



THE WILTON BULLETIN

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Wilton Bulletin

Oct 20, 2005

[Rail electrification: Will it boost ridership on trains?](#)

A smorgasbord of rail improvements — including a \$168-million re-electrification of the Danbury Branch Line — has been quietly under study for two years, and selected options are being readied for presentation to the public.

Five alternative options put together as part of the Danbury Branch Line Electrification Feasibility Study will be aired at two public meetings tentatively scheduled for the week after Thanksgiving in Wilton and New Milford. Despite the study's name, not all the alternatives being looked at involve electrification.

The goals of \$500,000 federally financed study are to improve rail service, increase rail ridership, and ease traffic — or at least slow its growth — in the Route 7 corridor.

A comprehensive study is viewed as the first step in any serious effort to improve rail service. As advisory committee members fretted Tuesday over what seemed prohibitively high costs for some options — the “full build” option carried an estimated cost of \$1.4 billion — state Rep. Toni Boucher of Wilton told her colleagues not to penny-pinch at the planning stage. “You go for it: What is the best option? And time and money will determine what gets done,” she said.