PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
ABBREVIATED BUS ACCIDENT REPORT

1. CASE#: 9855
2. PROPERTY NAME: MTA Bus Co
3a. ACCIDENT TYPE: Angle Collision
3b. Accident Severity Index: 16.00
4a. DATE: August 11, 2008
4b. TIME: 1:17 p.m.
5. ACCIDENT LOCATION: Seagirt Boulevard at Rockaway Freeway
6. TOWN/CITY/BOROUGH: Queens, NY
7. SUMMONS: No
8. BUS NUMBER: 3587
8a. YEAR: 2006
8b. MAKE: Orion Hybrid
9. NUMBER OF INJURIES: 30
10. FATALITIES: 0
11. HOURS OF SERVICE: 7 hr 39 min in last 24 hrs/61 hrs 34 min in last 7 days
12. SYNOPSIS:

At approximately 1:17 p.m., MTA Bus Company (MTABC) bus #3587 was traveling east on Seagirt Boulevard through the intersection with Rockaway Freeway when an auto traveling north on Rockaway Freeway (right to left to the path of the bus) failed to stop for the red traffic signal and entered the path of the bus. The right front of the bus collided with the left front side of the auto, moved slightly to the left and collided with the support pillar of the elevated railway before traveling approximately 130 feet to final rest. The bus driver, 29 of the 43 bus passengers and the auto driver claimed various non-life threatening injuries. Ten of the injured bus passengers were treated at the scene and left the scene unassisted. The remaining 19 injured bus passengers, the bus driver and the auto driver were transported to local hospitals where all were released following treatment. Both vehicles sustained extensive damage from the collision.

In the vicinity of the accident site Seagirt Boulevard is a two-way east/west roadway divided by dashed white pavement markings into three travel lanes in each direction. Rockaway Freeway is a two-way north/south roadway that travels under an elevated railway structure and is divided into one northbound and two southbound travel lanes. Parking is not permitted at the curbs of either roadway. Both roadways are asphalt paved, straight, level and in good condition. The intersection is controlled by standard traffic and 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 area speed limit is 30 mph.

Bus #3578 is a 2006 Orion VII hybrid low floor transit type bus housed and maintained at the Far Rockaway Depot and has a seating capacity of 38 passengers. A review of the bus records showed that Preventive Maintenance Inspections are performed at regular 4,000 mile intervals, the most recent was completed on August 2, 2008 and the bus had traveled 1,099 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 August 12, 2008 showed collision damage to the left and right front corners of the bus but found no defects that could be considered a causative factor in the accident. Due to the damage sustained in the accident no decelerometer tests were performed on the bus braking systems.

The bus driver was originally hired by Green Bus Lines on March 17, 2003 and was retained when Green Bus was acquired by the MTABC on January 6, 2006.
A review of the driver's NYS Department of Motor Vehicles record for the past three years showed no violations or convictions. 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 MTABC accident record showed one preventable accident (03/14/06, warning and retraining). Post accident drug and alcohol tests performed on the bus driver upon her release from the hospital, approximately 4 hours and 17 minutes from the time of the accident were negative.

In an interview bus driver indicated that she was standing, first in line, at the red light on eastbound Seagirt Boulevard at the intersection with Rockaway Freeway. The bus driver said that when the light turned green she moved from a stop and entered the intersection. The driver indicated that when she was about midway through the intersection she heard a loud bang and the bus simultaneously jerked left, causing her to momentarily lose control and allowing the left front of the bus to collide with the support pillar of the elevated railway before she could bring the bus back under control. The bus driver further indicated that once she regained she control she braked to a gentle stop. The bus driver also stated that she did not know what had happened until after the bus had come to a stop and she observed the damaged auto in the intersection behind the bus.

In an interview two of the injured bus passengers indicated that the bus had been standing at the red light and when it changed to green the bus entered the intersection where it was struck by an auto that was traveling at a high rate of speed after running the red light.

The auto driver stated, to MTABC personnel at the accident scene that she was moving through the intersection on a green light when the bus came out nowhere and collided with her vehicle.

Physical evidence at the accident scene showed no pre-collision skid marks from either vehicle and that the collision had occurred within the confines of the northbound travel lane of Rockaway Freeway. Based on the debris within the intersection it was determined that the bus had traveled approximately 49 and auto 20 feet, respectively, into the intersection when the collision occurred. Further, it was determined that the bus traveled a total of 230 feet from first impact to final rest. The auto came to final rest in the far side crosswalk of Rockaway Freeway after having rotated 90 degrees after colliding with the bus. The damage to the auto was confined to its left front side and was consistent with it having been struck by the bus.

The MTABC trains all their bus drivers in defensive driving techniques for safely approaching and traversing intersections, statistically one of the most hazardous points on a driver’s route. These techniques include, but are not limited to, reducing speed, scanning for hazards, identifying and anticipating potential hazards – particularly those hazards presented by the unanticipated actions of other motorists, such as failing to stop for traffic control devices. By her own admission, the bus driver in this case stated that she did not observe the approaching auto until after the collision had occurred – a clear failure to adhere to her training.
The Public Transportation Safety Board staff finds that most probable cause of this accident was the failure of the auto driver to stop for the red traffic signal on northbound Rockaway Freeway. Contributing to the accident was the failure of the bus driver to adhere to her defensive driving training by failing to properly scan the intersection and to observe the approaching auto in time to avoid the collision.

The MTA Department of Buses, upon the bus driver’s return to work, reviewed the facts concerning the accident and found it to be preventable. The accident was rated as a Major Preventable and the driver was issued, and appealed, a five day suspension. The bus driver later accepted, and served, a two day suspension. The bus driver was also retrained and had her driving skills evaluated prior to being returned to passenger service.

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

INVESTIGATOR: Harry W. Gerham

__________________________________________  __________________________
CHIEF, ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SECTION       DATE

__________________________________________  __________________________
DIRECTOR, PCSB, NYSDOT                     DATE