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SFPD Apprehend Suspect in Assault of Muni Bus Operator 17-178

November 27, 2017 | 11:05 AM

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On November 14, 2017 at approximately 8:50 AM, San Francisco Police officers responded to 4th and Townsend Streets regarding an assault of a Muni bus operator.

Upon arrival, the officers contacted the bus operator, a 53 year-old Fairfield resident who had been struck several times in the head by a suspect who fled the scene. The victim was transported to a hospital for non-life threatening injuries.

The victim told officers that the suspect bicycled past her bus and made an obscene gesture with his hand. Upon arriving at a bus stop on 4th and Townsend Streets, the suspect got off the bicycle, boarded the bus, and attacked the driver. The suspect was described as a white male, approximately 40-50 years of age, 5'08"- 5'10" tall, 150 - 160 pounds, with sandy hair and blue-green eyes. The suspect was last seen riding a dark colored fold up style bicycle and wearing a distinctive red Georgia Bulldogs jacket, a bright orange bicycle helmet, with a sticker that read: "Bike Lover, Save Water."

On November 21, 2017 police officers from the San Francisco Police Department's Muni Task Force were conducting surveillance at 4th & Townsend Streets in an attempt to locate the suspect. The officers immediately recognized the suspect, later identified as Sami Tapio Tuomivaara, from the MUNI Security Video that recorded the initial attack. Tuomivaara was seen riding his bicycle when officers attempted to apprehend him; the suspect subsequently fled from police. The investigation led police officers to the area around the 600 block of 16th Street. In coordination with officers from the University of California San Francisco Police Department, SFPD officers were able to locate Tuomivaara and take him into custody. Due to pending identification matters, Tuomivaara's booking photo is not being released at this time.

"Muni transit operators have very demanding jobs," said John Haley, SFMTA Director of Transit. "Their focus should be on safely carrying 700,000 passengers a day, not on having to defend themselves from violent assaults. We applaud the San Francisco Police Department for following up on this case and for doing everything they can to bring a suspect to justice."

"Our investigators worked diligently to identify and apprehend the suspect in this case. We take assaults on MUNI employees very seriously and we work closely with SFMTA to make the transit system as safe as possible," said SFPD Commander Teresa Ewins.

Although an arrest has been made, anyone with information on this case is encouraged to contact the SFPD Anonymous Tip Line at (415) 575-4444 or text-a-tip to TIP411 with SFPD at the beginning of the message.

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