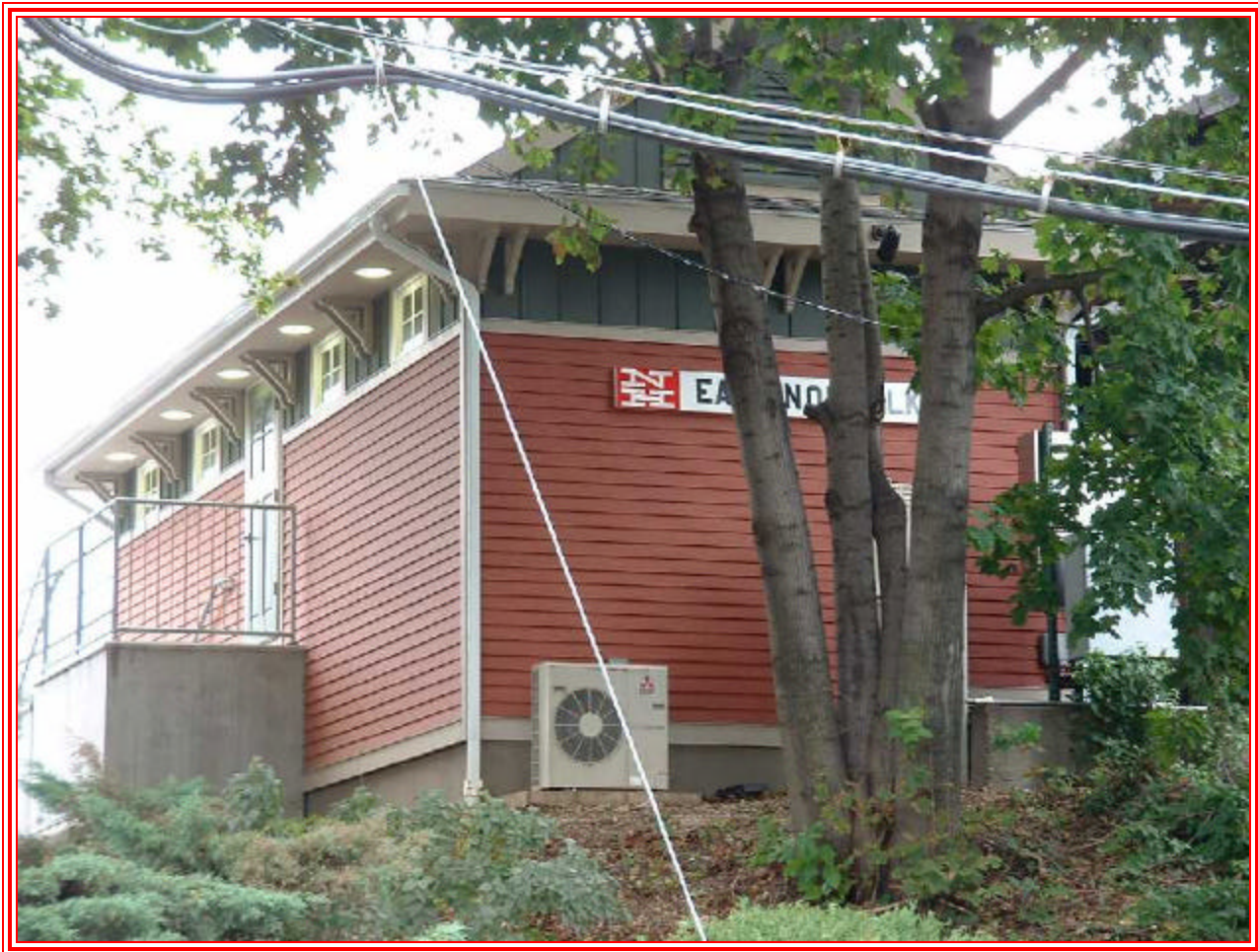


EAST NORWALK TRAIN STATION

VISUAL INSPECTION REPORT



January 2007



Prepared by the Bureau of Public Transportation
Connecticut Department of Transportation

Overview:

The East Norwalk Train Station is located on East Avenue south of the Interstate 95, Exit 16. Trailblazing signage should be supplemented to properly guide motorists from the highway ramps to the train station.

The station is located in the center of the East Norwalk section of Norwalk. This is a commercial area. The station has two four-car platforms separated by East Avenue. Platform to platform access is impeded by this offset layout, resulting in the need to cross busy East Avenue during rush hour.



The City of Norwalk has constructed a station building just behind the westbound platform. The eastbound platform has a shelter for protection from the elements. The station entrances have been nicely landscaped.

Maintenance Responsibilities:

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

Station Layout:



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

-  Station Building
-  State-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 5, 2006:

Highway Access – Motorists can access the East Norwalk Train Station from Interstate 95 and Route 1. Additional trailblazing signage should be added from the primary access routes. A station entrance sign should be placed on both sides of the railroad bridge to minimize confusion caused by the offset platforms.

Parking – Several parking lots serve this station. However, it does not appear that the City has set aside any daily parking spaces.

Platforms – The platforms at East Norwalk are only four cars in length. Structurally, the platforms are in fair to good condition. Some of the joints between platforms are failing. Most stairs and ramps are in good condition except for some minor spalling, which appears to have been recently patched. Some railing base plates are corroded. The aluminum platform, stair and ramp railings are weathered with an occasional bent panel. The lower portions of ramps and stairs have steel pipe railing in poor condition. The trackside edges of the platforms have a bright yellow stripe. Platform illumination appears to be sufficient, although corroded. Rusty catenary supports rise up through or just behind the platforms.

Canopy – The westbound canopy is in good condition.

Walks/Paths – The East Norwalk Station has offset platforms, separated by East Avenue. The eastbound platform sits on the edge of a parking lot, which is used by adjacent businesses. Commuter parking can be found at the west end of the lot. The westbound platform has adjacent commuter parking. Paths to and from these lots follow the parking aisles or short bituminous walks. The walks are uneven and excessively sloped. The paths down to East Avenue are also steep. The eastbound path has old pipe railing. The sidewalk under the East Avenue bridge is narrow with a sturdy but deformed railing.

Ticket Vending Machine (TVM) – There is a TVM on the westbound platform

Shelter – There is a Plexiglas shelter on the eastbound platform. The glazing is in good condition.

Station Building – The small station building on the westbound side appears to have been recently constructed or restored. It is in good condition. The building has a concession, rest rooms and a small waiting area.

Taxi Stands and Bus Stops – Taxis and buses can physically access the eastbound side of the station. The westbound area is too narrow for buses.

Signage – Apart for the usual Metro-North ticket and station name signs, there is very little signage at this location.

Fences – The chain link fence between the westbound platform and East Avenue is in poor condition.

Litter – This is a clean station. Even graffiti has been removed from track-level platform supports.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Access – While ramps and high-level platforms provide access to trains, this station is not ADA compliant. Platform to platform access is very difficult.

Amenities (See Appendix A Photos)

- Kiosk: None
- Exterior Paint Theme: Red
- Vending: Newspaper boxes located on the platform.
- Benches: Aluminum benches on platforms. Dining seats inside building.
- Railings: The aluminum railing on platforms, upper stairs and upper ramps are weathered. There is old pipe railing on the lower portions of stairs/ramps and along paths.
- Light Fixtures: Weathered fluorescent fixtures.
- Trash: Blue recycling bins on platforms and large green PVC cans near station building.
- Bicycle Rack: None
- Platform Clock: None

General Remarks – This is nice station for commuters with parking permits and transit riders. The city has provided no daily parking spaces at this location.

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:

- Trailblazing signs should be placed prior to the end of the exit ramps to avoid the sign clutter at East Avenue.
- Install reverse trailblazing signage directing motorists back to the highways.
- Repair spall on platform stairs and ramps and repair railing base connections.
- Address short-term safety issues relative to paths and stairs.
- Remove newspaper boxes from platforms and primary paths.
- Provide hours of operation sign for the station building.
- Clean and paint catenary structures. Coordinate with Metro-North.

Amenity Upgrades:

- Add a station kiosk near each platform.
- Place a station entrance sign near the westbound entrance. Place a banner type entrance sign near the eastbound driveway.
- Add TVM to eastbound platform.
- Replace all aluminum benches with black mesh benches.
- Replace trash receptacles with recommended trash cans. Add trashcans to primary platform access points.
- Construct a shelter for vending behind the platform or near primary paths.
- Add a bike rack
- Add station clocks to both platforms. Consider a pedestal mounted clock on the eastbound side and a wall mounted clock on the westbound side.

Governance Improvements:

- Evaluate illumination levels in and around the station.
- Replace broken chain link fence with black chain link fence at the west end of the westbound platform.
- Repair platform surface, foundations, bearings and joints as required.
- Replace all platform, stair and ramp aluminum railing with black railing.
- Replace all bituminous walks with less sloped concrete sidewalks. Add ADA compliant stairs and ramps if necessary.
- Add concrete walk to the eastbound parking lot.
- Replace the sidewalk railing on East Avenue under the bridge. Highway guide rail or a concrete barrier may be warranted.
- Review content and location of station signage. Supplement as needed.
- Add platform edge tactile warning strips.

Major Capital Improvements:

- Lengthen 4-car platforms to 10 cars.
- Extend and/or replace the westbound platform canopy.
- Add a canopy and/or replace the shelter on the eastbound platform.

--- END OF NARRATIVE ---

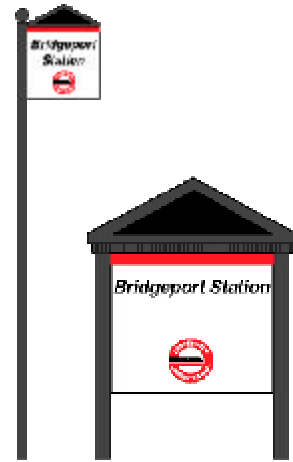
APPENDIX A



Trailblazing Sign



Kiosk (Historic)



Signs (Contemporary)



Bench (Contemporary) and Railing



Fence, Walk and Post Mounted Light Next to Track



Trash Can (Black preferred)



Bike Rack