

SEYMOUR TRAIN STATION
VISUAL INSPECTION REPORT



January 2007



Prepared by the Bureau of Public Transportation
Connecticut Department of Transportation

Overview:

The Seymour Train Station is located in the heart of downtown Seymour on Main Street. Parking in front of the station is available for commuters and local businesses. Additional commuter parking can be found in nearby mixed-use parking lots. Access to the station is relatively easy, although one could easily miss a trailblazer sign amid the normal urban clutter. Once at the station, finding a parking space can be difficult for a patron looking for an impromptu train ride due to the posted 2-hour limit and mixed commuter/retail usage. The Governance Study notes that one can obtain a pass for the day or for the year for a nominal charge, but this is not widely known.



The Seymour Train Station is a small train stop along the Waterbury Branch of the New Haven Line. Like most branch stations, the station includes a low-level platform and a shelter. The shelter (waiting room) is unique in that it is a brick structure with windows and sufficient roof overhang to protect patrons from the elements.

Due to low ridership, this and other Waterbury Branch stations received little attention and have few amenities, which is to be expected. However, Metro-North and the Department will continue to evaluate the demands of the Waterbury Branch patrons toward the eventual goal of installing the high-level platforms and related amenities.

Maintenance Responsibilities:

Owner:	CDOT
Operator:	CDOT
Platform Lights:	Metro-North
Trash:	Metro-North
Snow Removal:	Metro-North
Shelter:	CDOT
Platform Canopy:	CDOT
Platform Structure:	CDOT
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 8, 2006:

Highway Access – The Seymour Train Station is located on Main Street in heart of downtown Seymour. It is easily accessible from Routes 8 and 67. Trailblazing signage is minimal and lost in the urban clutter. Some thought should be given to supplementing and/or relocating the existing signs to better guide the occasional rider to the station.

Parking – The parking situation is confusing. Two-hour limit parking signs have been placed everywhere. However, arrangements can be made ahead of time to park in either the spaces along the street or in nearby lots for a day or for a year. Whatever the arrangement, potential rail users need to be informed of the idiosyncrasies of parking at the Seymour Train Station. Provisions should also be made for those just looking to take an unplanned train ride.

Illumination for the street parking is provided by streetlights.

Platforms – Platforms consist of two separate wooden boxes in varying stages of disrepair. Illumination is provided by streetlights and lights mounted in the eaves of the shelter. The bituminous pavement under the platform is uneven and cracked with weeds growing through. The painted yellow warning stripe is bright.

Canopy – There is no canopy at Seymour other than the roof overhang around the brick shelter.

Walks/Paths – This station is located on a downtown street. Streetlights illuminate paths to and from the station, which are primarily city sidewalks in good condition. The area has been nicely landscaped by the town, although trees planted in front of the shelter appear to be dead or dying.

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

Shelter – The shelter is a 12' by 18' brick shelter with windows. Although the roof has gutters, there are no downspouts. The exterior is clean. The interior was a little messy and there was a faint foul smell. Lighting appears to be adequate both inside and outside the shelter, though this should be confirmed by the operator. There are no benches in the shelter.

Station Building – There is no station building other than the shelter noted above.

Bus Access & Taxi Stand – Bus and taxi can access the front of this station.

Signage – Two-hour parking limit signs cover most of the station mixed use parking spaces. Other than the presence of the tracks and the station name hanging from the shelter, one might be hard pressed to realize that there is a train station here.

Fences – There are no fences.

Litter – There was some track level litter on the day of the site visit. An old freight building across the tracks is not owned by the state, but it could still use a coat of paint. There are many weeds around the tracks.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Access – ADA access to trains from this location is difficult due to the low-level platform. An ADA parking space has been provided adjacent to the brick shelter. However, the mixed-use parking provides no guarantee that this space is available for the station.

Amenities (See Appendix A Photos)

- Kiosk: None
- Exterior Paint Theme: Brick and white trim
- Vending: Newspaper boxes
- Benches: None in or outside the shelter
- Railings: None
- Light Fixtures: Inside and in the outside eaves of the shelter
- Trash: A blue recycling bin and wooden trash can
- Bicycle Rack: None visible
- Platform Clock: None

General Remarks – This is a small train stop utilized by a relatively few commuters. However, given its downtown location, this station has potential. If the use of this station is expected to increase over the next few years, a high-level platform and all the amenities should be installed. The Department plans to initiate a Waterbury Branch needs and feasibility study next year. Study recommendations may be included in planned station improvement program.

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:

- Supplement and/or relocate trailblazing signage to and from Routes 8 and 67.
- Clean and deodorize the inside of the brick shelter.
- Repaint, repair, replace or remove the north boarding platform.
- Remove the south boarding platform if it is not needed. Coordinate with Metro-North.
- Keep up with housekeeping duties.
- Seal cracks in bituminous pavement in the platform area.
- Replace dead trees in front of shelter.
- Ask the owner of the old freight house on the other side of the tracks to paint the structure.
- Repair the shelter's roof gutters

Amenity Upgrades:

- Install a station kiosk.
- Add station entrance sign
- Add a sign that provides parking details and describes lot locations
- Move newspaper boxes to the north side of the shelter. If vending machines are planned, build a separate small shelter away from the boarding platforms to house the vending machines and newspaper boxes.
- When the shelter trim is ready to be repainted, consider changing the paint scheme to something more consistent with the New Haven Line colors, such as red, white and black.
- Install benches both inside and outside the shelter.
- Replace the trash can with the desired Amenities Committee trash can.
- Consider placing a bike rack, if warranted. A concrete pad just behind the south boarding platform should be considered.
- Provide a station clock either on the shelter or as part of the proposed kiosk.

Governance Improvements:

- Construct a raised tinted concrete or brick sidewalk with black railing along the tracks north and south of the platform boarding areas. This will better separate the parking from the tracks and provide patrons with a safer path to the shelter and boarding platform.
- Install post mounted light fixtures along the newly constructed sidewalk

Major Capital Improvements:

- When warranted by increased ridership or future demand, install a high-level platform and all the amenities. The shelter may have to be moved or replaced to accommodate the platform.

-- END OF NARRATIVE --

APPENDIX A

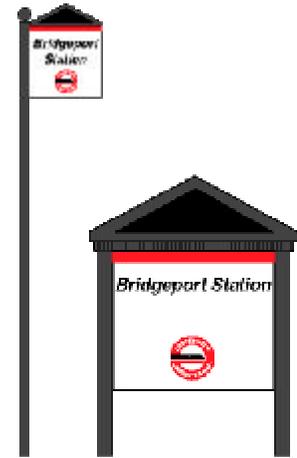
Examples of Amenities



Pole Mounted Lights



Kiosk (Historic)



Signs (Contemporary)



Bench (Contemporary) and Railing



Vending Shelter



Trash Can (Black preferred)



Bike Rack



Fence, Walk and Post Mounted Light Next to Track



Typical Trailblazing Sign



View of Platform Area Looking North