



Connecticut Department of Transportation

Danbury Branch Study News

September/October 2003

www.danburybranchstudy.com

Welcome to our Open House!
This is an opportunity to ask questions about improvement strategies currently under consideration in the Connecticut Department of Transportation's Feasibility Study of the Danbury Branch of the New Haven Line commuter rail service.

The Study Corridor

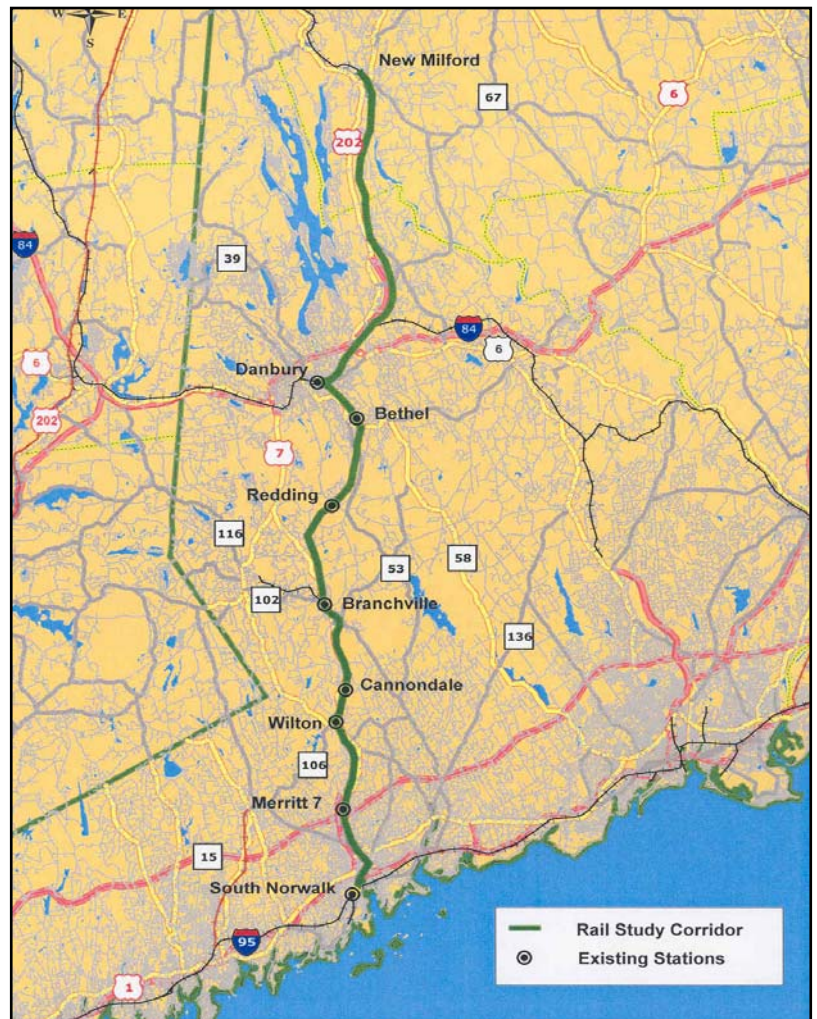
The study area corridor consists of 23.6 miles of existing rail line between Norwalk and Danbury, which is owned by the Connecticut Department of Transportation, and 14 miles of existing rail line between Danbury and New Milford, which is owned by the Danbury Terminal Railroad (a subsidiary of the Housatonic Railroad Company) and the Housatonic Railroad Company.



Photo by J.W. Swanberg

Study Background

The Danbury Branch Electrification Feasibility Study is a result of a number of factors including the branch's past history, which provided electrified service between 1925 and 1961, the results of previous studies, which recommend electrification, infrastructure, and service improvements to the branch, and support from the two regional planning organizations (the South Western Regional Planning Agency and the Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials), who are interested in bringing improvements to the branch and for its customers. A review of the previous studies that helped lead to this current effort is available on the project's website or by contacting the study team.



Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the Danbury Branch study is “to evaluate a range of infrastructure and service improvements to determine their potential to significantly enhance the Branch’s attraction as a competitive alternative to driving in the Route 7 and other adjacent north/south corridors, or commuting on the Harlem Line in New York. The study will result in a list of recommended infrastructure and service improvements that will include an evaluation of the costs and benefits. The results of this study will provide decision makers with the information necessary to determine how the needs of the Danbury Branch fit in an overall statewide transportation strategy which must balance needs and funding ability.”

Improvement Strategies Under Study

1 Track Geometry Improvements

The study is evaluating the feasibility and costs of various improvements to the track, including track curves, superelevations (banking to improve speeds), track clearances, and grade crossings. Three improvement programs are under consideration that would result in reduced travel times to South Norwalk of five (5), ten (10) and fifteen (15) minutes. If it is determined that it is not feasible to achieve these levels, then the study will determine what the maximum achievable travel time reduction is with cost estimates.



Undergrade & Overhead Bridges.

2 Potential for Double Tracking

The Danbury Branch is currently a single track railroad, which limits the number of trains that can effectively operate on the line. The study is examining the feasibility of double tracking the line from South Norwalk all the way to New Milford. It should be noted that there are significant constraints to double tracking – primarily in terms of environmental issues, geographic limitations, existing structures, and the prohibitive costs of property acquisitions. The study will expose these limitations and provide a realistic cost estimate for double tracking the entire branch and section to New Milford.



Curves through a Rock cut.



Curves through a Grade Crossing.

3 Feasibility of Passing Sidings

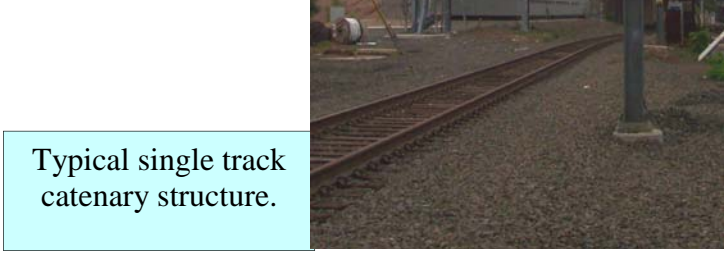
An alternative to double tracking is the addition of passing sidings, which allows for trains to operate in two directions more frequently. The study is determining the optimum number of sidings and their locations based on the results of the potential track improvements described above. We are considering two alternatives: one is based on a 12-car length siding; the second alternative is considering a siding of sufficient length to allow trains to pass on the move, similar to a double track alternative.



Passing Siding at a grade crossing.

4 Electrification

Once the potential improvements described above have been fully studied and results determined, we will develop a complete cost estimate for electrification of the newly configured Danbury Branch. The study will also examine what travel time improvements can be achieved as a result of the electrification.



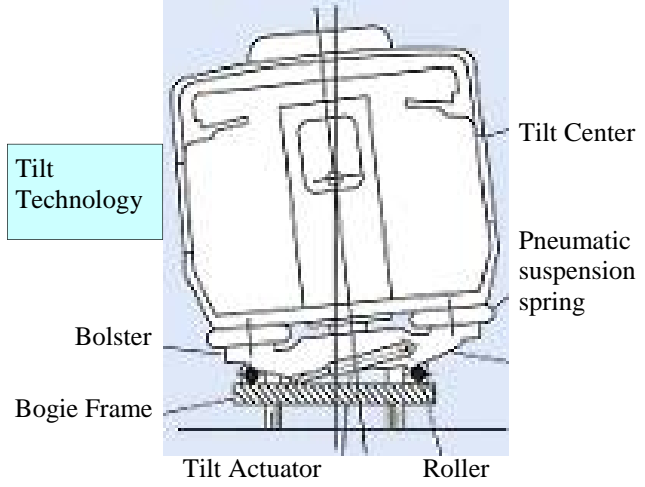
Typical single track catenary structure.



Diesel Multiple Unit

5 Innovative Technologies

The study is examining innovative technologies that may help reduce travel time on the Branch. These include tilt-technology vehicles, diesel multiple unit trains, and grade crossing equipment, as examples. Resources include the Federal Railroad Administration's Office of Research and Development and other operators of commuter rail service in the U.S. and abroad.



Study Schedule

The Study is being conducted in two phases, with the first phase scheduled for completion by Spring, 2004. It is anticipated that another set of public meetings will be held at that time to share study findings with the public. In addition, a Study Advisory Committee has been established to review reports and help provide input as the study is being prepared. The Study Advisory Committee meetings are posted on the website. A Second Phase is anticipated to begin shortly afterwards and will focus on those components of Phase 1 that are determined to improve the utility of the Branch and that are cost effective.

Danbury Branch – Fact Sheet

Danbury Branch (South Norwalk to Danbury)

- 23.6 miles
- 8 Stations
 - South Norwalk (New Haven Line)
 - Merritt
 - Wilton
 - Cannondale
 - Branchville
 - West Redding
 - Bethel
 - Danbury

- Grade Crossings: 35
- Undergrade Bridges: 27
- Overhead Bridges: 10

- Passing Sidings
 - MP 0.11 to MP 0.60
 - MP 7.00 to MP 7.32
 - MP 12.7 to MP 13.0
 - MP 23.0 to MP 23.6

(Danbury Station)

- Sidings
 - MP 20.4

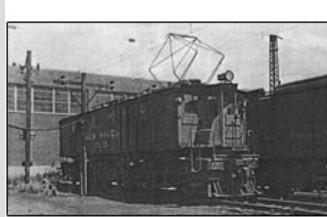
Maybrook Line (Danbury to Berkshire Junction)

- 2.9 miles
- Grade Crossings: 2
- Undergrade Bridges: 2
- Overhead Bridges: 2

- Passing Siding
 - 2.9 miles (Danbury Branch – Berkshire Junction)

Berkshire Line (Berkshire Junction to New Milford)

- Approximately 11.5 miles to New Milford Station
- 1 Station – New Milford (Proposed)
- Grade Crossings: 7
- Undergrade Bridges: 10
- Overhead Bridges: 5
- Passing Sidings
 - 1 @ New Milford Station
 - 1 @ Kimberly-Clark



Photos by J.W. Swanberg or from the J.W. Swanberg Collection.

Public Outreach Goals

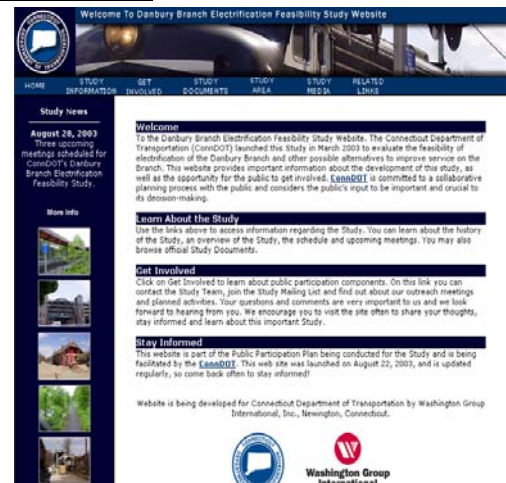
1. Establish effective communication with the public.
2. Encourage early and continuing public participation.
3. Present complete information to the public.
4. Determine public sentiment.

Get Involved!

The Danbury Branch Feasibility Study can only be successful if we have your feedback and comments. Our goal is to establish effective communication with the public and to continue that communication throughout the study.

There are many ways that you can provide us with your thoughts and comments.

You can go to the Study Website, www.danburybranchstudy.com and click on the Get Involved section.



To join the mailing list:

- o Mail: Feasibility Study Danbury Branch Electrification, Care of: Washington Group International, Inc. 30 Christian Lane, Newington, CT 06111, Attention: Stephen A. Gazillo, Project Manager
 - o By fax: (860) 667-7002
 - o By calling Steve Gazillo, Project Manager of Washington Group, at (860) 667-7622.
- Or through e-mail: info@danburybranchstudy.com



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James F. Byrnes, Jr., Commissioner of Transportation

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