



The New Brunswick railroad station, from the platform, looking north toward Highland Park. The city leases the facility from NJ Transit and the New Brunswick Development Corp. is paid to maintain it.

Train station has long way to go

New Brunswick riders cite smell, safety, looks as main complaints

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NEW BRUNSWICK — The paint is peeling, the corridors smell like urine and the walls are plastered with graffiti. It's not home, but city commuters spend too much time there to feel comfortable with assurances that the downtown railroad station will soon be sparkling.

Many commuters interviewed recently said that while the facility has looked slightly better in the last several months, it's still an unpleasant

place to wait for a train.

The smell in the enclosed tunnel that connects the eastern portion of the station with the western half was singled out by many commuters as the worst part of the facility.

"When you walk in there you think it's the bathroom," New Brunswick resident Harold Eatman said as he waited for a train. "The place smells like urine."

Eatman described the awning which overhangs both sides of the station as an "eyesore." There have been some improvements made recently to the main lobby, but to someone who doesn't ride the train often, "the station still looks like a dump."

Patricia Maes, also a city resident, described the station as "tolerable."

Security is an important issue for Maes. She said she takes a taxi from New York to New Brunswick, if she finishes work later than usual, rather than use the station at night. "I have been here late in the evening and not felt particularly comfortable," she said.

Old Bridge resident John Bell said he is impressed by the city's redevelopment, but doesn't understand why it can't maintain its downtown train station in better condition.

"The outside looks a lot better," Bell said. "The inside needs a lot of work. This is a landmark. It should be restored and kept."

The New Brunswick Development Corp. is paid \$10,204 per month to maintain the downtown station, the Jersey Avenue Park and Ride facility and the Career Preparation Center on French Street. DevCo received the maintenance contract from the city last August. DevCo President Paul Abdalla did not return repeated phone calls placed to his home and work place last week.

NJ Transit, which leases the station to the city, is currently undertaking a \$2.8 million project to rehabilitate the station. The work includes the rehabilitation of the station's interior and exterior, installation of new canopies over the stairways and elevation of platforms above track level, she said.

The work on the platforms has be-



The waiting room, at platform level. Restrooms have been closed for restoration work. Commuters say that despite recent restoration work, it's an "unpleasant" place to wait.

gun, and the work on the building itself should commence in the near future, Terrell said. The money is also being used to rehabilitate the Jersey Avenue station and to expand parking facilities there, she said. The work is scheduled to be completed by February, she said.

The city agreed last summer to take over control of the railroad stations, if NJ Transit agreed to improve the facilities. The city's lease is part of a program begun by the state Department of Transportation in 1979 to turn over the management

of deteriorating stations to interested municipalities.

The city is subleasing the station to Yellow Cab, Red's Barber Shop and Suburban Transit. The monies paid by the subtenants are used to maintain the two facilities, according to the city's Business Administrator Stanley Marcinczyk.

The barber shop and bus company were both moved from lower Church Street to make way for a redevelopment project. Both began operations in the station around June 1, Marcinczyk said.



The pedestrian tunnel under the tracks as seen through a graffiti-covered window. The smell in the tunnel is a frequent focus of complaints.

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