

CTA urged to get own police

By Gary Washburn

Transportation writer

The rape of a woman bus driver last month provides one more illustration of the Chicago Transit Authority's need for a security unit of its own, a union leader asserted Tuesday.

Elcosie Gresham, president of Local 241 of the Amalgamated Transit Union, said the special Chicago police contingent of moonlighting police officers was not providing adequate protection for drivers or passengers.

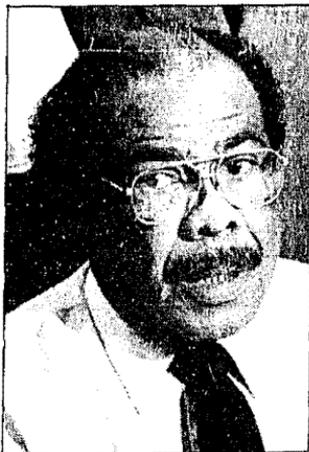
"Police officers working on their days off are not going to put forth the same effort as they do on their daily jobs," Gresham said. "The CTA must have its own force, because that force would only be responsive to the needs of the CTA."

The victim in last month's attack, a CTA veteran with 13 years of service, was assaulted on the West Side by a man who apparently was on her bus when she drove it out of the garage.

The attacker twisted and broke the driver's left arm when she reached for a silent alarm, then "made her disrobe and tore her clothes off and sexually molested her right there on the bus," Gresham said.

Before fleeing, the man tied her up, and she was found only after another CTA driver became curious about her parked vehicle, Gresham said.

CTA Executive Director Robert



Elcosie Gresham

Paaswell said agency executives were discussing the possibility of using employees to patrol rail yards and stations, and "I think the issue of bus security will be looked at in much more detail as the year unfolds. It is a concern, absolutely."

But Officer Charles Brougham of the police special functions group believes the special unit is doing a good job overall. The rape was the only sexual assault of a driver in this year's first quarter. There was none in all of 1987 and only two the year before, he said.

Serious assaults against drivers

in this year's first three months totaled 8, Brougham said; 62 were recorded in all of 1987.

With 134 routes, more than 2,200 buses and nearly 500 million passenger trips a year on the CTA, "I don't imagine anybody is doing any better than that," Brougham said.

CTA security has been an issue for years. In 1979, Mayor Jane Byrne ordered an in-house CTA unit disbanded, charging that it failed to perform its job properly.

A series of attacks on bus riders eventually brought pressure from the Regional Transportation Authority on the CTA to take new steps. After months of negotiations, the special police bus security force was formed last year.

But almost immediately there were questions about the new force's degree of commitment and disagreements over where to deploy patrols. After debate, CTA officials earlier this year decided to renew the agency's contract with the police department for the rest of 1988.

Officials say there are strong arguments both for a Chicago police contingent and for a CTA force to guard buses. Cost is one concern; in the current arrangement, the CTA does not have to provide fringe benefits to patrol officers.

John Hoellen, chairman of the CTA board's Operations Committee, said there is "enormous room for improvement" in the performance of the police unit, but he continues to oppose formation of a CTA force.