

STRATFORD TRAIN STATION
VISUAL INSPECTION REPORT



January 2007



Prepared by the Bureau of Public Transportation
Connecticut Department of Transportation

Overview:

The Stratford Train Station is located on Main Street (Rt. 113) in downtown Stratford. The station is readily accessible from I-95. However, trailblazing signage would aid the occasional visitor in finding the station. Once in the parking lot, a sign provides all the parking information needed by the motorist.

Town enhancements to the Main Street entrances to the station include a new sidewalk canopy, improved lighting and landscaping. The station buildings appear to be in good condition.

The National Helicopter Museum occupies the old eastbound station building. A restaurant and coffee shop inhabit the westbound building.

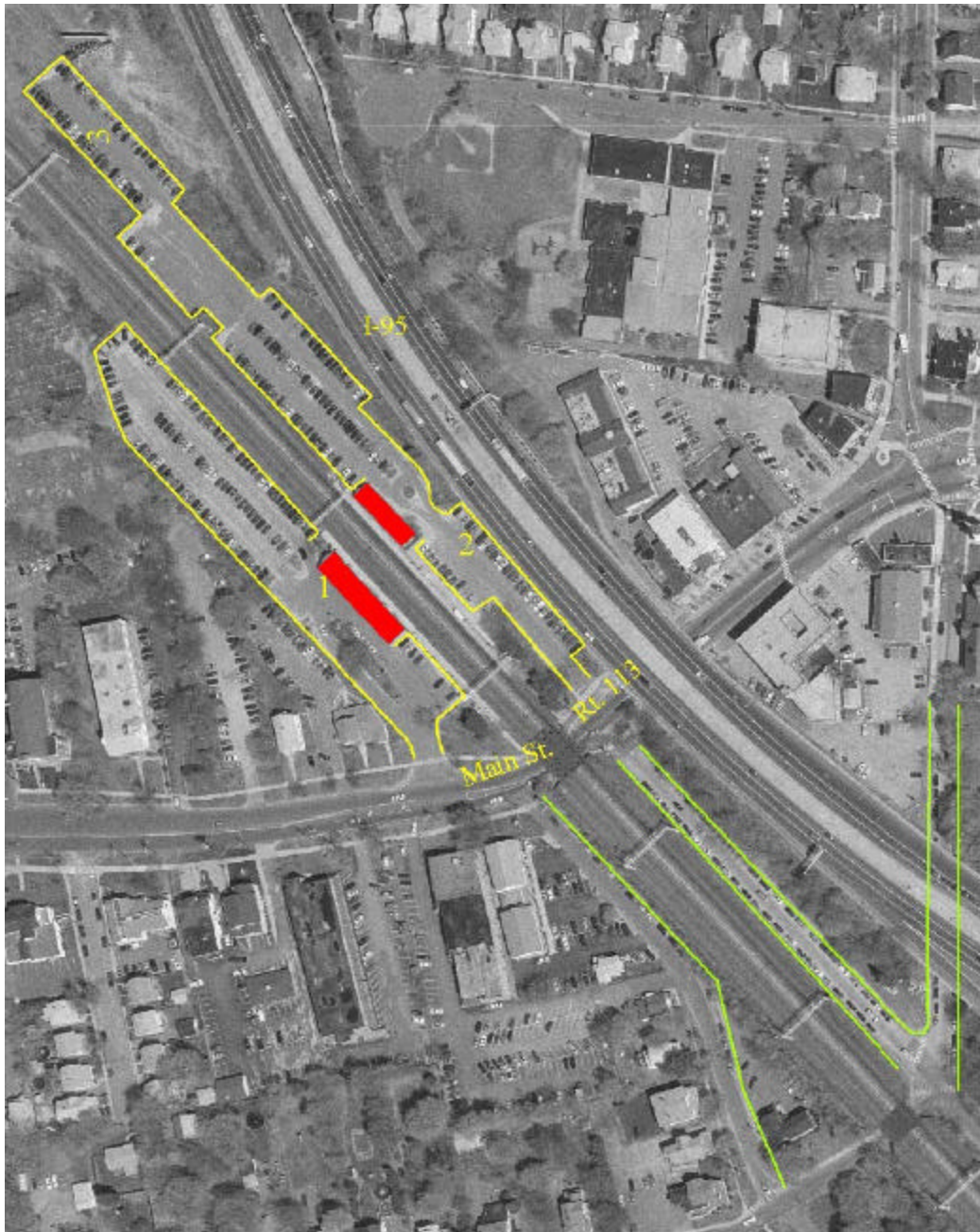


This station has short platforms with no canopies. The Town and CDOT have plans to extend the platforms, construct a parking garage and possibly add a canopy to the westbound platform

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
- 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 – August 10, 2006:

Highway Access – Stratford Station is readily accessible from I-95 and Route 1. However, additional trailblazing signage is required on local streets.

Parking – Parking lots extend in both directions from the station. Both entrances have signs that provide information about daily and permit parking locations and fees. Lighting appears to be substandard in portions of the parking lots. Illumination levels in these lots should be evaluated as part of the next phase of improvements. The Town and CDOT have initiated a project to construct a new parking garage at this station.

Platforms – The platforms at Stratford Station are only four cars in length. Structurally, the platforms are in fair to good condition. Nearly all the joints between platforms are failing. Some of the stairs are cracked and spalling. The aluminum platform, stair and ramp railings are weathered with an occasional bent panel. The trackside edge of the platform has a painted yellow stripe. Platform illumination appears to be sufficient. With support from CDOT, the Town plans to extend the platforms over the next few years.

Canopy – There is no canopy at this location

Walks/Paths – The west end of the station has been beautifully landscaped. The sidewalk canopy under the railroad bridge was recently replaced along with the Main Street sidewalk, retaining wall and railing. The stairs up to track level are cracked and spalled. The bituminous walks at the top of the stairs are cracked and uneven. The eastbound platform juts out into the path to the platform stairs. The path on the westbound side has sidewalk railing protecting pedestrians from the edge of the platform. One path between the westbound building and platform is too narrow for normal passage.

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

Shelter – There are three westbound and two eastbound shelters. One westbound shelter is an independent structure on a filled corrugated metal foundation. The metal is rusted and the bituminous floor is settling. The glazing on all shelters is scratched from graffiti and attempts to remove it.

Station Building – The eastbound station building is an old waiting room that has been converted into a helicopter museum, run independent from station operations. The westbound station building includes a restaurant and coffee shop that acts as a station waiting room from 4:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. The coffee shop was closed at the time of this site visit, but it appears to be clean and functional. The rest rooms also appear to be operational. The exterior of the westbound building has splintered siding and water damage at the foundation. The power cord for a soda vending machine lies in a path creating a tripping hazard.

Bus Access & Taxi Stand – Taxis can access the various parking lots. Due to geometry, buses are probably limited to drops and pick-ups on Main Street.

Signage – Parking signage is good. Entrance signs have been creating for the two Main Street driveways. Other platform signage is sparse.

Fences – Chain Link fencing beyond the ends of the platforms is weather, rusted, bent and broken. Fence and railing around most of the paths is new and in good shape.

Litter – Overall Stratford is a clean station. However, the area between the buildings and platforms needs to be cleaned of trash and cigarette butts.

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

Amenities (See Appendix A Photos)

- Kiosk: None
- Exterior Paint Theme: Salmon
- Vending: Newspaper boxes are located on the platform. Soda machines are located on paths behind the platforms.
- Benches: Aluminum benches are spread about the two platforms.
- Railings: Aluminum guide rails line the rear of the platforms and all platform stairs and ramps.
- Light Fixtures: There appears to be adequate illumination on the platform and paths, but further evaluation is required.
- Trash: Blue recycling bins on the platforms
- Bicycle Rack: yes
- Platform Clock: None

General Remarks – The Town of Stratford has made a good faith effort to improve this station. The Main Street entrances are nicely landscaped and well lit. As one approaches the east end of the station, however, one notices more sterile surroundings. Both the Town and CDOT have plans to extend the platforms and build a parking garage. Platform canopies are also being considered. These capital improvements along with improved amenities and continued general upkeep will result in a first class suburban train 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:

- Add trailblazing signage along local streets and state highways.
- Add reverse trailblazing signage directing motorists back to the highways.
- Repair platform stairs and ramps.
- Repair station siding.
- Repaint platform edge warning stripe.
- Protect jutting edge of platform at west end of eastbound platform.
- Monitor the condition of the independent shelter at west end of the westbound platform. Repair structure as necessary.
- Replace shelter glazing as required.
- Protect electrical connections for vending.

Amenity Upgrades:

- Add a station kiosk on each side of the station.
- Add TVM to eastbound platform.
- Replace all aluminum seats with black mesh benches.
- Place trash cans at primary entrances to the platforms.
- Replace existing lights with theme lighted fixtures.
- Add a station clock to each platform, possibly pedestal mounted or on the side of the buildings.

Governance Improvements:

- Evaluate illumination levels in and around the station.
- Replace chain link fencing between parking lot and tracks. Add raised concrete walk and black railing (or fence) for half the distance, then black chain link fencing.
- Repair platform surface, foundations, bearings and joints as required.
- Replace all aluminum railing with black railing.
- Repair or replace stairs from Main Street to platform level.
- Replace bituminous walks with concrete sidewalks.
- Address ground level water damage to building(s).
- Review needed to keep passage open between the westbound station building and platform.

- Review content and location of station signage.
- Add platform edge tactile warning strips.

Major Capital Improvements:

- Extend the platforms.
- Construct a new garage.
- Install new canopies: 200 feet EB platform and 400 ft WB platform.

-- END OF NARRATIVE --

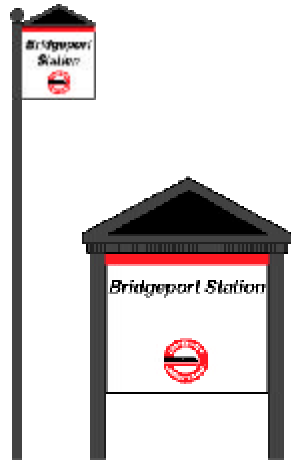


National Helicopter Museum at Stratford Station

APPENDIX A



Kiosk (Historic)



Signs (Contemporary)



Bench (Contemporary) and Railing



Bike Rack



Vending Shelter



Trash Can (Black preferred)



Fence, Walk and Post Mounted Light Next to Track



Trailblazing Sign