

STAMFORD TRANSPORTATION CENTER

PARKING GARAGE

ENTRANCE/EXIT NUMBER	STATUS OF ENTRY / EXIT FROM JANUARY 19, TO FEBRUARY 29,	STATUS OF ENTRY / EXIT BEGINNING MARCH 1,
1	CLOSED	<u>OPEN</u> - STAFFED 24/7 FOR MONTHLY AND DAILY PARKING FOR <u>ENTRY AND EXIT</u>
2	CLOSED	<u>OPEN</u> - 5 AM TO 12 NOON DAILY FOR MONTHLY <u>ENTRANCE ONLY</u>
3	<u>OPEN</u> - 24/7 FOR MONTHLY PARKING FOR EXIT ONLY, STAFFED 4PM TO 11 PM FOR DAILY PARKING FOR <u>EXIT ONLY</u>	<u>OPEN</u> - 24/7 FOR MONTHLY PARKING FOR EXIT ONLY, STAFFED 4PM TO 11 PM FOR DAILY PARKING FOR <u>EXIT ONLY</u>
4	<u>OPEN</u> - STAFFED 24/7 FOR MONTHLY AND DAILY PARKING FOR <u>ENTRY AND EXIT</u>	<u>OPEN</u> - 5 AM TO 12 MIDNIGHT FOR MONTHLY, STAFFED 3 PM TO 11 PM SUNDAY THROUGH FRIDAY FOR DAILY PARKING, CLOSED 12 MIDNIGHT TO 5 AM DAILY FOR <u>ENTRY AND EXIT</u>
5	<u>OPEN</u> - 4 PM TO 10 PM FOR MONTHLY <u>EXIT ONLY</u>	<u>CLOSED</u> - ENTRY AS NEEDED FOR HIGH TOP HANDICAP VAN ENTRANCE ONLY. FOR ON-CALL SYSTEM. EMERGENCY EXIT AS NEEDED.
PEDESTRIAN DOOR NUMBER	STATUS OF DOOR FROM JANUARY 19 TO JANUARY 29	STATUS OF DOOR BEGINNING MARCH 1
6	LOCKED AT ALL TIMES	<u>OPEN</u> - 24 HOURS A DAY 7 DAYS A WEEK FOR <u>ENTRY AND EXIT</u>
7	LOCKED AT ALL TIMES	<u>OPEN</u> - 4 PM TO 10 PM FOR <u>ENTRY AND EXIT</u> , 7 DAYS A WEEK
8	UNLOCKED AT ALL TIMES	<u>OPEN</u> - 4 PM TO 10 PM FOR <u>ENTRY AND EXIT</u> , 7 DAYS A WEEK
9	<u>EXIT</u> ONLY AT ALL TIMES	<u>EXIT</u> ONLY AT ALL TIMES
10	<u>EXIT</u> ONLY AT ALL TIMES	<u>EXIT</u> ONLY AT ALL TIMES
11	<u>EXIT</u> ONLY AT ALL TIMES	<u>EXIT</u> ONLY AT ALL TIMES

Noroton Heights Railroad Station

Frequently Asked Questions

by Jim Cameron, CT Metro-North Rail Commuter Council

Who owns the Noroton Hts. railroad station?

Like most of the stations on the New Haven line, this one is owned by the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CDOT), but leased to the Town of Darien along with the parking lots.

Who owns the parking at the station?

The parking lots are also owned by CDOT and are leased to the Town of Darien which sets the rates and administers the parking, both daily vouchers (\$2.50) and annual permits (\$235).

Why are non-residents of Darien allowed to park there?

Because the lot is owned by the state, Darien residents cannot be given any special preference. At present the waiting list for annual permits is about four years long. But the Town is updating the list to see if those on the list are still interested or if they've moved out of the region.

How many permits are sold?

There are 439 spaces in the annual permit lot, but 777 permits are sold, about a 76% over-sell. Because permits are relatively inexpensive (\$235 at Noroton Hts vs \$600 per year in Norwalk), those who've waited on the list and received their permits tend to keep them, even if they don't use them regularly. The lot is rarely full, so one suggestion to expand parking might be to sell more permits.

Are there other ways to expand parking?

Yes. There are 100 daily voucher parking spaces next to Post 53 on the south side of the tracks across from The Depot (Teen Center). The Commuter Council has suggested for years now that signs be placed near the Depot alerting would-be parkers to these additional unused spaces.

Where does the money from parking permits go?

Under the Town's contract with CDOT, 20% of the revenues go directly to CDOT. Where the balance of the money (approx. \$260,000 per year for Noroton Hts. alone) ends up is something of a mystery because, until now, the Town has never kept station revenue and expenses as a line item in its budget.

In November 2002, at the time of the last rate hike for daily parking, the Commuter Council made a formal request of then First Selectman Bob Harrell for an accounting of parking revenue and expenses. Eight months later he delivered his best guesstimate showing that much of the money went to pay for salaries of workers at Town Hall.

Why is the station in such bad shape?

According to the Town's contract with CDOT, parking revenue is first to be spent on the maintenance and repair of the station and parking lots. Only after those expenses can the Town use parking money for "General Fund" purposes. In recent years the Town has done just the opposite, pouring parking money into the General Fund and spending little or nothing on station upkeep, with no accounting of those expenses.

Why is security so poor in the parking lot and there are so many break-ins?

Though patrolled by Darien Police and Darien Public Works staffers, the lot is quiet most of the day making it an attractive target for thieves. Despite many requests for the installation of security cameras, Town officials have refused such suggestions.

Why doesn't CDOT enforce its contract and require the Town to fix things?

CDOT is now doing this. In November 2002 they hired a consultant, Urbitran Assoc., to look at all of the rail stations and examine their condition. Noroton Hts was ranked "worst" on the line by commuters. The consultants' engineers identified \$538,000 in necessary repairs. To view the 62-page report, see <http://www.citrailgovernance.com/reports/Noroton%20Heights.pdf>

In January 2004, CDOT appeared before the Darien Board of Selectman and reminded the Town of its contractual obligation to fix the station, citing the Urbitran study which had been given last year to then-First Selectman Harrell. The Town must now find the money to complete the repairs.

Does CDOT want to "take over" the station?

CDOT already owns the station. It is offering to assume operational control of the station as it has done with the railroad stations in New Haven, Bridgeport, Fairfield and Stamford, several of which were also in bad shape, neglected by their Towns.

What does CDOT want in return for "taking over" the Noroton Hts. station?

CDOT is interested in offering expanded parking at stations along the New Haven line to get commuters out of their cars and onto the trains. In return for assuming operational control of the station and waving the Town's liability for the \$538,000 in repairs, CDOT wants to build and operate additional parking at the station.

What kind of parking structure does CDOT have in mind?

Nobody knows for sure because CDOT has presented no designs. They have only spoken about adding 450 additional spaces to the existing 439 in the permit lot, effectively doubling the capacity of the lot. This would probably mean adding one more level of parking by digging into the side of the hill.

Why Noroton Hts. station for this parking structure?

Because of its location and topography. The permit lot is sandwiched between the railroad tracks and I-95 on a sloping hill. The idea is that, by building into the side of the hill, additional parking can be added without necessarily adding to the height of the lot. Also, there are no residential houses facing the lot, reducing its impact on the neighborhood.

In fact, the idea of expanded parking at Noroton Hts. is considered in Darien's long-range Town Plan, drawn up by P&Z under the Harrell administration. See page 23 of the 11/12/03 draft of the new Town Plan
<http://www.ci.darien.ct.us/townplan/trafficandtransimp.pdf>

What is the South West Regional Planning Agency's role in all this?

SWRPA is conducting its own study of parking at the five railroad stations in Darien and Norwalk. Their consultants are especially interested in Noroton Hts and So. Norwalk and they are holding public information hearings on possible expanded parking at those stations. More details are available at:
<http://www.swrpa.org/projects/railroadparking.htm#ProjectTeam>

Who would pay for the construction and how long would it take?

The lot would be built with \$3 to \$6 million in state and federal funds. Construction would probably take many months, following a design process of several years. Again, no design has been presented, but the Town's interest is being evaluated. CDOT has said it will not force a parking garage on a Town that does not want it.

Where would parking permits holders go during construction?

That remains to be seen, but as we saw during the reconstruction of the Darien station, accommodations can be made.

Wouldn't more parking mean more traffic?

Yes, and CDOT has offered to spend additional money to mitigate this impact. Another possibility would be to have access to and from the lot also be available directly from I-95.

Wouldn't more commuters using the station just mean further crowding on the trains?

No, because CDOT and Metro-North have had a long policy of putting the train service where the parking is. More parking at Noroton Hts would actually mean *more* train service. If the parking is not built at Noroton Hts., we might actually lose train service to the Towns that do add parking.

Why not order more trains to deal with the crowding?

Good ideal. But because it would cost \$2.5 - \$3 Billion to replace our aging fleet of cars, there is no political will in Hartford to deal with this issue. Even if the money was allocated it would take 3-4 years for the new cars to go into service. If crowding on the trains gets any worse it will discourage ridership.

So, what benefit would there be in seeing this parking lot get built?

- 1) Expanded train service to Noroton Hts.... more trains, more often.
- 2) Better train service would mean higher real estate values.
- 3) CDOT would rebuild, and in fact expand, the station at no cost to the Town.
- 4) CDOT would waive the Town's \$538,000 expense for deferred maintenance.
- 5) A parking lot could be designed with additional amenities, ie stores.
- 6) The lot would have security designed into it with TV monitors and security personnel.
- 7) More parking would mean more commuters and less traffic on I-95 for those who must drive.

What's the CT Metro-North Rail Commuter Council's involvement in this issue?

Created by the legislature as a watchdog group to promote the interest of commuters, the Council is comprised of riders, just like you. Vice Chmn. Jim Cameron resides in Darien, commutes out of Noroton Hts. and is a member of the RTM. With the backing of the Council, he has pursued the parking revenue vs. maintenance issue because the Council sees this as an issue at many stations and Towns along the line. For more information about the Commuter Council's work, see www.trainweb.org/ct or contact Jim Cameron at jim@camcomm.com

For full results of the Council and Town's poll of Noroton Hts commuters, see: <http://www.ci.darien.ct.us/news/nhmsurveyresults.htm>

SIGN SYMBOL LEGEND	
(S)	INDICATES CLEAR WIDTH
(S)	ALL OTHER MARKS

LOWER LEVEL PLAN

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

Station Place 7

NOTE
1. ALL SIGN LOCATIONS TO BE INSTALLED AS ORDERED BY DESIGNER AND APPROVED BY CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION.



SIGN SYMBOL LEGEND	
(S)	INDICATES CLEAR WIDTH
(S)	ALL OTHER MARKS

FIRST LEVEL PLAN

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

Alhambra

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1. ALL SIGN LOCATIONS TO BE INSTALLED AS ORDERED BY DESIGNER AND APPROVED BY CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION.

