

ANSONIA TRAIN STATION

VISUAL INSPECTION REPORT



January 2007



Prepared by the Bureau of Public Transportation
Connecticut Department of Transportation

Overview:

The Ansonia Train Station is a small rail stop located on West Main Street in downtown Ansonia, one block from Main Street (Route 334). Storefronts line the street opposite the station. Across the track is the Naugatuck River floodwall and floodgate, which are pleasantly clear of graffiti. Between the wall and the tracks is an abandoned roadway with an old wooden post guide rail. Weeds have overtaken the old pavement.

The platform area consists of a wooden box and an old wooden canopy on bituminous pavement. A Plexiglas glass shelter sits nearby on a concrete pad. Shrubs obscure the shelter from the street. Several large trees shade the adjacent street. Paths to and from the station use city sidewalks and are illuminated by streetlights.



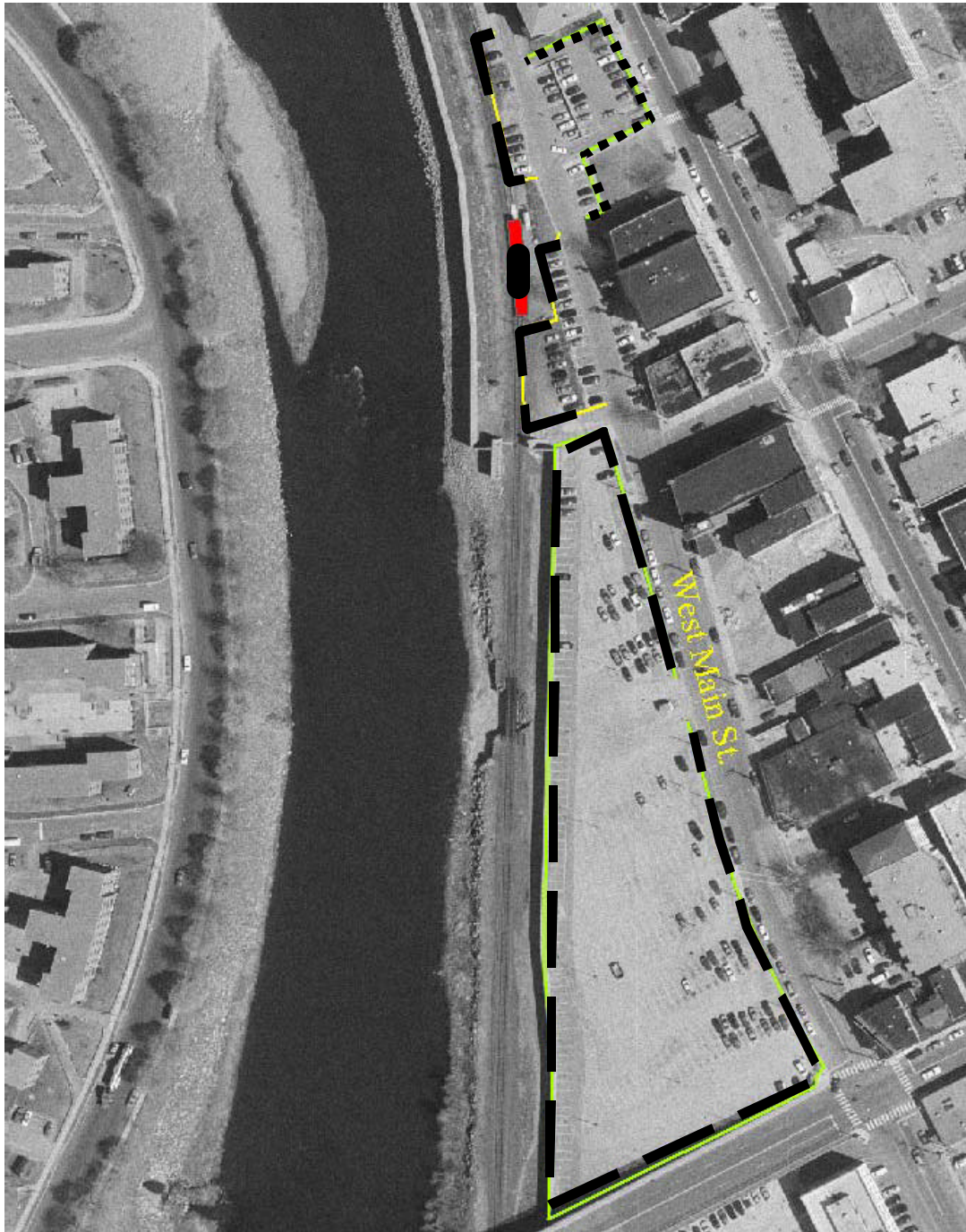
This is small station whose ridership is less than 100 commuters per weekday. Weekend numbers may equal or exceed the average weekday ridership.

While only a minor facelift to the canopy and immediate area will make this a more attractive rail stop, ridership numbers will likely not increase until commuter service is perceived to be more reliable.

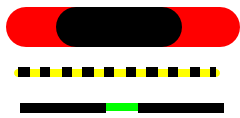
Maintenance Responsibilities:

Owner:	CDOT
Operator:	CDOT
Platform Lights:	Metro-North Power Department
Trash:	Metro-North Operations Services (Stations)
Snow Removal:	Metro-North Track Department
Shelter Glazing:	CDOT
Platform Canopy:	CDOT
Platform Structure:	CDOT
Parking:	Municipality

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 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 – Although located just behind Main Street, the Ansonia Train Station may not be conspicuous to visitors to the town. Trailblazing signs at key locations are needed to guide motorists to the station and parking areas. It is recommended that a more appropriate station entrance sign be placed at the corner of Railroad Avenue & Main Street. A small entrance sign should be placed at the corner of Bridge Street & West Main Street. There are no reverse trailblazing signs guiding motorists back to the highway.

Parking – A parking information sign should be placed at the main lot entrance to clarify the parking arrangements for this particular station. This sign should note the location of free, monthly or fee based daily parking areas and applicable.

Tree limbs obscure some light fixtures. Post mounted lights placed around parking lots and along pathways would provide the required illumination without a need to excessively trim the foliage or remove trees.



Ansonia Station Parking Area

South of the canopy is a small, poorly defined parking area (above). Due to its odd shape, only nine cars can squeeze into the lot. This area should be reconfigured or eliminated. The reconfigured lot might accommodate several van accessible handicap spaces. If eliminated, the Department should consider landscaping the area. The unsightly highway guide rail should be removed. Consider a raised walk and black steel fencing along the tracks.

Platforms – There are no high-level platforms at this station. Commuters board trains using a wooden box (right) with an uneven surface. The surface under the box and adjacent canopy is bituminous pavement. Unsightly cracks and uneven surfaces make this a poor choice for a boarding area. It is recommended that the blacktop be replaced with concrete or paver blocks.

There are no plans to install high-level platforms at the Ansonia Train Station at this time. The costs would be excessive considering present ridership. However, the Department has initiated a separate study of the Waterbury and New Canaan Branch Lines to examine the future viability of each. Upon completion of this report, the Department will consider high-level access and other station options.

Canopy – The Ansonia Train Station has a classic wooden canopy (right), which is the focal point of the station. The structure's wood surfaces need to be scraped and repainted. Rain gutters should be regularly



Wooden Low-Level Platform

maintained. Illumination levels under the canopy need to be evaluated and fixtures replace, if necessary. It is recommended that canopy electrical wires be placed underground, possibly when the bituminous pavement is replaced.

Walks/Paths – The Ansonia Train Station is located on West Main Street in downtown Ansonia. Several sidewalks and paths provide primary pedestrian access to the station. Streetlights provide lighting for paths except where shaded by tree limbs. As noted above, the Department and municipality should consider placing post mounted light fixtures along the path from Main Street and other station walkways.

Ticket Vending Machine – There are no TVM's at this station.

Shelter – There is a small Plexiglas shelter located just north of the canopy. The shelter is in good shape.

Station Building – There is no station building at this location.

Taxi Stands and Bus Stops – It is likely that local buses provide regular service through this area. However, bus stops were not observed at the station. Both taxis and shuttle vans can easily access the station area.

Signage – The need for parking and trailblazing signage is noted under the Highway Access and Parking headings above. Once at this small station, the commuter is not likely to get lost. However, a kiosk would provide an opportunity for the city to display local information as well as train schedule and bus schedules.

Fences – The small parking lot just south of the canopy has weathered, dented and unsightly highway guide rail. It should be removed. Black steel railing and a raised concrete sidewalk are recommended along the track.

Litter – This is a very clean station. On the day of the site visit, trash was limited to that found in the brush on the floodwall side of the tracks. As noted in the picture to the right, the floodwall was free of graffiti. A standard blue recycling bin is located next to the shelter. Although not specifically observed, it is likely that trash cans have been placed along West Main Street. The floodwall across the tracks remains relatively free of graffiti. The Department and municipality should consider planting trees and shrubs in front of the wall, provided there is adequate width to perform normal wall maintenance activities.



Ansonia Station Floodwall

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Access: Commuters must climb aboard trains using the wooden platform box. Access for the disabled is difficult. Patrons should be informed of the location of the nearest accessible station. A kiosk can provide this information.

Amenities (See Appendix A Photos)

- Kiosk: As noted above, a kiosk can be used to pass along local information to rail users.
- Exterior Paint Theme: The canopy should be repainted. White paint will maintain the current classic look.
- Vending: There is only one newspaper box in the platform area, chained to the parking lot highway guide rail. Additional boxes and vending machines can be placed weather protected vending shelter installed away from the platform area.
- Benches: There are no benches at the Ansonia Station.
- Railings: Highway guide rail is used to separate areas of the station.
- Light Fixtures: Illumination is provided by under canopy lights and streetlights.
- Trash: One blue recycling bin next to the shelter.
- Bicycle Rack: There was is no evidence of bike use at this station.
- Platform Clock: None.

General Remarks – As noted earlier, this is a quaint train stop located in downtown Ansonia. Due to limited ridership, there is no immediate need to upgrade to the level of the busier Milford Train Station. In fact, such improvements might degrade the overall appearance of the station. Instead, the less intrusive recommendations listed below will likely attract more users and improve the appearance of this classic whistle stop.

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:

- Redeck or seal/repaint the wooden platform.
- Repair uneven joint between the platform sections.
- Paint the canopy, check gutters.
- Provide signage to any nearby bus stops.

Amenity Upgrades:

- Add trailblazing signage from Routes 8 and 34.
- Add return trailblazing signage back to Routes 8 and 34.
- Add station entrance signs at both ends of West Main Street.
- Install a parking information sign for nearby lots.
- Add a bench in the shelter and one under the canopy.
- Add an information kiosk.
- Add a trash can to station area.
- Add a bike rack, if warranted.
- Add a pedestal clock near the platform or include a clock with the recommended kiosk.

Station Governance:

- Reconfigure or eliminate the parking area just south of the canopy.
- Remove parking lot guide rail and replace with station railing, if warranted.
- Add raised sidewalk and railing along the track.
- Repair or replace the low-level boarding platform.
- Replace bituminous pavement in platform area with concrete or paver blocks.
- Add post mounted lights along the path from Main Street and around the station area.
- Place the aerial wires to the canopy underground.
- Add a vending shelter if vendors plan to place additional equipment at this facility.
- Place low maintenance trees and shrubs on the other side of the tracks. Coordinate with the Army Corps of Engineers

Major Capital Improvements:

- No major capital improvements have been identified at this time. Upon completion of the current New Canaan Branch and Waterbury Branch Needs and Feasibility Study, additional improvements may be recommended.

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

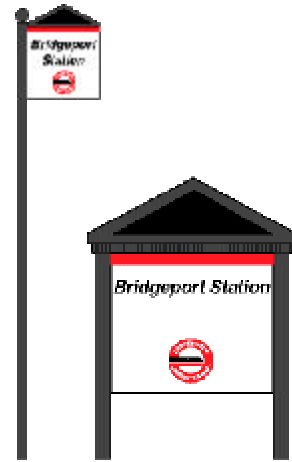
APPENDIX A



Pole Mounted Lights



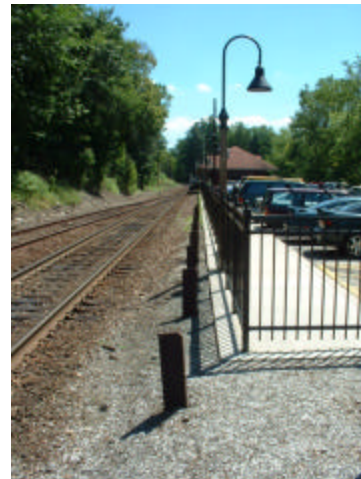
Kiosk (Historic)



Signs (Contemporary)



Bench (Contemporary) and Railing



Fence, Walk and Post Mounted Light Next to Track



Trash Can (Black preferred)



Bike Rack