

# ROWAYTON TRAIN STATION

## VISUAL INSPECTION REPORT



January 2007



Prepared by the Bureau of Public Transportation  
Connecticut Department of Transportation

**Overview:**

The Rowayton Train Station is located in the residential southwest corner of Norwalk, about a mile east of the Darien Train Station. Although the station is easy to get to, first time visitors could easily lose their way. Additional trailblazing signage would help.

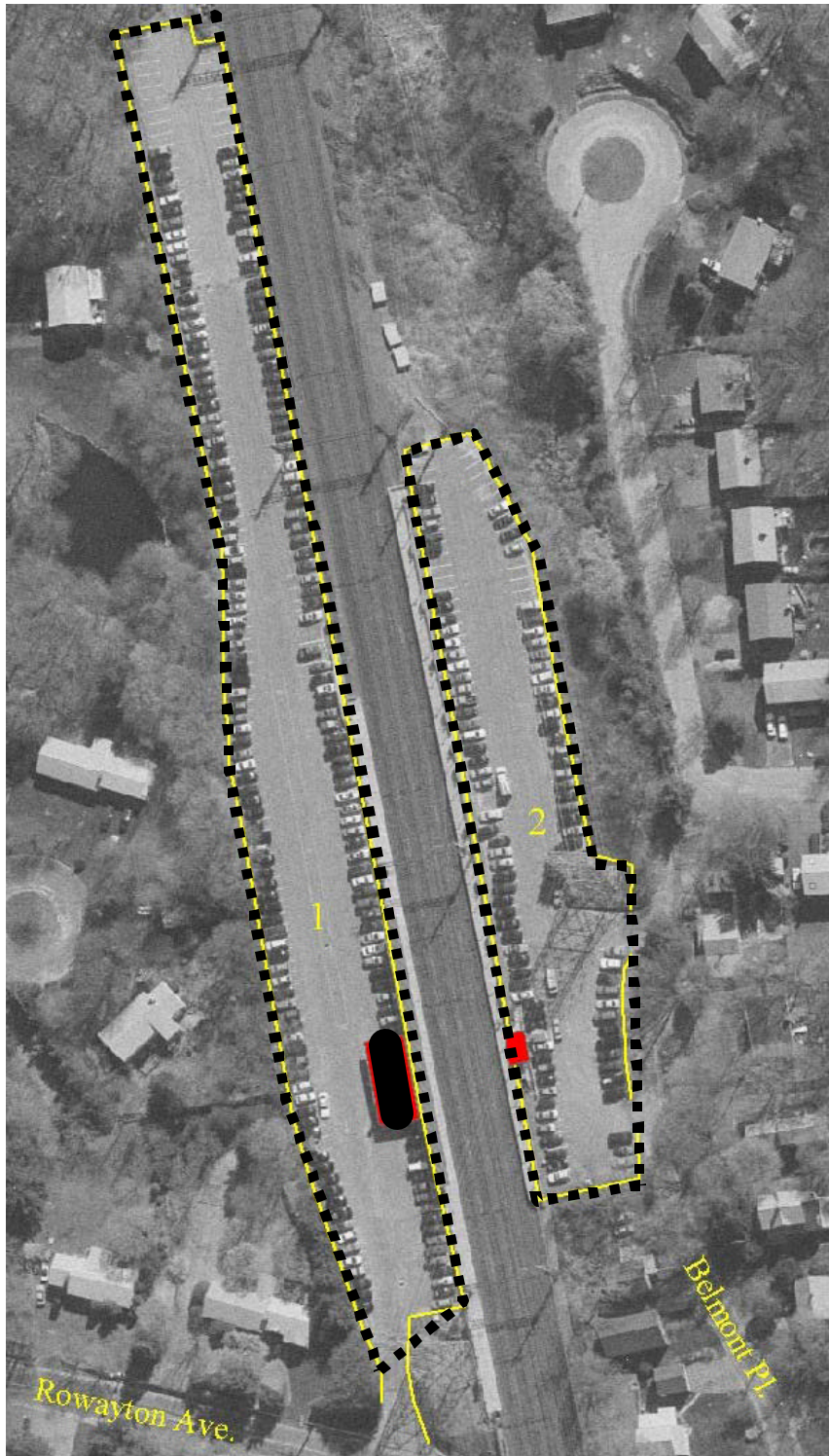
The station has over 300 spaces of which 25 have been set aside for daily parking. An attendant in a booth collects the daily parking fee.

Construction on the nearby Rowayton Avenue overpass has disrupted the normal routine. The necessary platform-to-platform movement of commuters is more unpredictable due to the temporary closure of paths and stairways. As part of the bridge construction project, the street will be widened with sidewalks on both sides and two new stairways up to the station.

**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:	City

**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 – September 7, 2006:**

**Highway Access** – The Rowayton Train Station is located in a quiet residential section of southwest Norwalk, near the Darien town line. Motorists can access the station from Tokeneke Road to the west, Rowayton Avenue to the north and Route 136 to the east. However, trailblazing signage was not observed from either direction. Since the station is not conveniently located next to a major highway, trailblazing signs should be provided along all primary access routes.

**Parking** – The station has a parking lot on each side of the tracks. Both lots were full on the day of the site visit. A parking attendant collects fees from daily parkers. The ongoing Rowayton Avenue bridge replacement project has disrupted vehicular and access to the parking lots. Lighting appears to be minimal for both lots. Illumination levels should be evaluated.

**Platforms** – The platforms at Rowayton are only six 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 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 bright yellow stripe. Platform illumination (fluorescent) 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. It appears to be freshly painted. The High Level Platform Visual Inspection Report noted some drainage issues. There is no eastbound platform canopy.

**Walks/Paths** – Commuters normally move from platform to platform along a series of stairs and paths under the Rowayton Avenue bridge. The bridge replacement project will continue to disrupt this movement for a few years. Currently detours are appropriately signed. The completed project will provide a wider travel area, new raised sidewalks on both sides of the street and two new stairways to the station. The old cast iron railing along the retaining wall on the south side is ineffective and needs to be replaced.

**Ticket Vending Machine (TVM)** – There is a TVM in front of the westbound station building.

**Shelter** – There is a Plexiglas shelter on the eastbound platform. It is in good condition.

**Station Building** – The westbound station building was closed at the time of this site visit. Its stucco surface appears to be in good condition. The Governance Study noted some compliance issues that should be addressed.

**Bus Access & Taxi Stand** – Taxis can easily access both platforms. Buses would find it difficult to turn around in the long, narrow parking area.

**Signage** – Beyond the usual Metro-North ticket signs, there is minimal signage around the station property.

**Fences** – The chain link fence beyond the ends of the platforms is weathered, rusted and bent. The cast iron fence on top of the retaining wall on the south side is not functional.

**Litter** – This is a clean station.

**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: Beige
- Vending: Newspapers on platform
- Benches: Aluminum benches on platform and in shelter
- Railings: Weathered aluminum railing on platforms, stairs and ramps.
- Light Fixtures: Corroded fluorescent light fixtures
- Trash: Blue recycling bins.
- Bicycle Rack: None
- Platform Clock: Beer clock under canopy

**General Remarks** – This is a nice station in a quiet residential setting.

**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 along primary routes to the station.
- Add reverse trailblazing signage directing motorists back to the highways.
- Repair spall on platform stairs and ramps. Fix railing base connections.
- Remove newspaper boxes from platforms and primary paths.
- Provide hours of operation sign for the station building.
- Replace rusted and broken handhole cover on west end of westbound platform.
- Fix canopy drainage.
- Monitor ongoing bridge construction activities and adjust signage accordingly.
- Clean and paint catenary structures. Coordinate with Metro-North.

**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 movement.
- Add a bike rack
- Replace beer clocks with station clocks on westbound platforms. Add a station clock to the eastbound platform. Consider a pedestal-mounted clock.

**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 bituminous walk and chain link fence at the east end of the westbound platform with raised concrete sidewalk. Replace rusted chain link fence with black railing or black chain link fence. Extend both the walk and fence to the end of the parking lot. Beyond the lot, install black chain link fence for about 200 feet or so.
- Replace all bituminous walks with concrete sidewalks.
- Replace other chain link fence with black chain link fence.
- Place pole mounted light fixtures along all new concrete walks.
- Replace the cast iron fence with black railing or black chain link fence.
- Review content and location of station signage. Supplement as needed.
- Add platform edge tactile warning strips.

**Major Capital Improvements:**

- 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.

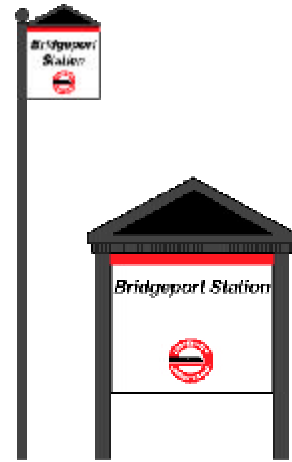
**APPENDIX A**



**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**