

# MERRITT 7 TRAIN STATION

## VISUAL INSPECTION REPORT



January 2007



Prepared by the Bureau of Public Transportation  
Connecticut Department of Transportation

**Overview:**

The Merritt 7 Train Station is named after its location near Route 7 and Exit 40 of the Merritt Parkway. Situated on Glover Avenue, the station consists of a shelter, a narrow parking lot and the only low-level platform on the Danbury Branch. The station was built by the adjacent Merritt Seven developer and has since been taken over by the Department.



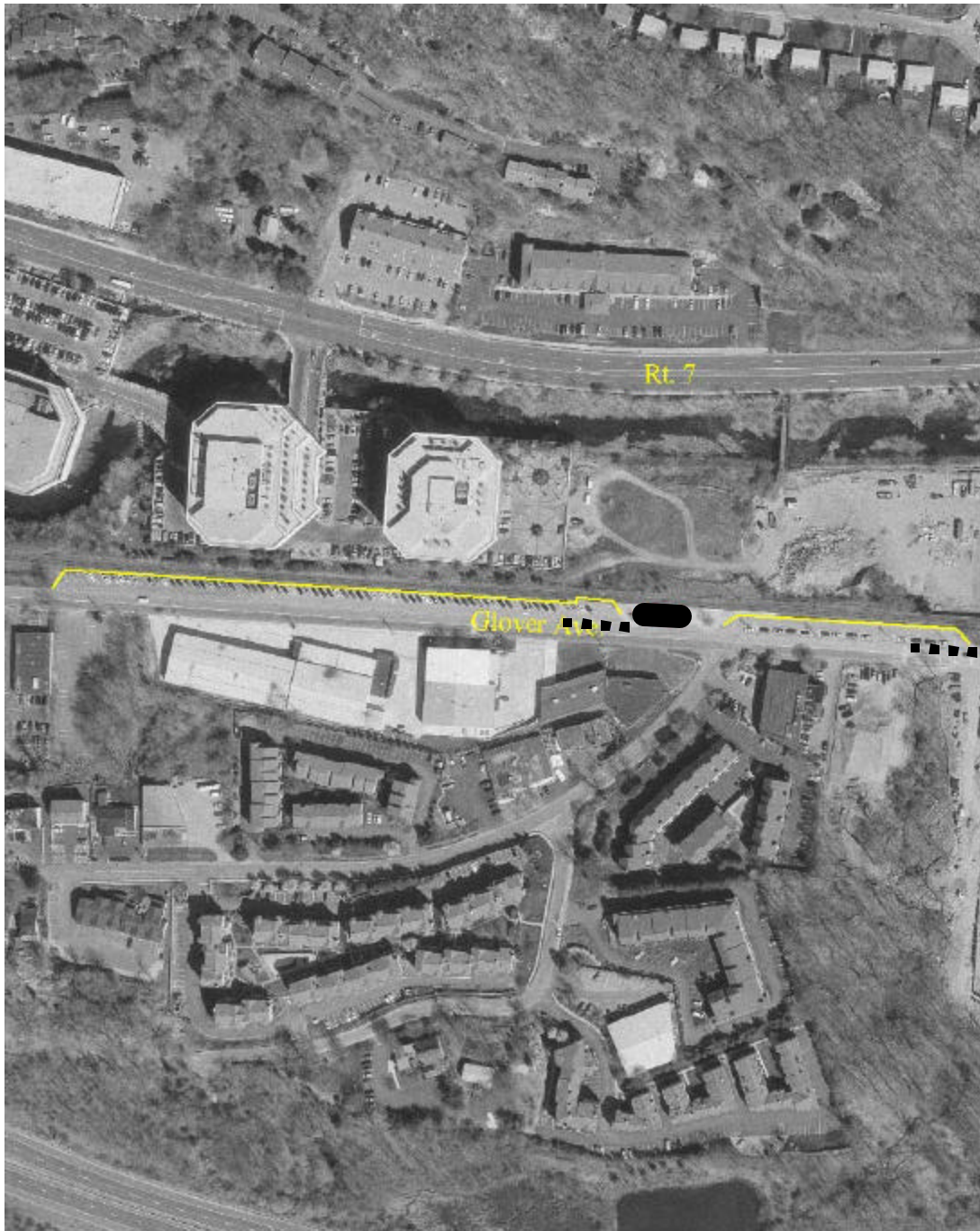
Access to the south end of Glover Avenue is made difficult by the adjacent and high volume Route 7/Merritt Parkway interchange. The north end of Glover Avenue ends at the equally busy terminus of the Route 7 expressway at Grist Mill Road and its nearby Main Avenue intersection. There is a parking lot along the tracks to the north of the platform and a smaller lot to the south. There is also an area for the local Wheelstop buses to pull over. This area is designated as a scheduled bus stop.

As can be seen in the photo, Merritt 7 is little more than a whistle stop along the Danbury Branch. There are few amenities at this location. The level of improvements to his facility will be governed by future demand and continuing ridership increases.

**Maintenance Responsibilities:**

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

**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 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 – August 16, 2006:**

**Highway Access** – The station is located on Glover Avenue. Access onto either end of the road is difficult. Both intersections have high volume traffic and conflicting turning moves. Station signs should be considered at both ends of Glover Avenue. Advance trailblazing signage may improve access to this station.

**Parking** – The parking is accommodated by a long, single aisle lot extending north of the platform along the tracks. The bituminous pavement is cracked and uneven. There is no parking fee and the lot is filled on a first come, first served basis. Lighting levels need to be evaluated.

**Platforms** – There is a low-level concrete platform in front of the shelter. The surface is cracked and worn and has a faded yellow warning stripe along its edge.

**Canopy** – There are two canopy extensions from the Plexiglas shelter. They are in good condition.

**Walks/Paths** – The station is located on Glover Avenue. Any paths to and from the station are sidewalks or parking lot surfaces. These paths are cracked, worn and uneven.

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

**Shelter** – The Plexiglas shelter is in good condition. It has one bench. The shelter can protect a number of people from inclement weather. The glazing is slightly scratched with glue residue from posters.

**Station Building** – None

**Bus Access and Taxi Stand** – Wheelstop Bus has commuter connection service to this station. Taxi access and passenger drops are easily accommodated.

**Signage** – There are a few signs indicating parking for commuters only, a station sign at the south end of the platform and a park & ride sign.

**Fences** – The chain link fencing to the north and south of the platform is weathered.

**Litter** – The area is clean although generally unattractive.

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Access** – Being a low-level platform, there is no easy access to the trains. However, there is a portable chair lift chained to a nearby lamppost. Its condition was not determined.

**Amenities** (See Appendix A Photos)

- Kiosk: None
- Exterior Paint Theme: None
- Vending: Newspaper boxes
- Benches: One bench in located the shelter and one on the platform near bus stop.
- Railings: None
- Light Fixtures: Good under canopy lights, several post mounted platform fixtures and a few street lights.
- Trash: One blue recycling bin.
- Bicycle Rack: None
- Platform Clock: None

**General Remarks** – At some point over the next few years, the Department and the City of Norwalk need to evaluate the future of this 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:**

- Repaint yellow stripe along platform edge.
- Paint the rusty top rail of the chain link fence.
- Remove weeds from sidewalk cracks.
- Trim weeds along the tracks.

**Amenity Upgrades:**

- Add kiosk with station clock.
- Add station signs at each end of Glover Avenue and in front of the station shelter.
- Build a small shelter for vending machines and newspaper boxes, off the platform and clear of primary paths.
- Add a trash can to the platform.
- Add a bike rack.

**Governance Improvements:**

- Evaluate and add lighting along parking lot.
- Add black railing along the trackside of the platform away from the boarding areas.
- Consider extending the raised concrete sidewalk into the parking lot along the fence line and replacing the fence with a black railing.
- Evaluate signage and add signs as necessary
- Improve the sidewalk along the street south of the station
- Upon completion of work at the Route 7 / Merritt Parkway interchange, re-evaluate access onto Glover Avenue.

**Major Capital Improvements:**

- Add a high-level platform with a canopy.
- Add a platform-level shelter similar to one found at West Redding.
- Make necessary ADA upgrade improvements

--- END OF NARRATIVE ---



**Merritt 7 Station Platform**

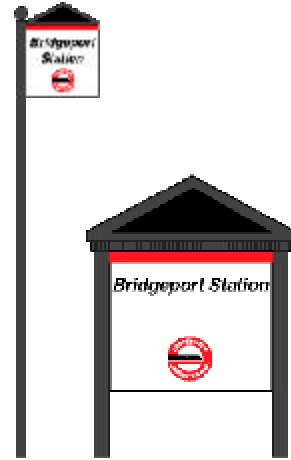
**APPENDIX A**



**Pole Mounted Lights**



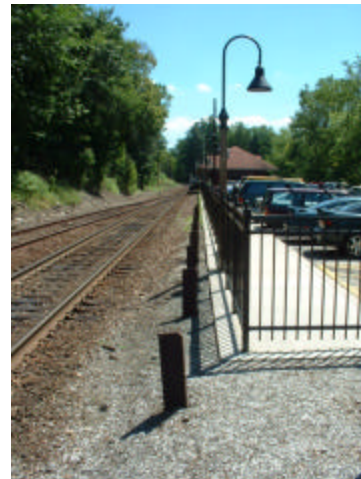
**Kiosk (Historic)**



**Signs (Contemporary)**



**Bench (Contemporary) and Railing**



**Fence, Walk and Post Mounted Light Next to Track**



**Trash Can (Black preferred)**



**Bike Rack**