PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
ABBREVIATED BUS ACCIDENT REPORT

1. CASE: 9601
2. PROPERTY NAME: NYCT
3a. ACCIDENT TYPE: Multiple Injury
3b. Accident Severity Index: 5.25
4a. DATE: December 14, 2007
4b. TIME: 07:57 am
5. ACCIDENT LOCATION: Union Turnpike at 184th Street
6. TOWN/CITY/BOROUGH: Queens
7. SUMMONS: None
8. BUS NUMBER: 6457
8a. YEAR: 2004
8b. MAKE: Orion
9. NUMBER OF INJURIES: 8
10. FATALITIES: 0
11. HOURS OF SERVICE: 3 hrs and 51 min in last 24 hrs/28 hrs and 14 min in last 7 days
12. SYNOPSIS:

On December 14, 2007, at approximately 7:57 am, MTA New York City Transit (NYCT) bus #6457, traveling westbound on Union Turnpike with an approximate speed of 30 mph, was approaching the intersection with 184th Street on a green traffic signal. At that time a passenger van moving in the opposite direction was stopped in the left turn only travel lane with the van’s left turn signal activated. Suddenly, the van driver started to perform a left turn in front of the moving bus. In an attempt to prevent a collision, the bus driver applied the brakes and swerved to the left. While the rear of the van was still in the intersection the van driver applied the brakes for unknown reasons. Subsequently, the right front of the bus struck the right rear side of the van, causing it to spin approximately for 180 degrees. The bus driver and 7 children (ages 5 to 12) from the van claimed various injuries, were transported to local hospitals, treated and released; except for two injured children who were admitted in the hospital. One of them was in critical condition. Both, the bus and the van sustained moderate damage. The NYC Police responded to the accident and the van driver was arrested for operating a vehicle out of class and for endangering the welfare of a minor.

In the vicinity of the accident site, Union Turnpike is a 70 foot wide, two-way road divided by an raised concrete median, accommodating two eastbound and two westbound travel lanes. The eastbound direction contains a designated left turn only travel lane. Parking is restricted during morning hours. One Hundred Eighty Fourth Street is a 30 foot wide, one way northbound road with no pavement marking. Parking is permitted at the curbs. Both roadways are straight, level and asphalt paved. The traffic at the intersection is controlled by four traffic signals. At the time of the accident it was daylight, overcast and the pavement was wet. The speed limit is 30 mph.

Bus #6457 is a 2004 Orion transit bus with a seating capacity 38 passengers. A review of the bus records indicated that Preventive Maintenance Inspections (PMI) at Queens Village Depot are performed at 3,500 mile intervals. The most recent PMI was completed on November 21, 2007. The bus had traveled 1,291 miles at the time of the accident. There were no safety or recurring defects noted in the 45 days prior to the accident. A post accident inspection of bus #6457 was conducted by the Public Transportation Safety Board (PTSB) staff in conjunction with MTA NYCT staff on December 17, 2007 and no defects were found that would be considered causative factors in this accident.
Decelerometer tests were performed on the 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 MTA NYCT on February 15, 1999, and completed the standard “New Bus Operator Training Program”. A review of the bus driver’s Department of Motor Vehicles records showed no violations or suspensions. New York State Vehicle and Traffic Law, Article 19-A records were complete and up-to-date. A review of the driver’s NYCT record for the last three years revealed one non-major preventable collision accident on 03/16/07, resulting in a verbal warning. A post accident drug and alcohol test administered to the bus driver 4 hours and 25 minutes after the collision was negative. The delay in administering the drug and alcohol test was due to the bus driver being transported to a local hospital and treated.

In an interview with the PTSB staff, the bus driver indicated that traffic was light and he was moving westbound on Union Turnpike with an approximate speed of 30 mph, approaching the intersection with 184th Street on a green traffic signal. The bus driver stated that he noticed the red van stopped before the intersection in the left turn only lane with the activated left turning signal. Then he stated that the van suddenly started to make a left turn and then suddenly stopped in the intersection. The bus driver said that he moved the bus to the left and applied the brakes. He indicated that he applied the brakes right before the impact.

In an interview with a police officer, the van driver stated that he was stopped with a green traffic signal waiting for several cars to pass westbound and clear the intersection. After the cars passed he performed the turn and was hit by the bus.

A witness who was seated in the second row on the right side of the bus stated that the bus was moving through the intersection on a green traffic signal when the van turned left in front of the bus and stopped. Then the bus struck the van.

Another witness who was seated in the third or the fourth row on the left side of the bus stated that she was reading a book when she looked up and noticed the van in front of the bus, coming to a stop.

The investigation showed that according to the final rest positions of the bus and the van, the location of the collision debris, the statements of the bus driver, the van driver and two witnesses, it is most likely that the bus moving westbound on Union Turnpike with an approximate speed of 30 mph entered the intersection with 184th Street on a green traffic signal. The van, moving in the opposite direction failed to yield the right-of-way to the oncoming bus and initiated a left turn. When the rear of the van reached the middle of the intersection the van suddenly stopped for no apparent reason, blocking the intersection. Subsequently, the right front of the bus struck the right rear section of the van.
The Public Transportation Safety Board (PTSB) staff finds that the most probable cause of the accident was the van driver who failed to yield the right-of-way to the oncoming bus.

Contributing to the accident was the bus driver who failed to utilize his training in defensive driving techniques while driving through an intersection.

The MTA NYCT reviewed the accident on February 8, 1008, and found it to be preventable. The bus driver was issued a 10 day suspension which he accepted. The bus driver was retrained, his performance was evaluated as satisfactory and he was returned to passenger service.

INVESTIGATOR: Mikhail Palanker

__________________________________________  _______________________
CHIEF, ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SECTION  DATE

__________________________________________  _______________________
DIRECTOR, MCSB, NYSDOT  DATE