

Old Saybrook's four railroads

This Connecticut town offers a close look at the modernized Northeast Corridor



A westbound Shore Line East commuter train at Old Saybrook. Two photos, Scott A. Hartley



The steam-powered Valley Railroad is located just 4 miles north in Essex.

LOCATION: Amtrak's busy Northeast Corridor offers opportunities to watch and photograph passenger and freight trains. Old Saybrook, Conn., located on the state's Long Island Sound coastline about midway between New York City and Boston, is a stop for Amtrak *Northeast Regional* trains and all of the Connecticut Department of Transportation Shore Line East commuter trains.

Amtrak staffs the red 1873 wood-frame station, which is partially hidden by the adjacent Saybrook Junction commercial district. New office buildings complement the old New York, New Haven & Hartford freight house, which still stands trackside as a restaurant. Passengers board trains from two high-level platforms. An enclosed overhead walkway was constructed in the 1990s as part of Amtrak's electrification and modernization project east of New Haven, Conn.

TRAIN-WATCHING: On weekdays, Amtrak schedules 19 trains, 10 *Northeast Regional* and nine *Acela Express*, in each direction through Old Saybrook. Seven eastbound and six westbound *Regional* trains, all pulled by new Siemens-built ACS-64 electric locomotives, stop at the station. All other Amtrak trains are nonstop, and the *Acelas* cruise through at 110 mph.

Shore Line East commuter service is almost as frequent. Seventeen trains operate in each direction on the 33 miles between New Haven and Old Saybrook. Seven of those round trips cover the additional 17 miles east to New London. The trains feature diesel-powered, push-pull consists. Former Virginia Railway Express cars are propelled by CDOT's 12 former Amtrak GE P40 locomotives, most wearing Amtrak blue

and silver, and six GP40-2H locomotives, all painted in the 1950s-era New Haven red, white, and black scheme.

Freight service on this portion of the Northeast Corridor is provided by the Providence & Worcester Railroad. The company's Plainfield, Conn.-New Haven, Conn., turn usually operates in darkness. P&W serves two freight customers on the Northeast Corridor in Old Saybrook.

A defect detector on the Amtrak Northeast Corridor radio frequency at Old Lyme, across the Connecticut River, gives a couple of minutes warning of westbound trains. A green westbound interlocking signal aspect, visible just west of the station, also indicates the track that the next train will use. Eastbounds are visible for some distance as they approach Old Saybrook on a long tangent.

Other nearby locations from which to see and

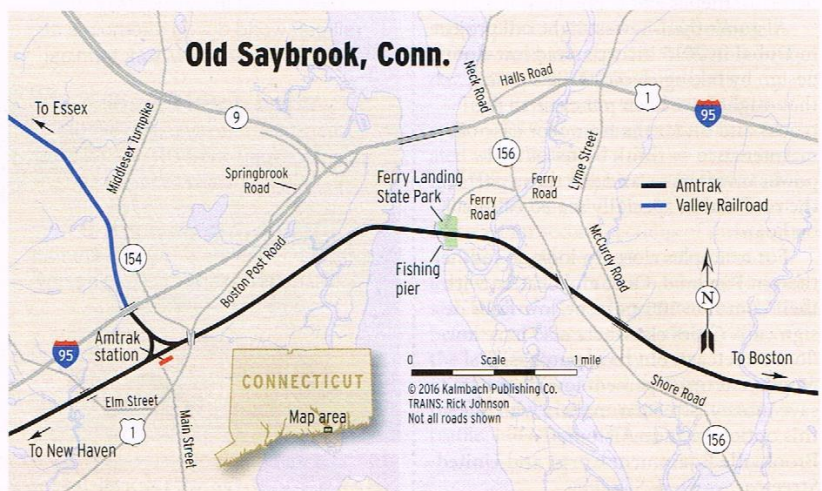
photograph Amtrak and Shore Line East trains include the public beaches at Niantic (with a mile-long boardwalk) and Rocky Neck State Park, both in the town of East Lyme, where trains run along the shore. The Ferry Landing State Park in Old Lyme is a nice place to watch trains, even if photography angles are limited. A long fishing pier runs under the east end of Amtrak's lengthy Connecticut River bridge, and train and boat activity is nonstop during the summer months.

Just 4 miles north of Old Saybrook is the town of Essex, base of operations for the steam trains of the Valley Railroad. Those trains, coupled with a popular Connecticut River boat ride, operate north from Essex. The Valley Railroad still connects with Amtrak at Old Saybrook, but the line is used only for equipment moves.

RADIO FREQUENCIES: Northeast Corridor, 160.920; Providence & Worcester switching, 160.650.

FOR YOUR FAMILY: In addition to the many Long Island Sound beaches and popular seafood restaurants, the lower Connecticut River Valley offers beautiful scenery and many classic small New England towns.

THIS MONTH: OLD SAYBROOK, CONN.



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