

# BRIDGEPORT TRANSPORTATION CENTER

## VISUAL INSPECTION REPORT



January 2007



Prepared by the Bureau of Public Transportation  
Connecticut Department of Transportation

**Overview:**

The Bridgeport Transportation Center lies along the Pequonnock River in the City’s central business district. The present day station serving the center was constructed in the early 1970’s. It replaced the original 1903 building that was destroyed by fire several years earlier. This station is unique in that it was constructed over Water Street with an under-track tunnel connected to the eastbound lobby.



The station is easily reached by auto from the nearby highway, with bus and ferry service also available. There are some trailblazing roadway signs, but they are lost among the myriad of street and advertisement signs.

There are many improvements underway around the Bridgeport Train Station. A new bus terminal, just north of the train station, is presently under construction. The existing parking garage located to the south will soon be expanded. The City is constructing pedestrian bridges to connect these facilities with the train station. In addition, the City is conceptualizing an all-encompassing transportation center at the same location. Plans are being developed with construction expected to commence several years from now. A long-range view of this area foresees a significant increase in the demand for the railroad and other commuter services. The future development of the vacant land located across the river from the station will certainly support the development of the City’s Transportation Center concept.

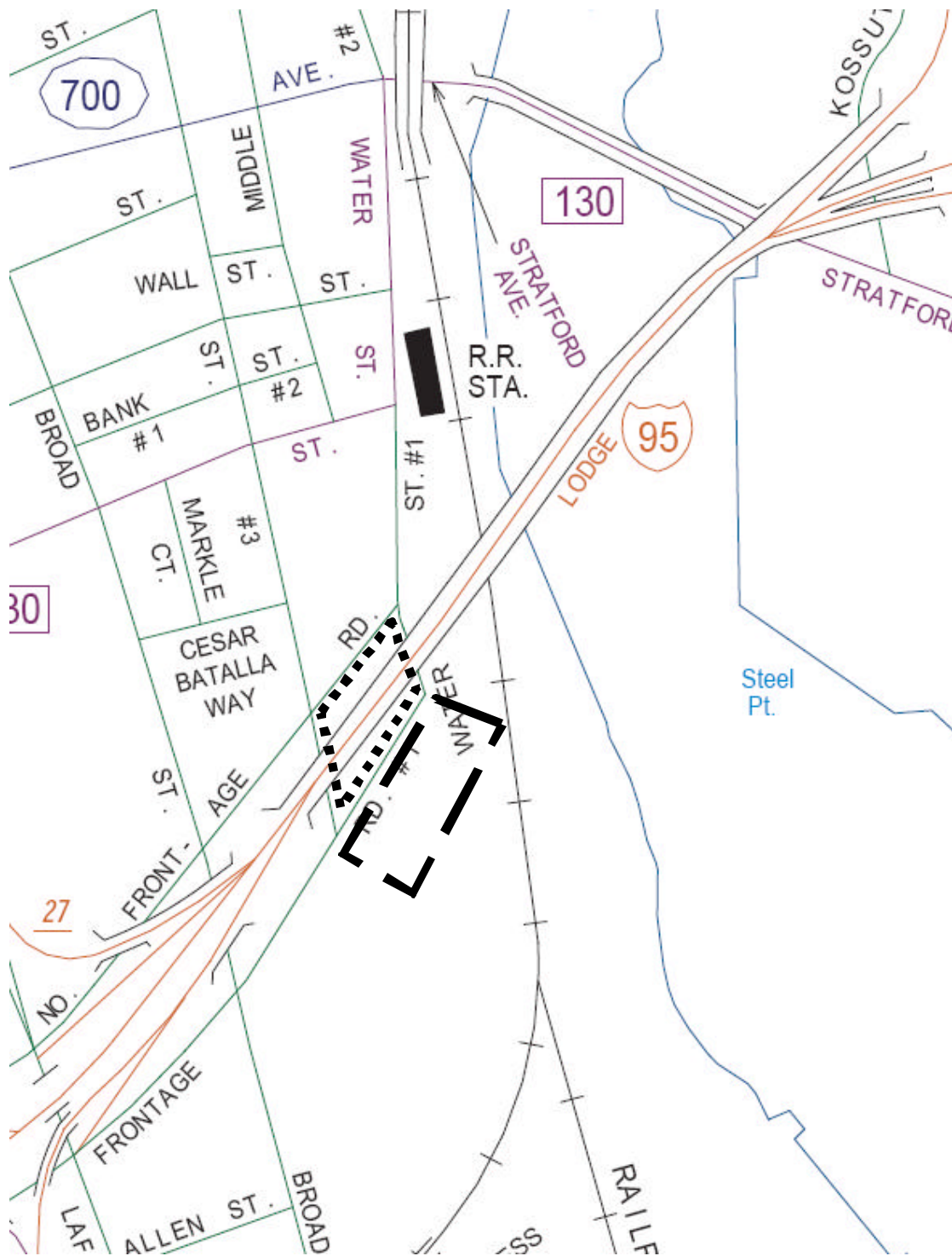
The Department currently leases the Bridgeport Train Station from the City. However, negotiations are underway to purchase the facility and nearby parking garage.




The Department recently prepared a detailed report on the condition of the Bridgeport facility. It will implement the recommendations of this report over the next few years. For this reason, the following station account will be less detailed than the other corresponding visual inspection reports.

**Maintenance Responsibilities:**

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

**Station Layout:**



-  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.

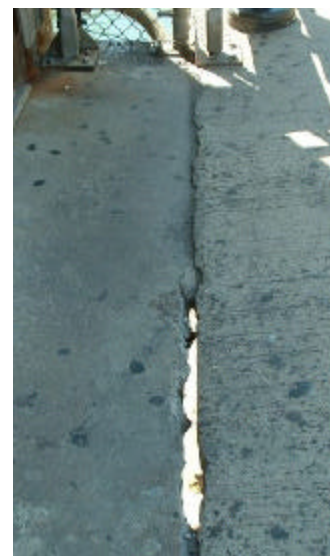
**Observations – September 12, 2006:**

**Highway Access** – The station signing on the interstate highway is adequate. However, the trailblazing signage on the secondary roadways is sporadically placed. Near the station, unfamiliar commuters are easily confused in their effort to locate parking.

**Parking** – Parking at times becomes a problematic issue. The parking garage serving the station is located two blocks south of the train platforms. Besides providing for station patrons, the facility also accommodates vehicles generated by the various events sponsored at the neighboring arena and ballpark. Beginning next year, the city plans to expand the parking garage by two stories. A surface lot to the north recently made way for the construction of a new bus terminal. For these and other traffic-related reasons, the space afforded under the nearby Interstate 95 structure will soon serve as an overflow parking area for the station. Several private garages in the area also provide monthly parking arrangements.

**Platforms** – The platforms are beginning to show their age. The concrete is deteriorating and the expansion joints are failing. Several stairs are cracked and spalled, while the aluminum railings are eroding with some requiring repair. The eastbound platform has a small gap (right) between concrete sections, which poses a safety concern for commuters near the waiting room entrance.

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



**Walks/Paths** – City sidewalks are the principle means of pedestrian access to the station, including the several hundred yards that must be traversed from the garage. Two pedestrian bridges are under construction connecting the train station to the parking garage and the new bus terminal. A wooden fishing pier at the north end of the eastbound platform is the primary path to Stratford Avenue. The old Union Avenue underpass just south of the platforms is used to access the ferry terminal.

**Ticket Vending Machine** – TVM's have been located on both sides of the tracks.

**Shelter** – Shelters have not been provided.

**Station Building** – The platform-level main concourse is located in the station building over Water Street. It offers a coffee shop, ample seating, rest rooms, elevators and ticket offices. The Regional Planning Agency and Metro-North occupy offices on an upper floor. The facility is clean and bright with ample seating and vending machines. A tunnel leads to a sitting room on the eastbound side via stairs and an elevator.

**Taxi Stand and Bus Access** – The current bus terminal is located under the older parking garage adjacent to the station's west entrance. The new bus facility being constructed north of the station will be completed next year. Taxis line up on the southeast side of Water Street, just below the westbound platform.

**Signage** – A traffic sign study is warranted for the area surrounding the train station with emphasis to be given to station trailblazers on secondary routes. Signage on the platforms and paths around the station should also be reviewed.

**Fences** – Most of the chain link fences are worn and rusted.

**Litter** – There was a significant accumulation of litter both in front of and behind the platforms. The station proper was relatively free of debris except in the construction areas to the north and south of the westbound platform.

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Access** – The High Level Platform Visual Inspection Report noted several ADA non-compliant issues on and around the station platforms. However, a recent inspection sponsored by the FTA found that most of the deficiencies had been corrected. Those remaining non-compliance issues will be addressed by the Department's station operator upon the official release of both this report and the FTA inspection notes. Variable message signs are proposed for this location within the next year.

**Amenities** (See Appendix A Photos)

- Kiosk: A kiosk is positioned in the plaza outside of the west concourse entrance.
- Exterior Paint Theme: The facility has an unpainted concrete facade.
- Vending: Soda machines have been placed inside the facility and newspaper boxes are located on the platforms
- Benches: The platforms have aluminum benches. Metal mesh seats are located inside the main concourse.
- Railings: Weathered aluminum railing is used throughout the station.
- Light Fixtures: Light fixtures are aged but functionally adequate.
- Trash: Blue recycling bins and PVC trash cans are adequately supplied.
- Bicycle Rack: A bike rack has been installed at the west concourse entrance.
- Platform Clock: None. There is a clock inside the main concourse.

**General Remarks** – Opinions have been voiced that the Bridgeport Station is visually unappealing due to the extensive use of uncoated concrete. In coordination with the City's transportation center proposals, the Department will take measured steps to upgrade the station's amenities and aesthetics for the convenience and comfort of its railroad passengers.

**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:**

- Remove track level debris from under the platforms and behind the westbound platform.
- Clean and paint the canopy structures.
- Upgrade roadway directional signing to the station parking areas.
- Post information in the concourse concerning construction progress, closures, detours and other disruptions.
- Remedy the hazard posed by the eastbound platform gap.

**Amenity Upgrades:**

- Establish a more colorful paint scheme throughout the station complex.
- Verify the authorization of all newspaper boxes located within the station area. Remove unauthorized vendors.
- Move newspaper boxes from where they impede pedestrian movement.
- Replace all aluminum platform benches with the more comfortable black mesh seats.
- Replace PVC receptacles with steel trash bins.
- Install an analog clock on both platforms.

**Governance Improvements:**

- Refurbish all platform surfaces, foundations, bearings and joints as required.
- Replace all aluminum rail with black railing
- Replace all worn fencing with black chain link fence or railing.
- Upgrade light fixtures as necessary.
- Install ADA compliant variable message signs.
- Upgrade all walkways to the latest ADA standards.
- Address the ADA non-compliance issues noted in the High Level Platform Visual Inspection Report and the FTA Accessibility Review.

**Major Capital Improvements:**

- Complete the construction of the pedestrian bridges to the bus terminal and parking garage.
- Raise the parking garage by two stories.
- Continue with the city's plan to replace the Bridgeport Transportation Center.
- Utilize or eliminate the enclosed walkway at the north end of the eastbound platform.

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



**Eastbound Platform and Waiting Room**

**APPENDIX A**

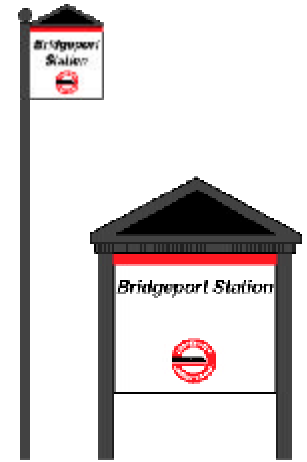
**Examples of Amenities**



**Pole Mounted Lights**



**Kiosk (Historic)**



**Signs (Contemporary)**



**Bench (Contemporary) and Railing**



**Trash Can (Black preferred)**



**Typical Trailblazing Sign**



**Bridgeport Station over Water Street**