

# TALMADGE HILL TRAIN STATION

## VISUAL INSPECTION REPORT



January 2007



Prepared by the Bureau of Public Transportation  
Connecticut Department of Transportation

**Overview:**

The Talmadge Hill Train Station is located in New Canaan. Access is convenient from Exit 36 of the Merritt Parkway. A small station trailblazing sign shows the way from Route 106 (Hoyt Street). The station consists of a series of hillside parking lots surrounding a station platform.

A four-car platform is wedged between the Merritt Parkway and Talmadge Hill Road. The platform has four Plexiglas shelters in good to fair condition. The main shelter has several benches, scratched glazing and power distribution boxes. The other shelters provide some level of protection from the elements.

While it may be possible to expand parking through additional land purchases, there is no room to extend the platform without relocating Talmadge Hill Road or the station.



The town and CDOT need to assess current operations and establish a realistic plan for the future of this station. This should be accomplished prior to investing into upgrades and improvements at this site.

**Maintenance Responsibilities:**

Owner:	CDOT
Operator:	Town
Platform Lights:	Metro-North
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 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 25, 2006:**

**Highway Access** – Access is convenient from the Merritt Parkway and Route 106. Several trailblazing signs should be added at the ends of the Parkway exit ramps and along Route 106. A station entrance sign is needed near the platform.

**Parking** – A series of parking lots are spread along the hillside beside Talmadge Hill Road. Some lots are connected some have separate entrances. Signage appears to identify each lot's intended use (daily, permit, etc.). However, a more detailed review of signage will help to alleviate any potential confusion or disorientation.

**Platforms** – The four-car platform cannot be extended without relocating Talmadge Hill Road or continuing the structure over the historic Merritt Parkway on a new railroad bridge. It has already been extended 12 to 16 feet at its north end to achieve the minimum length required to open the doors on a fourth railcar. This extension consists of metal grating. The platform has some cracks in the concrete. The warning strip is freshly painted, although it is a little narrow. The aluminum railing is weathered with rusted and corroded base plates.

**Canopy** – There is no canopy at this station. One is needed.

**Walks/Paths** – Paths between the various lots consist of bituminous walks and wooden stairs. Some of the paths are rather steep or uneven. Stair railings are rough and weathered. Lighting levels are questionable along the various paths.

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

**Shelter** – There are four Plexiglas shelters on the platform. The large shelter has two benches, several portable shelves and electrical boxes. The glazing is scratched from graffiti and attempts to remove it. Next to this is a more conventional three-sided shelter with translucent domes. Two other three-sided shelters are located near the ends of the platforms.

**Station Building** – None

**Bus Access & Taxi Stand** – There is no room for a bus to maneuver through the parking lots but access to Talmadge Hill Road is convenient. Taxis can access any part of the station.

**Signage** – Parking signs should be evaluated further to determine if occasional commuters can decipher the unique parking arrangements.

**Fences** – There is no fence on the other side of the track opposite the platform. Several deep holes and a culvert are present.

**Litter** – Except for some track level litter, the area is generally clean.

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Access** – There is a pull off adjacent to the platform ramp, which is probably an ADA parking space, but it is not signed. In addition, the bituminous surface is uneven and cracked.

**Amenities** (See Appendix A Photos)

- Kiosk: None
- Exterior Paint Theme: None
- Vending: Several newspaper boxes and a soda machine are located on the platform near the main shelter.
- Benches: Two benches in the main shelter and two on the platform.
- Railings: Aluminum back railing and stair/ramp handrails are weathered and rusted.
- Light Fixtures: Need to be evaluated.
- Trash: Two blue recycling bins on the platform as well as several PVC containers.
- Bicycle Rack: None
- Platform Clock: None

**General Remarks** – There are several options for improving the Talmadge Hill Station depending of the level of ridership anticipated for this location. The Department and the town need to discuss future demand and upgrade the facility accordingly.

**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:**

- Pick up track level trash.
- Remove vending machines and newspaper boxes from the platform, ramps and primary paths.
- Paint a wider warning stripe on the edge of the platform.
- Replace scratched shelter glazing.

**Amenity Upgrades:**

- Add a kiosk with a clock.
- Add a station entrance sign near the platforms.
- Add trailblazing signage on Route 106.
- Build a small shelter for vending and newspapers similar to the one at the New Canaan Station.
- Replace aluminum benches with contoured benches.
- Add a bike rack.

**Governance Improvements:**

- Replace aluminum back and stair/ramp railing with black railing.
- Install black fence or railing on the east side of the tracks especially near the old drainage structure.
- Install fence along the Merritt Parkway right of way.
- Place post-mounted lights along all paths.
- Replace all bituminous walks with flatter concrete walks and black railing. Stairs and ADA compliant ramps will need to be constructed to flatten some of the steeper slopes.
- Install a sidewalk along the road and across the railroad tracks.
- Add a TVM at this location.
- Consider a solid platform extension at the north end of the platform to replace the less secure looking steel grating.
- Better define the ADA parking area. Provide a flatter surface.
- Evaluate and supplement station signage as required.
- Evaluate station lighting levels and supplement, as needed.

**Major Capital Improvements:**

- Add a canopy to platform.
- Build a new shelter under the new canopy (similar to West Redding)
- If future demand warrants:
  - Consider moving the entire station to enable a longer platform, or
  - Consider adding a platform extension over the parkway when it comes time to replace the deteriorated Merritt Parkway Railroad Bridge. Of course, this will need to be accomplished within the historic restrictions of Merritt Parkway construction.

**-- END OF NARRATIVE --**

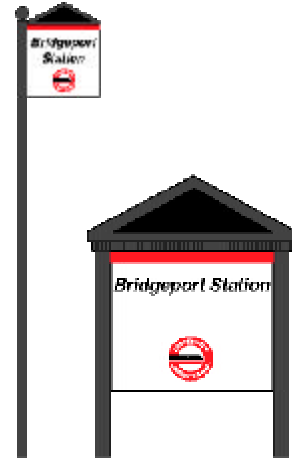
**APPENDIX A**



**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**