



Waterbury Rail Line Fact Sheet

The State of Connecticut initiated an infrastructure improvement project for the Waterbury Rail Line to install a traffic control signal system, implement Positive Train Control and construct passing sidings at four locations: Devon, Derby, Beacon Falls and Waterbury. The total investment to date is about \$90 million. Completion of the signal system is scheduled for December 2020, with the signal system along with PTC fully operational by mid-2021.

The intent of the proposed Waterbury Rail Line improvement program is to finish the work started by the CTDOT and take full advantage of the current \$90 million investment. Without the requisite replacement and upgrade of existing rail equipment, acquisition of new, modern rail equipment, expansion of service to meet passenger travel needs, and development of adequate rail storage and maintenance facilities, the allocation of \$90 million for WRL improvements will not result in a positive return and the benefits would not have justified the expenditure. It is only by continuing and completing the project will the state realize the full economic potential from improving the WRL.

Infrastructure Points

- Longest of the 3 branch lines at 27 miles
- Track in generally good condition; max speed = 59 mph – several sections have speed restrictions due to grade crossings and condition
- Single track; “dark” territory because of lack of signals – only one train allowed on the line at any time
- Connects to the New Haven main line at the Devon wye; only the inbound (toward New York) connection is in service, can’t get to New Haven unless travel to Bridgeport and transfer
- Average travel time between Waterbury and Bridgeport is about 55 minutes

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- State has invested about \$90 million for new traffic control signal system, Positive Train Control (PTC) and passing sidings, but has not committed to equipment and service increases to take advantage of that investment

Service and Operations

- Six stations on the WRL – Waterbury, Naugatuck, Beacon Falls, Seymour, Ansonia and Derby/Shelton
- Limited service; only 15 trips daily – 8 inbound toward Bridgeport and 7 outbound to Waterbury
- Once signal system operational, multiple trains will be able to operate on the line – capacity would allow up to 10 trains per hour
- Service generally ends at Bridgeport; one trip continues to Stamford and two trips (one in the morning and one in the evening) stop at Stratford
- Daily ridership is about 1,000 – the past year’s ridership totaled 345,000, a 94% increase of the total recorded in 2004
- 2½ hours between trains

Problems and Concerns

- Insufficient number of trains in the morning and evening time periods
- Can’t make connections – concerned if you miss a connection, you have to wait a long time; 2-to-2½ hours
- Over half (55%) of riders transfer to a New Haven main line train
- Existing equipment is unreliable, in poor condition and not clean
- Riders want CTDOT and MNRR to be more responsive to complaints
- Poor communication when service delayed or disrupted – no real time information
- Poor on time performance – average for 2018 was 81.2%
- Excessive delay when buses substituted for service
- Stations are not accessible – low level platforms make boarding and alighting trains difficult for mobility impaired riders
- Limited sheltered waiting areas for riders
- Lack of passenger amenities either on board or while waiting for a train

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Traffic Considerations

- About 80,800 vehicles cross the Commodore Hull Bridge (Derby-Shelton town line) on Route 8 each day
- Morning traffic backs-up from the Commodore Hull Bridge to Seymour; in the evening northbound traffic backs-up through Shelton to about the Merritt Parkway
- About 14,000 people travel to Bridgeport, New Haven or Stamford each day from the Naugatuck Valley; this translates into about 28,000 trips
- More affordable housing in the Naugatuck Valley resulted in a shift of commuting from the NV to lower Fairfield – workers couldn't afford to live near their jobs in Fairfield County and moved to Naugatuck Valley; increased the flow of traffic on Route 8 to I-95

Economic Development Considerations

- Stations areas located in small, compact, historic downtowns with infrastructure available to support higher density land uses
- Former industrial economic bases with numerous vacant or underutilized parcels available for reuse and redevelopment
- Current economic trends indicate that younger workforce wants to live in vibrant, walkable areas where convenient transit available and they don't have to rely on driving
- Investment in the WRL will revitalize downtown areas and spur private development; recent experience:
 - About \$375 million has been invested near CTfastrak line stations
 - About \$400 million has been invested along the Hartford Line
- Assessment of TOD potential near WRL stations by CDM Smith indicates the potential increase in commercial development, housing units and population:
 - About 5.2 million square feet of new commercial space
 - About 6,245 new residential units
 - About 16,400 new residents
 - Potential tripling of WRL ridership – about 2,000 new riders

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