



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Steve Soler  
**Project:** Georgetown Special Taxing District  
**From:** Susan VanBenschoten, PE  
**Date:** August 18, 2008  
**Subject:** Train Station Parking Demand Assessment

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The purpose of this memo is to present the estimated parking demand for the proposed Georgetown Train Station. This memo presents the methodology and results of a parking demand assessment for the site. It has been completed in order to estimate the potential total parking demand for the year 2020 including latent (unmet) parking demand in the “ridershed” of the station. The purpose is to provide information to help appropriately size the garage.

### Methodology

It is important to realize that the potential parking demand at the Georgetown Station relates to the ridership demand and resulting parking demand at all stations along the branch line. In other words, deficits in parking supply in Branchville and Wilton (the two stations on either side of the Georgetown Station) as well as deficits in parking demand along the branch line in general can possibly be met by providing parking in Georgetown. This system-wide look at the ridership and parking demand on the branch line in general provides valuable information as to the potential role the Georgetown Station could play on both a local and regional basis.

As such, to complete this assessment, FHI gathered pertinent data related to train commuter demand within the entire Danbury Branch Line commuter shed. Below is a listing of the research completed for this effort.

- FHI had discussions with ConnDOT facilities personnel regarding their methodology in estimating train station parking demand. Based on these discussions, it was learned that currently, ConnDOT has no set formula for determining individual train station parking demand. In general, parking facility sizing is based on perceived need and opportunities on each individual site. Parking supply decisions are also based on economic drivers such as cost for surface vs. structured parking and opportunities to provide parking at other locations. Given the strong shift to transit over the past few years in response to highway congestion and high fuel costs, the State DOT has a strong emphasis on improving transit services and transit access. Parking deficits at train stations

exist throughout the state on the main New Haven Line, the Shoreline East stations, and along the Branch lines. As a result, ConnDOT often aims to maximize parking at train stations and is continually looking for opportunities to increase rail parking in order to provide maximum access to transit for commuters. This trend is expected to continue with a general feeling that “if you build it, they will come”.

- FHI gathered all available rail ridership counts and estimates for the Danbury Branch Line in order to get a sense of both the existing and future rail ridership activity along the line as an indicator of rail parking demand trends. The ongoing Feasibility Study of Danbury Branch Line Electrification<sup>1</sup> being completed by the Department provided some estimates about likely ridership increases between 2000-2020. The study estimated 40-48% ridership growth between 2000 and 2020 depending on the level of rail improvements that are implemented along the line.
- FHI researched other sources of rail ridership estimates for the Danbury Branch Line. The 2000 joint SWRPA/HVCEO sponsored study of the Route 7 corridor<sup>2</sup> recommended a two-phased schedule of service improvements to the branch line as well as extension of the branch line from Danbury to New Milford. As part of this study, ridership estimates were made for a 2015 No-Build condition (no improvements to service) and various scenarios with improvements. The study estimated that there was the potential for 68-98% growth depending on the level of rail improvements implemented (note: these percentages only include improvements to existing service and not the added ridership resulting from the extension of service to New Milford). Both this study and the Branch Line Electrification study were completed before the more recent spikes in gasoline prices and strong shift to transit that has resulted. It's therefore possible that these rail ridership estimates could be low.
- FHI gathered all available parking supply and utilization information. The parking information was from HVCEO's Long-Range Plan and was originally collected and calculated as part of the Route 7 Transit Options Implementation Plan previously referenced. The study provided existing information on all seven Danbury Branch Line stations including supply, observed utilization, and 2015 parking demand estimates with and without improvements to the branch line service. The study estimated a branch-line parking deficit of 272 spaces in 2015 with no improvements and a 672-space deficit with service improvements to the line. The most severe deficits are expected in the four southernmost stations along the line including Merritt 7, Wilton, Cannondale, and Branchville; where a total deficit of 582 spaces is anticipated; however, by 2015 all branch line stations are expected to operate at capacity. Table 1 below is from the 2000 corridor study showing these anticipated parking deficits.

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<sup>1</sup> Feasibility Study Danbury Branch Line Electrification; State Project 302-008.

<sup>2</sup> Route 7 Travel Options Implementation Plan; SWRPA and HVCEO; 2000

**Table 1: Rail Station Parking Needs Summary (Enhanced Danbury Branch Service)**

Station	Existing Parking Supply	Observed Parking Utilization	2015 No-Build Parking Surplus/ (Deficit)	Phase 1 Parking Surplus/ (Deficit)	Phase 2 Parking Surplus/ (Deficit)
Merritt 7	87	81	-8	-67	-95
Wilton	194	185	-22	-95	-127
Cannondale	146	133	-103	-126	-137
Branchville	170	173	-154	-197	-223
West Redding	80	40	5	-13	-22
Bethel	199	105	3	-29	-44
Danbury	119	60	7	-6	-24

Source: Route 7 Travel Options Implementation Plan, VHB, June 2000.

- FHI learned that Metro-North has completed new rail ridership counts for ConnDOT which have not yet been released. These new counts could provide valuable information related to actual rail ridership growth since 2000. It's important to note, however, that actual ridership levels are currently constrained by deficits in parking supply at many stations along the line so they do not completely reflect the demand along the line as latent demand cannot be measured.
- FHI also considered conducting updated parking supply and demand counts at the branch line stations, but decided against this given the tendency for reduced demand during the summer vacation months and the fact that if full, it's not possible to directly measure latent (or unmet) demand. It is recommended that parking utilization counts be conducted this fall to determine if any excess parking capacity exists at Danbury Branch Line stations.

## Conclusions

Given the data and information obtained in the data search and analysis described above, it is clear that additional parking at train stations along the branch line is needed to provide access to public transportation. The Georgetown Station, located about half way along the branch line provides a unique opportunity to address much of the system parking shortfalls. To calculate the estimated parking demand at the Georgetown Station, the following assumptions and conclusions were made:

- The unmet demand at the Branchville Station will use the Georgetown Station given it's proximity to Branchville. Data sources indicate the Branchville Station will have a deficit of **223** spaces by 2015 with branch line service improvements.
- The West Redding, Bethel, and Danbury Stations will all be over capacity by

2015 by a total of **90** spaces which can be met in the Georgetown Station.

- Some portion of the Cannondale parking demand can be met at the Georgetown Station for commuters who live at the northern part of Wilton. For estimation purposes we have assumed that ¼ of the total 285-space Cannondale Station parking demand of can reasonably be serviced at the Georgetown Station, resulting in an additional **71** space demand; representing about half of the anticipated parking deficit for this station.
- All of these estimates are for 2015 and growth in rail ridership and parking demand are anticipated between 2015 and 2020. If rail ridership grows at a modest 1% per year over this 5 year period, an additional 20 spaces would be needed at the Georgetown Station.
- While it's anticipated that most of the on-site Georgetown Village commuters will walk to the station, some commuters will still choose to drive and park for convenience and for time savings. The ridership demand generated by the new Georgetown development is estimated at 168 new daily riders (both directions) and 84 new inbound boardings. This results in the need for 17 parking spaces per day assuming that 20% of residents who use transit from the site will drive the short distance to the station rather than walk.

**Table 2: Georgetown Station Parking Demand**

<b>Component of Demand</b>	<b>Parking Demand (spaces)</b>
Branchville Station Excess Demand	223
Danbury, Bethel, and West Redding Excess Demand	90
Cannondale Excess Demand	71
Estimated Growth from 2015 to 2020	20
Site-Generated Demand	17
<b>Total Parking Demand at Georgetown Station</b>	<b>421</b>

Source: Fitzgerald and Halliday, August 2000.

Table 2 shows a summary of the various component of the parking demand anticipated for the Georgetown Station. As shown, the estimated parking demand at the Georgetown Station is approximately 420 spaces. This estimate is obviously based on a large number of assumptions and other data sources, however, based on this assessment, it seems reasonable that the parking demand in Georgetown for commuter rail services could range from 350 to 450 spaces.