

DARIEN TRAIN STATION

VISUAL INSPECTION REPORT



January 2007



Prepared by the Bureau of Public Transportation
Connecticut Department of Transportation

Overview:

The Darien Train Station is located in downtown Darien along the Boston Post Road (Route 1). Access is convenient from Interstate 95. There are about 860 parking spaces available at the Darien Train Station. Lots can be found on either side of the tracks both east and west of the station. Pedestrians must access the station and platforms along a maze of town sidewalks. In addition, many patrons must cross the busy Route 1 to access the station.



The historic station building was rehabilitated five years ago. As part of the project, elevators were installed along with new canopies and amenities. The new elevators have improved Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) access from one platform to the other using the Boston Post Road underpass.

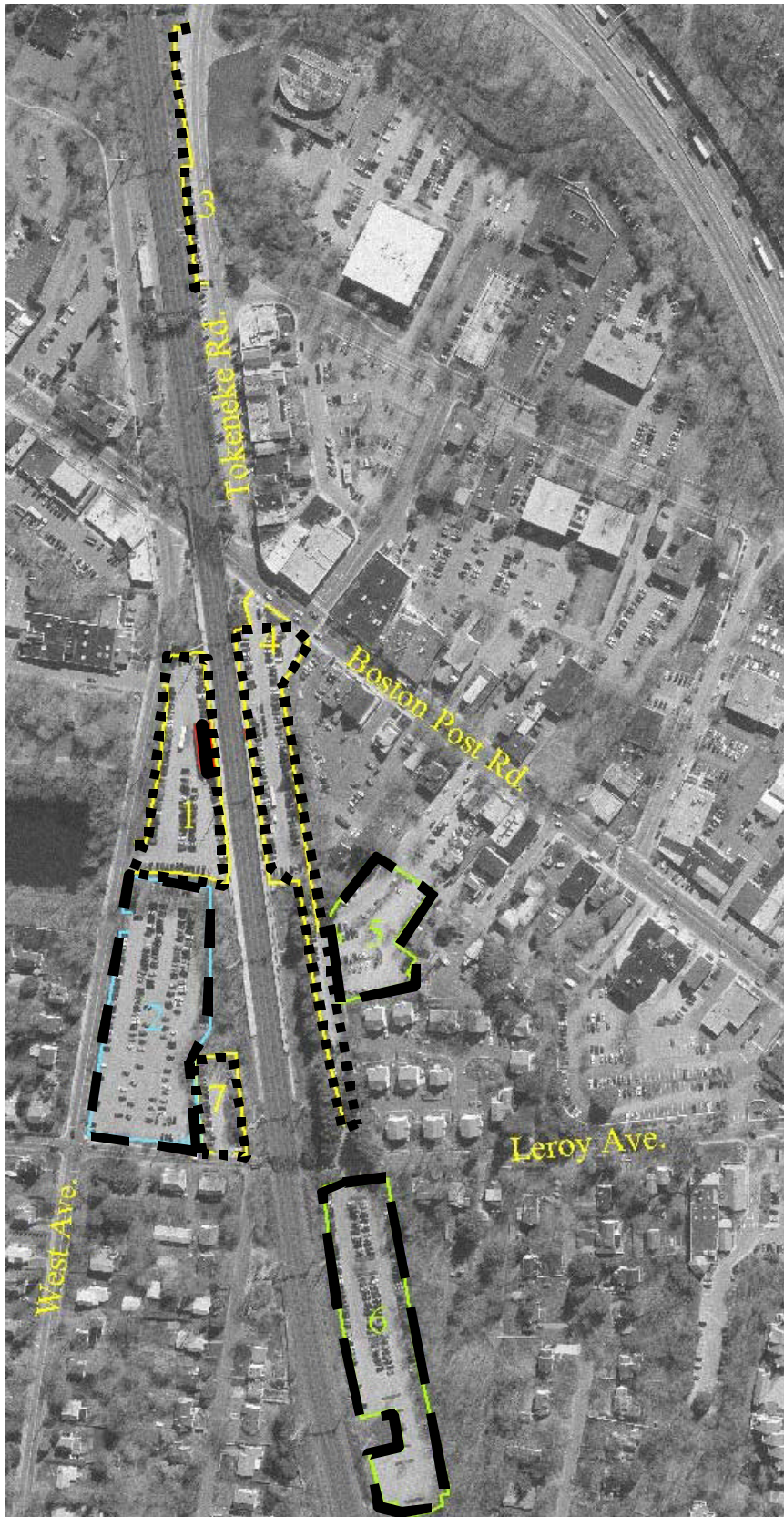
In general, the station is in good condition with one major exception. Illumination installed under the rehabilitation contract is substandard. The Department has reached an agreement with the manufacturer of the lights to replace the fixtures. This work should be completed by November 2006.

The Department currently has a major rail project underway. It includes replacing the catenary through the station and replacing the Boston Post Road railroad bridge one track at a time. This will disrupt normal train operations and vehicular access for several more years.


Maintenance Responsibilities:

Owner:	CDOT
Operator:	Town
Platform Lights:	Town
Trash:	Town
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


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 – September 7, 2006:

Highway Access – There is a green highway on Interstate 95 indicating the appropriate exit for the Darien Train Station. Trailblazing is needed along the ramp to guide patrons toward the station. Once on the Boston Post Road (Route 1) and driving in the proper direction, the station is easy to locate.

Parking – Daily parking is available at the station. Monthly commuters are spread over the area as shown on the location map. Moving between the lots and station involves town streets and sidewalks. Crossing the busy Boston Post Road can be a challenge during most hours of the day. Lighting levels in the various parking areas were not evaluated during this site visit.

Platforms – Darien has two 10-car platforms. Although canopies, stairs, ramps and railings are new, the platform itself was not replaced under the recent rehabilitation project. The High Level Platform Visual Inspection Report states that the platforms are in good condition. Isolated cracks and spalls do not impact 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.

All platform guide railing has been replaced with the recommended black railing. Station name signs are mounted to the railing. Poster signs are located in front of the railing on separate posts. These appear to be in good shape.

Stairs and ramps are new. However, much of the metal stair nosing is prematurely rusting, leaving brown stains on the new concrete. Premature rusting was also noticed in the welds at the top of one of the westbound stairs.

In stark contrast to the freshness of the station platforms, rusted catenary supports rise prominently from the eastbound platform. Portions of the westbound platform have been cut away to accommodate catenary and high voltage towers on that side. Black railing protects these structures. As expected, the rust looks awful. It has discolored everything directly under the structures, including the platform, canopies and tactile warning strips.

Because of substandard material that was installed during the recent rehabilitation project, the Department is replacing platform illumination.

All metal surfaces need to be properly grounded to the railroad power system. These surfaces include benches, sign boards, trash cans, handrails, light poles, conduit and bases. At the Darien Station, much of the grounding is either lacking or corroded enough to prevent proper connections.

Several ADA non-compliance issues have been noted in the High Level Platform Visual Inspection Report.

Canopy – The canopies on both platforms are new and in good condition.

Walks/Paths – Paths to and from the station follow town sidewalks. Town streetlights provide illumination for these walks. The Boston Post Road rail bridge is being replaced as part of the

ongoing Catenary B Replacement Project. This project will replace the uneven sidewalks under the bridge.

Ticket Vending Machine (TVM) – TVM’s are located on the westbound platform.

Shelter – Aside from the canopy, there is no other shelter on the eastbound platform.

Station Building – The historic station building is located behind the westbound platform. It was recently rehabilitated and is in good condition with only three exceptions. The men’s room was messy on the day of the site visit, and the floor in front of the sink is warped, probably from a water leak or spillage. In addition, some interior and exterior trim needs to be repainted.

Taxi Stand and Bus Access – A taxi stand occupies the west end of the station building. The driveway and parking area in front of the station building accommodate a bus stop.

Variable Message Signs (VMS) – Variable message signs are being installed at this station.

Signage – A station entrance sign should be installed along the Boston Post Road. Several platform signs are rusted at their connections.

Fences – Fencing beyond the ends of the platforms is in poor condition. Fencing at the east end will be replaced under the bridge replacement project. The end of the eastbound platform has an opening that could permit a person to access the unprotected top of the bridge abutment.

Litter – Aside from some tropical storm debris, the station was very neat on the day of this visit.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Access: Darien has been identified as a “key” station, which will keep the facility up to date with code level ADA access from the parking lot the train. While the recent rehabilitation of the station goes has provided this access, several non-compliant issues have been identified and need to be addressed.

Amenities (See Appendix A Photos)

- Kiosk: There is no information kiosk.
- Exterior Paint Theme: The new canopy and old station building blend very well.
- Vending: Vending machines and newspaper boxes are located on the westbound platform. These should be relocated off the main platform.
- Benches: A new bench at the east end of the eastbound platform is broken.
- Railings: All platform railings are new.
- Light Fixtures: All platform light fixtures are being replaced.
- Trash: Blue recycling bins have been poorly placed on the platform, blocking signs. Pebble-faced trash cans are located around the station building.
- Bicycle Rack: An unused bike rack is located on the eastbound side. There were no bikes on the day of this visit.
- Platform Clock: There is currently no clock on the platform. Upon energizing the variable message signs, the current date and time will be displayed. The station waiting room has a clock.

General Remarks – A telephone is missing from the eastbound ramp. There are no emergency phones on the platform.

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:

- Keep bathrooms clean.
- Properly ground all metal fixtures on and adjacent to the platforms. Coordinate the grounding with Metro-North.
- Monitor corrosion of galvanized fittings under light poles, conduit and light pole bases.
- Address premature rusting of platform stair nosings, and clean the rust stains.
- Repair concrete spall and railing connections at eastbound stair/ramp.
- Repair the lower end of the eastbound ramp to the platform
- Replace the taxi phone on eastbound platform or remove the "booth" and pictogram sign.
- Place emergency telephones on both platforms.
- Move the blue recycling bin, which blocks the exit sign on the eastbound platform.
- Blue recycling bin is too close to TVM on westbound platform, restricting ADA access.
- Repair storm damage to landscaping behind the east end of the westbound platform.

- Touch up station building exterior trim and siding.
- Remove peeling paint and touch up interior walls.
- Move cabinet blocking ADA signage in waiting room.
- Repair broken bench on eastbound platform.

Amenity Upgrades:

- Install station entrance sign at West Avenue entrance.
- Install smaller station entrance signs at Leroy Avenue and Boston Post Road entrances.
- Add a station sign to the east face of each elevator buildings.
- Locate a kiosk in front of the station building, possibly in the bus stop area.
- Add themed trash cans to platforms. Relocate rubber trash barrels from the platform.
- Add another bike rack on the westbound side of the station.
- Variable message signs are being added at this time.
- Relocate vending machines and newspaper boxes to an area off the main platform and principal pathways. Consider constructing a vending shelter.

Governance Improvements:

- The Department is currently replacing faulty light fixtures.
- Paint catenary structures in and behind platforms.
- Repair platform expansion and construction joints.
- Monitor platform tactile warning edge for worn or broken edges.
- Assure that variable message sign supports are painted black.
- Protect the top of the wall between the southwest abutment of Boston Post Road bridge and the eastbound elevator.
- Monitor cracks in the concrete supporting the westbound elevator.
- Review signage requirements for the entire station area.
- During construction, keep track level area clean from trash and excess construction debris.
- Address ADA code compliance issues noted in recent Department studies.
- Install tactile warning at the bottom of all ramps.

Major Capital Improvements:

- The eastbound pedestrian crossing over Boston Post Road should be replaced under the Catenary B Replacement project.
- The sidewalk under the Boston Post Road bridge should be replaced.

-- END OF NARRATIVE --

APPENDIX A

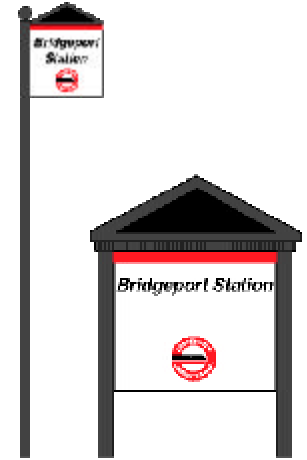
Examples of Amenities



Pole Mounted Lights



Kiosk (Historic)



Signs (Contemporary)



Trash Can (Black preferred)



Vending Shelter



Typical Trailblazing Sign

Miscellaneous Photos



**Recycle Bin to close to TVM.
Vending encroaching on platform space**



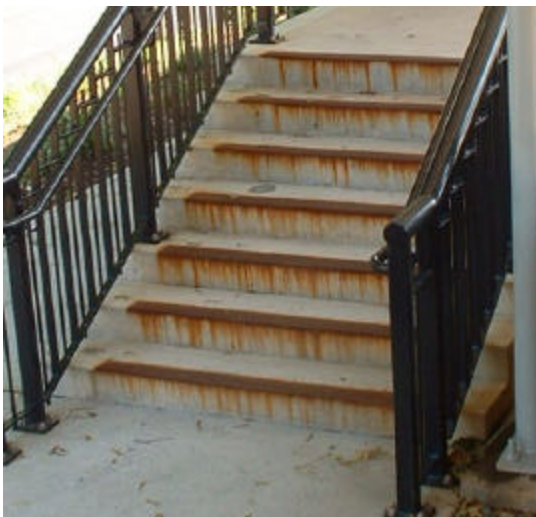
Recycle Bin Blocks Exit Sign



Concrete Spall and Poor Connection



Catenary Support in Platform



Stains from Rusted Stair Nosing