

CANNONDALE TRAIN STATION

VISUAL INSPECTION REPORT



January 2007



Prepared by the Bureau of Public Transportation
Connecticut Department of Transportation

Overview:

The Cannondale Train Station is located near Route 7 on Cannon Road in Wilton. A sign at the intersection of Cannon Road and Route 7 indicates the presence of the station, which is located in a quiet rural setting. A cluster of historic office buildings and shops is located across the track from the platform.



The station building houses a coffee shop. The rear of the building is landscaped with tables provided for coffee shop patrons. The building currently has no rest rooms.

However, the Department plans to install public rest rooms in a separate building on the station property within the next year or so.

A high-level platform with stairs and a ramp provides access to rail cars. The platform has a full-length canopy and benches.

Maintenance Responsibilities:

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

Station Layout:



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



Station Building
State-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 16, 2006:

Highway Access – Access from Route 7 is available via Cannon Road. A trailblazing sign has been placed at the intersection. Once on Cannon Road, the station is easy to locate. However, a station sign at the entrance is still recommended.

Parking – Parking is free at Cannondale. The lot is filled on a first come, first served basis. The lot surface is worn with weeds growing in the cracks. Streetlights illuminate the parking area.

Platforms – The high-level platform, stairs and ramp are worn and weathered but structurally sound. The aluminum railing is also weathered. There is no tactile warning strip at the platform edge, and the painted yellow warning stripe has faded away.

Canopy – The full-length canopy is weathered but in satisfactory condition. There are bird droppings on the platform and nests in the light fixtures.

Walks/Paths – The station building at the Cannon Road entrance to the parking lot. Patrons must walk through the lot or behind the building to get to the platform. The area between the building and the tracks has been landscaped. Umbrella tables and chairs are available for coffee shop patrons.

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

Shelter – There is no platform shelter at this location.

Station Building – The old station building is occupied by a coffee and sandwich shop. There are no public waiting areas inside the building. There are no rest rooms at the Cannondale Train Station. The Department plans to install public rest rooms in a separate structure within the next few years.

Taxi Stand and Bus Access – Buses and taxis can maneuver through the parking lot. However, there is no evidence of a regular bus stop at this location.

Signage – The only signs observed at this station were the “Cafe Au Lait” business sign and several station name signs.

Fences – The chain link fence along the track is weathered, but it is functional. A coat of paint or a new fence may be in order.

Litter – The station is clean.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Access – The markings for two ADA parking spaces appear to have faded on the street side of the station building. While a handicap person may have access to the trains, this station cannot be considered ADA compliant.

Amenities (See Appendix A Photos)

- Kiosk: None.
- Exterior Paint Theme: Red.
- Vending: Several free newspaper boxes are located in front of the station.
- Benches: There are several aluminum platform benches, an old weathered bench in front of the building and several small tables and chairs behind and to the side of the building.
- Railings: Weathered aluminum railing on platform, stairs and ramp.
- Light Fixtures: No issues with light fixtures were observed.
- Trash: Two blue recycling bins on the platform.
- Bicycle Rack: None evident.
- Platform Clock: None

General Remarks – This is a classic rural train station.

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:

- Seal bituminous pavement cracks.
- Address bird nesting issue
- Paint or replace chain link fence
- Clean and/or paint canopy surfaces.

Amenity Upgrades:

- Add an information kiosk.
- Add a station entrance sign at Cannon Road entrance.
- If vending machines are to be placed at this station, provide a vending shelter area off the platform and primary paths.
- Replace the aluminum platform benches with black steel benches
- Place several trash cans around the station building.
- Place a bike rack at the station, if warranted
- Add a station clock to the platform or to the kiosk.

Governance Improvements:

- Replace aluminum platform, stair and ramp railing with black steel railing.
- Evaluate illumination levels throughout the station.
- Repave the parking lot.
- If the business is not available as a waiting room, add a shelter for waiting commuters. This can be placed in the landscaped area or extended out behind the platform.

Major Capital Improvements:

- Construct new public rest rooms.

--- END OF NARRATIVE ---

APPENDIX A

Examples of Amenities



Kiosk (Historic Theme)



Signs (Contemporary)



Bench (Contemporary) and Railing



Vending Shelter



Trash Can (Black preferred)



Bike Rack



Typical Trailblazing Sign



Cannondale – Landscaped Area Behind Coffee Shop