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NEWSCHOPPER 7/39

Police and bystanders gather around the bus shortly after the boy stopped and surrendered.





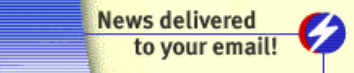
Marianne Kushi

Police chase stolen bus

SAN DIEGO – A high school student took a County Transit bus on an hour-long joyride Monday morning, leading police over freeways and surface streets before he finally surrendered.

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This picture of the 16-year-old suspect was taken as he arrived at the Downtown jail for questioning.



Michael Osment / NBC 7/39

Market Street.

The wild ride began at about 10 a.m. when a 16-year-old boy wearing an ROTC uniform climbed aboard the bus as the driver was outside inspecting the vehicle outside the College Grove Shopping Center. The boy drove the bus across San Diego and through National City before finally stopping in Chollas View at 47th and

An employee at a nearby bowling alley spoke to the bus driver after the bus was stolen.

“We asked what happened, and he said he just stepped out of bus taking inspection, and the kid just jumped on and drove right off,” Cindy Hessong said.

The driver said that there was no one aboard the bus when it was stolen and the boy never displayed a weapon of any sort.

The chase wound back and forth through much of southern San Diego and National city.



Throughout the chase, spectators lined the sidewalks to watch the bus drive by followed closely by a procession of police cars. The young man weaved around in traffic, but he maintained

moderate speed and stopped at stoplights and intersections.

“I thought he was taking every precaution, looking at stop signs looking at pedestrians,” witness Elisha Bullard said

But police say it was a dangerous joyride by a reckless driver.

“We do know at National City he blew through a red light and hit two vehicles,” Cpt. Cheryl Meyers said. “Two elderly people had minor injuries. He showed a total disregard for safety.”

Police kept up the pursuit but decided to hang back. Finally at about 11 a.m., they put down a spike strip at 47th and Market where the driver surrendered.

The clean cut young suspect walked off the bus and surrendered to police. He was ordered to the ground where he was handcuffed and arrested. As he was led to a police car, he began crying, “I’m sorry. I’m sorry.”

The boy is a freshman at Morse High School. Police say they believe that he has a history of mental problems. He was questioned for about an hour and a half by investigators and then turned over to the juvenile psychology department at Mesa Vista Hospital.

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