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City train station will get more parking

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More parking for the Poughkeepsie Train Station is on tap, with the state picking up the tab for commuter spaces.

Beginning Jan. 4, the Cannon Street parking deck, located between Academy and South Hamilton streets, will be available to Metro-North Railroad customers.

A LOOP bus will take commuters to and from the lot during the morning and evening rush hours. Walking distance to the station is about a mile.

The state Department of Transportation will pay the \$40 monthly parking charge when commuters buy a \$15-per-month combination UniTicket for the Dutchess LOOP commuter train connection. The UniTicket is in addition to the monthly rail commutation ticket, which costs \$404.

Mayor John Tkazyik said city officials "took a hard look at how underutilized the Cannon Street parking deck is" and realized it could help ease the parking crunch at the Metro-North station.

City officials hope commuters who use the Cannon lot also will visit nearby restaurants and stores along the Main Street corridor.

"We thought this would be a great connection," Tkazyik said.

A news conference to announce the partnership among the city, county, state and Metro-North Railroad is set for the Cannon Street parking deck at 1 p.m. Tuesday.

Metro-North Railroad President Howard Permut said he was "grateful and delighted" the partnership will improve access to train service.

"We hope this new LOOP service will succeed in attracting new riders to Metro-North and alleviate the parking crunch at the Poughkeepsie station," he said.

City Administrator Michael Long said the Cannon lot has more than 200 spaces. He estimated 100 initially could be used by Metro-North commuters.

"As it evolves, it will get more and more use," Long said.

Safety has been a concern at the Cannon lot over the years, but city officials said police have increased their presence there, and better lighting has been added.

Officials said a lot attendant would be on duty during the morning and evening rush hours.

Metro-North spokeswoman Marjorie Anders said 240 commuters are on a waiting list for the 649 spaces at the Poughkeepsie station.

Commuters pay \$307 a year or \$36 a month for a parking permit at the station.

There are an additional 427 spaces with meters for which commuters can pay \$3 for 16 hours or \$5 for 24 hours. In addition, there are 41 disability spaces that can be used by permit holders.

Anders stressed the cost of the \$15 UniTicket includes parking.

"That is a great deal," she said.
