

# WESTPORT TRAIN STATION

## VISUAL INSPECTION REPORT



January 2007



Prepared by the Bureau of Public Transportation  
Connecticut Department of Transportation

**Overview:**

Located next to the Saugatuck River, the busy Westport Train Station is a classic mix of old and new. The recently restored westbound station building, located in a small commercial district, still has a ticket window and continues to be used as a waiting room for the morning rush. Just a few yards away is a new contemporary glass and steel structure with a “down and under” pedestrian crossing (new tunnel and elevators). This crossing was constructed to improve ADA access to both platforms. Another old station building sits adjacent to the eastbound platform. It houses a taxi stand. Between the two station buildings is another older tunnel, which is still in use.



The condition of the station depends on where you stand. The area immediately surrounding the new tunnel and elevators has a new canopies, lights, stairs, railings and ramps. Away from this area, paint is peeling, stairs are cracked, weeds grow, railing is bent and other items are weathered and worn. The restored westbound station building looks good. The eastbound taxi stand needs a coat of paint.

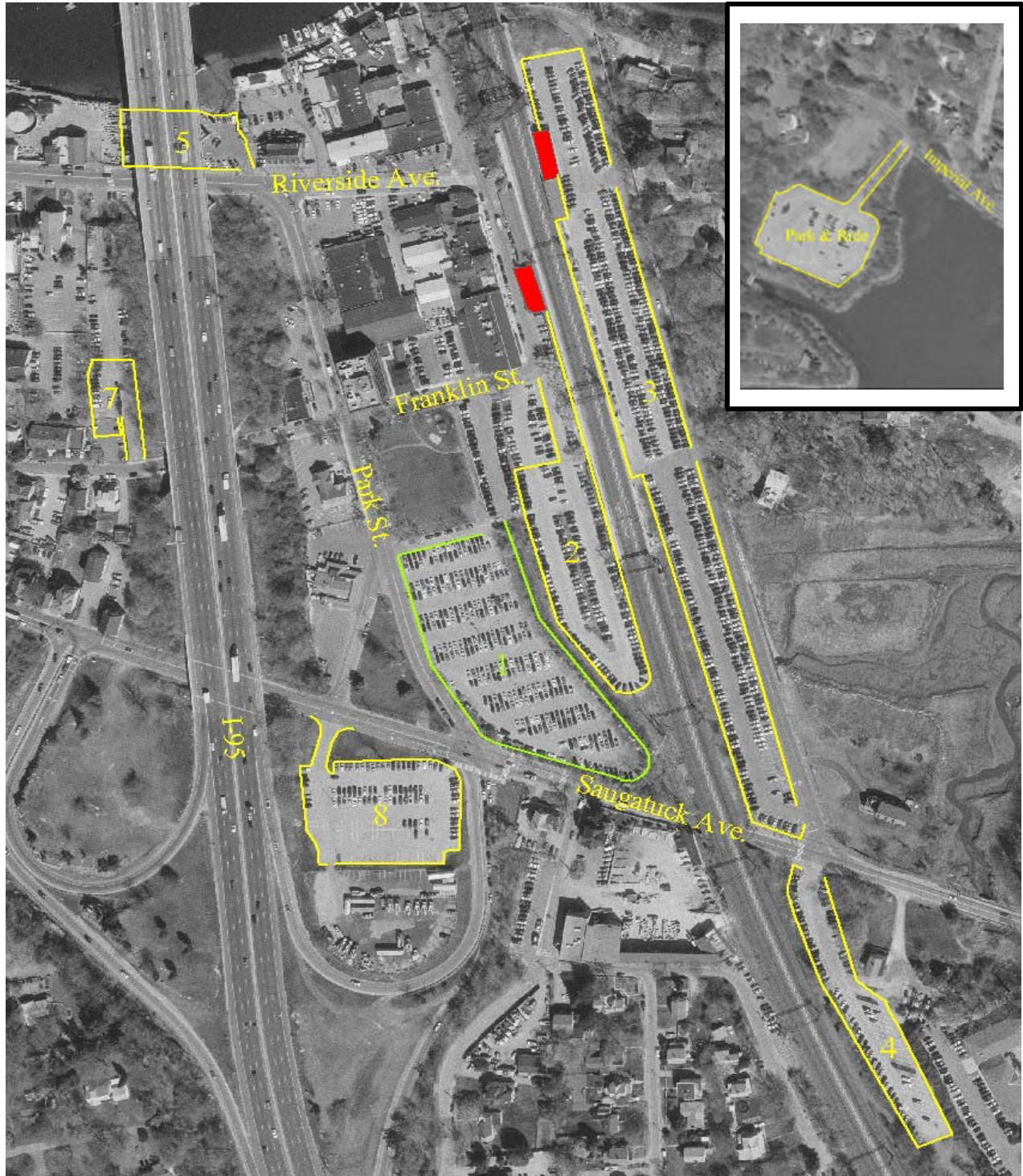
Westport has 1500 parking spaces (or more) spread over the area. Access is convenient from I-95, Exit 17, although being familiar with the area would help in finding a daily fee parking space. Pedestrian paths around the station are minimal. People must pass through the parking lots or along city streets to access the platforms. One exception is the footpath along the Saugatuck River Movable Bridge, which takes pedestrians over the river to the east bank. The proximity of the path to the eastbound tracks has been a long time safety and security concern for the railroad.

**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 Urbitran 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 7, 2006:**

**Highway Access** – The main entrance to Westport Train Station is located directly across from the northbound I-95, Exit 17 exit ramp. At the end of the ramp, one only has to cross Saugatuck Avenue to access the station area. Adding a station entrance sign at this location visible, to those approaching from Saugatuck Avenue, as well as from the off-ramp, would be helpful. In addition, simple directions to the daily fee parking area would help the occasional user. A smaller sign would be appropriate for the Ferry Lane entrance.

**Parking** – Parking is spread over many acres around Westport Station. Paths to and from the lots are few forcing commuters to walk through the parking aisles. Lighting levels need to be evaluated around the many parking lots, especially some of the more remote locations.

**Platforms** – Westport has a 10-car platform. The High Level Platform Visual Inspection report states that the platforms are in good condition. Isolated cracks and spalls do not affect the overall integrity of the beams or platform. Platform foundations and joints range from poor to good condition. Both platforms have a relatively new tactile warning strip with no wooden rub rail.

The condition of the guide railing and sign posts at the back of the platform varies. The new tunnel/elevator area has new aluminum posts and panels, while the remainder of the platform has weathered and bent railing. One sign stanchion is broken on the westbound platform. Several railing posts rest on failing concrete or corroded base plates.

Stairs and ramps are plentiful, but their condition also depends on their location. Away from the new tunnel/elevator, stairs and ramps are crack and deteriorated. One stairway on the south (eastbound) side is closed because of the loss of concrete. Some stair handrails are worn.

Rusted catenary supports rise out of the platform. Aluminum guide rail protects the structures. However, the rust looks terrible. It has discolored everything directly under the catenary support, including the platform and tactile warning strips.

Lighting levels along the platforms meet IESNA minimum standards. Some light post bases are corroded.

Benches, sign boards, trash cans, handrails, and light poles, conduit and bases either lack electrical grounding or are rotted enough to prevent proper grounding.

**Canopy** – Westport has five canopies. Two are new; three are older. The new canopies adjacent to the new tunnel are in good condition. The older canopies have peeling paint and missing gutter sections. Connections (electrical and non-electrical) are weathered.

**Walks/Paths** – As noted, there are few designated paths around this station. Pedestrians use parking aisles or street sidewalks to get to the platforms. Surfaces are either bituminous or concrete ranging from fair to good. The path to the Saugatuck River crossings is awkward at best. The base of one of the high towers and associated electrical boxes encroach on the path, reducing it to about two feet in width. The surface is uneven with tripping hazards right up to the 90-degree bend onto the steel grated pedestrian bridge.

**Ticket Vending Machine (TVM)** – There are TVM’s on both platforms.

**Shelter** – The eastbound shelter is deteriorated with broken glazing and rusted, corroded joints.

**Station Building** – The westbound station building has been recently renovated. The waiting room, ticket windows, rest rooms and seats are in good condition. The eastbound station building houses a taxi stand office. This building needs several coats of paint.

**Bus Access & Taxi Stand** – Taxis are readily available with a taxi stand located in the old eastbound station building. Buses have access to the area via local streets.

**ADA compliant Variable Message Signs (VMS)** – Variable message signs will be installed at this station under an existing Department project.

**Signage** – Platform signage is good, although a more detailed review should be made to assure compliance for signs located away from the new tunnel and elevators. Since the station sits in a busy commercial area, signage directing commuters to and from the platforms may get lost in the clutter. On the path to the river crossing, there is a sign meant for railroad workers. It states, “Mandatory Flotation Devices Required While On Bridge”. This could be confusing.

**Fences** – Chain link fence protects the railroad at both ends of each platform. The fence along the path to the river crossing is rusted and deformed. The adjacent wooden fence is slightly overgrown by vegetation and non-conforming.

**Litter** – The station is generally clean looking. One exception was the bagged trash under the stairs next to the taxi stand.

#### **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Access:**

Westport has been identified as a “key” station, which means that the facility needs to provide code level ADA access from parking to boarding the train. While the recent construction of the tunnel, elevators and the installation of variable message signs have improved the level of accessibility, several non-compliant issues still remain and need to be addressed.

#### **Amenities** (See Appendix A Photos)

- **Kiosk:** Westport is a high volume station with two tunnels and many ramps/stairs. There are many entry/exit points. At a minimum, there should be a kiosk on each side of the tracks.
- **Exterior Paint Theme:** The new tunnel/elevator structure has a gold (yellow) and glass theme. The more historic areas are either beige or yellow. Some thought should be given to providing a paint scheme that melds the contemporary with the historic.
- **Vending:** Anchor bolts and electrical connections remain where vending machines have been removed. In addition, vending machines and newspaper boxes currently sit on the platform. These should be relocated off the main platform. One suggestion is to utilize a portion of the walk behind the current vending by either extending the platform or utilizing the gravel area behind the walk.
- **Benches:** Typical aluminum benches are located throughout the platform. The waiting room has historic themed benches.



- **Railings:** Standard aluminum is used along the platforms, ramps and stairs. Its condition ranges from bent and weathered to brand new. The only variation is the aluminum railing on the new westbound ramp that has been painted brown.
- **Light Fixtures:** Lighting in, under, and around the new tunnel and elevators is new and adequate. The remainder of the station utilizes box type post mounted and under canopy fixtures. These fixtures are found at many stations.
- **Trash Cans:** Blue recycling bins are located along the platforms.
- **Bicycle Rack:** Commuters use various railings and posts to lock up their bikes. One unique location with many bikes was a wooden platform built over the eastbound side of the old tunnel.
- **Platform Clock:** The platform has several “Bud Light” clocks suspended from the canopy.

**General Remarks** – As noted throughout the observations, there is a stark difference between the new “down and under” structure and the remainder of the station. There is also a difference between the south (eastbound) and north (westbound) side of the tracks. The westbound platform lies adjacent to a commercial area. This side of the station has new walks, some landscaping, fencing under the platforms, and a newly renovated station building. The eastbound side has bituminous, concrete, broken stairs and a building needing a good coat of paint. At least the canopies on both sides of the tracks need painting.

### **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:**

- Paint the canopy, replace missing gutters.
- Clean trash from under stairs and behind platforms.
- Fix concrete and railing on older ramps and stairs.
- Properly ground all metal fixtures on and adjacent to the platforms (coordinate with Metro-North). These include handrails, guide railing, benches, sign boards, and trash cans. Monitor and address corrosion of galvanized fittings under light poles, conduit and light pole bases.
- Replace burnt out light bulbs.
- Remove tripping hazards from the platform surface such as old pole bases, unused anchor bolts, and abandoned electrical connections.
- Repair cracked walks and pathways.
- Better define the pathway to the river crossing.
- Repair broken light stanchion on westbound platform.
- Repair bent and broken guide railing.
- Repair or replace glazing panels in the eastbound shelter. Fix rusted or corroded joints.

**Amenity Upgrades:**

- Add station entrance sign at I-95 northbound exit visible from both the exit and along Saugatuck Avenue.
- Add smaller station sign at Ferry Lane entrance.
- Replace all benches with the more compliant contoured seats.
- Add a kiosk to each side of the station. If the old tunnel is to remain open, add kiosk near these entrances.
- Add themed trash cans to station area.
- Place a bike rack at some designated area.
- Replace clock with more traditional timepiece.
- Variable message signs will be added in the near future.
- Place vending machines and newspapers in an area off the main platform and principal pathways. This could involve an extension behind the platform or an area along side one of the platform entry points.

**Governance Improvements:**

- Paint catenary structures in and behind platforms.
- Replace all aluminum railing with ADA compliant black guide railing.
- Relocate post-mounted station signs to top of new guide railing.
- Replace all older ramps and stairs with compliant structures.
- Replace all older lights along platform. This includes under canopy light fixtures, as well as post-mounted fixtures and pole bases.
- Replace non-compliant signage through station area.
- Repair platform expansion and construction joints.
- Install tactile warning at the bottom of all ramps.
- Replace eastbound shelter.

**Major Capital Improvements:**

- Planned improvements to the Saugatuck River (Saga) Railroad Bridge include the replacement of the pedestrian walkway over the river. Construction to begin in 2009.

**-- END OF NARRATIVE --**

**APPENDIX A**

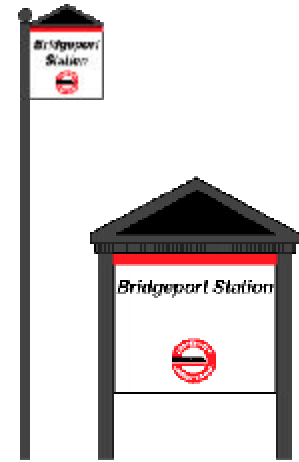
**Examples of Amenities**



**Pole Mounted Lights**



**Kiosk (Historic)**



**Signs (Contemporary)**



**Bench (Contemporary) and Railing**



**Vending Shelter**



**Trash Can (Black preferred)**



**Bike Rack**



**Typical Trailblazing Sign**



**West Redding Shelter**



**Ramp Corrosion and Spall**



**River Crossing Walk**