PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
ABBREVIATED BUS ACCIDENT REPORT

1. CASE#: 9566
2. PROPERTY NAME: MTA LIB
3a. ACCIDENT TYPE: Hit Other in Rear
3b. Accident Severity Index: 0.25
4a. DATE: November 10, 2007
4b. TIME: 3:10 p.m.
5. ACCIDENT LOCATION: Sunrise Highway at Carol Drive
6. TOWN/CITY/BOROUGH: Massapequa, NY
7. SUMMONS: No
8. BUS NUMBER: 362
8a. YEAR: 2005
8b. MAKE: Orion/CNG
9. NUMBER OF INJURIES: 5
10. FATALITIES: 0
11. HOURS OF SERVICE: 3 hr 45 min in last 24 hrs/45 hrs 17 min in last 7 days
12. SYNOPSIS:

At approximately 3:10 p.m., MTA Long Island Bus (LIB) bus #362 was traveling west in the right travel lane on Sunrise Highway and approaching the intersection with Carol Drive when the driver of an auto traveling in the same direction immediately in front of the bus abruptly stopped. The bus driver braked heavily but could not avoid colliding with the rear of the stopped auto. One bus passenger, the auto driver and three auto passengers claimed various minor injuries and were transported to a local hospital where they were all treated and released. The bus sustained slight and the auto moderate damage from the collision.

In the vicinity of the accident site Sunrise Highway is a two-way east/west roadway divided by a raised median into three travel lanes, separated by dashed white pavement markings in each direction. At the intersection with Carol Drive the roadway provides dedicated left and right turn lanes in each direction. Parking at the curbs is not allowed. Carol Drive is a two-way north/south roadway supporting one travel lane in each direction. Both roadways are asphalt paved, straight, level and in good condition. The intersection is controlled with standard traffic/pedestrian signals which, at the time of the accident investigation, were all functioning as designed. At the time of the accident it was daylight, the weather was clear and the roadway was dry. The posted area speed limit is 45 mph. The environment played no part in the accident.

Bus #362 is a 2005 Orion transit type bus fueled by compressed natural gas that is housed and maintained at the Mitchell Field Depot with a seating capacity of 45 passengers. A review of the bus records showed that Preventive Maintenance Inspections are performed at regular 6,000 mile intervals, the most recent was completed on October 15, 2007 and the bus had traveled 2,766 miles since then. There were no safety or recurring defects noted in the 45 days prior to the accident. Physical inspection of the bus on November 13, 2007 found no defects that could be considered a causative factor in the accident. The inspection showed minor collision damage to the front bumper of the bus. Decelerometer tests were performed on the bus’ braking systems and showed stopping distances that met the MTA NYCT adopted standards for passenger vehicles of NYS DOT Regulations (Title 17 of NYCRR, Article 3, Part 720).

The bus driver was hired by the MTA LIB on July 26, 1999 and completed the MTA LIB New Bus Operator Training Program. A review of the driver’s NYS Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) records for the past three years showed no violations or convictions.
However, the NYS DMV records did show two collision accidents [12/22/05-Transit Bus (Personal Injury) & 04/26/07-Personal auto (Property Damage)]. NYS Vehicle & Traffic Law, Article 19-A records were reviewed and found to be complete, in-order and up-to-date. A review of the driver's MTA LIB accident record for the past three years showed one preventable (04/29/05-retraining) and one non-preventable (12/22/05) collision accidents. Post accident drug and alcohol tests performed on the bus driver upon his release from the accident scene, 2 hours and 55 minutes from the time of the accident, were negative.

In an interview the bus driver indicated that he was traveling west on Sunrise Highway in the right travel lane near the intersection with Carol Drive when the auto immediately ahead of his bus abruptly stopped. The bus driver stated that although he braked heavily he could not avoid colliding with the rear of the auto with the front of the bus. The bus driver further indicated that the accident was his fault as, at the time of the accident, he was following the auto too closely.

The MTA LIB trains all bus drivers in defensive driving techniques utilizing the concept of “Space Cushion Driving” when traveling in congested traffic conditions. This training emphasizes maintaining sufficient space behind a vehicle in front of the bus so as to always be able to safely bring the bus to a stop.

Public Transportation Safety Board staff finds that the most probable cause of this accident was the failure of the bus driver to maintain control of his vehicle by following too closely and adhere to his defensive driving training.

The MTA LIB, after reviewing the facts concerning the accident found the accident to be preventable. The bus driver was issued, and served, a one day suspension which was followed by one day of classroom and behind-the-wheel retraining after which the bus driver’s driving skills were evaluated, found to be satisfactory and he was returned to passenger service.

Based on the action taken by the MTA Long Island Bus regarding this accident, the Public Transportation Safety Board staff makes no recommendation in this case.

INVESTIGATOR: Harry W. Gerham