

NEW CANAAN TRAIN STATION

VISUAL INSPECTION REPORT



January 2007



Prepared by the Bureau of Public Transportation
Connecticut Department of Transportation

Overview:

The New Canaan Train Station is a beautifully restored facility located in the center of New Canaan. It sits at the end of the New Canaan Branch, seven miles from Stamford. Access is difficult for someone unfamiliar with the downtown area. Trailblazing signage is not obvious. Finding a parking space in one of the many area lots is equally demanding at this busy station.

The station has a new high-level platform with a full-length canopy, much of which is the original wood. The station building was completely rehabilitated about 10 years ago. It was literally moved several yards to permit the reconstruction of the foundation, and raising the floor to the new high-level platform elevation.

Most of the recommended amenities were included in this station’s reconstruction. A taxi starter’s office was also rehabilitated at the south end of the platform in a similar style as the station building.

This is a nice station, historic yet accommodating to today’s commuter. The high volume of ridership testifies to the station’s functionality and the reliability of service along the short electrified New Canaan Branch.



Maintenance Responsibilities:

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



HABS Historic Photo of the New Canaan Canopy

Station Layout:



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

- █ Station Building
- █ State-Owned Parking Area
- █ Municipality-Owned Parking Area
- █ Privately-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, the report includes general observations concerning the condition of the paths, vegetation, lighting, signage and stairways along the paths.
- **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 19th 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 – August 25, 2006:

Highway Access – The New Canaan Train Station is relatively easy to find from the Merritt Parkway. However, to accommodate the occasional day-tripper, a few trailblazing signs should be added to the several state highways that pass within blocks of the facility.

Parking – As noted on the location map, parking lots are spread throughout the downtown area. They are needed to accommodate the high volume of passengers departing from this terminal.

Platforms – The high-level platforms are in good condition. Stairs, railing and tactile warning strips look new. ADA access is convenient from the parking area, which is level with the platform.

Canopy – The old wood canopy was restored about 10 years ago from just above ground level to the top of the rafters. The canopy is in good condition except at the east end where there is roof damage apparently caused by a bus or truck. Lighting levels and fixtures are reportedly adequate and in good shape. There is evidence of a nest or two in the canopy rafters and fixtures.

Walks/Paths – Being located in the center of town, the New Canaan Train Station is accessible by town sidewalks and through the front parking lot. All paths around the station appear to be well maintained and in good condition.

Ticket Vending Machine (TVM) – There are two TVM's on the platform.

Shelter – There is no shelter nor is one required with a convenient, platform-level station waiting room.

Station Building – The station building was restored inside and out about 10 years ago. Its foundation was replaced and the elevation of the floor was raised to the level of the new platform. A quick inspection of the facility confirmed that it is still in good condition.

Bus Access and Taxi Stand – A taxi stand has been established in front of the station. Buses can maneuver through the main entrance or are easily accessible from nearby streets.

Signage – Signage in and around the station is adequate, although a review of the sign placement and content should be performed as part of a future project.

Fences – All chain link fences appear to have a black coating and are in good condition. The east end of the station has a wooden stockade fence that is freshly painted and neatly landscaped.

Litter – The station is clean with one major exception. The stub end of the track is littered with trash at track level.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Access – The New Canaan Train Station is an ADA accessible key station. While it is likely that some minor non-compliant issues have arisen since the reconstruction of the station, the station is easily accessible to most disabled patrons. ADA compliant variable message signs were recently installed.

Amenities (See Appendix A Photos)

- Kiosk: None
- Exterior Paint Theme: Yellow and brown
- Vending: Newspaper boxes have been neatly gathered in color-coordinated lean-tos on the back of the platform. A soda machine has been placed off the platform on the side of the station building.
- Benches: Themed benches can be found on the platform in front of the station building and in the waiting room.
- Railings: Black railing is used at the ends of the platforms.
- Light Fixtures: Light fixtures are appropriately themed and in good condition according to the Governance Study.
- Trash: Green PVC trash containers are located along the platform as well as two blue recycling bins.
- Bicycle Rack: A bike rack is conveniently located next to the station building.
- Platform Clock: ADA compliant variable message signs provide time and date information between messages.

General Remarks – New Canaan has a very nice station. It is well maintained and it retains most of its historic attributes.

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 to local state highways.
- Clean track level trash at bumper.
- Address bird droppings and canopy nests, if warranted.
- Assure trash containers remain closed and locked.
- Clearly note the location of daily parking spaces.
- Fix canopy roof damage. If caused by a vehicle, takes steps to prevent a repeat of the collision.

Amenity Upgrades:

- Add a kiosk.
- Add a station sign at the main entrance.
- Consider replacing PVC trash containers with black containers.

Governance Improvements:

- Upgrade general ADA code issues around the station.
- Place raised sidewalk and fence between the parking lot and tracks to the Grove Street walk (west end of platform).
- Place raised walk behind platform at north (east) end to protect canopy.
- Replace bituminous walk to Grove Street with concrete.

Major Capital Improvements:

- None noted at this time

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



Inside the New Canaan Station



**Taxi Starter Shack at New Canaan Station
Waiting Room**

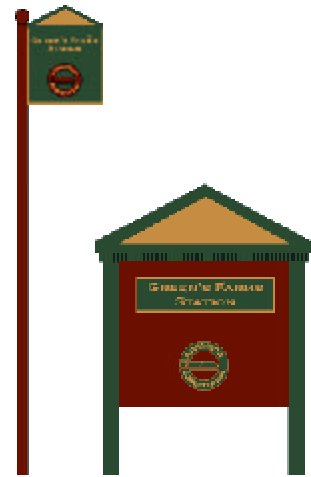
APPENDIX A



Trailblazing Sign



Kiosk (Historic Theme)



Station Signs



Bench (Contemporary) and Railing



Trash Can (Black Preferred)



Vending Neatly Placed in Shelters



Path to Parking Lot at South End of Platform