On March 3, 2008, at approximately 12:04 pm, MTA NYCT bus #208 traveling east on Bartow Avenue was entering the nearside bus stop at Edison Avenue when the #2 left side forward facing seats collapsed. The passenger from the seat fell to the floor of the bus and claimed various injuries. He was transported to a local hospital, treated and released. The bus driver claimed a mechanical failure. The bus sustained slight damage.

In the vicinity of the accident site, Bartow Avenue is a 96 foot wide, two way road divided by a full barrier yellow pavement marking, accommodating four westbound and three eastbound travel lanes. Each direction is provided by a left turn only travel lane. Edison Avenue is a 36 foot wide, one way southbound road accommodating three travel lanes. Parking is not permitted at the curbs on both streets. Both roadways are straight, level and asphalt paved. At the time of the accident the weather was dry and clear. The area speed limit is 30 mph.

Bus #208 is a 1993 Orion V transit type bus with a seating capacity of 40 passengers. A review of the bus records indicated that Preventive Maintenance Inspections (PMI) at Gun Hill Depot are performed at regular 3,000 mile intervals and the most recent was completed on February 20, 2008. The bus had traveled 777 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 #208 was conducted by the Public Transportation Safety Board (PTSB) staff in conjunction with NYCT staff on March 3, 2008. The post accident inspection revealed that the upper part of #2 left side seat was secured by only two “T” bolts instead of four. One of the forward upper “T” bolts was found loose inside the track, what caused the second forward “T” bolt bear excessive weight and eventually break. The seat bracket was found cracked at the attachment points.

The bus driver was hired by the MTA NYCT on May 17, 2004, 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 & Traffic Law, Article-A records were complete and up-to-date. A review of the driver’s MTA NYCT records for the last three years showed three preventable collision accidents: the first one on 10/01/05, resulting in counseling, the second one on 08/10/06, resulting in a reprimand, the third one on 03/31/007, resulting in a one day suspension. A post accident drug and alcohol was not administered to the bus driver due to the nature of the accident.
In an interview with the PTSB staff, the bus driver indicated that while driving the bus eastbound on Bartow Avenue and entering a nearside bus stop at Edison Avenue he heard commotion in the bus and observed that #2 left side forward facing seats collapsed. A male passenger was lying on the floor and claiming various injuries.

Following similar type incidents involving 1993-6 Orion V model buses, NYCT issued a Maintenance Directive on April 19, 2005, requiring depots to replace the hardware on the two passenger forward facing seats.

On November 26, 2006, NYCT issued a Maintenance Directive, “Inspection of Passenger Seat Securement Bolts (Revised)” requiring depots to conduct a Midas survey identifying buses with broken or cracked seat frames or defective, missing or loose securement channel hardware. Included in the directive were instructions to replace the acorn style nut with a standard type hex type nut. The use of the hex nut, along with a vertical line marking should help in ensuring that the bolt will be positioned properly upon installation, and more readily identifiable if it became loose or improperly positioned.

The Public Transportation Safety Board staff finds that the most probable cause of the accident was the failure of the maintenance personnel to replace the securement hardware as per the previously issued Maintenance Directive.

The NYCT re-issued the Maintenance Directive “Inspection of Passenger Seat Securement Bolts dated November 28, 2006 in conjunction with the Maintenance Directive “New Flyer Seat Rail”. Gun Hill Depot, the depot in which this accident occurred, campaigned its fleet of 1993 Orion buses on 03/03/08. Eleven buses were found to have seat securement concerns and were all corrected. Additionally, all 1999 Orion buses, and 2000 and 2003 New Flyer buses at the Gun Hill Depot were also campaigned (04/03/08 to 04/07/08). Three 2000 New Flyer buses were found to have loose seat securement hardware and the hardware was replaced.

Based on the action taken by the MTA NYCT regarding this accident, the Public Transportation Safety Board makes no recommendations in this case.

INVESTIGATOR: Mikhail Palanker

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CHIEF, ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SECTION

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DIRECTOR, PCSB, NYSDOT