

WILTON TRAIN STATION

VISUAL INSPECTION REPORT



January 2007



Prepared by the Bureau of Public Transportation
Connecticut Department of Transportation

Overview:

The Wilton Train Station is located at the intersection of Route 7 (Danbury Road) and Route 33 (Ridgefield Road) near Wilton Center. Entering and exiting the station is a challenge most days due to high traffic volumes on both roads. In addition, there is no prominent signage indicating the station’s presence under the Route 33 overpass.



The station consists of several parking lots, an old station building, a vehicular/pedestrian rail crossing, and a center island platform. Free parking is available on a first come, first served basis. An at-grade crossing provides access to a lot located on the west side of the tracks. The station building is likely historic with a waiting room, rest rooms and a coffee shop. Closed during the time of this site visit, it was difficult to determine if the station building is active due to overgrown vegetation at the entrances.

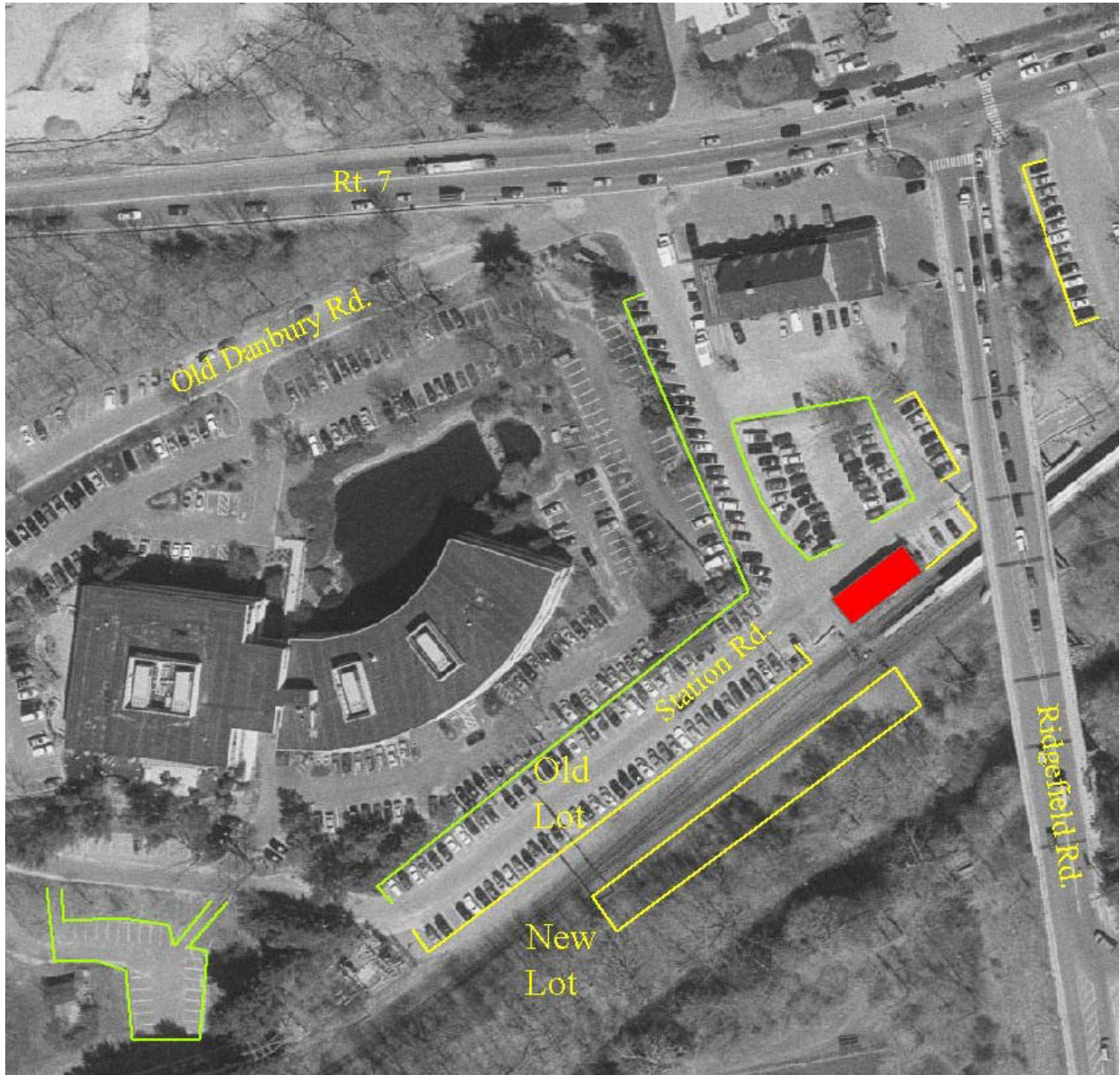
Wilton Station has a center island platform, accessible by a ramp from the at-grade pedestrian crossing. The platform is protected by a canopy for most of its length. Additionally, it is situated directly under the Route 33 overpass.

There are several active and planned construction projects taking place in the station area. Underground 345kV electrical cables are being installed by Northeast Utilities. A commercial building located just above the parking lot is being demolished. The Routes 7 and 33 intersection improvements are schedule to begin soon. Upon completion of the intersection project, construction is planned for a new parking structure at the station. Activities related to these and other projects will make access to this station even more challenging over the next few years.

Maintenance Responsibilities:

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

Highway Access – Located at the busy Routes 7/33 intersection, Wilton Station is difficult to find, hard to enter and even more challenging to exit. A station entrance sign is needed to announce the existence of the depot, as it is located in a depression well below Route 33. Current and future construction projects will eventually improve access to the station. Until then, maneuvers in and out of the parking lot will be formidable at times. As this is a busy intersection with its own clutter of signage, it is recommended that the Department provide additional trailblazing signage about a half mile in advance of the station on Route 7 from both directions and on Route 33.



Route 7 Traffic at Wilton Station Entrance

Parking – Parking is free and is filled on a first come, first served basis. A parking structure is planned for the Wilton Train Station. Its construction has been tentatively scheduled to follow the Routes 7/33 intersection improvement project.

Platforms – The high level platform is in good condition. The aluminum railing on the ramp is weathered causing stains in the concrete below. There are no tactile warning strips along the platform edge, but the painted yellow line is still visible.

Canopy – The canopy is in good condition. Drainage fixtures appear to be functional. There is evidence of bird droppings from the canopy roof and possibly the highway overpass. The Rail Governance Study reports that under canopy illumination levels are below standards.

Walks/Paths – With parking available on either side of the tracks, access to this platform requires crossing one track to the center island platform ramp. Both the pedestrian and adjacent vehicular crossings (right) are protected by crossing gates. The crossing has a bituminous surface that is cracked and uneven, especially at the bottom of the platform ramp. The ramp has no tactile warning at its base. The bollard mounted light fixtures on the edges of the platform ramp need to be sealed with new gaskets. The bituminous walk on the trackside of the station building is also cracked and uneven. Pedestrians move about the remainder of the station through parking lot aisles.



Wilton Station At Grade Rail Crossing

Ticket Vending Machine (TVM) – There is a TVM located in a thermoplastic glass shelter at the north side of the station building.

Shelter – A small shelter protects the TVM machine. It is in good condition. There are no platform shelters.

Station Building – The station building was closed during the site visit. There are no hours posted on either the waiting room or concession doors. Overgrown vegetation at both front doors give the appearance of an abandoned building. However, a glimpse through the door window reveals a well-stocked coffee shop. The Rail Governance Study notes that building ownership is shared between CDOT and another party. The study also notes deficiencies in waiting room lighting levels, electrical systems and ADA requirements. It is assumed that the rear door to the waiting room is always lock since it leads directly to the tracks. However, the rear door of the concession area has a fenced walkway to the pedestrian crossing (right). The building appears to be in good shape apart from the overgrown vegetation.



Bus Access & Taxi Stand – While a bus may be able to find a route through the parking lot, turns within the lot would be difficult. There is no evidence of a regular bus stop at this location and stopping on either Danbury Road or Ridgefield Road would be ill advised. Taxis can access all areas of the parking lot.

Signage – The vehicular crossing has mandatory signage, as do the ADA parking spaces. Other than that, signage is minimal throughout the station area.

Fences – Chain link fence along the right of way appears to be in good condition. Fencing around the platform ramp and crossing equipment is weathered and rusted.

Litter – There is considerable litter at track level around the platforms. There are no trash containers around the station building or adjacent parking lots. One must access the platform to find the only trash bin.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Access – ADA parking spaces are available next to the station building. The platform is accessible, but the station has some ADA non-compliance issues.

Amenities (See Appendix A Photos)

- Kiosk: None
- Exterior Paint Theme: Red
- Vending: Newspaper boxes at base of platform ramp
- Benches: Seating in building. One aluminum bench at the south end of the platform
- Railings: Aluminum railing on ramp
- Light Fixtures: Contemporary lights along platform and ramp
- Trash: One blue recycling bin at beginning of platform
- Bicycle Rack: None evident
- Platform Clock: None

General Remarks – The construction of various highway and utility contracts is ongoing and will continue for several years. There are plans to install a parking structure in the parking lot east of the rail crossing.

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:

- Repaint warning strip on edge of platform.
- Address bird drop and nesting problem.
- Reseal bollard mounted light fixtures along platform ramp.
- Re-Post station/concession hours signs to the front door.
- Maintain aluminum ramp rail to eliminate rust stains on the concrete beneath.
- Move the newspaper boxes off the platform ramp and from between the tracks. Place the boxes (and any vending machines) sufficiently away from primary walkways to avoid impeding pedestrian movement along the paths.
- Clean up the track level litter along the platforms.
- Trim the vegetation around the building and parking lots.

Amenity Upgrades:

- Add a kiosk. Aside from providing train information, the kiosk will keep patrons up to date on construction activities in and around the station.
- Add a station clock to the platform area, possibly on the rear wall of the station building.
- Add a large station entrance sign at main entrance just north of Route 33. Place smaller station signs at the Old Danbury Road entrance (1/4 mile north of Route 33) and at the parking entrance just south of Route 33.
- Consider a wind break on the platform to provide relief from winter wind or driving rain.
- If width allows, add several benches to the station platform.
- Place several trash cans around the station building.
- Install a bike rack somewhere near the station building.
- Perform repairs to station building noted in Governance Study.

Governance Improvements:

- Add tactile warning to both edges of platform
- Replace ramp aluminum railing with black railing
- Replace chain link fence around the rail crossing equipment with black railing.
- Install a raised concrete sidewalk between the railroad's east fence line and adjacent parking areas (north and south of the building). Replace chain link fence along this new walkway with black railing (similar to Branchville) or black chain link fence.
- Add raised concrete walks with curb cuts around the entire station building. Replace the chain link fence along the track with black railing. Tie the walk into the pedestrian crossing and parking lot paths.
- Provide post mounted lights along all paths. Consider post mounted lights as a replacement for the bollard mounted light fixtures.
- Increase lighting levels on the platform.
- Evaluate lighting levels throughout the station area.
- Evaluate signage in and around the station property. Add signage as necessary.

Major Capital Improvements:

- Intersection improvements are planned to the Route 7/33 intersection. Access to the station will be better defined upon completion of the project.
- A parking structure is planned for the station upon completion of the Route 7/33 intersection improvement project.

-- END OF NARRATIVE --



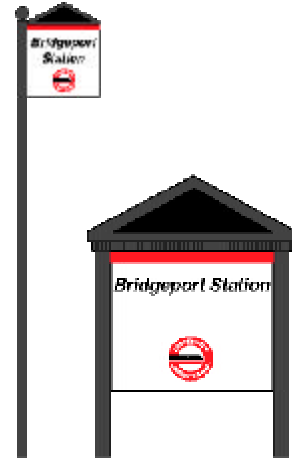
APPENDIX A



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