

OLD GREENWICH TRAIN STATION

VISUAL INSPECTION REPORT



January 2007



Prepared by the Bureau of Public Transportation
Connecticut Department of Transportation

Overview:

The historic Old Greenwich Train Station (a.k.a. Sound Beach Train Station) is located on Sound Beach Avenue in the southeast corner of Greenwich. Built in 1892, the nicely restored station building provides a waiting room and concession area.

Access to the station from I-95 and Route 1 is difficult due to the lack of strategically placed trailblazing signs. The close proximity of the Riverside Train Station may also confuse first time patrons since the few trailblazing signs do not include station names.



The bridge over Sound Beach Avenue is in poor condition as are the stairs and paths adjacent to the structure. The remainder of the station looks worn but functional.

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 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 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 25, 2006:

Highway Access – Patrons may find it difficult to locate the Old Greenwich Train Station. The overabundance of signs along busy Route 1 can mask trailblazing signs where they are in place. In addition, the Riverside Train Station is only a half-mile to the west of Old Greenwich. Without a station name indicated, any trailblazing in the area could easily confuse a motorist.

Parking – Parking is provided on both sides of the station. The most remote spaces are about 1,000 feet from the platforms. The primary entrances are off Sound Beach Avenue. Illumination levels in the lots should be evaluated.

Platforms – The platforms at Old Greenwich are only six cars in length. Structurally, the platforms are in fair to good condition. Some of the joints between platforms are failing. Most platform stairs and ramps are in fair to good condition with minor spalling and cracks, especially at railing connection plates. The aluminum platform, stair and ramp railings are weathered with an occasional bent panel. The trackside edge of the platform has a fading yellow warning stripe. Platform illumination appears to be recent and in good condition. Painted catenary supports rise up through or just behind the platforms. The westbound uncovered platform extends over Sound Beach Avenue.

Canopy – The westbound canopy is in satisfactory condition. Peeling paint, rust stains and corrosion are evident. The canopy drainage is in good condition.

Walks/Paths – Paths lead to Sound Beach Avenue from both sides of the station. The westbound platform extends over Sound Beach Avenue where an old deteriorated stairway leads down to the west side of the street. The northeast stairway is a recent wood structure leading to a bituminous walk. The eastbound platform can also be accessed by stairways on either side of the street. The southwest stairs are also deteriorated, as is the walkway over the road. The southeast stairs are wood. The railing along the walkway over the street is rusted. Most bituminous paths are cracked and uneven.

Ticket Vending Machine (TVM) – There are TVM's on the westbound platform.

Shelter – The eastbound platform shelter has litter and graffiti tags.

Station Building – The historic station building appears to be in good shape. It was closed during this site visit. No waiting room hours were posted.

Taxi Stands and Bus Stops – Taxis can access this station. Buses may be able to maneuver the local streets on the westbound side, but the area is tight. Any bus stops are likely located on Sound Beach Avenue.

Signage – Signage content and placement should be reviewed and supplemented, if necessary.

Fences – Most fencing is weathered, rusted or broken.

Litter – Track-level litter is minimal. However, trash was scattered throughout the area on the day of the visit.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Access – While ramps provide access to platforms and trains, this station is not ADA compliant for accessibility.

Amenities (See Appendix A Photos)

- Kiosk: None
- Exterior Paint Theme: Red
- Vending: Vending machines and newspaper boxes on platform.
- Benches: Aluminum benches on platform.
- Railings: Weathered aluminum railings on platforms, stair and ramps.
- Light Fixtures: Fixtures appear to be new and adequate.
- Trash: Blue recycling bins and steel trash cans.
- Bicycle Rack: Yes
- Platform Clock: Beer clock hanging from the canopy.

General Remarks – The Department is designing a replacement for Sound Beach Avenue railroad bridge at this time. Construction is expected to begin in a few years.

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 with the station name should be placed at strategic location along US Route 1 and other area roads.
- Add reverse trailblazing signage directing motorists back to the highways.
- Repair spall on platform stairs and ramps. Fix railing base connections.
- Remove vending machines and newspaper boxes from platforms and primary paths.
- Provide hours of operation sign for the station building.
- Clean and paint canopy.
- Protect the jutting edge of the west end of the eastbound platform along walk from the street.
- Repaint platform edge warning strip.

Amenity Upgrades:

- Add a station kiosk on each side of the station.
- Place a station entrance sign near the westbound side entrance. Place a small banner station entrance sign near the eastbound driveway.
- Add TVM to eastbound platform.
- Replace all aluminum seats with black mesh benches.
- Add trash cans to primary platform access points.
- Construct a shelter for vending behind the platform or near primary paths, provided it does not interfere with pedestrian.
- Replace beer clock with station clock on westbound platforms. Add a station clock to the eastbound platform, maybe pedestal mounted.

Governance Improvements:

- Evaluate illumination levels in and around the station and supplement lighting as required.
- Replace platform light fixtures.
- Repair platform surface, foundations, bearings and joints as required.
- Replace all platform, stair and ramp aluminum railing with black railing.
- Replace all bituminous walk with raised concrete sidewalk.
- Replace rusted chain link fence at west end of station with black chain link fence. Consider installing a raised concrete walk along the new fence to provide a designated walk for commuters parked in remote spaces.
- Replace any other chain link fence with black chain link fence.
- Place pole mounted light fixtures along all new concrete walks.
- Review content and location of station signage. Supplement as needed.
- Add platform edge tactile warning strips.

Major Capital Improvements:

- Replace Sound Beach Avenue railroad bridge.
- Lengthen 6-car platforms to 10 cars.
- Extend and/or replace westbound platform canopy.
- Add a canopy and/or replace the shelter on the eastbound platform. Consider the West Redding Station shelter as a template.

-- END OF NARRATIVE --

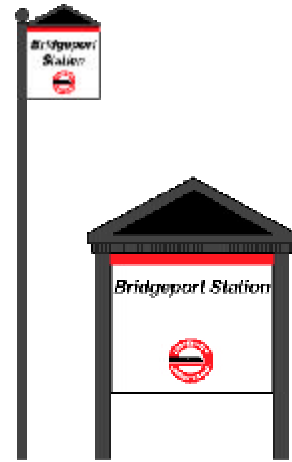
APPENDIX A



Pole Mounted Lights



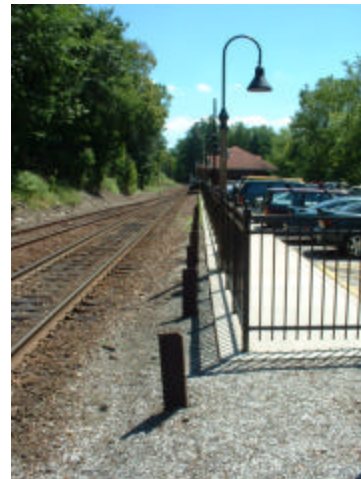
Kiosk (Historic)



Signs (Contemporary)



Bench (Contemporary) and Railing



Fence, Walk and Post Mounted Light Next to Track



Trash Can (Black preferred)



Bike Rack