

FAIRFIELD TRAIN STATION  
VISUAL INSPECTION REPORT



January 2007



Prepared by the Bureau of Public Transportation  
Connecticut Department of Transportation

**Overview:**

One of the busiest stations on the New Haven Line, the Fairfield Train Station is located a block from Fairfield's central business district. Access is convenient from Interstate 95 and Route 1, although additional trailblazing signage would help a visitor find the station.

The first thing one observes is the expansive parking lot that is always near capacity. Finding a convenient parking space at 11:00 in the morning might be challenging.



The old eastbound station waiting room has been converted to a restaurant (pictured above) with brick walks, black railing and freshly painted trim. The area immediately surrounding the establishment is equally clean. The remainder of the south side is bland, abutting the rear façades of the many Post Road establishments. A strip parking lot separates the buildings from the platform. Sidewalk cracks are clogged with weeds. The westbound station building has also been nicely restored. Unfortunately, it sits in the middle of the expansive bituminous parking lot.

Stairs up to the Unquowa Road overpass carry commuters from one side of the station to the other. There are no provisions for ADA access. Fairfield was originally designated a key station as part of the effort to identify accessible locations. With the planned construction of the new compliant Fairfield Metro Station near Blackrock Turnpike, this designation has been transferred to that location.

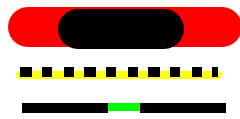
**Maintenance Responsibilities:**

Owner:	CDOT
Operator:	Town
Platform Lights:	Town
Trash:	Town
Snow Removal:	Town
Shelter Glazing:	Town
Platform Canopy:	Town
Platform Structure:	Town
Parking:	Fairfield Parking Authority

**Station Layout:**



*Aerial Photo by Aero-Metric, Inc. – Graphics by Urbitrans as part of the Rail Governance Study*



Station Building  
State-Owned Parking Area  
Municipality-Owned Parking Area

### **Train Station Visual Inspection Parameters:**

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (Department) recently inspected all 36 New Haven Line train stations to assess their appearance, safety, means of access and overall condition. Observations have been noted in an inspection report prepared for each station. The findings of these individual reports will be used to develop a Station Improvement Program. Initially, maintenance issues will be passed along to responsible parties for resolution. Soon after, a series of improvement projects will be recommended, followed by a long-term program of maintenance repairs and capital improvements.

The following station components were reviewed as part of the visual inspection process:

- **Highway Access** – While traveling to each station, inspectors observed the placement of trailblazing signage. In addition, they assessed the ease of locating appropriate station parking and drop-off areas. Typically, a green highway sign has been placed in advance of the proper exit for a particular train station. This sign notes the name of the station and commuter service operator. However, trailblazing signage at ramp termini or on secondary routes is typically missing or indistinguishable amid the clutter of other signs. Primary routes from the major roadways to each station need to be established and prominently identified. Conversely, trailblazing the return route is also required.
- **Parking** – This station reports cover signage, illumination and pavement condition issues within station parking areas. The Department and municipalities will address parking capacity and demand matters separate from this report.
- **Platforms** – Each station report details observations related to the general condition of the platforms, stairs, ramps, handrails and railings. The reports also incorporate the comments and recommendations of the Department's Connecticut Rail Station Governance Study - May 2005 (Governance Study) and High Level Platform Visual Inspection & Inventory. The latter inspection effort addresses only main line stations. The Department will inspect branch line platforms and canopies in the second phase of the high-level platform inspection program and incorporate the findings into future improvement projects
- **Canopies** – Each station report details observations relative to the general condition of any canopies located at the station. As noted under the Platform heading above, other studies have been referenced in presenting the findings for this component of the station.
- **Illumination** – The observations noted in each station report do not include a specific heading for illumination. Field visits occurred during daylight hours, thus inspectors could not assess the effectiveness of illumination in parking areas, along paths or on the platforms. Comments have been included in other headings relative to the number of fixtures, location and assumed coverage. This station report incorporates the comments of the Governance Study, where appropriate. However, the reports generally recommend that any first phase of station improvement include an evaluation of illumination levels in all areas of the stations and upgrade light fixtures, as necessary.

- **Painting** – As with illumination, the station inspection reports address painting issues under the appropriate headings.
- **Walks and Paths** – This station inspection report makes note of paved paths between parking areas, streets and station platforms. Where appropriate, general observations of the condition of the paths, vegetation, lighting, signage and stairways along the paths have been included.
- **Ticket Vending Machine (TVM)** – Metro-North has placed TVM's at most high volume stations. Where appropriate, this station report notes current locations. The Department and Metro-North plan to install at least one full service TVM at all main line and branch line stations. They will accomplish each of these installations based on ridership demands and funding availability.
- **Shelter** – Many platforms have shelters in lieu of adjacent waiting areas in station buildings. Typical Plexiglas or glass shelters protect waiting commuters from the elements. Many of these structures are similar to curbside shelters found along local bus routes. If appropriate, this report notes the location and general condition of platform shelters. It also addressed the need for new or additional protective structures.
- **Station Building** – The typical New Haven Line station building is a historic structure with a waiting room, rest room, and ticket office. Some have a coffee shop and/or newsstand. Where appropriate, observations have been incorporated into the station reports. Where station buildings were closed at the time of site visit, applicable findings of the Governance Study have been included in the report.
- **Taxi Stands and Bus Stops** – Taxis can physically access most station areas with the exception of parking garages and gated lots. Several stations have designated taxi stands. However, roadway geometry may limit bus access to most train stations. Stations with narrow parking aisles, tight turns or dead ends can accommodate bus patrons by placing bus stops on nearby streets. This report notes general taxi and bus accessibility issues.
- **Variable Message Sign (VMS)** – Every New Haven Line station has an audio PA system consisting of the typical “steel can” speaker or horn. The inspectors did not assess the regularity, audio levels or content of public announcements. These matters will continue to be addressed by the Department and station operators. Variable message signs or VMS provide a visual backup to audio announcements. These signs not only assist the hearing challenged. They also provide necessary train information over the din of large stations, nearby construction activities or noisy rail equipment. Currently, Metro-North is installing VMS at the designated “key” stations listed in the ADA section below. The Department and Metro-North intend to address visual messaging needs at all stations based on ridership demands and funding availability.

- **Signage** – This heading includes general observations of signs placed on platforms, along paths and in other areas of the station. Inspectors attempted to look at the signage as a first time or infrequent user. Their observations are noted in this report. In addition to observations noted within this topic, signage issues are addressed under the Highway Access and Parking headings.
- **Fence** – Nearly every station uses metal fencing beyond the platform ends to restrict unauthorized access to the tracks. Fencing has also been installed to secure parking areas, demarcate private property or cordon off potentially hazardous areas. Most locations employ a chain link fence, although occasional ornamental steel, cast iron or wood fences can be found. The condition of station fencing has been noted in this report.
- **Litter** – Litter may be the most conspicuous distraction at train stations. Patrons appreciate a well-maintained facility. For this report, inspectors have noted the general appearance of the station including areas under and behind platforms, along paths, around station buildings and in parking lots. It should be noted that these comments are depict the station condition only for the day of the site visit. It is assumed that station operators and Metro-North will continue to maintain the train stations to the high standards of the rail commuters.
- **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Access:** The New Haven Line has its origins in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, so many of the stations do not conform to the current ADA standards. Due to funding limitations, the Department cannot upgrade all New Haven Line stations at this time. Therefore, State and federal agencies have incorporated a “key station” upgrade program for twelve of the stations (Greenwich, Stamford, Darien, South Norwalk, Westport, Bridgeport, Milford, New Haven, New Canaan, Danbury, Waterbury, and the proposed Fairfield Metro Station). The remaining facilities will be upgraded over time. Meanwhile, the Department will continue to incorporate code compliant materials and practices into all of its current and planned station upgrades and improvements.
- **Amenities** –This inspection report addresses the inspectors’ observations of amenities placed around the stations. These may include items such as benches, trash cans, platform and stair railings, entrance signs, kiosks, vending areas, bike racks, station color schemes, clocks and light fixtures.
- **General Remarks** – General comments may be included at the conclusion of each observation report to address those matters that do not fall within the criteria of the above list of headings.

**Observations – September 5, 2006:**

**Highway Access** – Fairfield Station is conveniently located near Interstate 95. Highway signs note the proper exit. There are few trailblazing signs on the local roads.

**Parking** – Fairfield’s parking lot is expansive and near capacity. There are numerous signs in the parking lot noting daily and permit parking area, parking fees and means of payment. However, there is little to guide the occasional user to other areas when this lot is full. Illumination appears to be minimal. To alleviate the demand for parking spaces, the Department and the town are building the new Fairfield Metro Station near Blackrock Turnpike.

**Platforms** – The platforms at Fairfield Station are only six cars in length. Structurally, the platforms are in fair to good condition. Nearly all the joints between platforms are failing. Some of the stairs/ramps are cracked and spalling. Railing base plates are corroded. The bottom risers on several eastbound platform stairs exceed desired heights. The aluminum platform, stair and ramp railings are weathered with an occasional deformed panel. The trackside edge of the platform has a faded yellow stripe. Platform illumination appears to be sufficient. Rusty catenary supports rise up from both platforms.

**Canopy** – The westbound canopy is in satisfactory condition. There is evidence of peeling paint, rust, and corrosion on columns, roofing, connections and framing.

**Walks/Paths** – Most paths are bituminous pavement except those immediately bordering the buildings and the Unquowa Road sidewalk. These surfaces are uneven and cracked. The parking lots have no designated paths to the platforms.

**Ticket Vending Machine (TVM)** – There are TVM’s on the westbound platform.

**Shelter** – There is a Plexiglas shelter on the eastbound platform, which has been placed on a concrete platform extension. The glazing is scratched from graffiti and numerous attempts to remove it. The aluminum framing is weathered.

**Station Building** – The eastbound station building is occupied by a restaurant and Fairfield Cab. The building and immediate area have been restored and appears to be well maintained. The westbound station building has a ticket office, waiting room, public rest rooms and a coffee shop at platform level. This building was closed at the time of the site visit, but it appears to be in good condition.

**Taxi Stands and Bus Stops** – The taxi office is located in the eastbound building, but vehicles have access to both platforms. Buses can access both sides of the station as well as local streets.

**Signage** – There is nominal signage on the platforms. Metro-North has installed its obligatory “purchase ticket before boarding” and track number signs. Other informational signs are rare.

**Fences** – The chain link fence separating the parking lots from the tracks is weathered, rusted or broken.

**Litter** – Overall, the Fairfield Train Station is nicely maintained

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Access** – While ramps and high-level platforms provide access to trains, this station is not ADA compliant. Platform to platform access is restricted.

**Amenities** (See Appendix A Photos)

- Kiosk: None
- Exterior Paint Theme: Yellow and brick.
- Vending: Vending machines and newspaper boxes line the platform on both sides.
- Benches: Aluminum benches on the platform, wood benches inside.
- Railings: Weathered aluminum railing on platforms, stairs and ramps.
- Light Fixtures: Platform fixtures appear to be adequate. Illumination levels need to be evaluated.
- Trash: There are blue recycling bins and trash cans everywhere.
- Bicycle Rack: An area next to the eastbound building has many bikes during the day.
- Platform Clock: Beer clock hanging from canopy.

**General Remarks** – Fairfield has a well-utilized train station.

**Recommended Repairs, Upgrades and Improvements:**

At the urging of the Governor, the Department is establishing a program of repairs, upgrades and improvements to better the appearance, safety, and functionality of all 36 New Haven Line Stations. As a first step, the Department will continue to pass along all maintenance concerns to station operators for their immediate attention. The next step will be to have the Department and station operators upgrade station amenities. These might include benches, kiosks, railing, light fixtures, trash cans, bike racks, clocks and other common station elements. When funding becomes available, the Department will initiate a project to commence the upgrade of amenities at the stations.

With the cooperation of municipalities and Metro-North, the Department will review, categorize, and prioritize the findings listed under the Station Governance heading below. In addition, the recommendations of the High Level Platform Visual Inspection Report and the Connecticut Rail Governance Study will be considered. The resulting priority listing will include a number of projects to accomplish the repairs, upgrades and improvements needed to bring the New Haven Line Commuter Rail Service up to the commuters' expectations.

Finally, the Department anticipates that a number of major capital improvements may result from a comprehensive review of the findings of these station inspection reports. These might include the installation or extension of high-level platforms and canopies, the replacement or addition of shelters, and major ADA improvements. As noted earlier, the Department and individual municipalities will address parking issues separate from this report. However, these too may demand major capital investments. Finally, the recently completed Danbury Branch Feasibility Study and similar reports planned for the New Canaan and Waterbury Branches could lead to other capital improvements at some of the branch line stations.



The findings of this Visual Inspection Report and recommended solutions for station repairs, upgrades and improvements are listed below:

**Maintenance Repairs:**

- Add trailblazing signage along local streets and state highways.
- Add reverse trailblazing signage directing motorists back to the highways.
- Repair platform stairs and ramps.
- Clean and paint all elements of the canopies.
- Address eastbound stair problem with the excessive “first step” height.
- Repaint platform edge warning stripe.
- Replace shelter glazing as required.
- Add raised sidewalk and/or curbing between parking areas and the rear of platforms.
- Paint catenary structures (coordinate with Metro-North).
- Remove vending and newspaper from platforms and primary paths.

**Amenity Upgrades:**

- Add a station kiosk on each side of the station.
- Add TVM to eastbound platform.
- Replace all aluminum seats with black mesh benches.
- Replace trash receptacles with steel trashcans.
- Construct a shelter for vending behind the platform or near primary paths.
- Add westbound bike rack.
- Replace beer clock with a station clock. Add a clock to eastbound platform.

**Governance Improvements:**

- Evaluate illumination levels in and around the station.
- Install raised concrete walk and black railing or fence between the parking lot and tracks. Extend the walk at least two-thirds the length of the lot. The sidewalk will provide a designated walkway for commuters parked at remote areas of the lot while maintaining a separation from the railroad.
- Replace all other weathered chain link fencing with black chain link fence.
- Repair platform surface, foundations, bearings and joints as required.
- Replace all aluminum railing with black railing.
- Replace all bituminous walks (defining established paths) with concrete sidewalks.
- Review content and location of station signage.
- Add platform edge tactile warning strips.
- Replace shelter and/or add a stretch of canopy to the eastbound platform.
- Landscape both sides of the tracks.
- Install post mounted lights along all walkways.

**Major Capital Improvements:**

- Lengthen 6-car platforms to 10 cars.
- Extend and/or replace westbound platform canopy
- Provide ADA compliant pedestrian bridge for platform-to-platform access.

----- **END OF NARRATIVE** -----

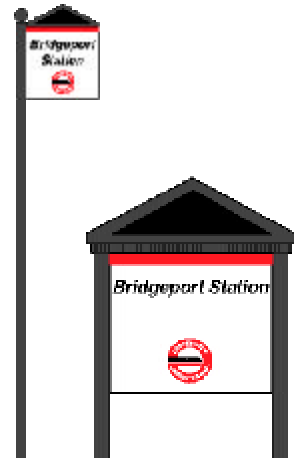
**APPENDIX A**



**Typical Trailblazing Sign**



**Kiosk (Historic)**



**Signs (Contemporary)**



**Bench (Contemporary) and Railing**



**Vending Shelter**



**Trash Can (Black preferred)**



**Bike Rack**



**Example of Fence, Walk and Post Mounted Light Next to Track**



**Fairfield Platforms, Station Building and Overpass**



**Eastbound Bike Storage Area**