

WATERBURY TRAIN STATION VISUAL INSPECTION REPORT



January 2007



Prepared by the Bureau of Public Transportation
Connecticut Department of Transportation

Overview:

The Waterbury Train Station is located near the city's central business district. Adjacent to the facility is the old Union Station, now owned and occupied by the Waterbury Republican newspaper. Its 245-foot bell tower provides a landmark for locating the station. Using local roads to access the facility is not as easy due to a lack of trailblazing. Upon arriving at the station, one may have trouble locating the parking lot entrance, which is located several hundred feet south. A station sign has been placed at the entrance. The drive is partially obscured by a bank building and its poorly situated exit, which is only several feet from the parking lot driveway.



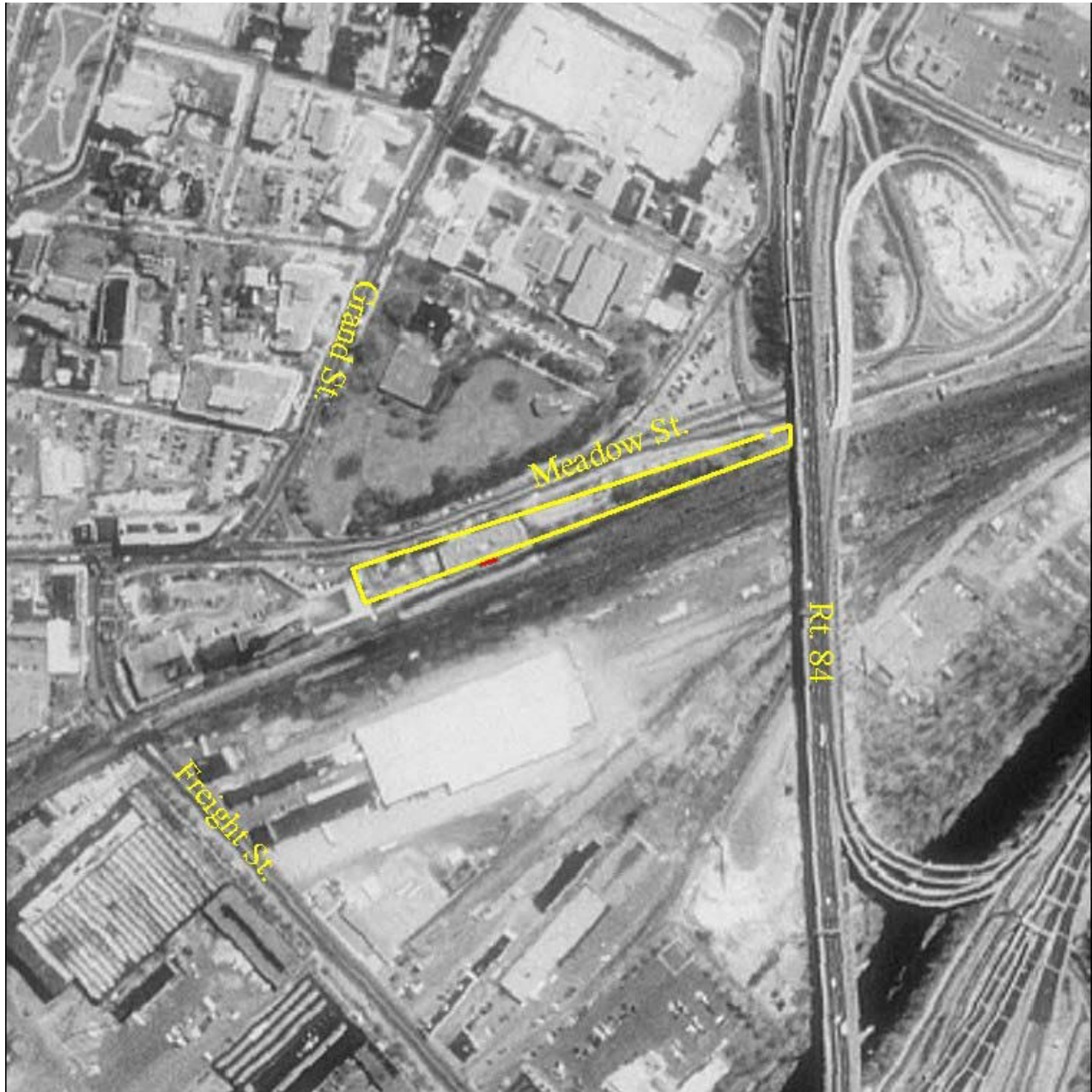
The station itself consists of a short high-level platform, a ramp, two shelters and a parking lot. The station area is clean with only an occasional tossed item. However, the area across from the platform consists of abandoned tracks and railroad debris. The shelters are clean with benches. A recycling bin is located next to the shelters.

Between the station and Meadow Street are an abandoned parking structure and vacant office building. The old driveway behind the platform is barricaded against use by commuters. A kiosk is situated at the north end of the platform.

Maintenance Responsibilities:

Owner:	CDOT
Operator:	CDOT
Platform Lights:	Metro-North
Trash:	Metro-North
Snow Removal:	Metro-North
Shelter Glazing:	CDOT
Platform Canopy:	CDOT
Platform Structure:	CDOT
Parking:	City

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, 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 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 8, 2006:

Highway Access – Access to the station is relatively simple from nearby exits off I-84 and Route 8. However, a few more trailblazing signs would assist the occasional rail patron.

Parking – The parking lot is located several hundred feet from the station platform. Immediately adjacent to the lot entrance is the exit from a Webster Bank branch building. The proximity of these two driveways can lead to conflicting vehicular movements and driver expectations. The lot itself is long (750+ feet) with a single row of cars for the most part, extending south of the station platform. Although there appear to be sufficient light fixtures, lighting levels in the parking lot need to be further evaluated. There was no discernable line striping. If parking expansion is ever desired, consider shifting track to the west.

Platforms – The 120-foot (1½ car) platform is structurally sound. Its length is adequate for the current ridership of 300± passengers, but it should be lengthened if demand increases over the next few years. The foundations, joints, stairs and ramp are all in good condition. The platform surface shows only a little spall. Platform lighting is sufficient. The tactile warning strip is slightly discolored but functional. The wood rub rail at the edge of the platform is splintering. The wood needs a coat of sealant, primer and yellow paint.

Canopy – The full-length platform canopy is good condition. A cover is missing from one of the 120-volt power receptacles.

Walks/Paths – Pedestrians can access the station through the parking lot or along a sidewalk from Meadow Street under a canopy projecting out from the building owned by the Republican. The railroad (CDOT and B&M) retains an easement to use this walkway. The walk is maintained by Metro-North personnel. Responsibility for maintaining the canopy appears to fall on the Building owner. Upon confirming this, it is recommended that some assurance be provided by the owner that the structure is indeed being inspected and maintained. Except for concrete under the canopy, all walking surfaces are bituminous. Concrete or tile/stone should be considered to better define desired pathways. Tearing up and landscaping the bituminous area behind the platform should be considered. As of now, the only vegetation found is eight planters, some trees along the Meadow Street, and the weeds in the rail yard.

Ticket Vending Machine (TVM) – There is no TVM at this station.

Shelter – There are two plexiglas-type structures at Waterbury Station. Each has a standard aluminum bench. The shelter is in good condition with no scratches.

Station Building – There is no station building at Waterbury. The old Union Station is owned by the local newspaper. As part of the original conveyance, certain rights were retained by the railroad to operate waiting and baggage rooms within the building. Most of these rights have since been relinquished to the owner.

Bus Access & Taxi Stand – Meadow Street is about 100 feet from the platform. Bus and taxi access is readily available.

Signage – The only signs at Waterbury are two partially obscure station name signs, a parking entrance sign, a memorial to a fallen CDOT employee and a kiosk. A train schedule is posted in one of the shelters. It is recommended that the need for additional signage on the station property be evaluated during the next phase of station improvements.

Fences – A highway guide rail and chain link fence separate the parking lot from the tracks. Although weathered, the fence is in good condition. The guide rail is dented but functional. The north end also has a weathered fence and dented guide rail in good condition. This fence combination only extends about 70 feet. Beyond that point, there is no protection of the railroad even though the old grade level platform extends north another 100 yards or so.

Litter – Aside from an occasional food wrapper or soda can, there was relatively little trash in the station area. The rail yard opposite the platform is dotted with deteriorated ties, weeds and rail debris.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Access – Waterbury has been designated as a key station for ADA access. A ramp provides access to the high-level platform. The bituminous approach is level and in good condition. No ADA parking spaces were evident due to the near complete fading of the lines. There are no signs, hence no Braille. A variable message sign will be installed at Waterbury to provide a visual backup to audio announcements.

Amenities (See Appendix A Photos)

- Kiosk: Waterbury has the only kiosk that was recommended by the Department's Amenities Committee. It is being used to convey bus and other transit information.
- Exterior Paint Theme: There appears to be an attempt to match the color of the kiosk with the canopy. Both colors are rather dull. Brightening the color scheme might distract from the bleakness of the blacktop, abandoned structures and vacant rail yard.
- Vending: There is no vending at this location.
- Benches: There is an aluminum bench located in each of the two shelters. Another bench sits on the platform.
- Railings: All the platform guide railings are unpainted steel, all in good shape.
- Light Fixtures: Canopy light fixtures are high-pressure sodium. Several spots cover the bituminous areas, while light poles illuminate the parking lot. The old Union Station bell tower is illuminated by spotlights.
- Trash: There are two blue recycling bins on the platform, which are incidentally partially blocking the station name signs.
- Bicycle Rack: There is no bike rack at the Waterbury Train Station, nor was there any evidence of bicycle use during the day of this site visit.
- Platform Clock: There is no clock on or around the platform area. The old Union Station (Republican) bell tower has a clock face on all four sides, but the time was indicating 10:24 at 4:30 p.m.

General Remarks – The platform is separated from Meadow Street by an abandoned parking structure and vacant office building, which are owned by the Department. The parking structure is severely deteriorated. It should be demolished. This would open the area directly behind the platform. The Department needs to lease the building or demolish it. This could provide additional parking closer to the platforms and allow for a construction of the safer entrance.

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:

- Continue good housekeeping.
- Monitor and repair minor spall on platform surface.
- Replace covers on platform 120-volt power receptacles.
- Move blue recycling bins blocking the station name signs on the platform.
- Seal, prime and repaint the wood rub rail at the edge of the platform.

Amenity Upgrades:

- Install station entrance sign at Meadow Street pedestrian access.
- Repaint kiosk and canopy to brighter common color scheme. Consider CT commuter contemporary colors scheme (black, red and white).
- If vending machines are to be located in Waterbury, place them off the platform and principal pathways. Consider a sheltered area for vending machines and newspapers.
- Replace the flat aluminum benches with black contoured benches.
- Paint or replace metal platform, stair and ramp guide railing black.

- Consider adding post mounted lights along the Meadow Street entrance and any defined walks behind the platform.
- Add several black trash cans to platforms. Remove one of the recycling bins, unless two are justified.
- Add a bike rack behind the platform.
- Add a station clock, possibly in the kiosk.
- Investigate repair of Waterbury Republican bell tower clock.
- Variable message signs will soon be installed at this location.

Governance Improvements:

- Remove the bituminous pavement and concrete planters behind the platform in favor of a landscaped area.
- Provide defined concrete or tile/stone walks from the ends of the platform to the parking area and toward the walk to Meadow Street.
- Remove the highway guide rail north of the platform and replace the fence with either a black chain link fence or black rail. Extend the fencing to the “End of Block” sign, turn 90 degrees to the east, and extend the fencing to the old Union Station fence. Provide gates, if necessary for access to the rail yard and tracks to the north.
- Remove guide rail “island” just north of the kiosk.
- Evaluate the level of illumination in the parking lot and along the Meadow Street pedestrian access.

Major Capital Improvements:

- Provide added amenities as demand increases.
- If warranted, extend the platforms and canopies and add a waiting room type shelter.
- Reconfigure the parking lot entrance to avoid the conflict with the bank ATM exit.
- Remove or replace deteriorate parking structure opposite the platform.
- Find an occupant for the vacant building (333 Meadow St) or demolish it.

-- END OF NARRATIVE --

APPENDIX A

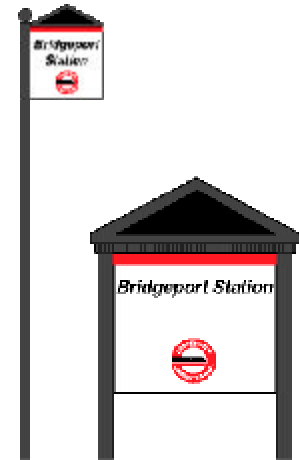
Examples of Amenities



Pole Mounted Lights



Kiosk (Contemporary)



Signs (Contemporary)



Bench (Contemporary) and Railing



Vending Shelter



Trash Can (Black preferred)



Bike Rack



Fence, Walk and Post Mounted Light Next to Track



Replace Fence, remove highway guide rail, return fencing to building fence, provide gate



Landscaping?



Typical Trailblazing Sign