

TEEN IS RAPED AT BUS STOP

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In the waning darkness on a west side street early Wednesday morning, a 17-year-old girl on her way to school was abducted and **raped** as she walked toward a **bus stop** .

The attack was a sad counterpoint to Tuesday's announcement that police had arrested a teenager they believe was responsible for **at least five bus stop rapes** along Gratiot on the city's east side. It also focused new attention on a recent spate of similar assaults and underscored the complex question of safety **at city bus stops** .

Authorities said security **is** difficult because there **is** no way to monitor or station police **at every bus stop** in the city 24 hours a day.

Since the beginning of the school year, Detroit police say they have stepped up monitoring of **buses and bus stops** around schools and along major city **bus** routes serving students, such as the 7 Mile and Grand River routes. Plainclothes officers ride some **buses** during peak student commuting periods, and patrol cars have been assigned to follow **buses** .

But safety remains elusive for many, including students who often must leave for school in the winter months before daylight breaks.

Consider these assaults from the last two months:

- * On Jan. 6, a 15-year-old girl waiting for a **bus at** West Chicago and Littlefield was assaulted **at** gunpoint, forced into an alley and **raped** .
- * On Feb. 2, Detroit police announced they were looking for a serial rapist who had attacked three women on the street or **at bus stops** in the area of East 7 Mile and Russell, just east of I-75. Those assaults occurred in December and January.
- * On Sunday, a 17-year-old and a 14-year-old companion were arrested after the fifth in a series of gunpoint rapes and robberies of women **at** or near **bus stops** along Gratiot. Prosecutors said the 17-year-old, who was wounded as he struggled with police, **is** expected to be arraigned today in his room **at** Detroit Receiving Hospital on nine counts of first- degree criminal sexual misconduct.
- * In Wednesday's attack, police said, the girl was on her way to a **bus stop at** Evergreen and Clarita on the west side when a man drove up in a blue station wagon, pulled a gun and ordered her into the car. He then drove to a garage **at** the rear of a nearby house and **raped** her, police said.

Officer Richard Rollet of the Detroit Police Department's crime prevention section said attacks happen **at bus stops** -- just as they happen anywhere else on any city street.

All that people can do **is** remain alert and aware of their surroundings to minimize the chances of being attacked, he said. But even that **is** no guarantee.

"You can do everything 100 percent perfect and still become a victim," Rollet said. "Cops become victims, too. Nobody's immune."

Detroit Public Schools spokesman Steve Wasko said the district annually gives out about 25,000 city **bus** passes to students, mostly high schoolers. And most school principals send letters to parents early in the school year reminding them to talk to their children about safety concerns.

A representative of the Detroit Department of Transportation could not be reached for comment.

Harold Walker, president of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 26, which represents city **bus** drivers, said cooperation between the city administration, the union and the police department has improved safety on **buses** .

STEPS TO TAKE

Experts offer these tips to lower the risk of becoming a rape victim:

- * Walk near a curb or down the middle of the street when sidewalks are dark.
- * Walk to and wait **at a bus stop** with someone whenever possible.
- * Keep an eye out for lit houses or businesses where you might go for help.
- * Wear shoes you can run in.
- * Walk briskly and confidently.
- * Vary your route.
- * Carry a whistle or hand alarm and have it ready.
- * If you suspect someone **is** following you, turn around confidently and check. If so, scream, blow your whistle or activate your alarm while running to a house or business.
- * Stand near the emergency button in the elevator.

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