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Bus video proves key in arrest of stabbing suspect

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P-I REPORTER

Photos of a man suspected of stabbing a fellow bus passenger last week helped King County sheriff's deputies spot the man sleeping on a Federal Way bus bench early Thursday and arrest him.

The suspect was caught wearing the same clothing and carrying the same backpack that was seen in a video from on an onboard bus surveillance system.

"This coach camera system is proving to be valuable," Federal Way police Cmdr. Stan McCall said. "If not for the images, of course, all we would have to go on would be a detailed description."

Deputies working the Metro Transit detail spotted the man wanted in the Sept. 30 stabbing around 5:30 a.m. Thursday at the Federal Way Transit Center.

The 19-year-old man, who has no current address, was booked into the King County Jail for investigation of assault and warrants related to earlier arrests for theft and property destruction.

The stabbing happened just before 5 a.m. Sept. 30 near the Federal Way Transit Center.

Two men aboard Metro bus 174 got into a scuffle. The bus driver tried to stop the fight, but when he couldn't, he summoned help.

As the bus left the transit center, the two men got off. It was after they got off the bus that one man stabbed the other.

The victim, a man in his 30s, suffered multiple stab wounds and was taken to Harborview Medical Center. He is expected to make a full recovery.

The assailant fled before police arrived. There were about 15 people aboard the bus at the time, and police were able to get a description of the assailant.

But that description became far more detailed when images from the onboard camera system were seen.

"You know what they say: A picture is worth a thousand words," McCall said.

Metro Transit has had onboard surveillance cameras since 2003, said deputy general manager Jim Jacobson.

"This clearly demonstrates how they can be useful," Jacobson said.

About half of Metro's fleets have cameras, he said, and the newer buses are coming wired to accept cameras when money becomes available. It costs about \$5,000 per system to have the cameras installed in buses.

"We're buying more all the time," Jacobson said. "We would like to have them in all our buses."

The man arrested Thursday in the stabbing assault has a lengthy criminal history, according to court records. He has been arrested four times since December for charges ranging from theft to harassment to malicious mischief.

He was most recently released from the King County Jail on Aug. 15.

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