PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
ABBREVIATED BUS ACCIDENT REPORT

1. CASE#: 9913
2. PROPERTY NAME: MTA NYCT
3a. ACCIDENT TYPE: Angle Collision
3b. Accident Severity Index: 0.30
4a. DATE: September 21, 2008
4b. TIME: 4:42 p.m.
5. ACCIDENT LOCATION: Ashford Street at Linden Boulevard
6. TOWN/CITY/BOROUGH: Brooklyn, NY
7. SUMMONS: No
8. BUS NUMBER: 6501
8a. YEAR: 2004
8b. MAKE: Orion VII Hybrid
9. NUMBER OF INJURIES: 6
10. FATALITIES: 0
11. HOURS OF SERVICE: 6 hr 0 min in last 24 hrs/43 hrs 14 min in last 7 days
12. SYNOPSIS:

At approximately 4:42 p.m., MTA New York City Transit (NYCT) bus #6501 was moving from a stop in the left turn travel lane on westbound Linden Boulevard onto southbound Ashford Street, when an Access-a-Ride para-transit cut-away type bus traveling east on Linden Boulevard failed to stop for the red traffic signal, entered the intersection and collided broadside with the bus. The bus driver, the three bus passengers, the para-transit driver and para-transit passenger all claimed various non-life threatening injuries, were transported to a local hospital where all were treated and released. Both vehicles were extensively damaged in the collision.

In the vicinity of the accident site Ashford Street is a two-way north/south roadway divided by solid double yellow pavement markings into one travel lane in each direction. Parking is allowed at the curb in each direction. Linden Boulevard is an east/west roadway consisting of a two-way main roadway and one-way eastbound and one-way westbound service roads. The main roadway is divided by dashed white pavement markings into three travel lanes and one dedicated left turn lane in each direction. Further, the east and west travel lanes are separated by a raised concrete median. The Linden Boulevard service roads are one-way in each direction and separated from the main roadway by raised concrete medians. Parking is not permitted at the curbs of any of the Linden Boulevard roadways. All roadways are asphalt paved, straight, level and in generally 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. In addition, the left turn lanes on Linden Boulevard are controlled by a directional arrow which activates prior to the main traffic signal changing to green. 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 #6501 is a 2004 Orion VII low floor hybrid transit type bus housed and maintained at the Fresh Pond Depot with a seating capacity of 38 passengers. A review of the bus records showed that Preventive Maintenance Inspections (PMI) are performed at regular 4,000 mile intervals, the most recent was completed on August 8, 2008 and the bus had traveled 3,465 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 September 22, 2008 found no defects that could be considered a causative factor in the accident. The physical inspection of the bus showed extensive collision damage to the middle of the right side of the bus. Decelerometer tests performed on the bus braking systems 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 Access-a-Ride para-transit bus is a 2002 Ford E-450 Superduty cutaway van type bus. The vehicle was last inspected and issued a 6 month sticker by a NYS DOT Motor Vehicle Inspector (MVI) on September 1, 2008 and the most recent PMI had been performed on August 31, 2008. The same NYS DOT MVI conducted a post accident inspection of the bus on September 24, 2008. The inspection found the vehicle to be undrivable (engine would not start, extensive damage to front end components, etc). However, the inspection showed that the braking system was intact and without damage. In addition, the records showed no claims of braking problems and that the bus had traveled 1,702 miles since the NYS DOT inspection and 1,730 miles since the PMI.

The bus driver was hired by the MTA NYCT on September 18, 2005 and completed the New Bus Operator Training Program. 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 NYCT accident record showed three minor collision accidents (12/01/05, 08/03/06, 02/25/07 – probationary counseling) that occurred during the driver’s probationary period, two non-preventable (05/26/07, 11/18/07) and two preventable (05/29/07-non-major/retraining/no discipline, 03/24/08-non-major/retraining/no discipline) collision accidents. Post accident drug and alcohol tests performed on the bus driver upon her release from the hospital, 5 hours and 14 minutes from the time of the accident, were negative.

In her written statement the bus driver indicated that she was traveling west on Linden Boulevard and, after moving from the left travel lane into the left turn lane, partially entered the intersection with Ashford Street on a green light and waited for traffic to clear so she could turn left. The driver said that the light cycled to red and, since she was in the intersection, began to turn left onto Ashford Street where she observed an Access-a-Ride bus run the red light and broadside her bus.

In an interview at the accident scene the bus driver indicated that she was traveling west on Linden Boulevard in the left lane and moved left into the left turn only lane, intending to turn onto southbound Ashford Street. The driver said that the light was green when she partially entered the intersection and stopped, waiting for traffic to clear. The driver stated that the traffic light cycled to red, traffic traveling in the opposite direction stopped and she proceeded to clear the intersection by completing the left turn onto Ashford Street. The driver further indicated that she as she was committed to completing the left turn she observed the approaching Access-a-Ride bus run the light and it collided with the right side of her bus, causing her to lose momentary control. The driver said that she regained control, finished the turn and stopped at the curb on Ashford Street.

The Access-a-Ride driver said that he was traveling east in the center lane of Linden Boulevard at a speed of approximately 25 mph. The driver indicated that when he was approximately 100 feet from the intersection with Ashford Street he observed a transit bus turn left, across his direction of travel. The driver further indicated that as he approached the intersection the light was green, cycled to yellow and although he braked heavily – the bus would not stop. The driver also stated that the brakes failed to stop the van.
A witness (injured in the collision) seated in the middle of the right side of the transit bus indicated that as the bus was making a left turn it was struck by a van traveling at a high rate of speed.

The sole passenger in the Access-a-Ride bus indicated that she observed the transit bus turning in front of the bus and yelled to the driver to “Look out! Look out!” and the driver turned right trying, unsuccessfully, to avoid colliding with the transit bus.

There were no skid marks from either vehicle at the accident scene. From debris in the street it was determined that the collision occurred within the middle travel lane of east bound Linden Boulevard. The damage to both vehicles, right side center on the transit bus and entire front of para-transit bus, is consistent with that which would occur with the para-transit bus colliding with the transit bus.

The MTA NYCT trains all 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 presented by the unanticipated or illegal actions of other motorists, such as failing to stop for or obey traffic control devices. By her own admission, the MTA NYCT bus driver identified the oncoming para-transit bus but failed to identify it as a potential hazard and continued initiating a left turn across the path of the approaching van.

Public Transportation Safety Board staff finds that the most probable cause of this accident was the failure of the Access-a-Ride para-transit bus driver to stop for the red traffic signal. Contributing to the accident was the failure of the MTA NYCT bus driver to adhere to her defensive driving training by failing to properly scan and identify the hazard presented by the approaching para-transit bus.

On November 19, 2008 the bus driver attended a MTA NYCT Department of Buses (DOB) Performance and Evaluation class/retraining where it was determined that the bus driver was qualified and able to be returned to passenger service. In addition, it was also determined that the bus driver was to be monitored by future undercover check rides. On November 24, 2008 the MTA NYCT Department of Buses, after reviewing the facts concerning the accident found the accident to be preventable on the part of the bus driver and issued her a 20 day suspension, which was appealed. At the time of this report there has been no final decision regarding the suspension.

Based on the action taken by the MTA New York City Transit 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