



August 7, 2024



RIPTA Metro Connector

Technical Working Group (TWG)
Meeting #1

Zachary Agush, RIPTA with Support from
ASG Planning and Nelson\Nygaard

Purpose of Today's Meeting:

Today is the first of six anticipated Technical Working Group meetings.

We hope to get your feedback on the purpose and need for the project, the engagement plan, and our initial existing conditions review.



Our Agenda

- 1 Project Background
- 2 Role of the Working Group
- 3 Purpose & Need, Goals & Objectives
- 4 Public Involvement Plan
- 5 Existing Conditions
- 6 Next Steps

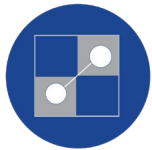


Project Background

Transit Forward RI (2021) has Laid the Groundwork for Major Transit Investment



Improve Existing Services



Expand Services to New Areas



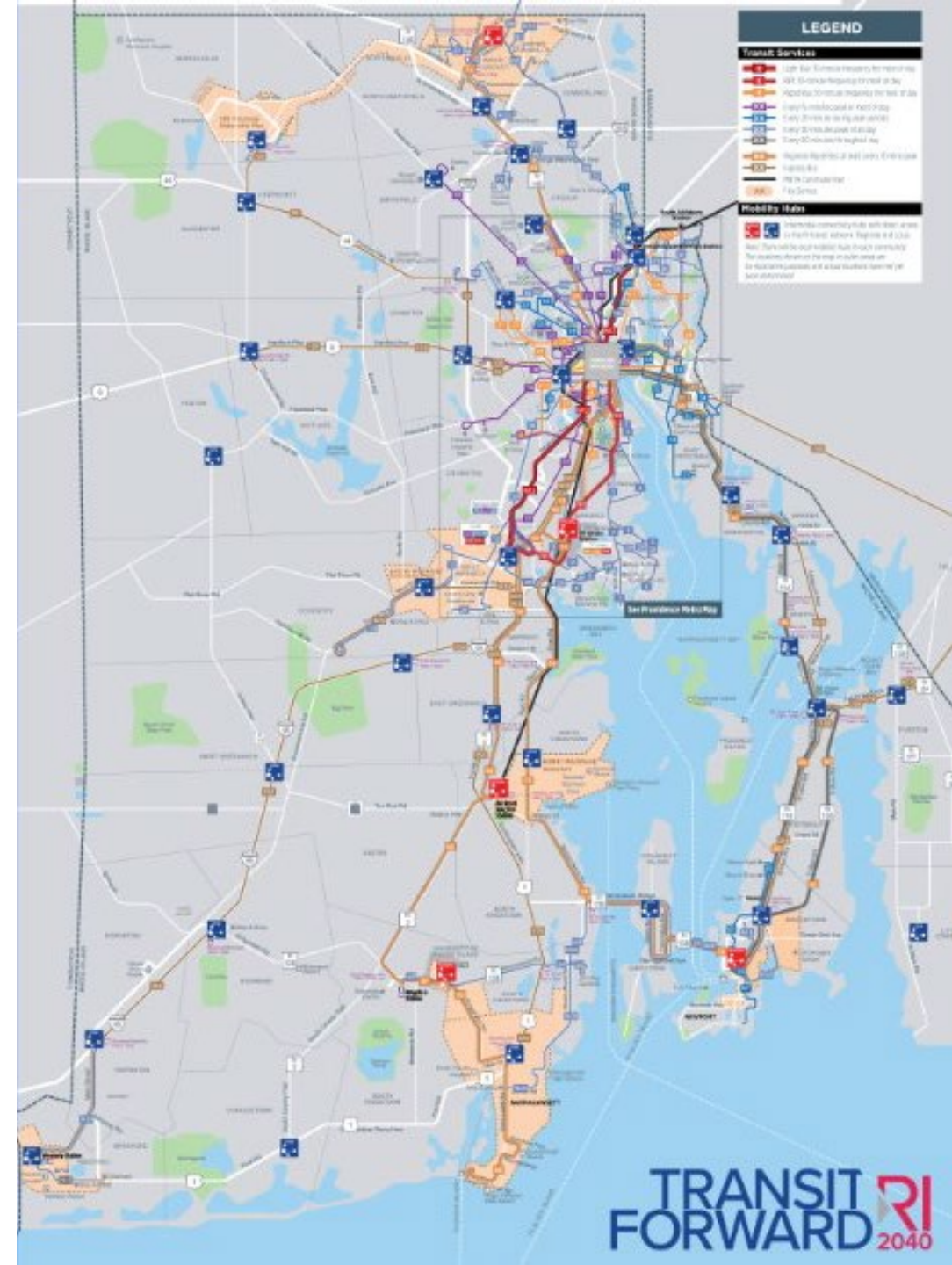
Develop High-Capacity Transit



Improve Access to Transit



Make Service Easier to Use

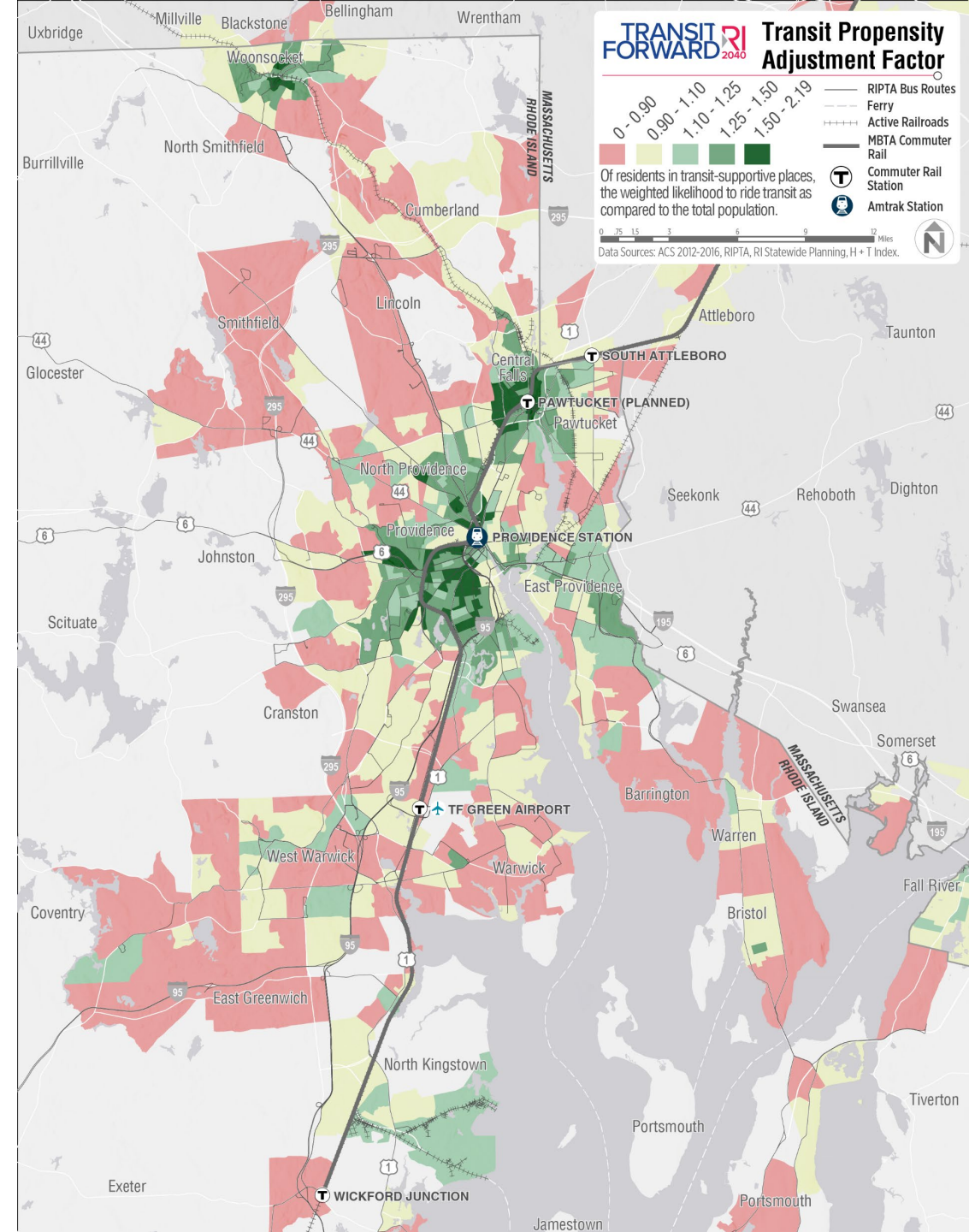


Demand in the Providence is so High that Only HCT Would Effectively Serve It

- Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and parts of Cranston and Warwick have some of the **highest levels of contiguous transit demand** in New England

- Jobs are so close together that people can get to work easily
- Transit is so important that people are willing to pay for it
- Income is so high that people can afford to pay for it

LAND USE	LAND USE		TRANSIT	
	Land Use Type	Residents per Acre	Jobs per Acre	Appropriate Types of Transit
Downtowns & High Density Corridors	>45	>25	Light Rail, BRT, Rapid Bus, Local Bus	10 mins or better
Urban Mixed-Use	30-45	15-25	BRT, Rapid Bus, Local Bus	10-15 minutes
Neighborhood & Suburban Mixed-Use	15-30	10-15	Local Bus	15-30 minutes
Mixed Neighborhoods	10-15	5-10	Local Bus, Micro-transit	30-60 minutes
Low Density	2-10	2-5	Micro-transit, Rideshare, Volunteer Driver Pgm	60 mins or less or On Demand
Rural	<2	<2	Rideshare, Volunteer Driver Pgm	On Demand



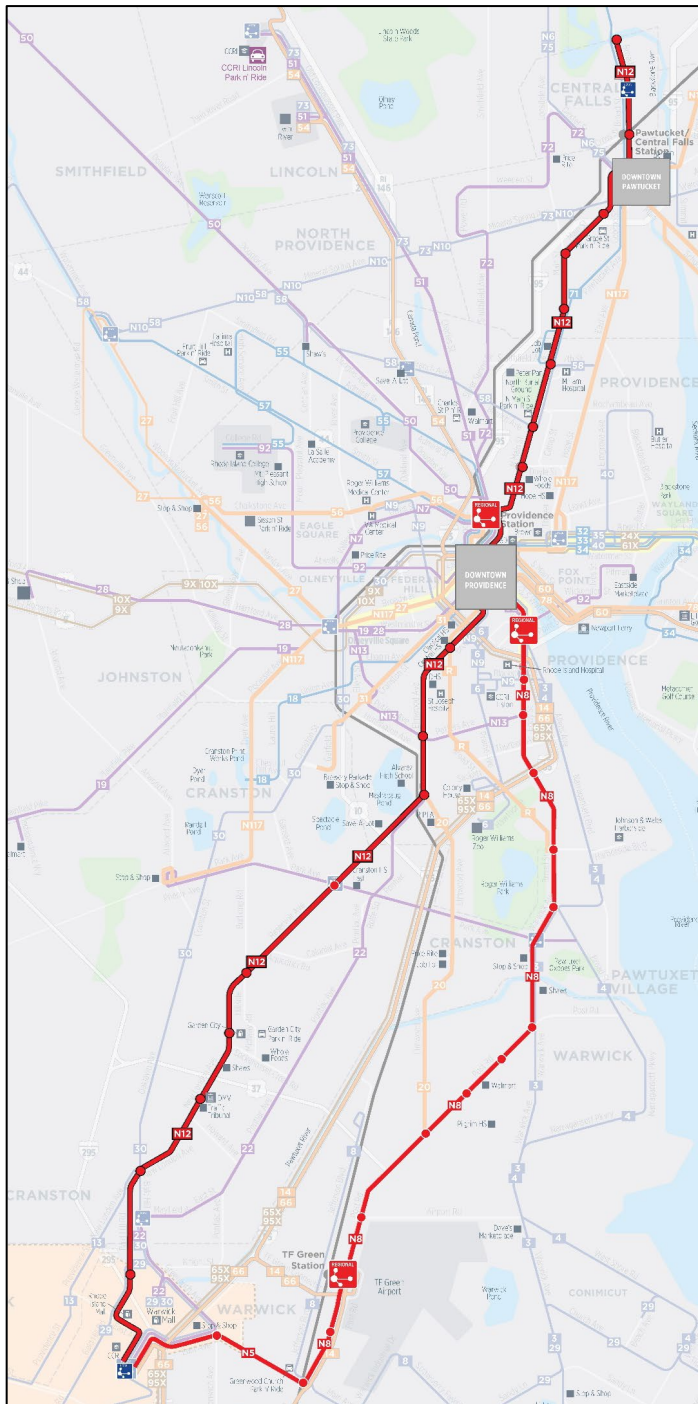
Service Needs to be Faster

- Without dedicated rights-of-way, **taking transit in Rhode Island is typically slower than driving**
- Downtown Transit Connector corridors in Providence and Pawtucket show how **transit-only lanes, signal priority (TSP), and consolidated stops can improve speeds and make transit more attractive**



Downtown Transit Connector in Providence

Light Rail and BRT Provide World-Class Transit Service that's Fast, Frequent, and Often More Attractive than Driving



Light rail, BRT, or Rapid Bus will be provided to 41% of residents and 52% of jobs



TRAVEL TIME SAVINGS	PERCENT SAVINGS
Light rail	25%
Bus Rapid Transit	15%
Rapid Bus	8%
Regional Rapid Bus	15%

High Capacity Transit Confers Benefits Beyond Increased Speed, Access, Reliability...

Realizing Transit Forward RI in its entirety would result in:

Reducing emissions and improving **air quality**

155,300

metric tons reduction in greenhouse gas emissions

Furthering Rhode Island **climate initiatives**

8%

reduction in vehicle miles traveled as a result of a shift from driving to transit

A goal of the Rhode Island Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Plan is to reduce vehicle miles traveled by shifting people from driving to transit

19,000+

created during plan (construction, manu

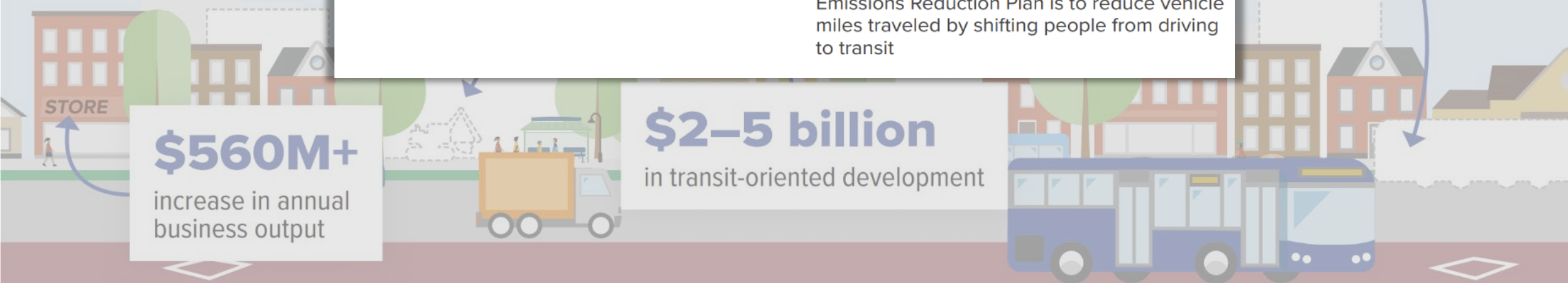
nt jobs

\$560M+

increase in annual business output

\$2–5 billion

in transit-oriented development

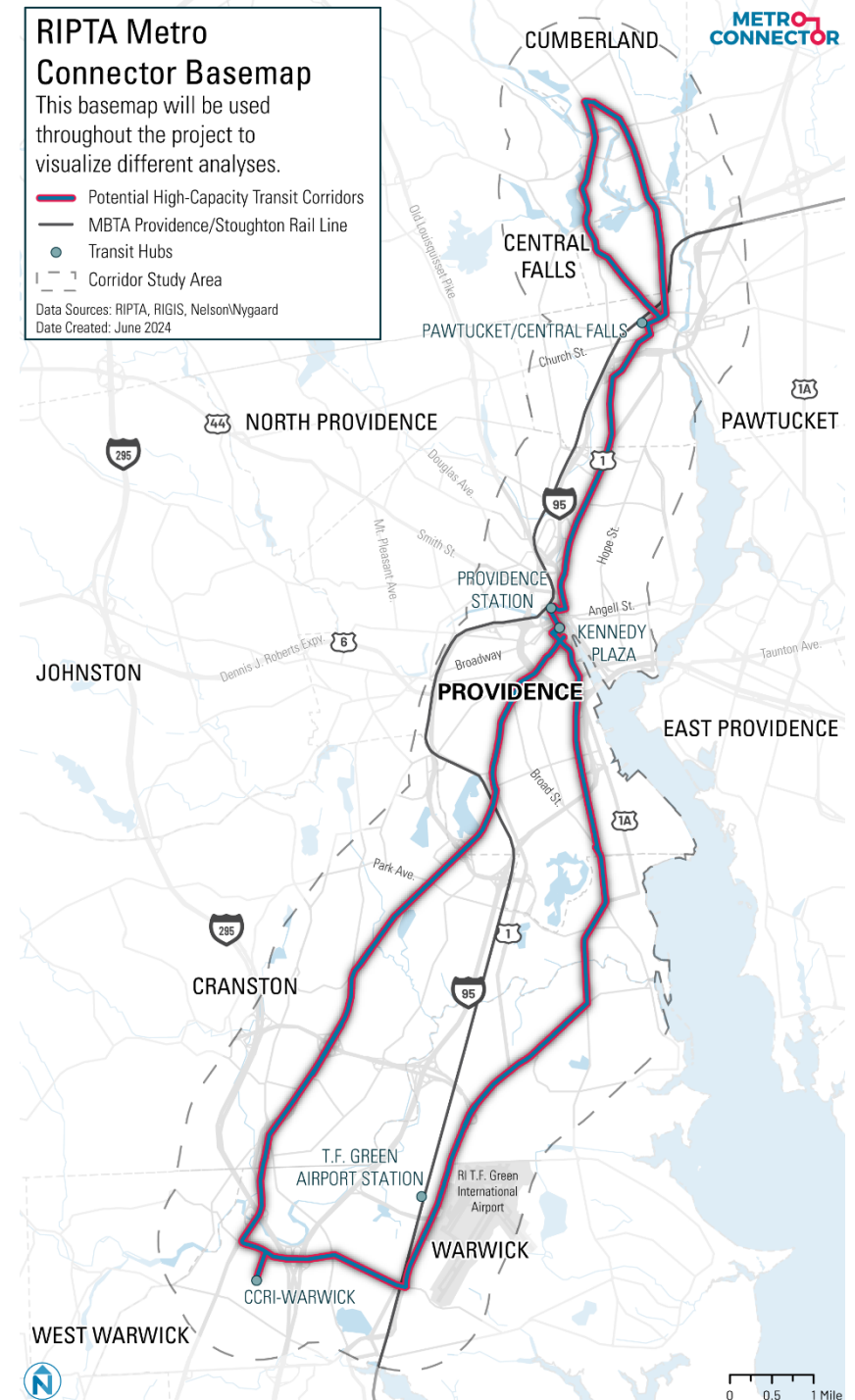




The Scope of Our Work

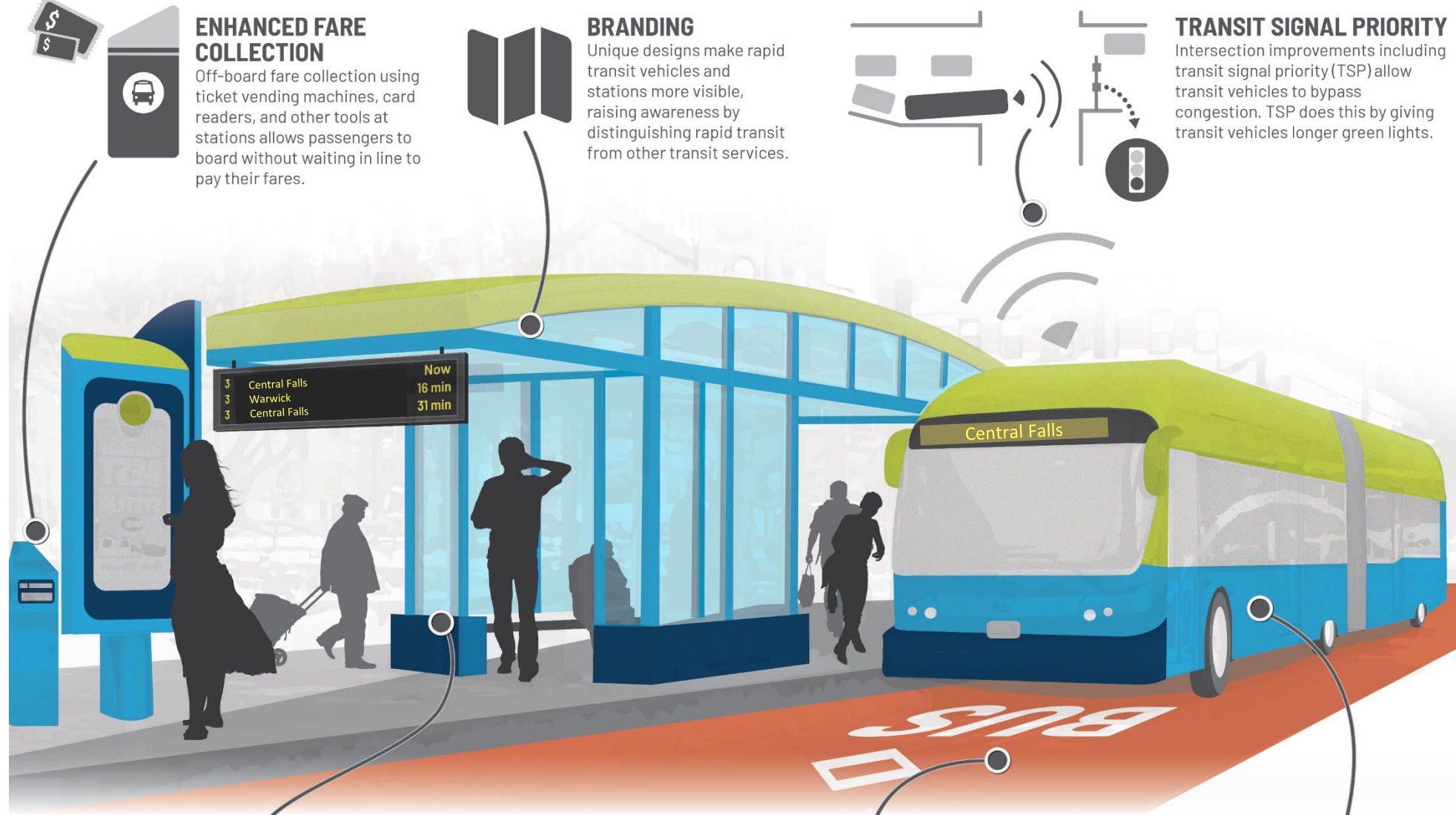
What this project will do

- We are assessing the potential for rapid transit connecting Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, Cranston, and Warwick
- The end product will be a **locally preferred alternative** (corridor and mode) and an implementation plan to move the effort into project development
- Based on recommendations from *Transit Forward RI*
- Our work includes:
 - Needs and opportunities assessment
 - Development of mode and alignment alternatives
 - Evaluation of costs, impacts and benefits
 - Robust public engagement throughout
 - Implementation plan and strategy



What is rapid transit?

An emphasis on being more competitive with auto travel through speed, reliability, capacity, convenience, and experience.



ENHANCED STATIONS

Rapid transit stations include raised platforms, ticket vending machines, real-time arrival information, larger shelters, and other passenger amenities.



DEDICATED RUNNING WAYS

Transit-only right-of-way separates transit from traffic, and may be painted to increase visibility.






HIGH-CAPACITY VEHICLES



Larger transit vehicles provide more capacity, more doors, and lower floors for easier boarding and alighting.



What is Rapid Transit?

- **Features vary** depending on place and market
- **Major step up from local bus service**
- An emphasis on being **more competitive with auto travel**

		Rapid Transit		
		Local Bus	Bus Rapid Transit	Light Rail
	Service design			
	Simple route design	✓	✓	✓
	Less frequent stops		✓	✓
	Frequent service	✓	✓	✓
	Early morning to late night	✓	✓	✓
	Branding			
	Special branding		✓	✓
	Transit priority			
	Transit signal priority	✓	✓	✓
	Queue jump lanes	✓	✓	✓
	Exclusive right-of-way	○	●	●
	Stops			
	Enhanced stops	✓	✓	✓
	Real-time passenger information	✓	✓	✓
	Off-board fare collection		✓	✓
	Level platform boarding		✓	✓
	Vehicles			
Passenger capacity	2 people	3 people	4 people	

 Typical features
 Potential features

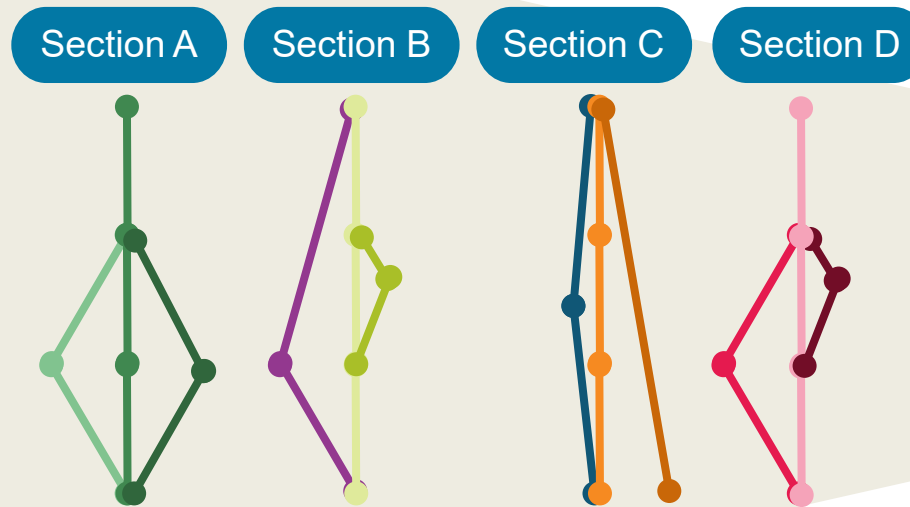
The 3 steps of our evaluation

Step A: Screening



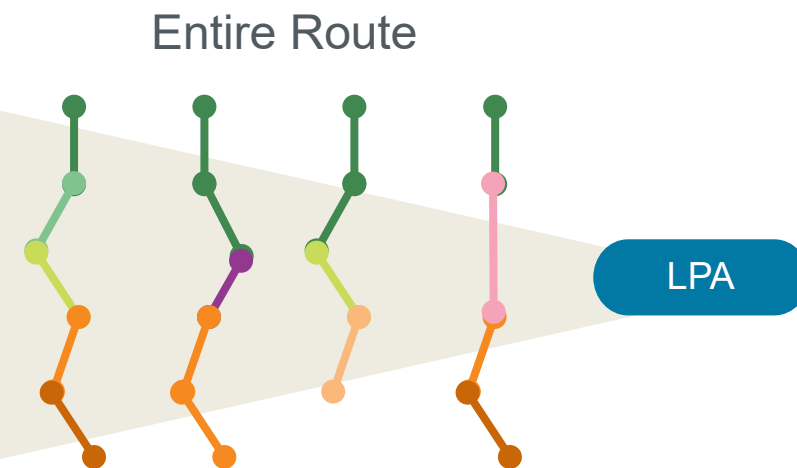
Review a wide range of ideas and remove those that don't meet the project purpose

Step B: Tier 1 Evaluation



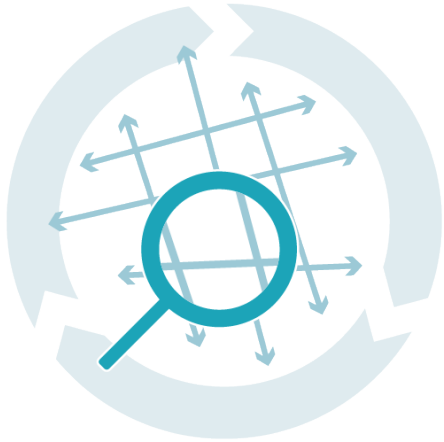
Test different alignments in each section

Step C: Tier 2 Evaluation



Test best alignments as complete route

The 3 phases of our scope



1. Understand

Months 1-6

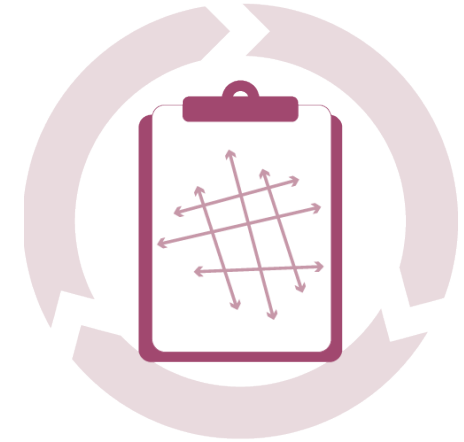
- Our study area
- Conditions today
- Purpose and need, evaluation framework
- Equitable stakeholder engagement



2. Assess

Months 6-14

- Defining our alternatives
- Evaluate alternatives
- Select LPAs
- Refine LPAs
- Equitable stakeholder engagement

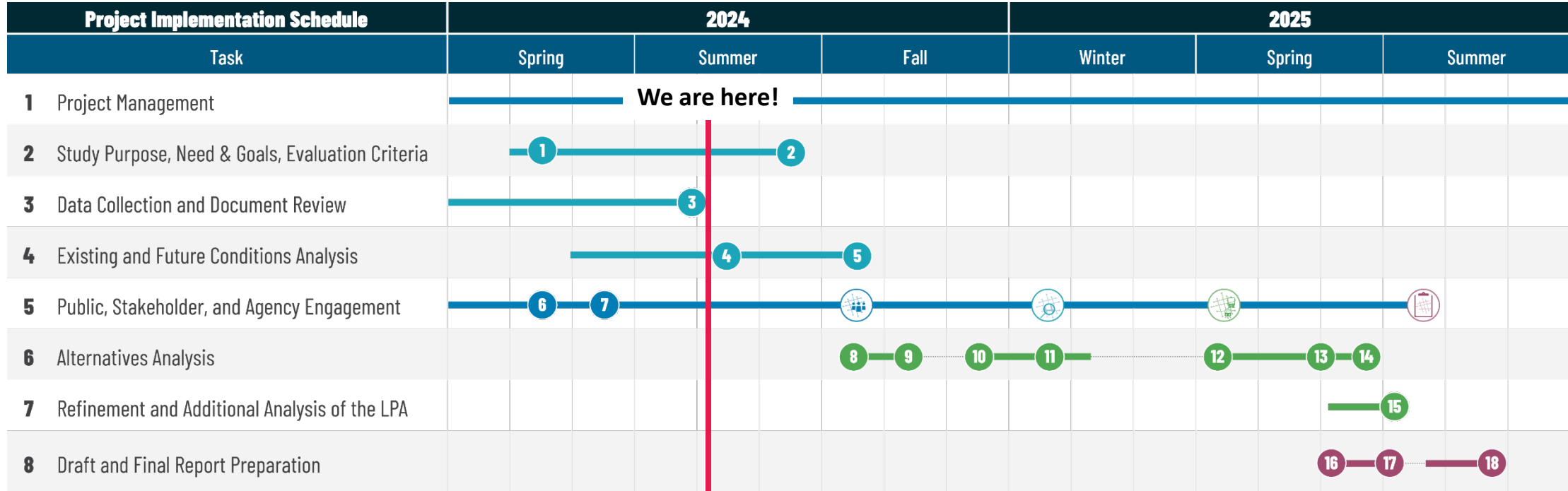


3. Document

Months 14-16

- Approve LPAs
- Prepare implementation plan
- Equitable stakeholder engagement

Our overall timeline

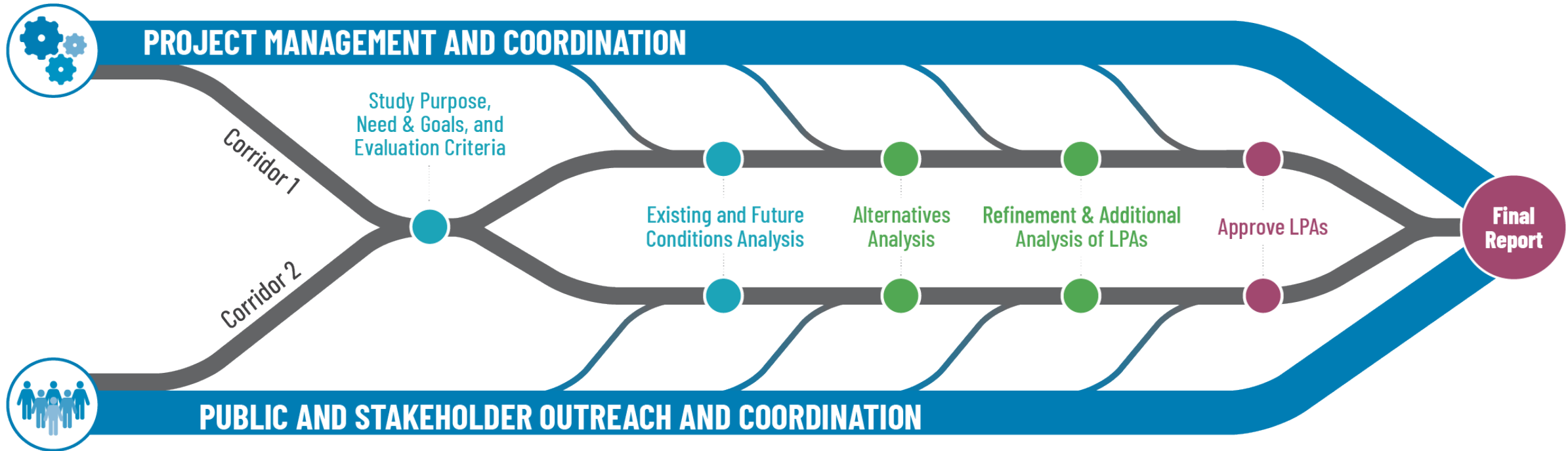


KEY MILESTONES AND DELIVERABLES

- 1 Draft Purpose and Needs Statement
- 2 Draft Evaluation Framework
- 3 Draft Plan and Policy Review
- 4 Draft State of the System Report
- 5 Final State of the System Report
- 6 Stakeholder Interviews
- 7 Walking Tour

- 8 Universe of Concepts
- 9 Screen Against Purpose & Needs
- 10 Develop Long List of Ideas
- 11 Tier 1 Evaluation
- 12 Develop Shortlist of Alternatives
- 13 Tier 2 Evaluation
- 14 Draft LPA
- 15 Refined LPA
- 16 Implementation Plan
- 17 Draft Final Report
- 18 Final Report

And a reminder – we are exploring 2 corridors





Technical Working Group

Meet the TWG!

Entity	Representatives
Key Agency Partners	RIPTA, RIDOT, FTA
Municipal Partners	Cumberland, Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, Cranston, Warwick
Other State and Quasi-Agency Partners	Statewide Planning, Commerce, Health, Housing, Environmental Management
Community Groups	RI Transit Riders, Convention Center Bureau, PVD Streets Coalition, West Bay CAP, PCF Development

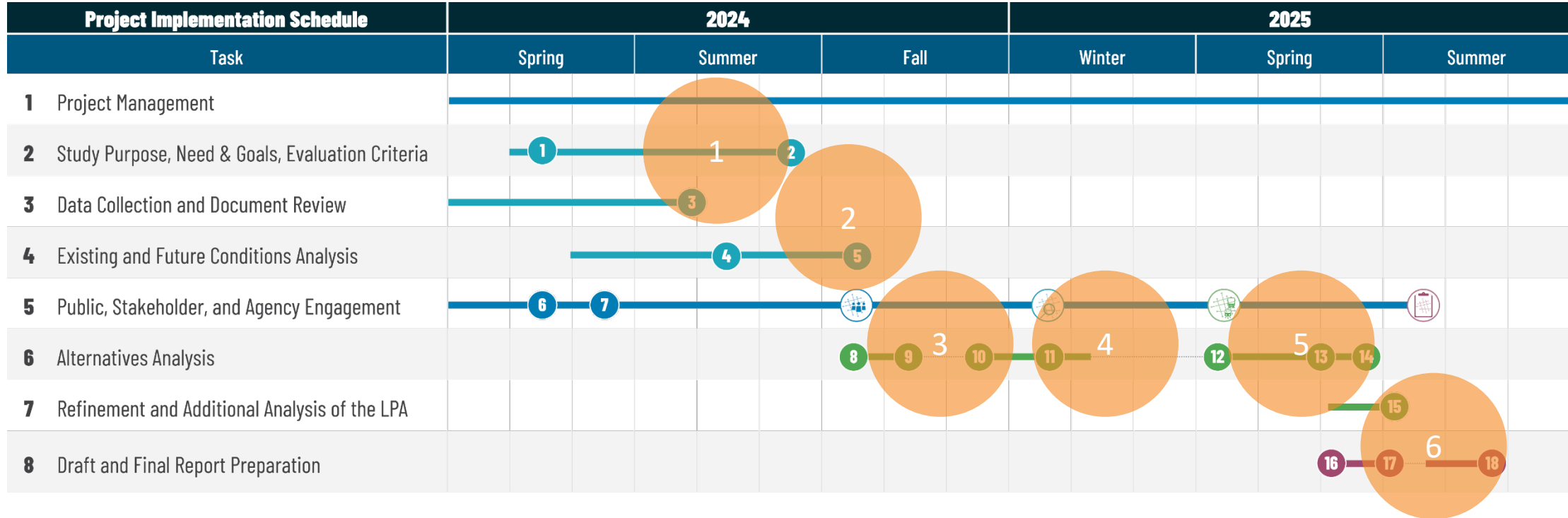
Purpose of the Technical Working Group (TWG)

- The TWG will serve as an advisory group to the Project Management Team (PMT).
- We plan to meet six times over the next 15 months, at key project milestones.

Key TWG Roles

- Serve as a sounding board for technical decisions.
- Raise local concerns, issues and/or opportunities.
- Make sure we provide good answers and help craft solutions.
- Help us engage a broad and representative sector of the community.
- Serve as a conduit to decision makers in your community or at your agency.
- **Think Regionally!**

The TWG will meet at Project Milestones



KEY MILESTONES AND DELIVERABLES

- 1 Draft Purpose and Needs Statement
- 2 Draft Evaluation Framework
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- 6 Stakeholder Interviews
- 7 Walking Tour

- [Icon] First Round of Outreach - Early Scoping
- [Icon] Second Round of Outreach - Shortlisting Alternatives
- [Icon] Third Round of Outreach - Towards Set of LPAs
- [Icon] Fourth Round of Outreach - Towards Implementation
- 8 Universe of Concepts
- 9 Screen Against Purpose & Needs
- 10 Develop Long List of Ideas
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- 12 Develop Shortlist of Alternatives
- 13 Tier 2 Evaluation
- 14 Draft LPA
- 15 Refined LPA
- 16 Implementation Plan
- 17 Draft Final Report
- 18 Final Report

Questions? Reactions?

- Does your role on this project make sense to you?
- How do you envision working with each other at and in between meetings?
- What would you like the PMT to know about this level of involvement and commitment?
- Is there anything the PMT can do to make your involvement more sustainable or convenient for you?





Purpose & Need, Goals & Objectives

Project Purpose (draft)

The purpose of the Metro Connector effort is to consider options for providing fast, reliable, and frequent transit that connects major transportation hubs, regional activity centers, and residential neighborhoods in metropolitan Providence while achieving other State goals related to climate, sustainable housing growth, and economic development in an equitable manner.

Project Need (draft)

- High **ridership demand** in the study area corridors merits investment
- High capacity transit plays a pivotal role in helping the state meet its binding goals to reduce **greenhouse gas emissions**
- Rhode Island has a significant gap in **housing supply**, and the introduction of more frequent transit would provide opportunities for more housing in the form of transit-oriented development.
- There is a lack of **crosstown mobility** in the region, and a north-south HCT could act as a regional transit spine which could allow for new crosstown connections.
- Some of the region's most important **economic generators and activity centers** are not well connected and are difficult to access using transit.
- From a **transportation equity** perspective, those more likely to rely on transit for travel would have the most to gain from high-quality transit service investments.
- Transit infrastructure investments will support the vision of **safe and complete street** design.

Project Goals and Objectives (draft)

Goal	Objective(s)
Grow transit ridership	Connect areas that have high demand for transit by providing fast, frequent, and reliable service that is competitive with driving.
Enhance connectivity	Improve multimodal connections between regional transportation centers and support Complete Streets that provide for safe pedestrian and bicycle access.
Focus on equity	Provide rapid transit where and when transit-critical populations are traveling, that allows these residents to stay in their neighborhoods.

Project Goals and Objectives, cont. (draft)

Goal	Objective(s)
Support sustainable growth	Support smart and compact transit-oriented development in designated growth districts and frequent transit corridors.
Support our economy/ provide new opportunities	Improve access to regional employment, workforce education, medical and social services, shopping, and other activities to open up new opportunities for regional residents.
Focus on practical and implementable solutions	Achieve local consensus on an option that balances costs and benefits, aligns with local goals, and can be reasonably implemented.

Questions? Reactions?

- Does the **Project Purpose** succinctly state what this project is trying to accomplish?
- Does the **Project Need** cover the range of 'problems' to be addressed?
- Do you have any comments on the **Study Area**?
- Do you think the **Project Goals** clearly state what the project aims to achieve? Are they achievable and measurable?





Public Involvement Plan

Public Involvement Plan ([here](#))

- The Public Involvement Plan (PIP) outlines RIPTA's approach, process, and timeline for engaging with the public, local communities, state agencies, and other public, private, and non-profit stakeholders.
- There are 5 objectives:
 1. Provide a continuous forum to share concerns, ideas and opportunities;
 2. Be comprehensive, equitable and accessible;
 3. Support transparent decision-making;
 4. Culminate the Study with a Locally Preferred Alternative(s);
 5. Garner a broad coalition of support for the LPA and a local funding strategy, with momentum to advance into formal Project Development and Engineering.

Approach to Public Involvement

- Iterative, flexible, and adaptive
- Combination of online, in-person, and events that meet the public where they are
- Prioritize
 - A people-first approach
 - Layering tools to fit community needs
 - Events that spark excitement
 - Outreach that builds trust
 - Metrics & tracking



Public Involvement Plan (here)



Questions? Reactions?

- What do you think is **most important** to cover with our public involvement approach?
- Do ideas come to mind when we say "**meet people where they are**"?





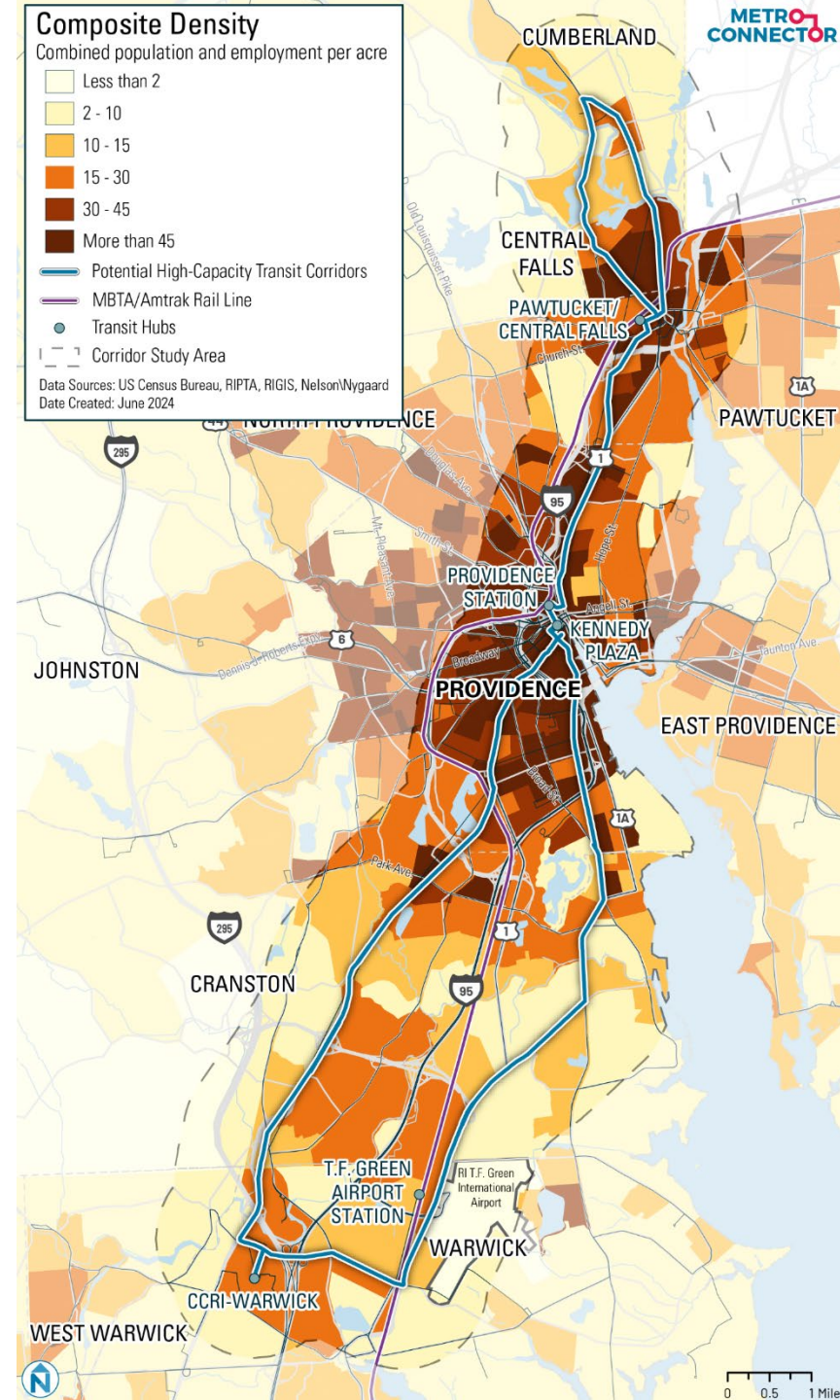
Existing Conditions

Existing Conditions Provides and Overview of Opportunities and Constraints in our Study Area

- Collects, synthesizes, and assesses a variety of qualitative and quantitative information that provides context for the Alternatives Analysis.
 - Organized into 7 chapters:
 1. Introduction
 2. Plan and Policy Review
 3. Land-Use Assessment
 4. Transit Network Analysis
 5. Existing Right-of-Way Conditions
 6. Market Profile
 7. Environmental
- Early findings presented today*

Market Analysis Highlights

- Composite Demand for transit includes:
 - Population density
 - Socioeconomic factors
 - Employment density
 - Industry Type



Market Analysis Highlights

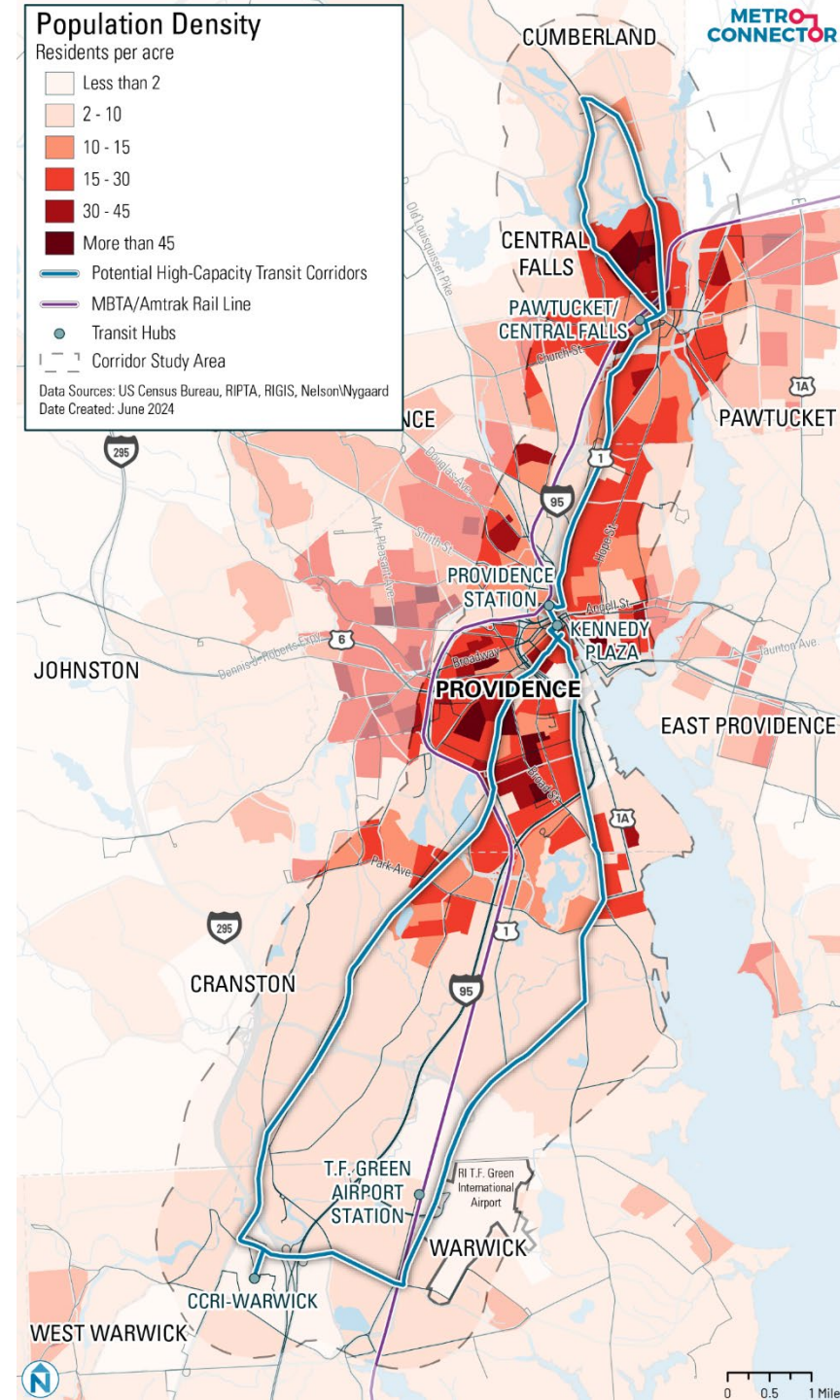
○ Population Density in the Study Area

– High density:

- Providence, most notably:
 - Downtown
 - Federal Hill
 - West End
 - Elmwood
 - Upper/Lower South Providence
- Central Falls
- Pawtucket

– Moderate/Low Density

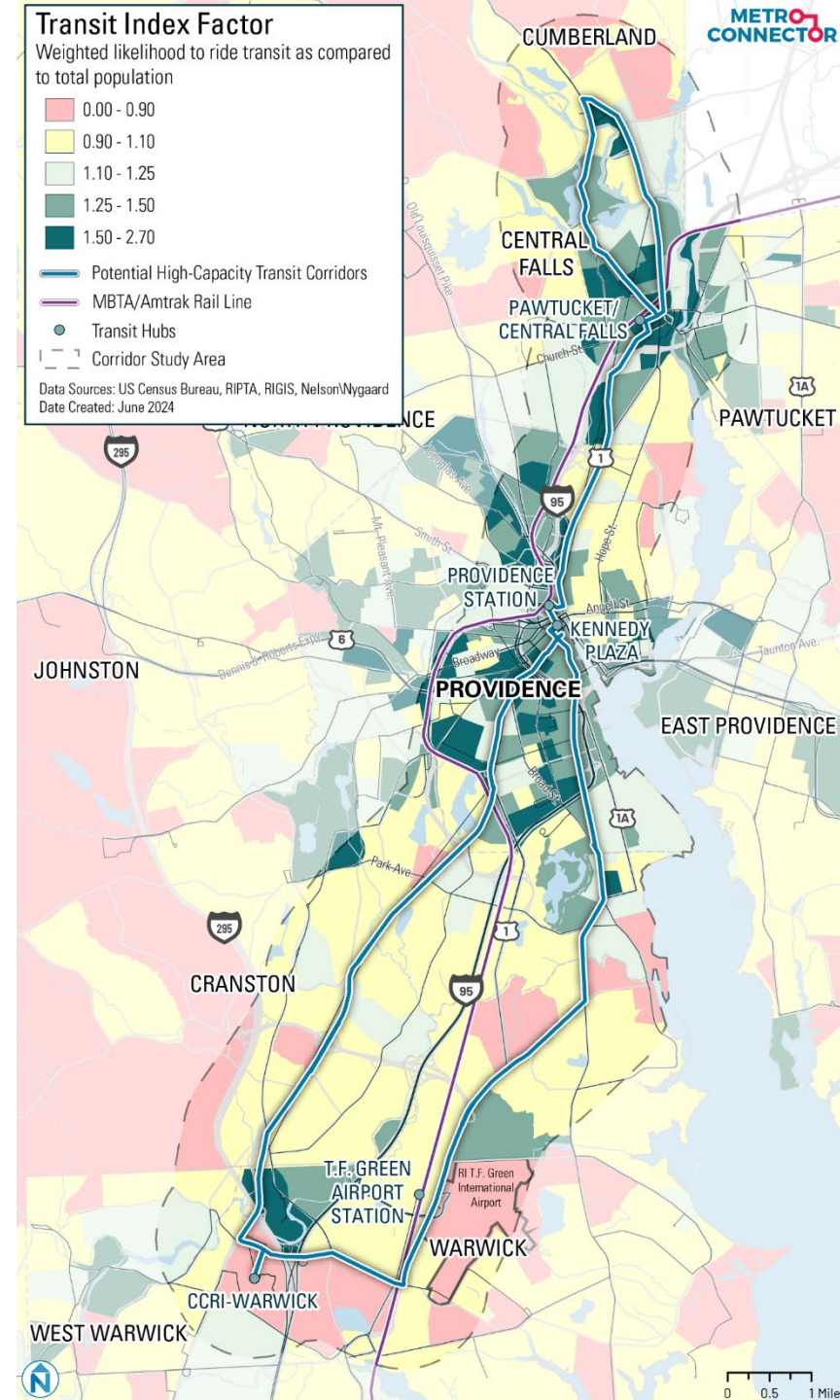
- Cranston
- Warwick



Market Analysis Highlights

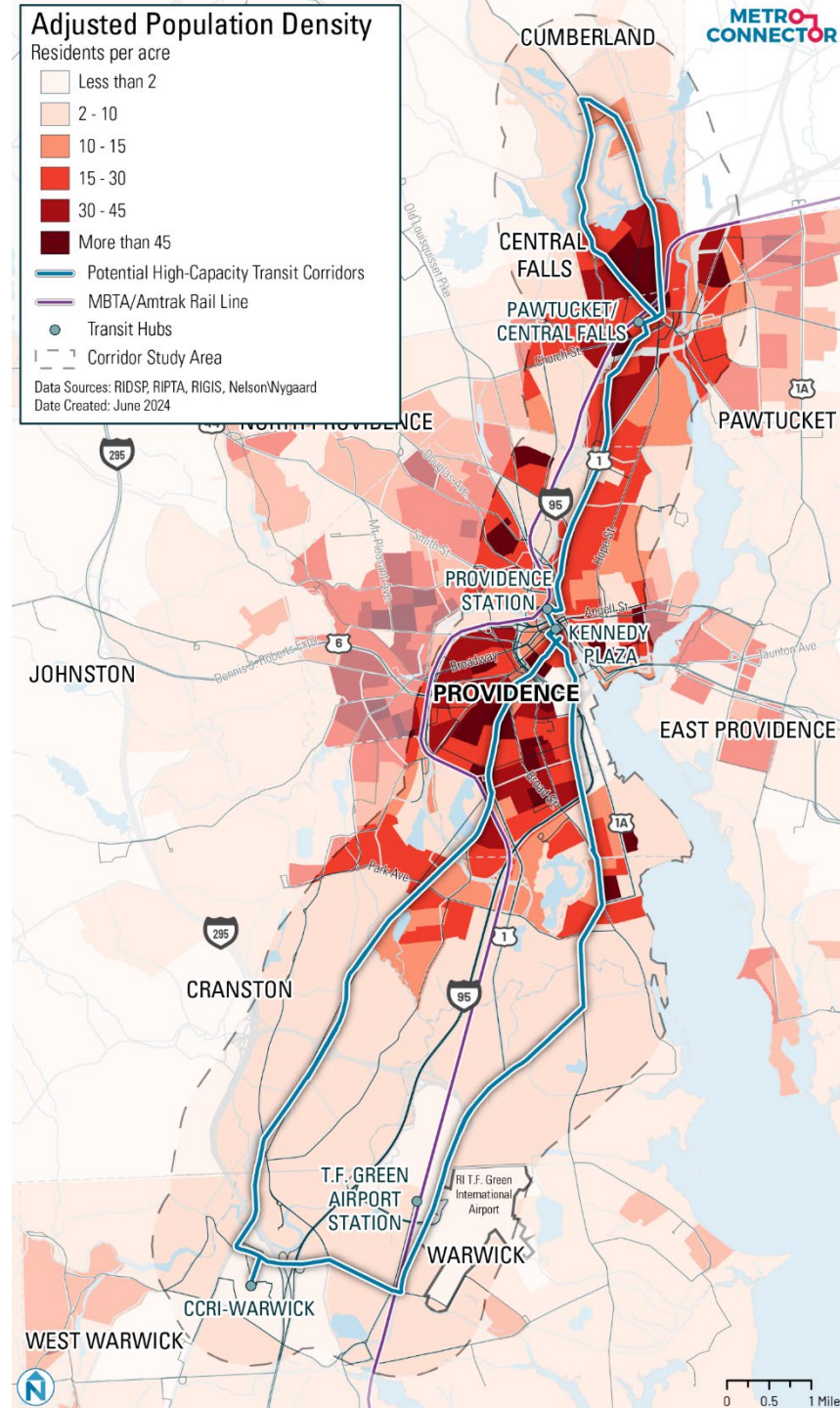
- Transit Propensity
 - Who is more likely to take transit and where do those groups concentrate

Demographic Group	Relative Transit Propensity
Race and Ethnicity	
White	0.73
Black	2.05
Asian	1.22
Other Race	1.63
Hispanic	1.43
Vehicle Ownership	
No Car	7.70
One Car	1.24
Two Cars	0.70
Three or More Cars	0.46
Country of Origin	
Native	0.95
Foreign	1.21
Household Income	
Less than \$10,000	1.54
\$10,000 - \$15,000	1.44
\$15,000 - \$25,000	1.40
\$25,000 - \$35,000	1.09
\$35,000 - \$65,000	0.83
More than \$65,000	0.80



Market Analysis Highlights

- Adjusted Population Density in the Study Area
 - Most places in the study area have average or above average transit propensity
 - Result in demand intensifying further in urban areas
 - Staying relatively the same in less dense areas



Market Analysis Highlights

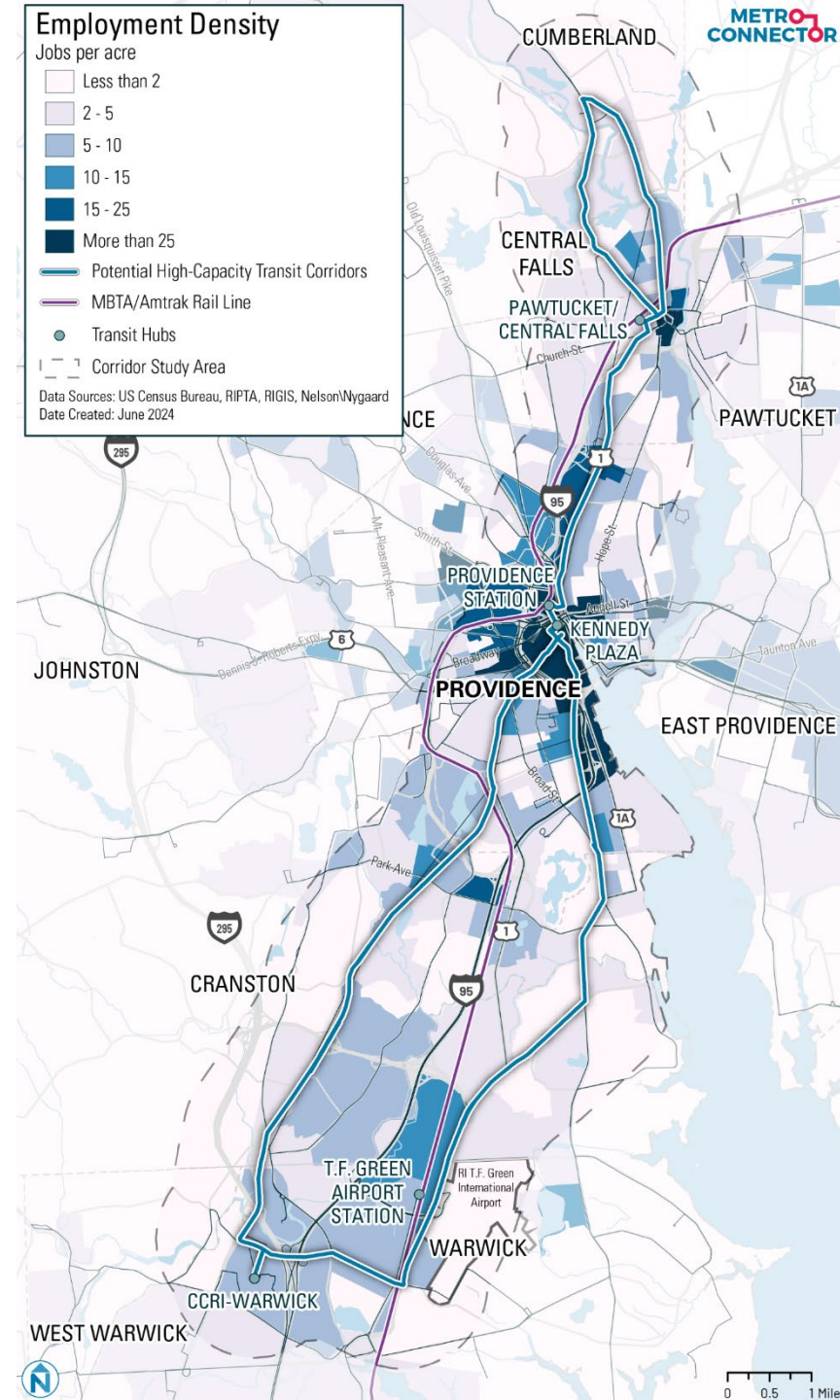
○ Employment Density in the Study Area

– High density:

- Providence
 - Downtown
 - Lower South Providence
- Area around Pawtucket/Central Falls Train Station
- Areas along Route 1
- Areas along Park Ave in Cranston

– Moderate

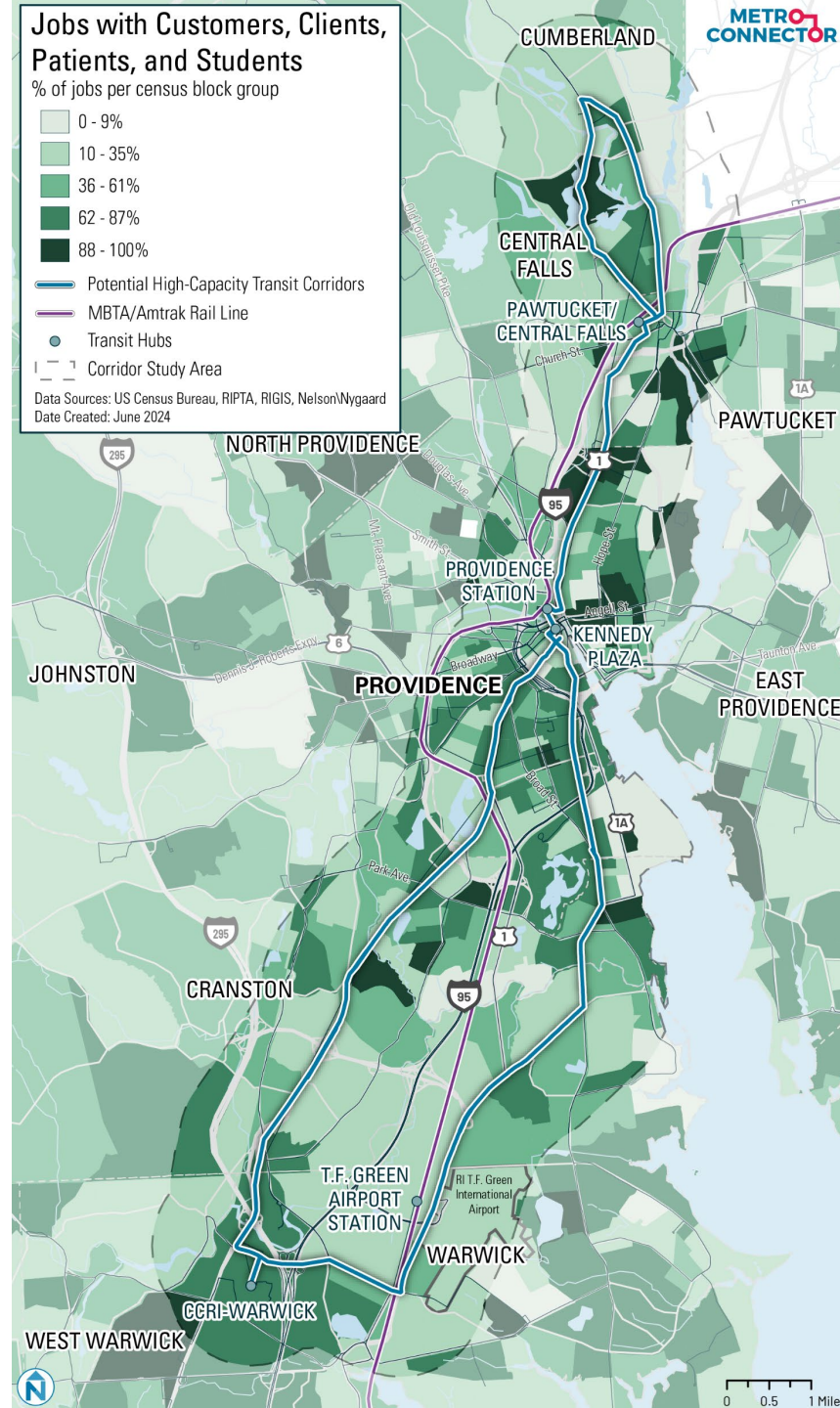
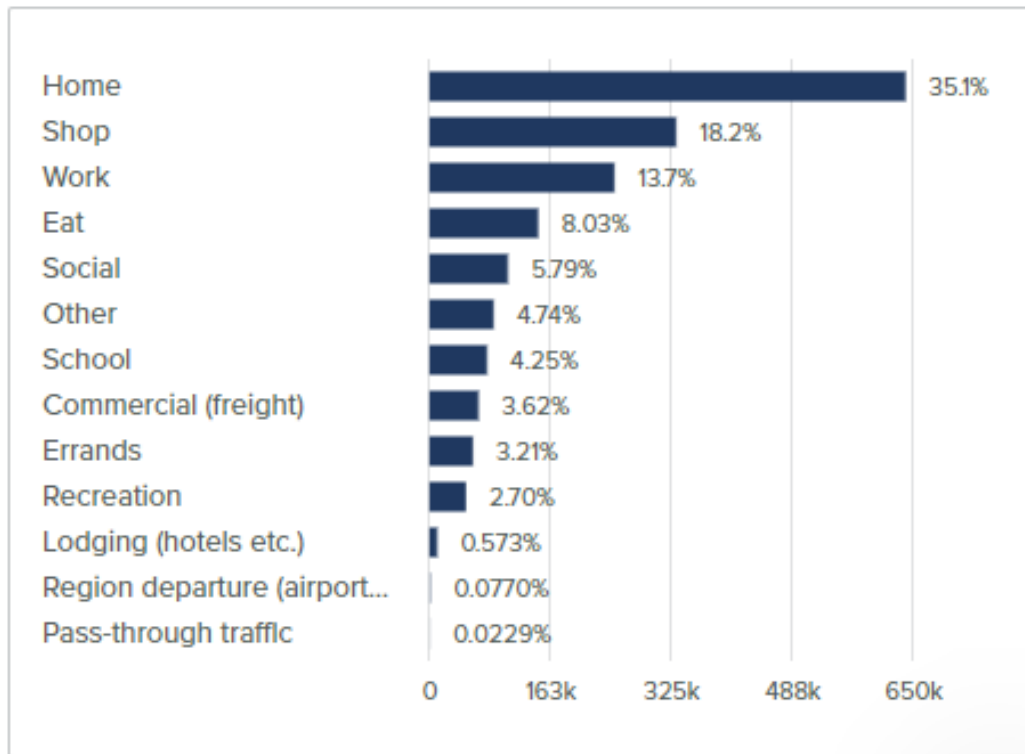
- T. F. Greene
- Shopping Districts along Reservoir Ave



Market Analysis Highlights

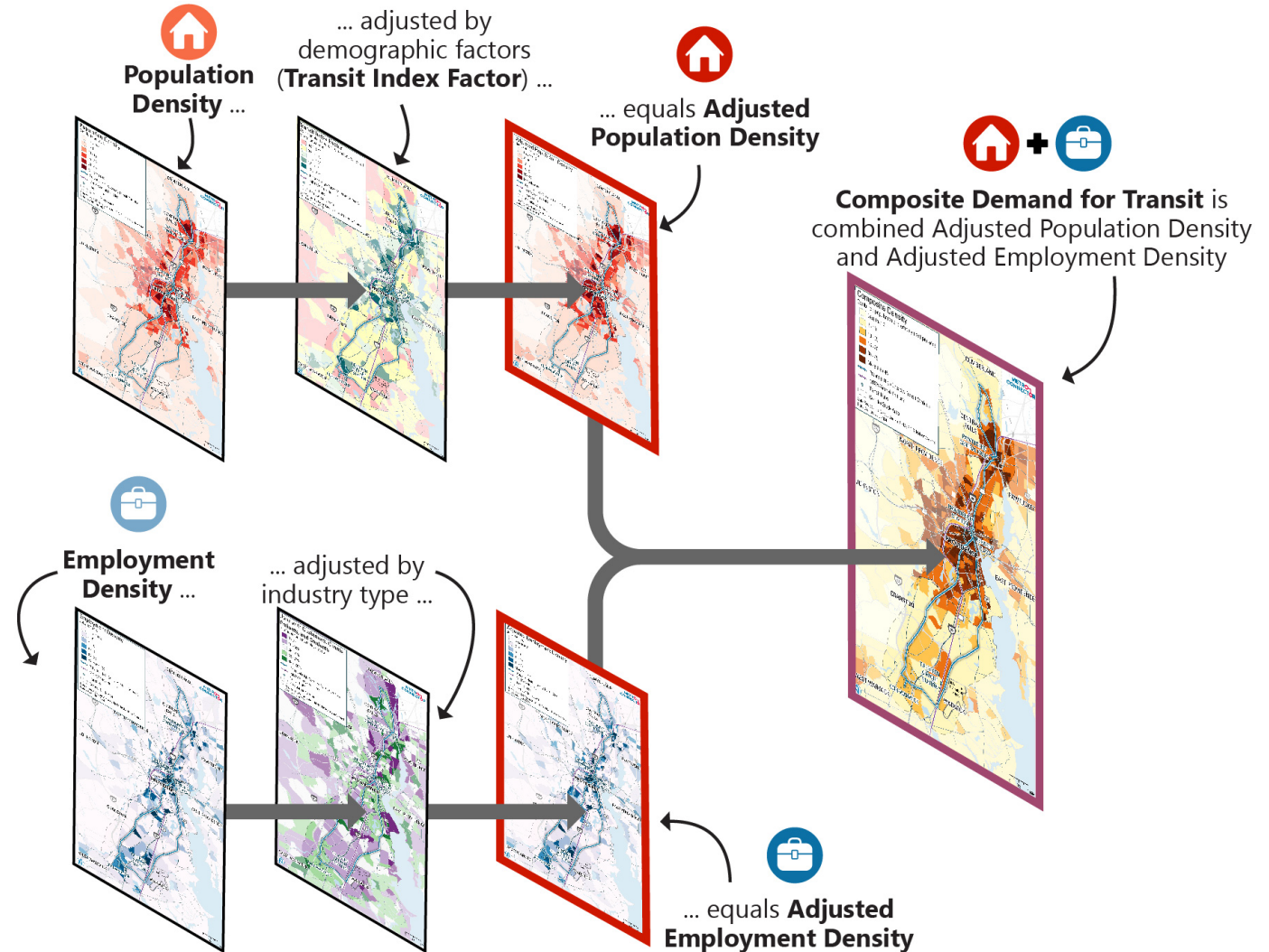
- Customers, Clients, Patients, and Students
 - Jobs with ancillary demand show about 45% more transit demand than those without

Trip Purpose








Market Analysis Highlights

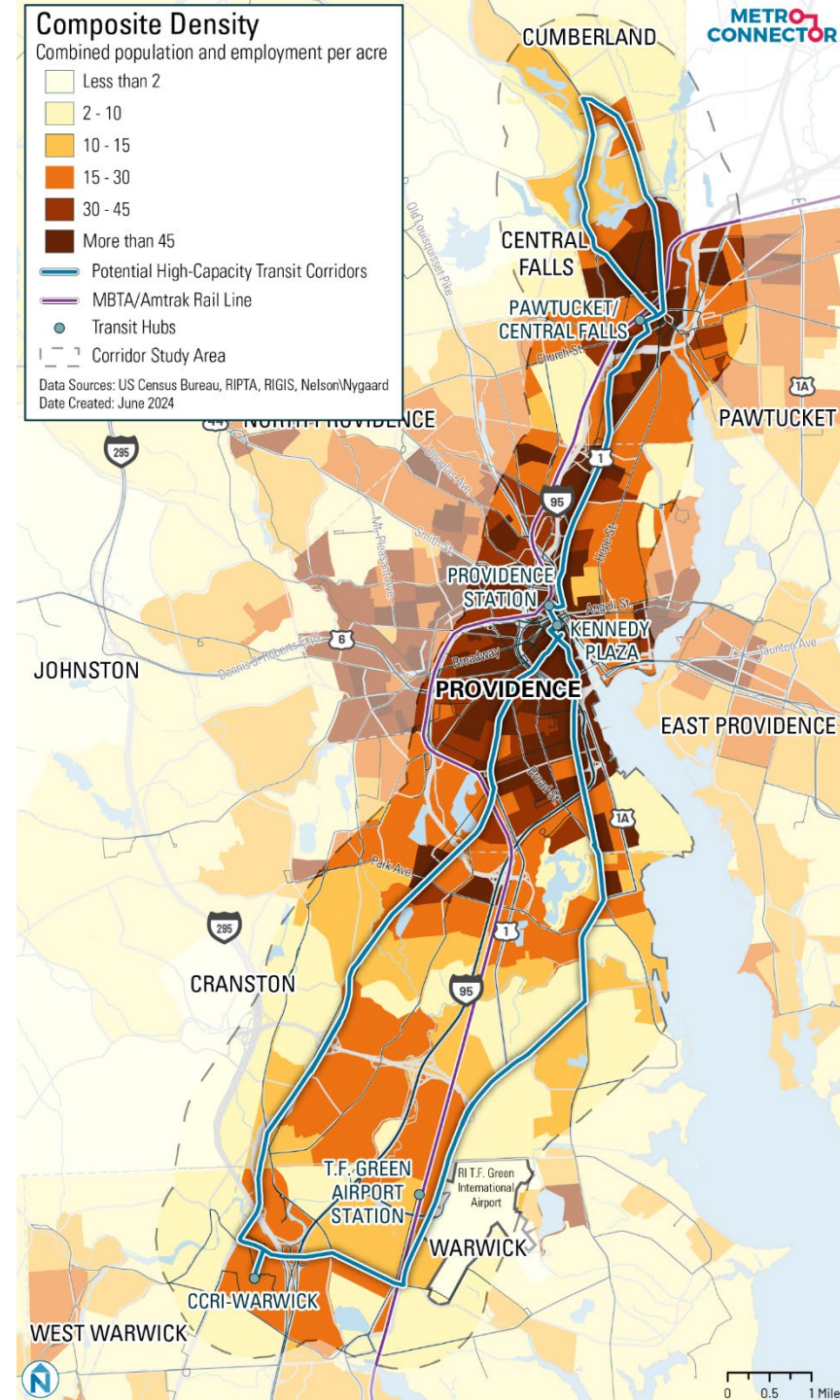
- Composite Demand in the Study Area
 - Combines:
 - Population Density
 - Demographic Factors
 - Employment Density
 - Industry Type



Market Analysis Highlights

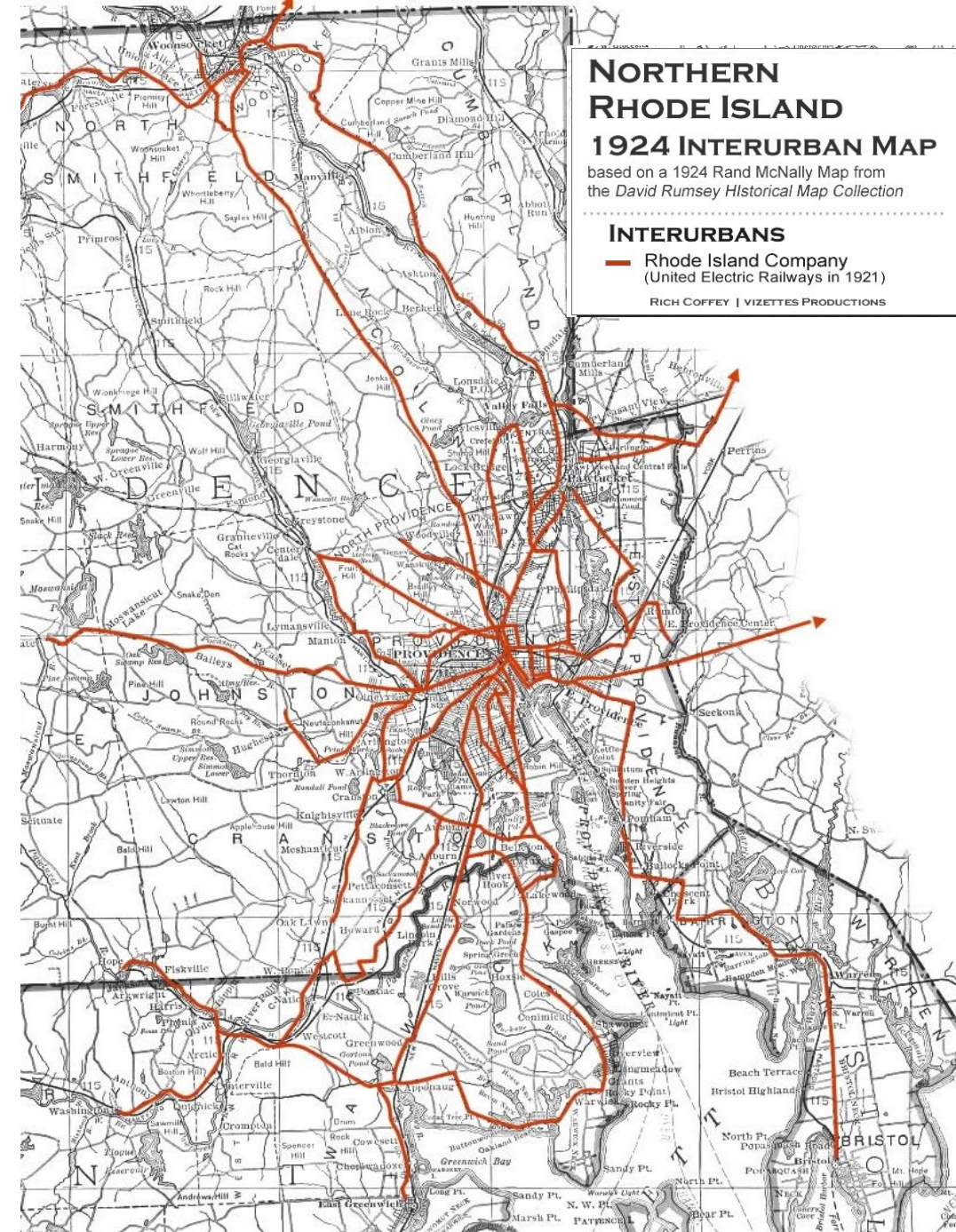
- Demand is high in the study area
 - Sections of the study area in Providence, Central Falls, and Pawtucket are very high
 - Pockets of demand in Cumberland, Cranston, and Warwick with strong institutional anchors
 - Strong potential to develop in less dense areas to increase demand

HIGH CAPACITY TRANSIT	 Light Rail Transit	Every 10 minutes or better 45+ Residents/Acre 25+ Jobs/Acre
	 Bus Rapid Transit	Every 10-20 minutes 30-45 Residents/Acre 15-25 Jobs/Acre
	 Rapid Bus	Every 10-20 minutes 30-45 Residents/Acre 15-25 Jobs/Acre
	 Local Bus	Every 16-30 minutes 15-30 Residents/Acre 10-15 Jobs/Acre
	 Local Bus	Every 31-60 minutes 10-15 Residents/Acre 5-10 Jobs/Acre



Market Analysis Highlights

- Even the less dense areas of our study area have had high capacity transit before!
- What made rail service viable 100 years ago is what makes it a good investment today
 - High density of residents, jobs, and activity centers
 - Walkable neighborhoods
 - Efficiently connecting people where they want to go



Plan and Policy Review Point to Planned Growth in Study Area

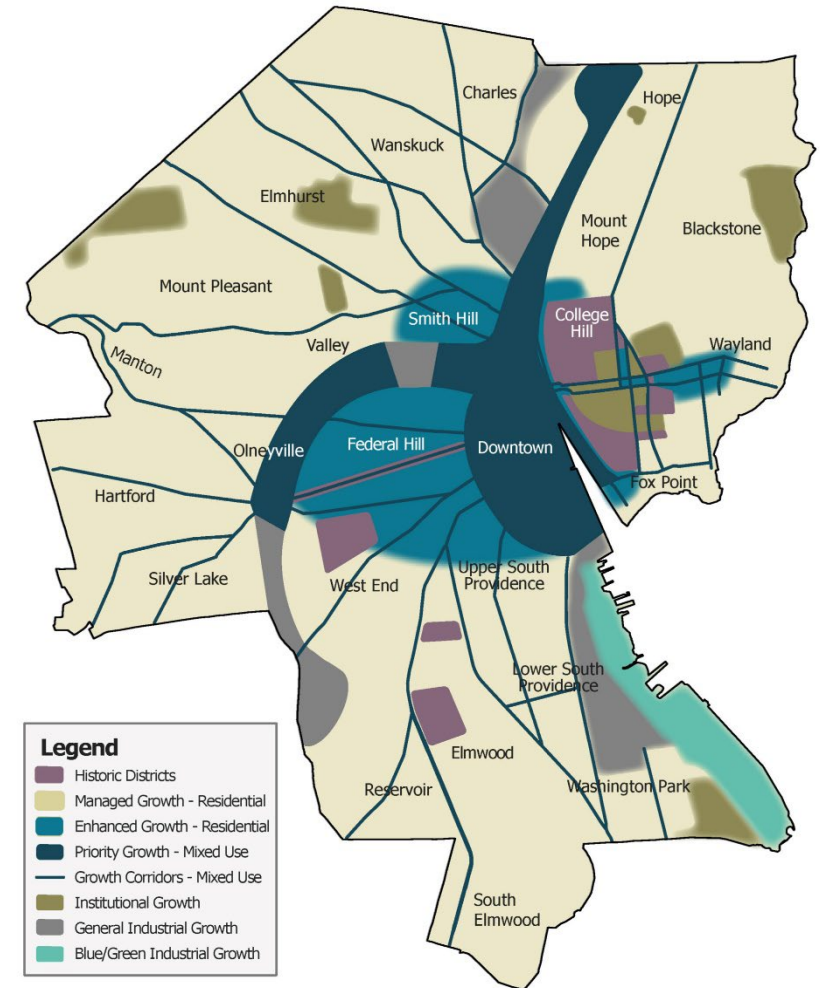
- **Plan and Policy Review Chapter summarizes 28 existing transportation and land use plans, transportation policies, and other studies which inform potential future rapid transit in the study area.**
 - Statewide Transportation Plans
 - Climate and Sustainability Plans
 - Safety and Complete Streets Policies/Plans
 - Land Use & Housing Plans and Policies

Early findings presented today

Land Use and Housing Plans and Policies Set the State for Additional Growth in Study Area

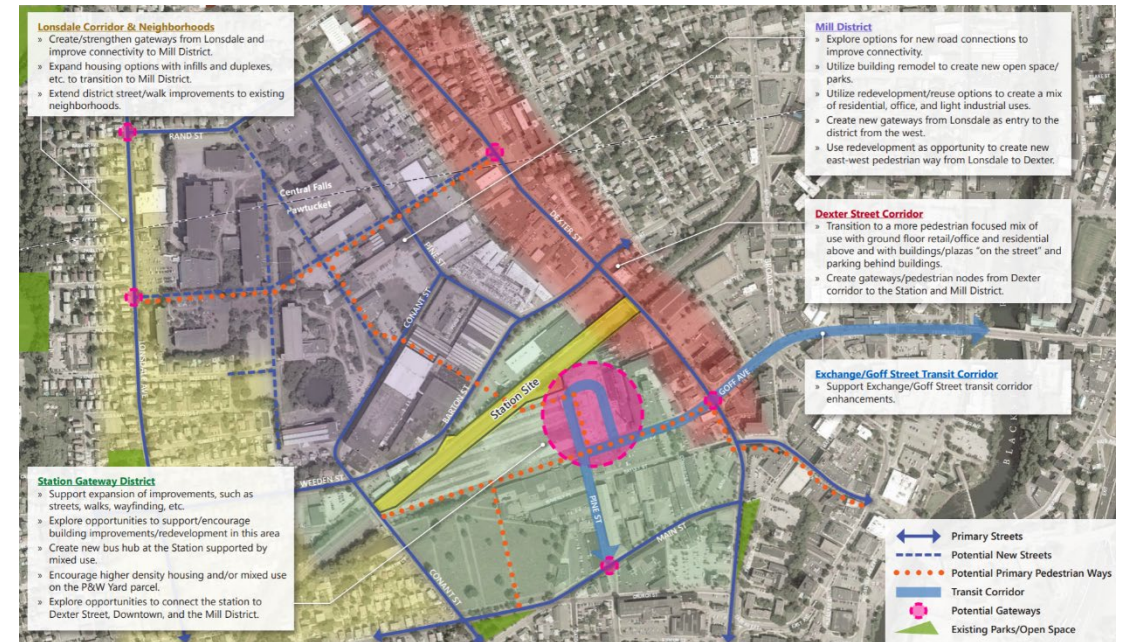
- **HCT presents a significant opportunity to meet local and State land use goals and to catalyze new housing** to help solve the state’s housing supply gap.
- **The State’s TOD Pilot Program and *some* municipal plans support increased density and funding incentives:**
 - **Five established municipal TOD zones** (Conant Thread in Pawtucket/Central Falls, City Centre in Warwick and three TOD overlay zones in Providence).
 - **Priority growth areas/corridors identified in Providence’s draft comprehensive plan update:** downtown, North Main Street, Elmwood Avenue, Reservoir Avenue and Eddy Street.
 - **A proposed high-density district in the Valley Falls area of Cumberland.**

DRAFT PROPOSAL
Growth Strategy Map



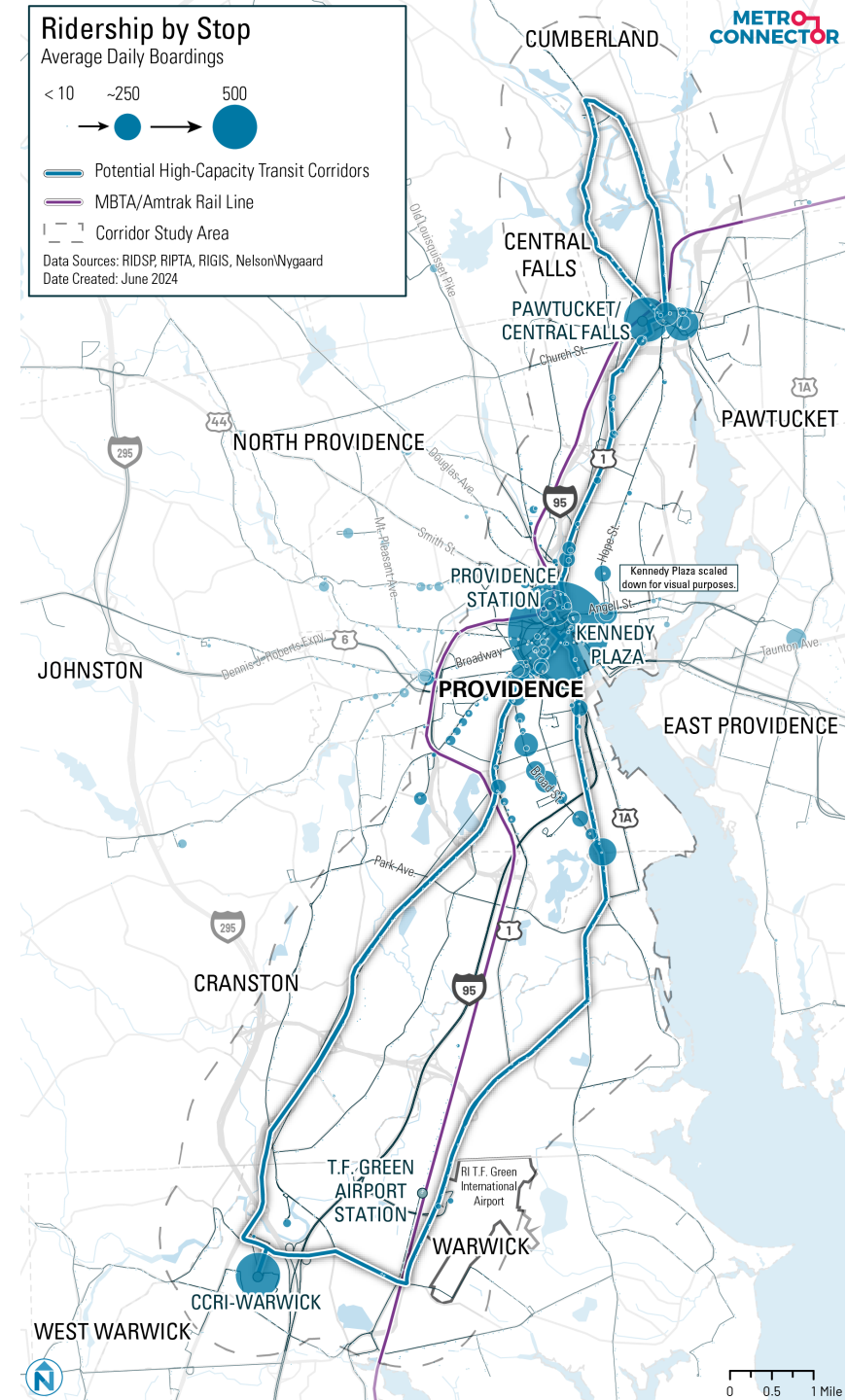
Additional Density South of Park Avenue and North of the Blackstone River Would Make HCT Possible for the Entire Corridor

- **More mixed-use and duplex, triplex, and denser housing is needed** to create the vibrant, walkable and economically thriving neighborhoods that support transit.
- **More collaboration between communities is needed** to create more cohesive corridors with transit supportive zoning.
- **Pawtucket and Central Falls Station District Vision Plan (2016, right) provides regional model for HCT-supportive development and planning**



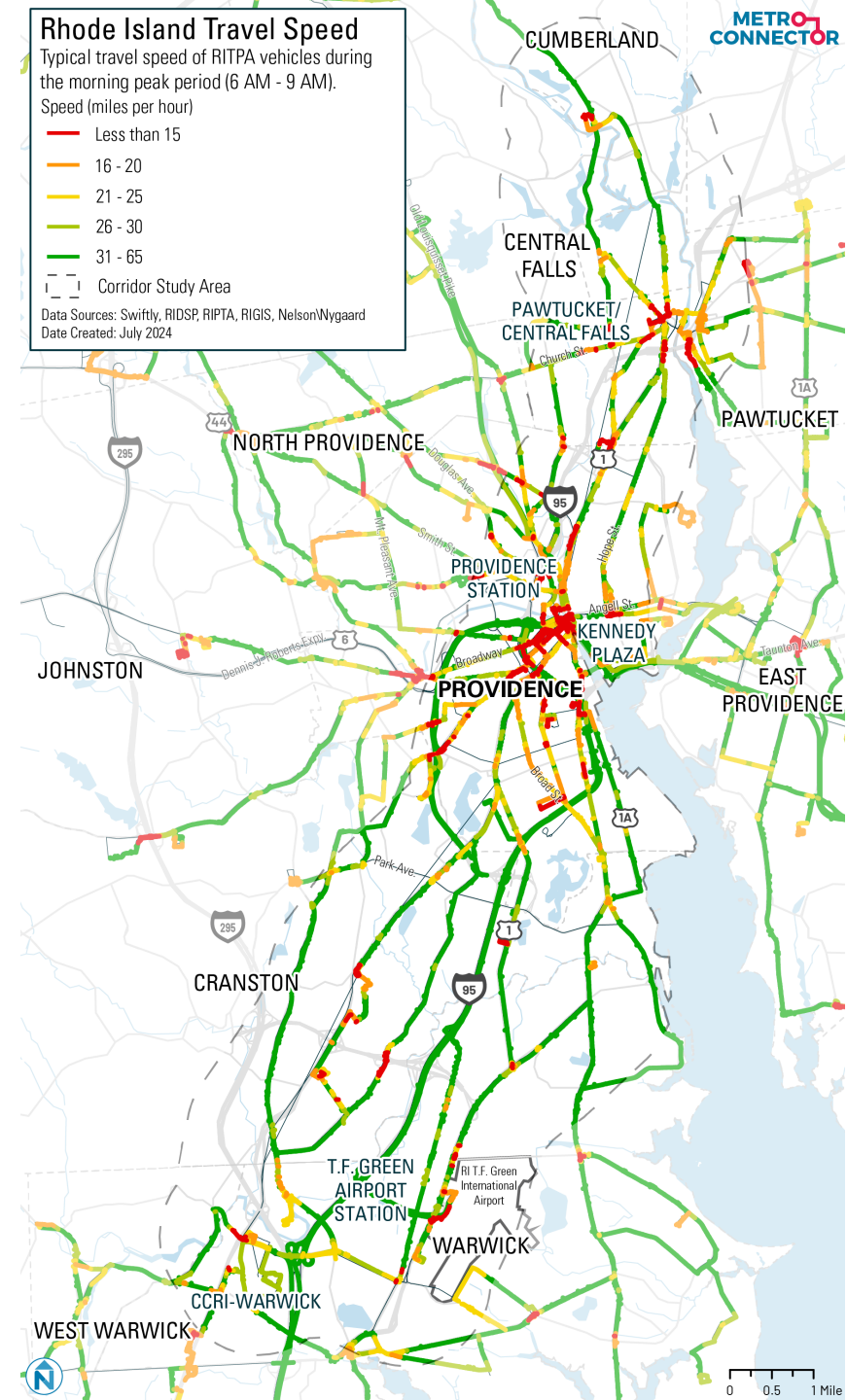
Transit Analysis Provides Overview of the State of Existing and Planned Public Transit

- It details transit routes operating in the area, highlights transit infrastructure and key transfer locations, and analyzes ridership
- **Existing ridership in Providence, Central Falls, and Pawtucket is extremely strong and HCT-supportive**
- **HCT would replace existing duplicative bus service in much of central Providence and Pawtucket, allowing existing RIPTA resources to be reinvested into improving frequencies**



HCT Opportunity: Major Speed and Reliability Improvements

- RIPTA has a strong and growing network of transit priority infrastructure, including 112 intersections with TSP and 2 transit priority corridors
- HCT presents the opportunity to significantly improve transit speeds, especially in Pawtucket, Downtown Providence, near TF Green Airport, and parts of Cranston



Questions? Reactions?

- Does anything you have heard so far surprise you?
- What, if anything, do you think is missing?
- Do you have advice for us as we prepare to roll this information out to the community?





Next Steps

Round 1 Outreach is this Fall



COMMUNICATE the study's purpose, need, goals, and objectives.



ESTABLISH relationships in the project's study area.



LEARN the critical issues, constraints, and opportunities.

- Tools for our first round of public engagement:
 - Online survey
 - Community open house (in-person)
 - Virtual public meeting
 - Promotional pop-up events

Next Steps

- **Engage the public** starting next month
- **Finalize existing conditions documents**
 - Existing Conditions Report
 - Key Community Stakeholder Outreach Report
 - Basis of Design
- **Early scoping** meeting with resource agencies
- **Finalize and screen long list** of potential rapid transit corridors
- **Next Working Group meeting** anticipated in October to review long list of potential rapid transit alternatives





Thank you!