

# Calgary man admits he was drunk when he stole city bus

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A 31-year-old man has admitted he was drunk, high on drugs and blacking out when he stole a Calgary Transit bus last year and went on an early-morning, high-speed joyride with a friend.

Robert Allen Smith, who pleaded guilty through lawyer Kim Ross on Tuesday to dangerous driving and theft over \$5,000 for the harrowing incident on May 30, 2010, had been scheduled for a full-day trial when he suddenly changed his pleas.

Crown prosecutor Julie Morgan, who read the admitted facts in court, said the incident began at 5:50 a.m. after a city bus driver stopped the vehicle briefly, leaving it running with the key in the ignition, by a McDonald's at 52nd Street and 61st Avenue S.E.

Police previously said the driver had gone into the restaurant for a bathroom break.

While the driver ran into McDonald's, Morgan said, Smith and Jeffrey Keizer hopped on the bus with Smith behind the wheel and fled. There were no passengers aboard at the time.

"As the bus was driving away, it struck two parked vehicles," Morgan said. "There was excessive speed and evasive turns."

The vehicle was located about 40 minutes later parked in front of a residence on Penworth Close S.E., still running and with damage to the front passenger side, the prosecutor told provincial court Judge Marlene Graham.

"Certainly, our buses aren't out there for people to steal. They're out there to provide public transit service in the city," said Calgary

Transit spokesman Ron Collins. "We're pleased this person will pay the consequences."

"It shows us that at the time, it was a bad decision. The person who stole the bus put people on the streets in jeopardy. The driver was not familiar with the vehicle and there could have been dire consequences."

Morgan said a surveillance video in the vehicle was released to the media and Keizer was quickly identified as the person standing beside the driver. He was arrested and when interviewed by police, told them Smith was the driver.

She said Keizer told police he saw the speedometer during the joyride and noted the bus was going 120 km/h at one point. He also said Smith went through a red light northbound at 52nd Street and 17th Avenue S.E.

Smith was arrested two days later and admitted to police he stole the vehicle and had no training to operate a full-sized bus.

Morgan said Smith told police he recalled driving the bus, but had no recollection of striking the other vehicles or other details of the incident.

Graham ordered a pre-sentence report for sentencing arguments by Morgan and Ross on Sept. 15.

Several other Traffic Safety Act charges were withdrawn by the Crown after Smith admitted to the two main charges.

Keizer, 21, who was in court ready to testify for the Crown on Tuesday, previously admitted responsibility for stealing the bus and was diverted to alternative measures.

He has completed his court obligations and does not have a criminal record for the theft.

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