



October 28, 2024



RIPTA Metro Connector

Technical Working Group (TWG) Meeting #2

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Today's Agenda

- 1 Welcome and Meeting Purpose
- 2 Community Outreach
- 3 Existing Conditions
- 4 Future Conditions
- 5 Towards a Universe of Ideas
- 6 Next Steps



Welcome and Meeting Purpose

Purpose of Today's Meeting:

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

We want to share with you what we learned from recent community outreach, finish our conversations on Existing Conditions, and introduce a Universe of concepts to be considered in the AA.

Reminder of our Charge

- The TWG serves as an advisory group to the Project Management Team (PMT).
- This is the 2nd of six meetings envisioned to occur over the 18-month project, at key project milestones.

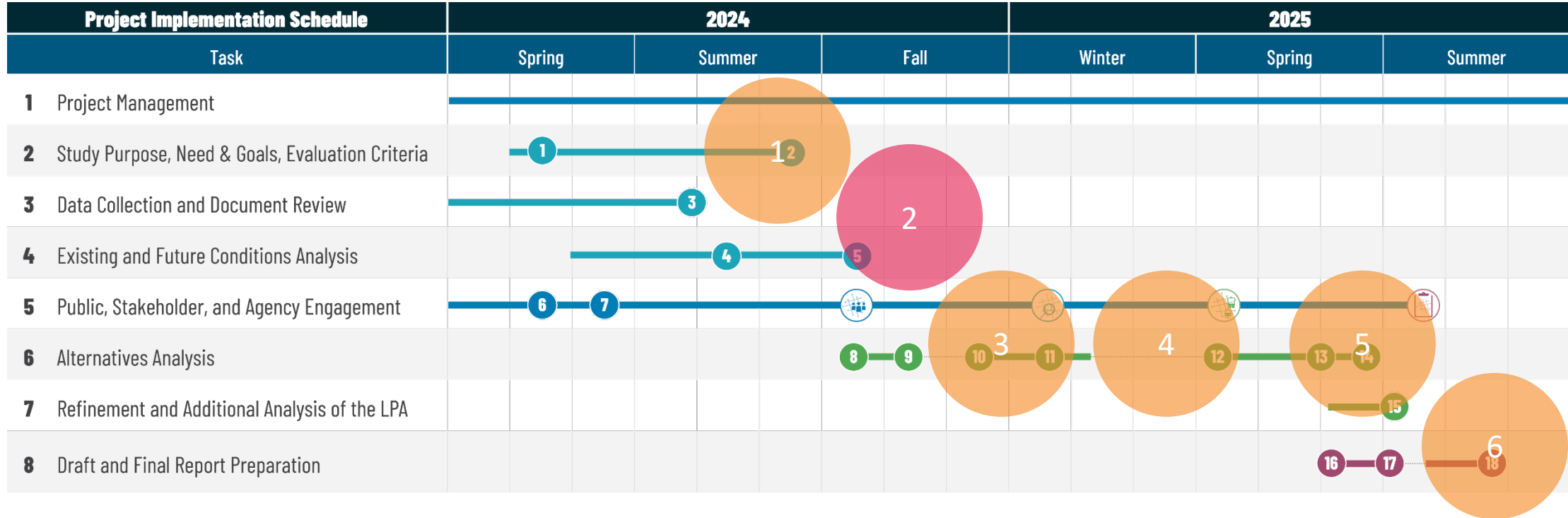
Key TWG Roles

- 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!**

Reminder of TWG Participation

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

Reminder of When we Meet



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
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Themes from Public Outreach

Public Involvement Plan



Stakeholder Interviews – Community Organizations

- Transit trips can be time-consuming; new service must be reliable/frequent/fast
- Integrate Safe Streets/Complete Streets concepts
- Eliminate transfers for long regional trips but also provide connections to nearby locations (e.g., crosstown service to senior housing)
- Stimulate economic growth in small business districts
- Desire for opportunities for affordable housing, but concern about gentrification around stations

Messaging/Outreach ideas:

- Service will be fast, frequent, reliable, safe, accessible, convenient
- Will reduce car/parking costs and help meet housing, climate and equity goals
- Partner with community organizations to build project support. Speak about project at already-scheduled meetings and events
- Use personal stories to highlight transit's critical role

Interviewees

- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Progreso Latino
- PCF Development
- One Central Providence
- Providence Streets Coalition
- AARP
- West Bay Community Action



Stakeholder Interviews – Business and Housing

- Link regional destinations and connect underserved areas
- Create a sense of place (streetscape and urban design)
 - Show that auto-centric areas along the corridors could be transformed
- Address parking concerns:
 - Opportunity to reduce parking minimums for new development
 - Help overcome fact that 45% of Rhode Islanders don't frequent downtown and many cite parking as a reason

Messaging/Outreach ideas:

- Share examples from other cities. Have business leaders from these areas speak to peers in RI (e.g. other 2nd tier cities have good transit, tourists and relocating workers expect it)
- Meets other state goals for Smart Growth, Climate Change, Housing, Public Health, Household Cost Savings, Equity
- Overcome perceived safety concerns and stigmas surrounding transit
- The business community has the ear of state leaders. Meet with them early in project to understand concerns

Interviewees

- Providence Foundation
- Housing Works RI
- Greater PVD Warwick Convention & Visitor's Bureau
- Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce



Round#1 Public Engagement

- We conducted 11 Pop-ups and connected with almost 750 people at transit centers, stores, colleges, and community events
- We hosted 5 Public Open Houses engaging over 80 participants
- Materials at Pop-Ups and Open Houses were made available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese
- The online survey collected 435 responses
 - 412 in English
 - 22 in Spanish
 - 1 in Portuguese



Snapshot of What we Heard

- Generally, participants were in favor of HCT as an added service option and would be likely to use it.
- Hospitals and places to shop were some of the most frequently cited for better connections.
- Current commutes in the corridors can be as long as 2 hours, just going one way to work or school.
- Faster service and safety were the most mentioned desires across all engagement.

"Traffic is a huge issue, we need more transit."

Warwick resident

"This is so awesome - I appreciate that 2 CCRIs are connected. I love that you service hospitals, that is where I want to work so it will help [me]"

CCRI Student

"Commuting on public transit takes the WHOLE day currently"

Kennedy Plaza User

"It takes me 90 mins from Pawtucket to CCRI-Warwick. I am lucky if I am on time."

Pawtucket resident

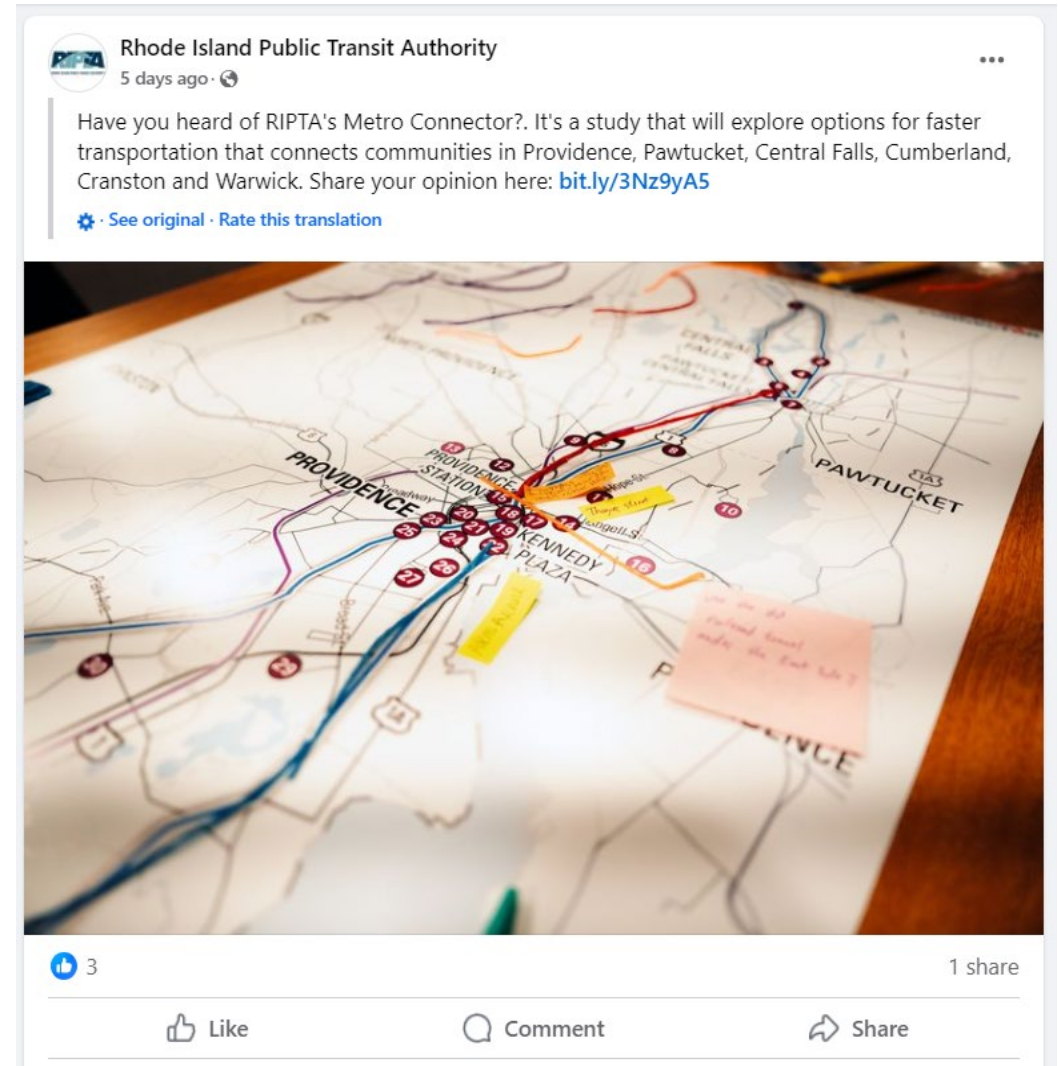
Recommended PIP Adjustments

Some ideas we have for the next round of public outreach

- **Reach harder-to-reach voices and those that will be most impacted:**
 - Organize and facilitate small Focus Groups
 - Target Pop-Up events to meeting key demographics where they are
- **Build trust and buy in from key community voices:**
 - Forge partnerships via deeper conversations with a cross-section of community groups
 - Integrate our meetings into existing community group sessions/events
- **Drive at-large, wide-spread public engagement:**
 - Incorporate virtual public meetings to enable greater attendance
 - Offer creative and user-friendly virtual engagement (i.e. interactive activities on website)

Strategic Messaging

- Periodic posts pushed every few weeks to increase awareness of the Metro Connector Study
- For example, content could cover:
 - Education (What is the Metro Connector?)
 - Project Rationale (Why is RIPTA considering this? What are the needs/trends?)
 - Closing the Loop (What have we heard so far? What's next?)
- Hoping municipalities, regional organizations and community organizations can help push content posted by RIPTA



Questions? Reactions?

- Did you participate in any of our community events or meetings?
- Do you think we have been successful at raising awareness about the project?
- What are your thoughts on our suggested adjustments to the PIP?





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

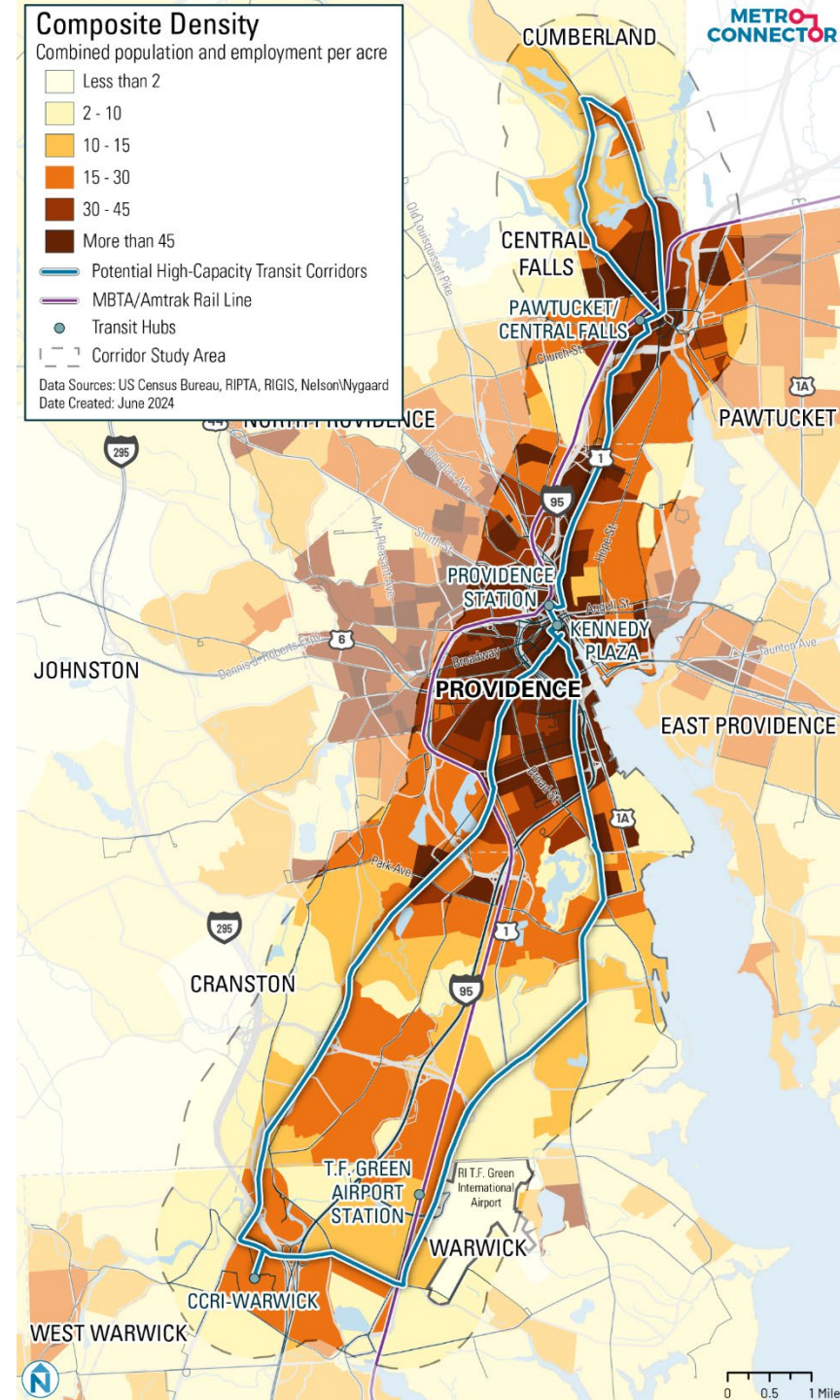
Findings presented at our last meeting

Findings presented today

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

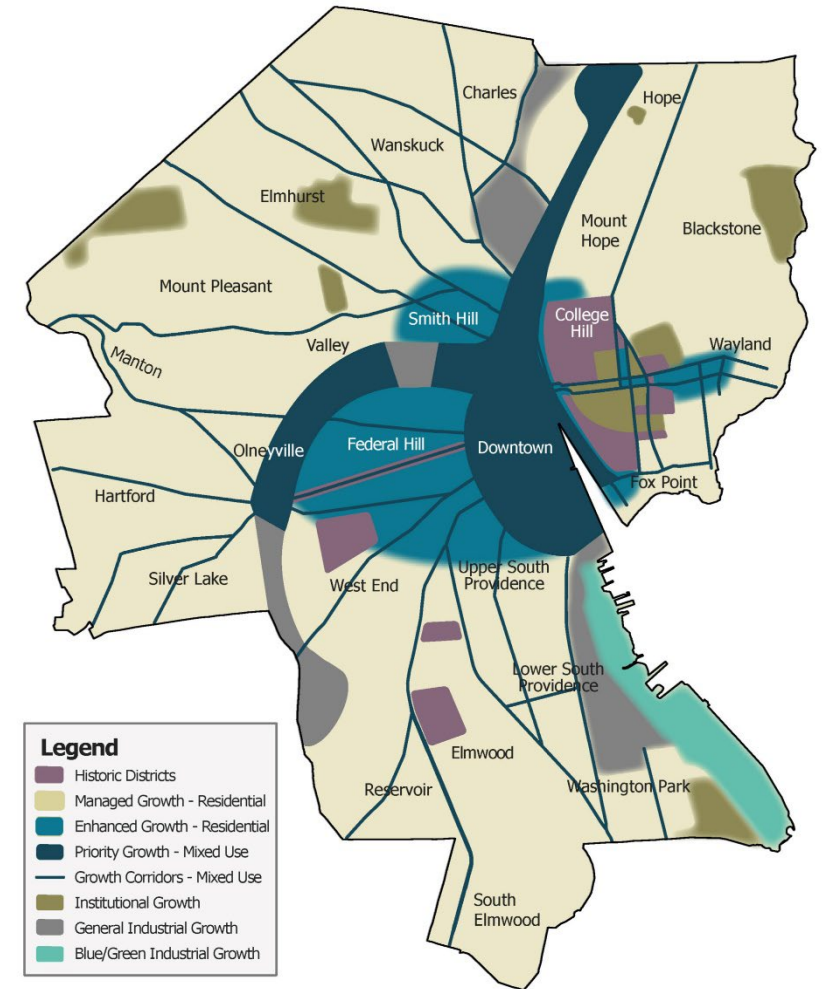
HIGH CAPACITY TRANSIT	 Light Rail Transit	Every 10 minutes or better 45+ Residents/Acre 25+ Jobs/Acre
	 Bus Rapid Transit	Every 10-20 minutes 30-45 Residents/Acre 15-25 Jobs/Acre
	 Rapid Bus	Every 10-20 minutes 30-45 Residents/Acre 15-25 Jobs/Acre
	 Local Bus	Every 16-30 minutes 15-30 Residents/Acre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



Plan and Policy Review Highlights: TOD and Housing

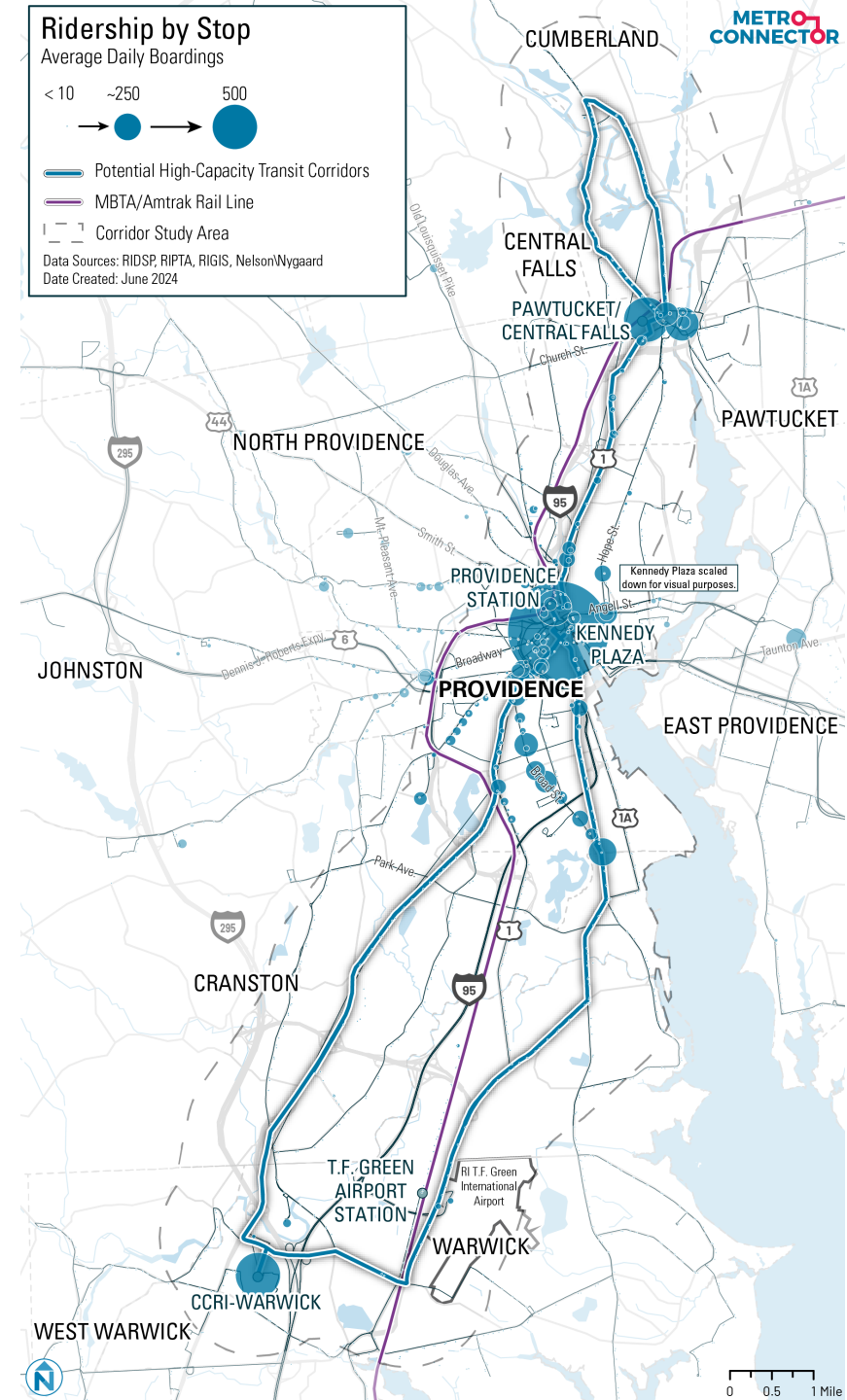
- **HCT presents a significant opportunity to meet local and State land use goals and to catalyze new housing** to help solve the state’s housing supply gap.
- **The State’s TOD Pilot Program and *some* municipal plans support increased density and funding incentives:**
 - **Five established municipal 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



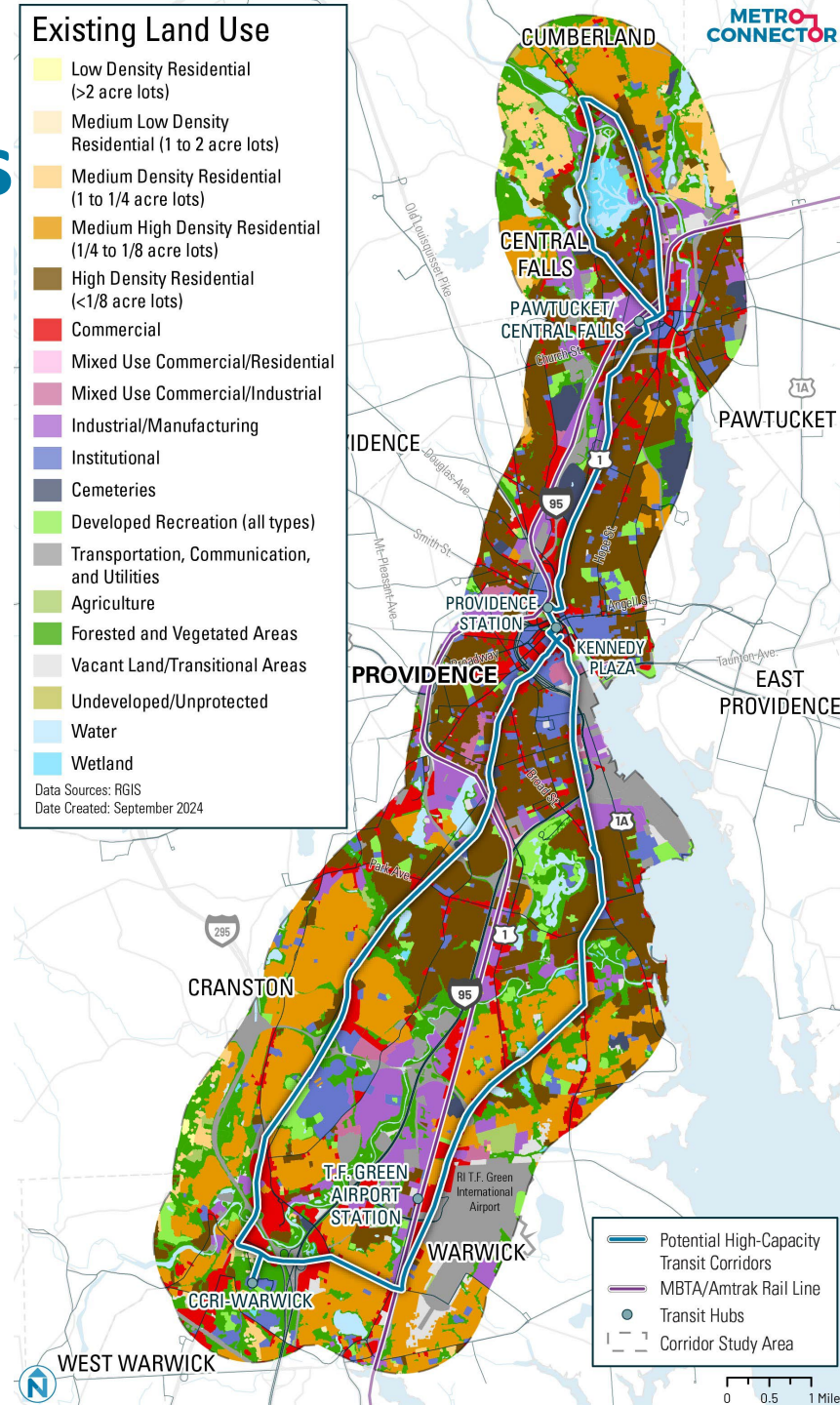
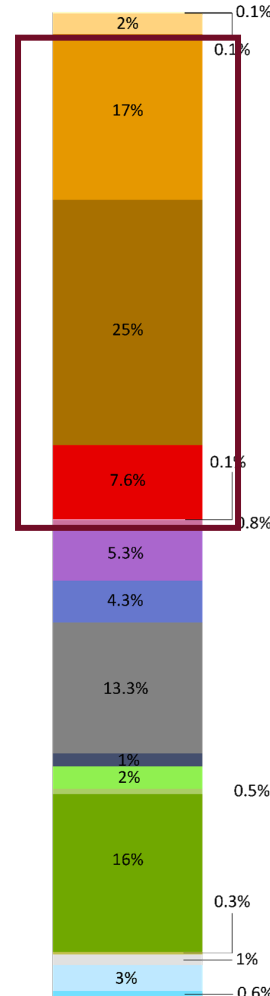
Transit Analysis Highlights

- 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
- 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



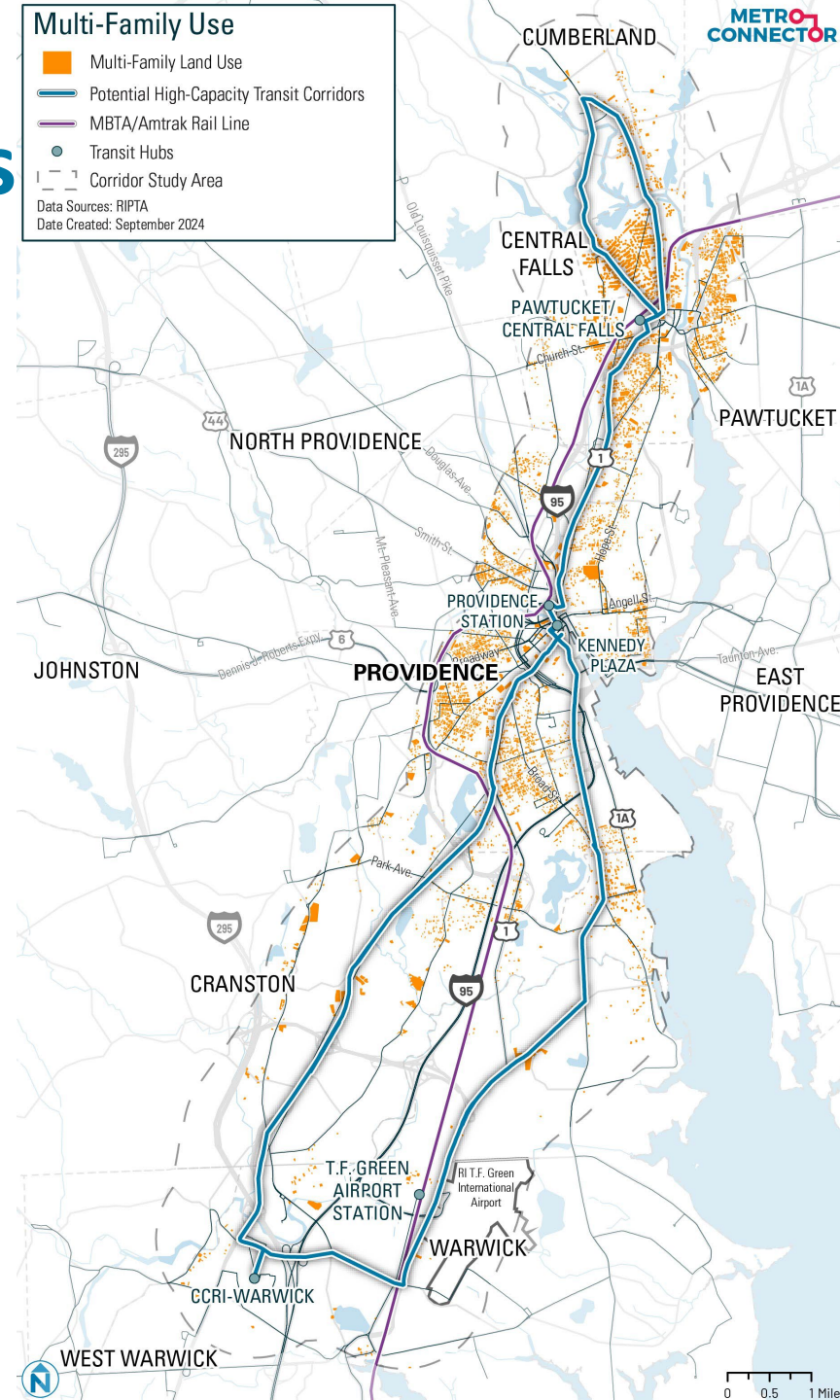
Land Use Assessment Highlights

- Existing land use varies with the following supporting HCT (51% of land area):
 - High Density Residential
 - Medium High Density Residential
 - Commercial
 - Mixed Use
- Very little undeveloped open land (<1%)
 - Future development will rely on infill and reuse of previously developed land



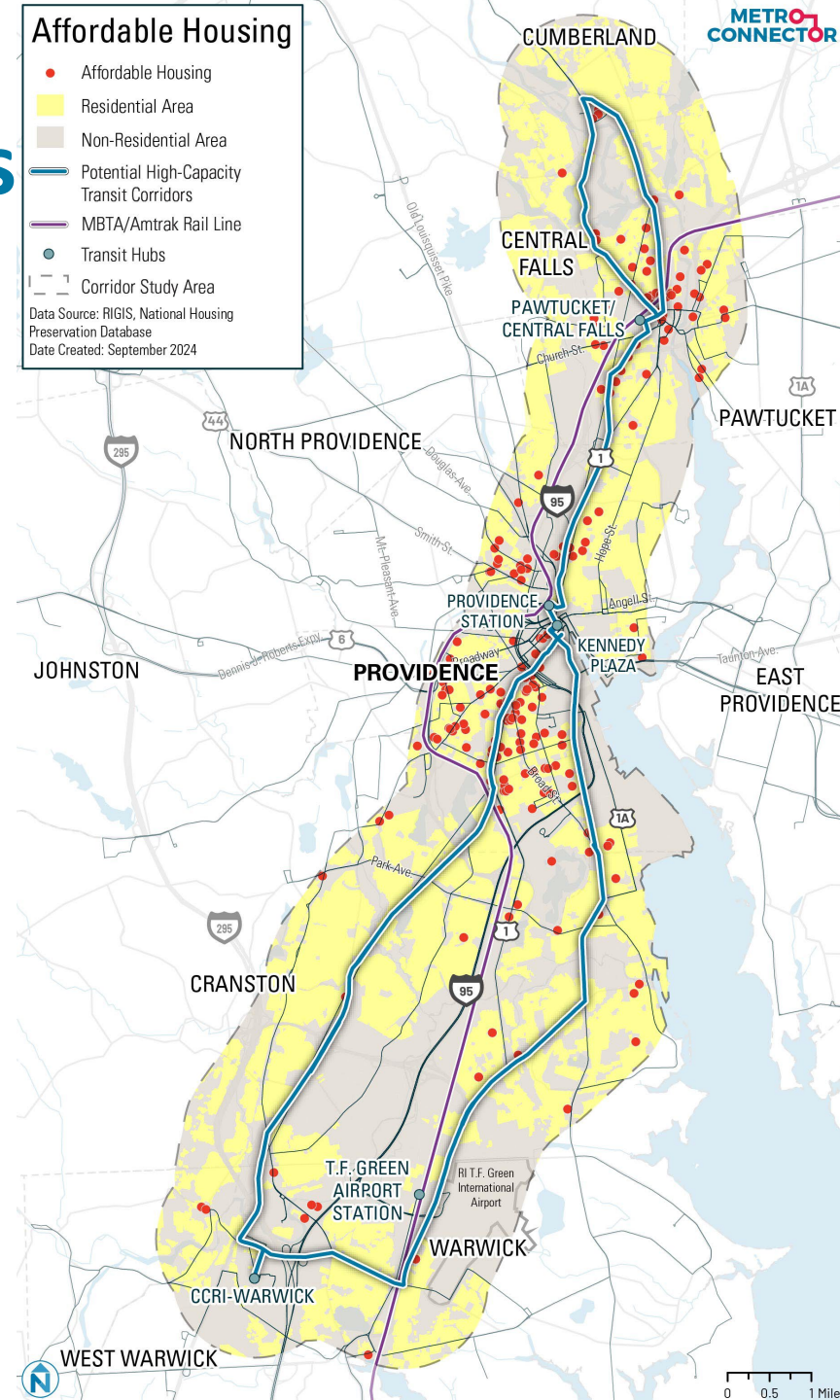
Land Use Assessment Highlights

- Multi-family housing are much more supportive of HCT than single-family housing
- Multi-family land use is concentrated Central Falls, Pawtucket, and Providence
 - Most of this is pre-war housing stock
- Cranston and Warwick have more dispersed, but large multi-family developments



Land Use Assessment Highlights

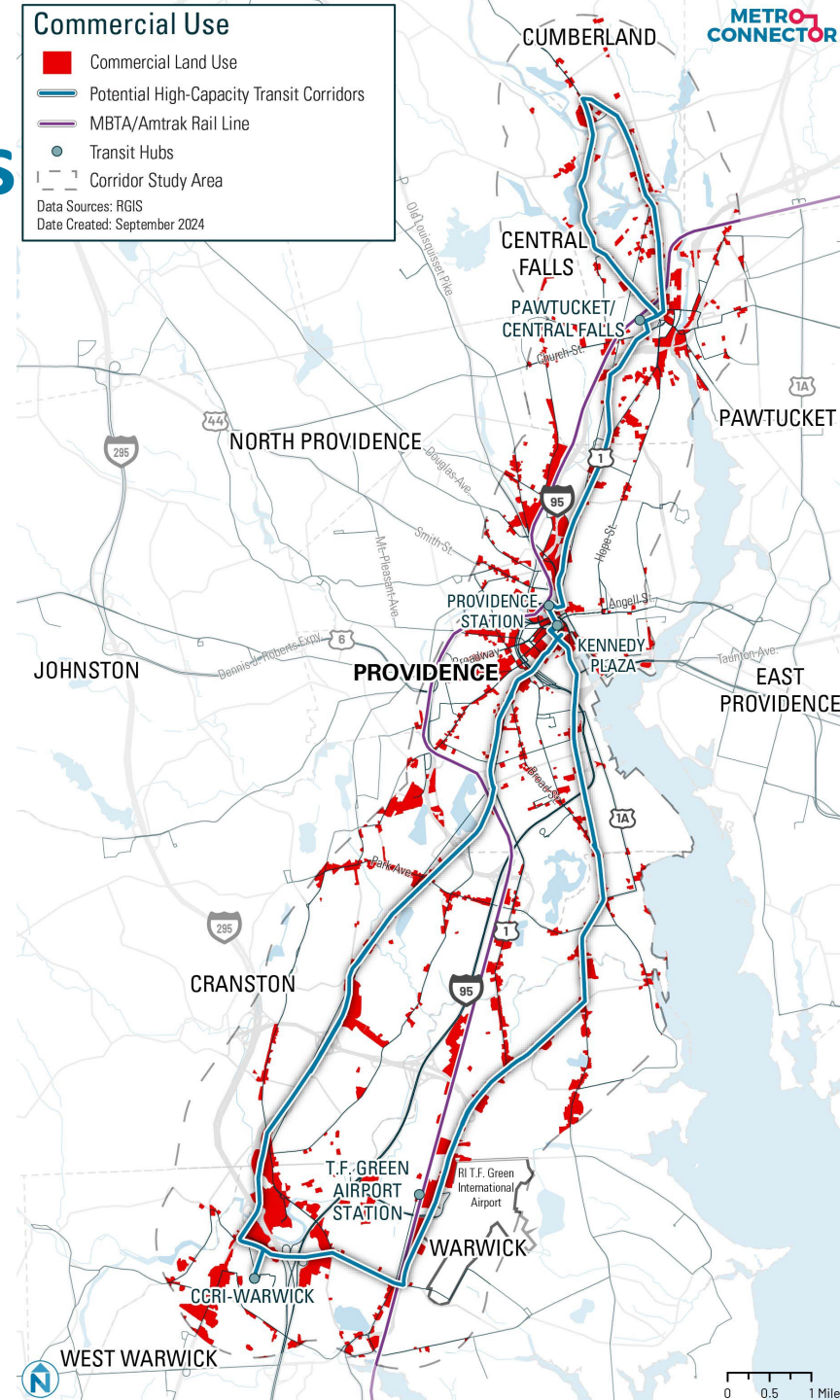
- Affordable housing
 - The study area has 52% of the state’s total affordable housing units
- Most of the study area’s affordable housing is in Providence, Central Falls, and Pawtucket
- Serving affordable housing with high-quality public transit can reduce the burden on low-income households of the combined costs of housing and transportation



Land Use Assessment Highlights

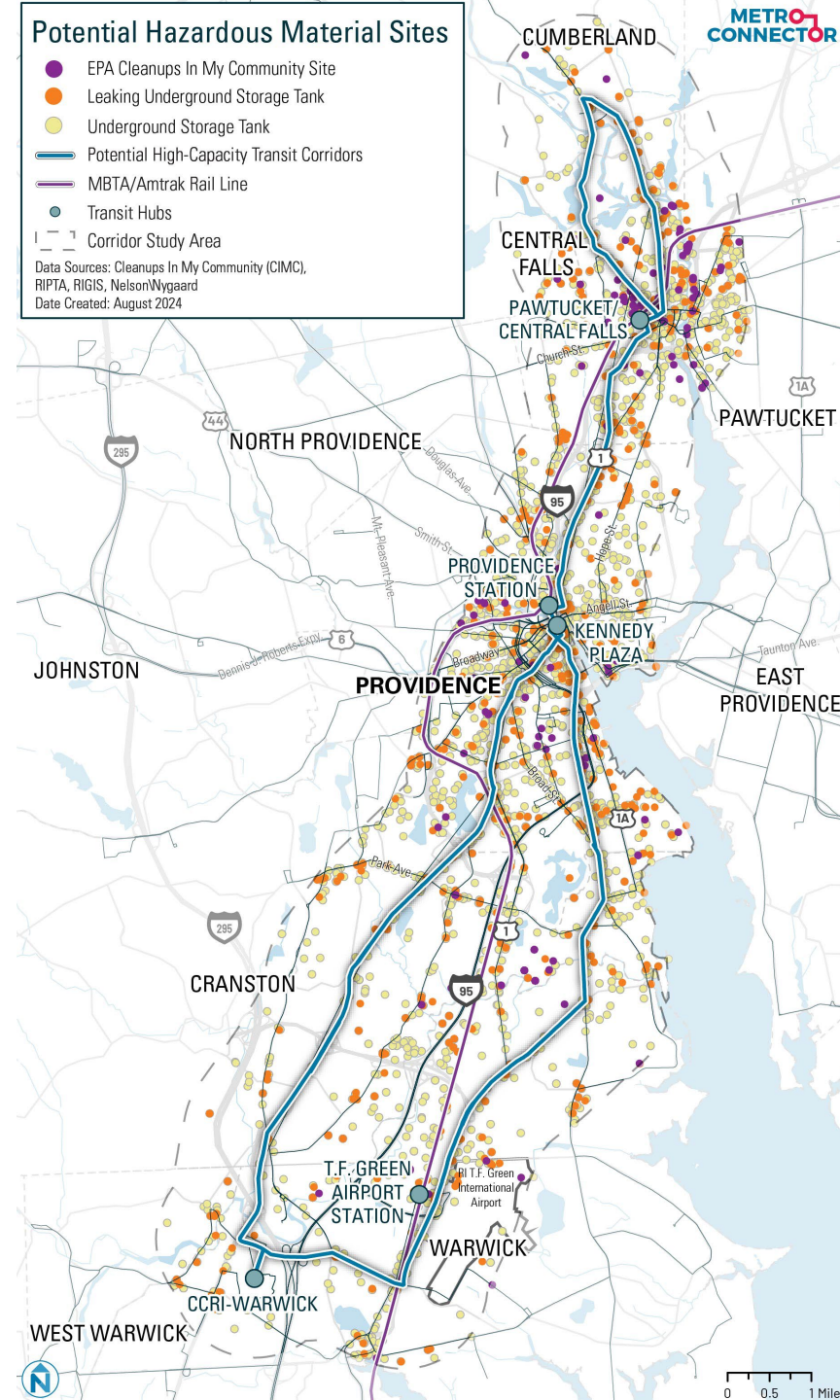
○ Commercial Land Use

- Indicator of destinations where patrons buy goods and services and jobs of the employees who work there
- Warwick has the highest commercial acreage in the study area
- Much of the commercial land use concentrates along corridors in the study area, good indicator for rapid transit



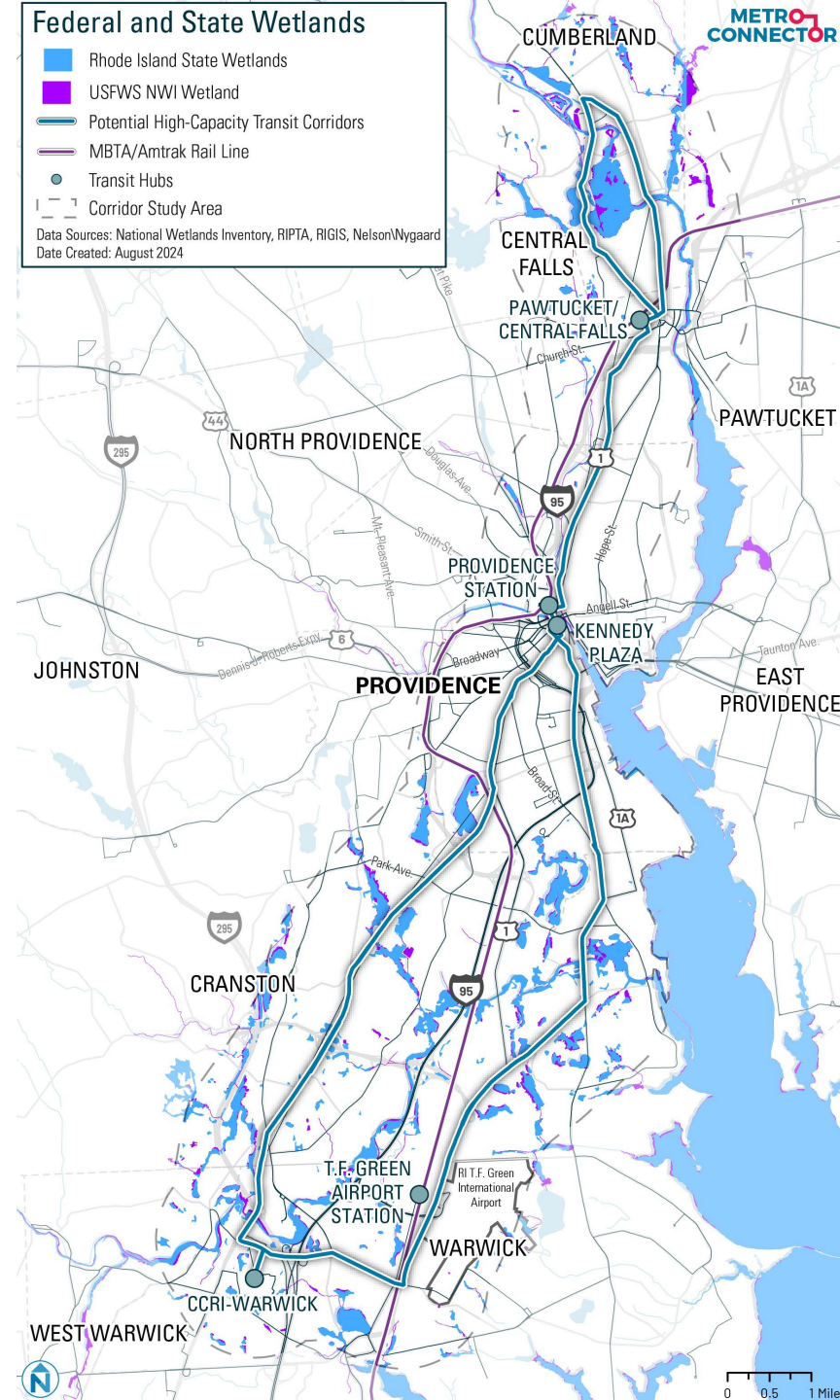
Environmental Review Highlights

- Potential Hazardous Material Sites including:
 - EPA Cleanups in My Community Sites
 - Include brownfield, superfund sites
 - Leaking Underground Storage Tank
 - Underground Storage Tank
- Concentrated in the denser and more developed portions of the study area
 - Correlated with current or former industrial and manufacturing land use
- If construction remains largely in existing ROW, direct impact from these sites is probably minimal



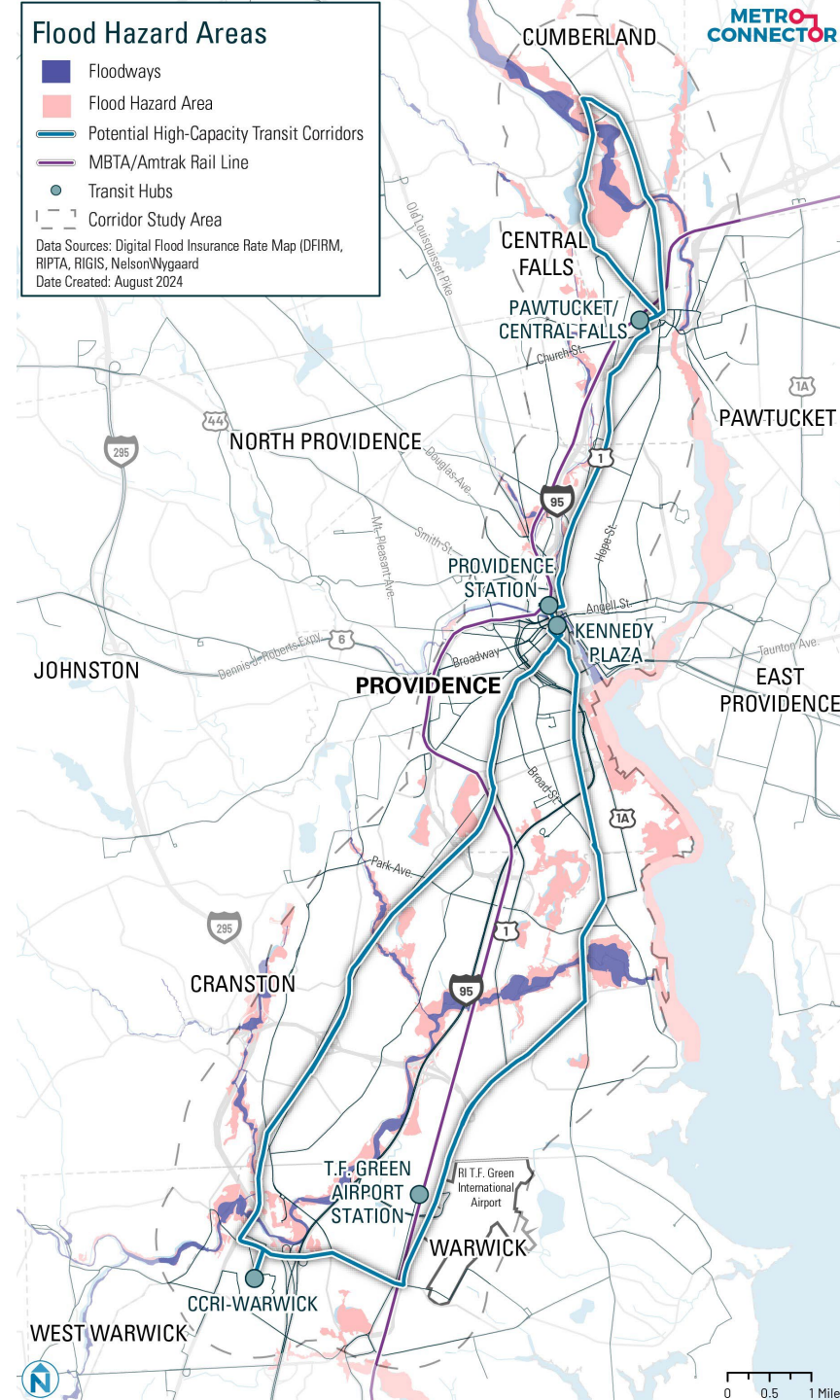
Environmental Review Highlights

- Federal and State Wetlands
 - The study area contains a variety of wetlands, streams, rivers, ponds, lakes, and other waterbodies
 - Rapid transit serving existing and paved roadways would limit the potential for wetland impacts
 - Unless major widening or other large-scale construction occurs
 - Wetland protection measures will be followed



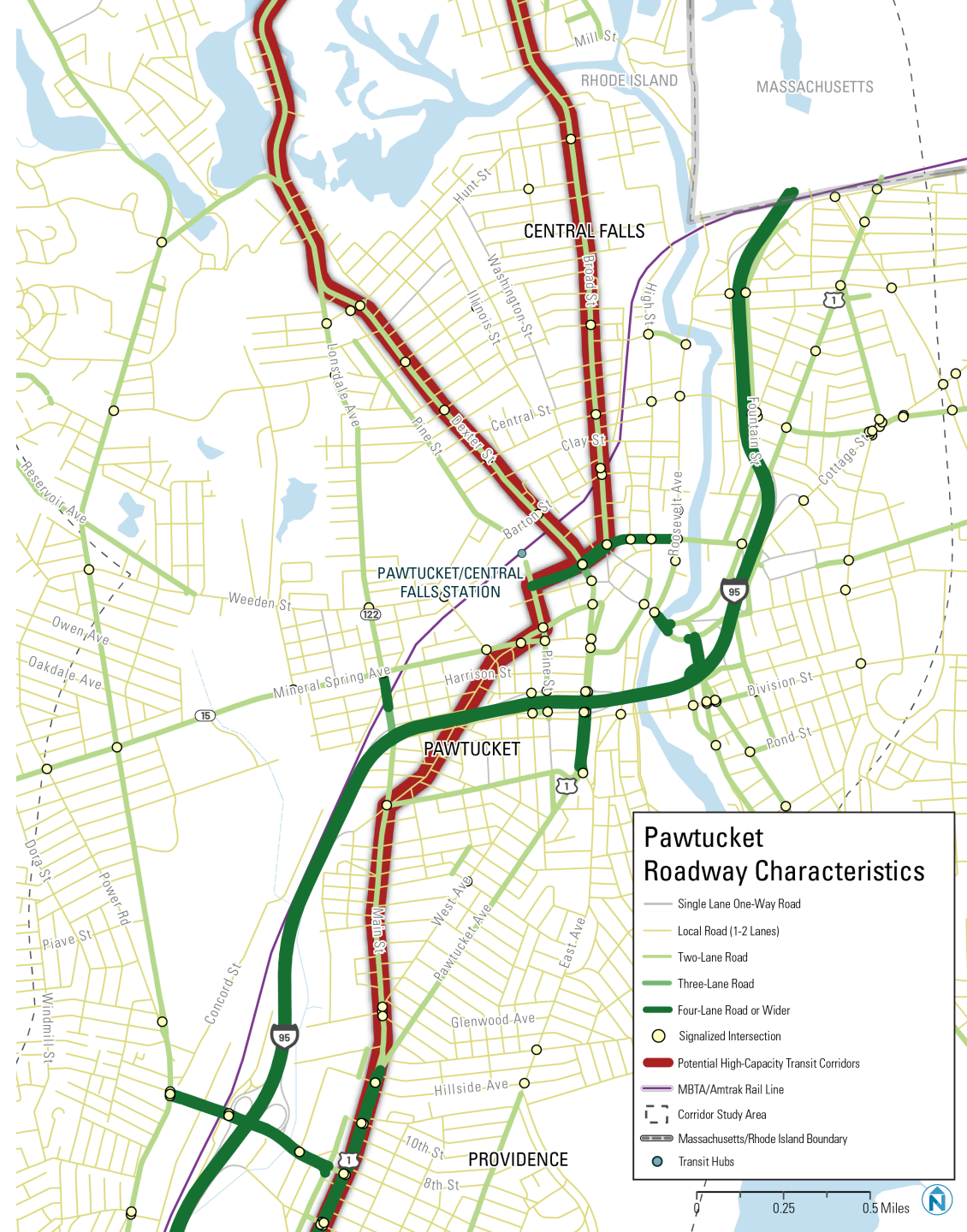
Environmental Review Highlights

- Flood Hazard Areas
 - Study area contains FEMA 100-year floodplains
 - Correlates with presence of waterbodies
 - Floodplains near the proposed corridors are primarily in Warwick and Cumberland
 - Unless widening occurs, potential for increased stormwater runoff and other floodplain impacts may be fairly limited on existing roadways



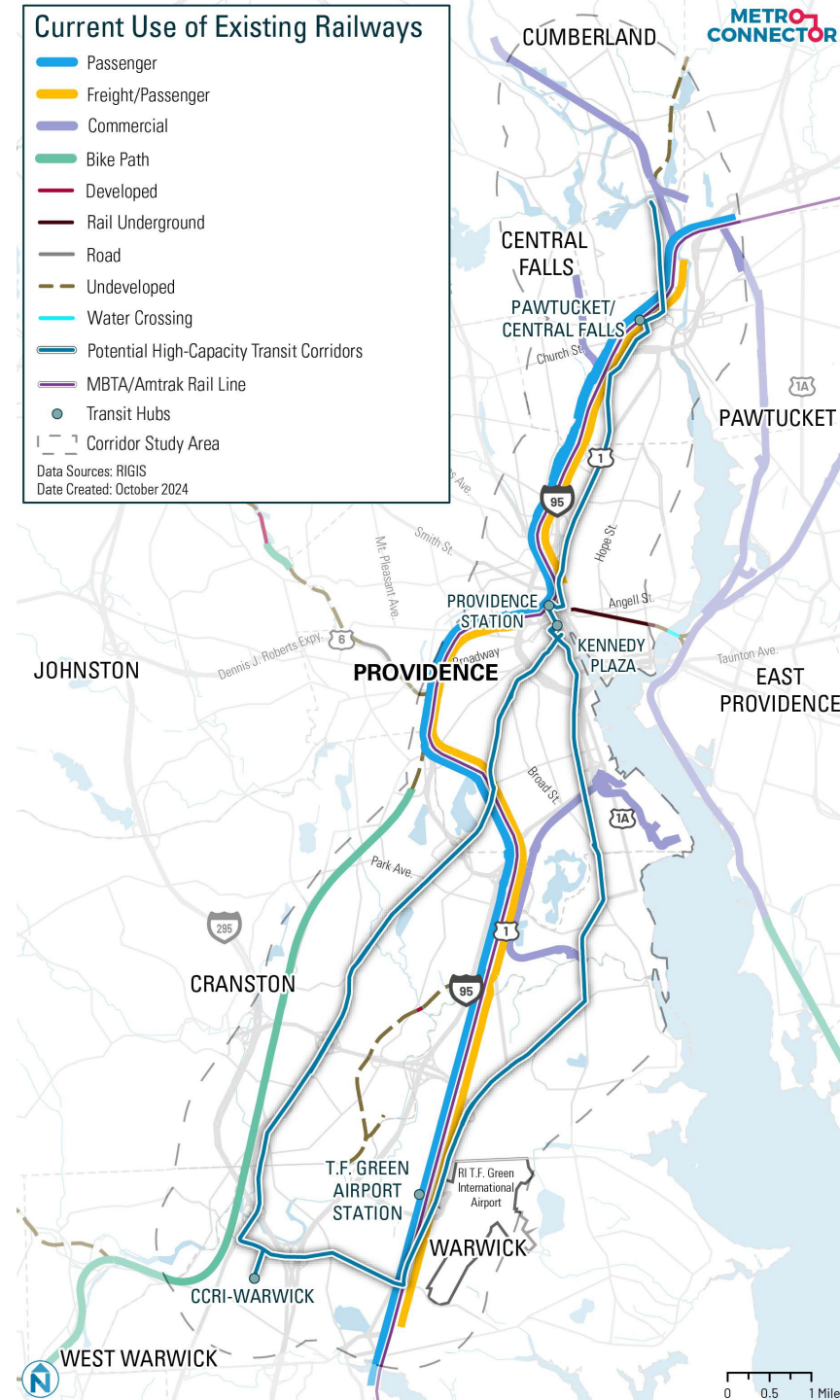
Existing Roadway Highlights

- Roadway Characteristics
 - Number of lanes and traffic signals have implications for transit priority that is crucial to rapid transit being fast and reliable
 - The Providence metro area has many constrained roadways, with many being 1 and 2 lane roads, limiting the opportunity for bus lanes and queue jumps
 - Mapping roadway characteristics will aid in identifying the universe of potential corridors



Existing Railway Highlights

- Use of Existing Railways
 - NEC is the key active passenger and freight line running north-south in the study area
 - Commercial rail lines spur off the NEC in Cumberland, Central Falls, Pawtucket, Warwick, and Providence
 - Washington Secondary Bike Path is converted rail
 - Undeveloped lines exist in Cumberland and Cranston
 - East Providence Secondary Track runs east into East Providence underground





Future Conditions

Developing assumptions about **Future Conditions** are crucial to modeling ridership. We strive to understand what infrastructure will be in place and what types of development will have occurred in the study area.

FUTURE CONDITIONS

Analysis Methods: Four Steps

Step 1: How Many Trips are Generated from Future Land Use?

Step 2: What Mode are People Using to Take these Trips?

Step 3: Where are those Trips Coming From or Going To?

Step 4: How do we Assign These Trips to the Network?

FUTURE CONDITIONS

What We Are Working On Now

Land Use: What kind of growth is reasonable to anticipate for the study area in the near future?

What about 25 years from now?

Infrastructure: What transportation network improvements are reasonable to expect for the future?

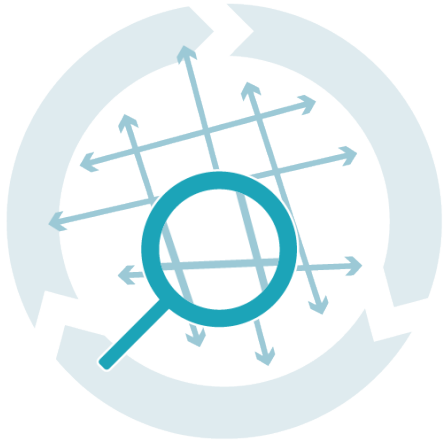
How much uncertainty is there about these?



Alternatives Analysis Phase

The Alternatives Analyses let us start assessing the universe of ideas for which corridors rapid transit might serve and the strength and weaknesses of different alignments.

The 3 phases of our scope



1. Understand

Months 1-6

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

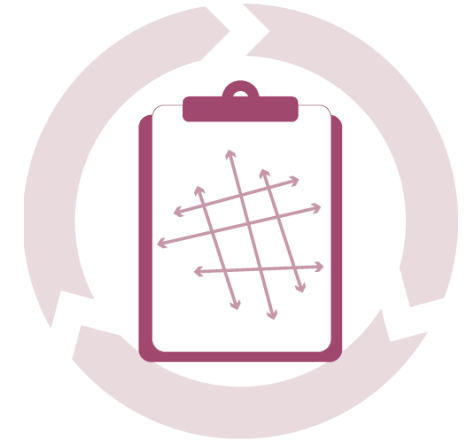
Milestone Alert:
We are here!



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

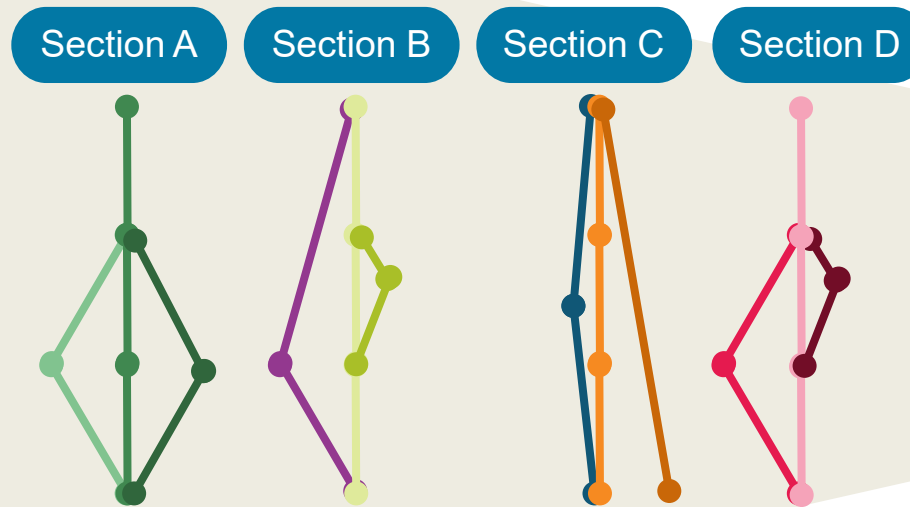
The 3 steps of our evaluation

Step A: Screening



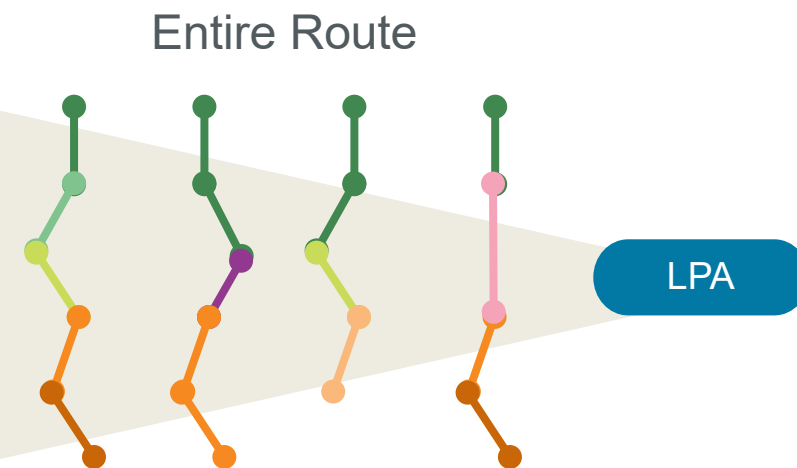
Review a wide range of ideas and remove those that don't meet the project purpose

Step B: Tier 1 Evaluation



Test different alignments in each section

Step C: Tier 2 Evaluation



Test best alignments as complete route

What Is Screening?

- Asks a set of simple YES or NO questions aligned with Project Purpose.
- The questions are framed so that they do not require significant data collection or analysis to answer.
- Screening criteria are based on existing or readily available data and may reflect regulatory or policy imperatives.
- If the answer is NO to any of the questions the concept is considered infeasible and is removed from further consideration.
- If the answer is YES to all the questions the concept is forwarded onto the Tier 1 Evaluation.

Step A: Screening



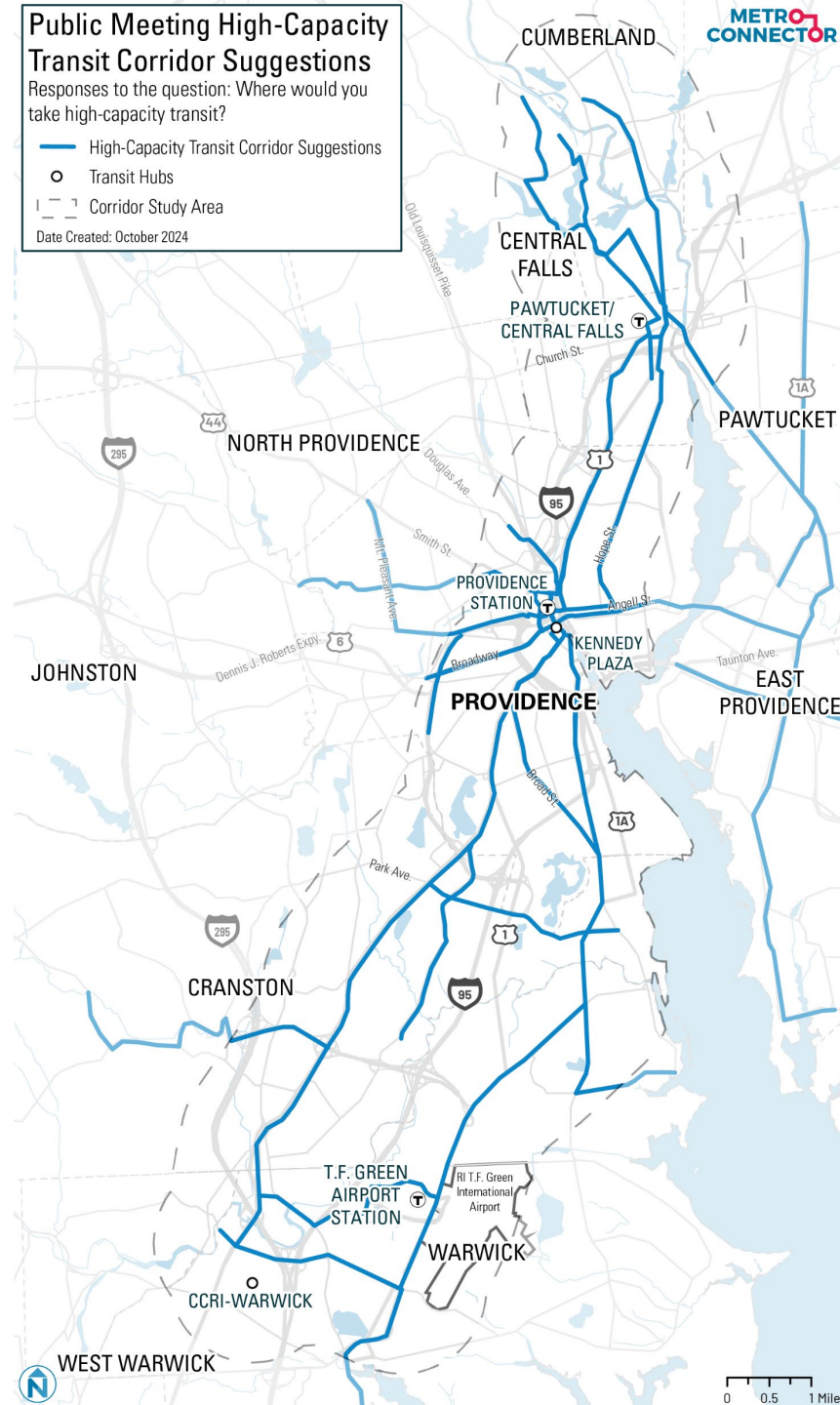
*Review a wide range
of ideas and remove
those that don't meet
the project purpose*

Draft Screening Criteria

1. Does the concept start and end in one of the study area municipalities: Cumberland, Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, Cranston, or Warwick?
2. Does the concept connect **key** existing and/or planned activity centers in the study area municipalities?
3. Does the concept serve areas with land-use **density to support** rapid transit now or in the future?
4. Could the concept be **permitted** from an environmental perspective?
5. Would the concept be within a corridor with **transit-supportive** zoning, or where zoning could change to be transit-supportive?

Public Meeting Corridor Suggestions

- During outreach in September, members of the public were asked: “Where would you take high-capacity transit?”
- These lines will be part of the universe of corridors that will be passed through the first screening
- Additional lines will be added by the project team later this month for the full universe of corridors



A Reminder of our Revised (Final?) Project Purpose

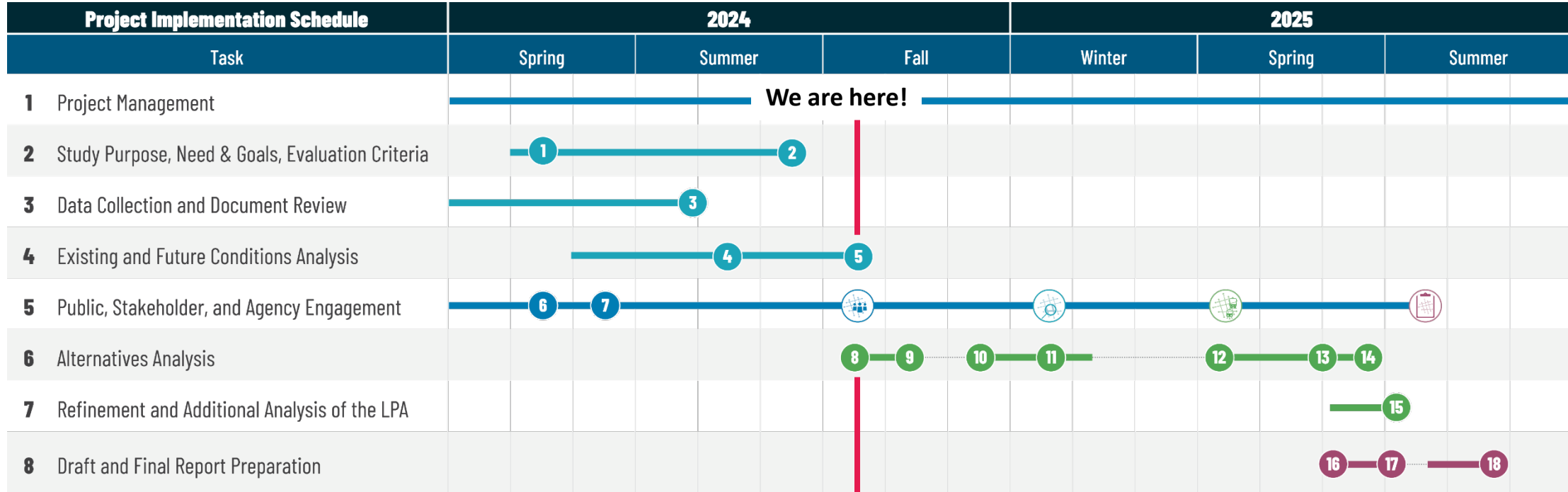
A key recommendation of *Transit Forward RI 2040*, this Metro Connector Study will consider options for providing a fast, frequent, reliable, and safe alternative to automobile travel that connects regional activity centers, neighborhoods, business districts, and transportation centers in metropolitan Providence while achieving other State goals related to climate, sustainable housing growth, public health, and economic development in an equitable manner.

Thank you for your thoughtful comments on the project's Purpose and Need. Your comments were incorporated into the revised document [here](#)



Next Steps

Our overall timeline



KEY MILESTONES AND DELIVERABLES

- 1 Draft Purpose and Needs Statement
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Next Steps

- **Stop drawing new lines** on the map by the end of next month
- **Early scoping** meeting with resource agencies in November
- Finalize **future no-build conditions assumptions** for ridership modeling by December
- **Conduct screening** in December
- **Next Working Group meeting** anticipated in January to review results of the screen and the recommended Tier 1 concepts





Thank you!

Infrastructure and Policy Assumptions

- Focus on infrastructure that has influence over STOPS ridership modeling
 - Transit priority infrastructure (anything that influences transit speed and reliability in the network)
 - Bus lanes/queue jumps
 - Bus on Shoulder
 - Transit Signal Priority
 - Transit frequency (higher frequency means more riders)
 - Pedestrian network (most people walk to and from transit)
 - Park and Ride locations and lot sizes
 - Fare prices and policy
- Only include infrastructure and policy that is funded or very likely to be in place by 2050
- This is our best guess based on what we know now

Recommended PIP Adjustments

- Building community partnerships
 - Progreso Latino
 - Vague in the PIP
 - How can we use the existing structure of community groups (they don't have to be transit focused, could be education, or faith) – the stipend is for food and drinks, they have their monthly meeting and we attend
 - Community champions – red herring for the hard work we need to do
 - What is the call to action!! Support, media, that puts pressure on decision makers
- Build the broader partnerships - major institutions
- Reaching the harder to reach communities
- Bringing native Spanish speakers
- Success – getting project awareness, and the pop-up