



# Newton Corner Long-Term Planning Study Public Meeting #1

## *Study Overview & Existing Conditions*

October 8, 2024 | 6:30 p.m.

Virtual



# Zoom webinar controls



- Ask a question and share comments



- Drop down menu to check microphone and speakers



- Raise your hand - \*9 for users dialing in and Alt + Y to raise your hand



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# Public meeting notes and procedures

## Notification of video recording

- This virtual public meeting will be recorded. The Massachusetts Department of Transportation may choose to retain and distribute the video, images, audio, and/or chat transcript.
- All parts of this meeting are considered public record.
- By continuing attendance with this virtual public meeting, you are consenting to participate in a recorded event.
- If you are not comfortable being recorded, please keep your microphone muted, or you may choose to excuse yourself from the meeting.

## Important notes for public attendees:

- Your microphone and webcam are automatically disabled upon entering the meeting.
- The meeting will be open to questions and answers at the end of the formal presentation.

**All questions and comments are welcome and appreciated, however we do request that you refrain from any disrespectful comments.**

# Agenda

## 1 Welcome

## 2 Study Overview

- Study Area
- Study Process
- Public Involvement Plan
- Previous Efforts and Themes

## 3 Goals and Objectives

## 4 Existing Conditions

- Planning Context
- Multimodal Mobility Conditions

## 5 Schedule and Next Steps

## 6 Public Comment Period



# NEWTON CORNER

## LONG-TERM PLANNING STUDY



# Meeting With You Today

- **MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning:**
  - Patrick Snyder (Project Manager)
  - Rachel Kelly
- **Study Consultants:**
  - Christine Trearchis (VHB)
  - Niki Hastings (VHB)
  - Matt Duranleau (VHB)
  - Christine Yi (FHI)





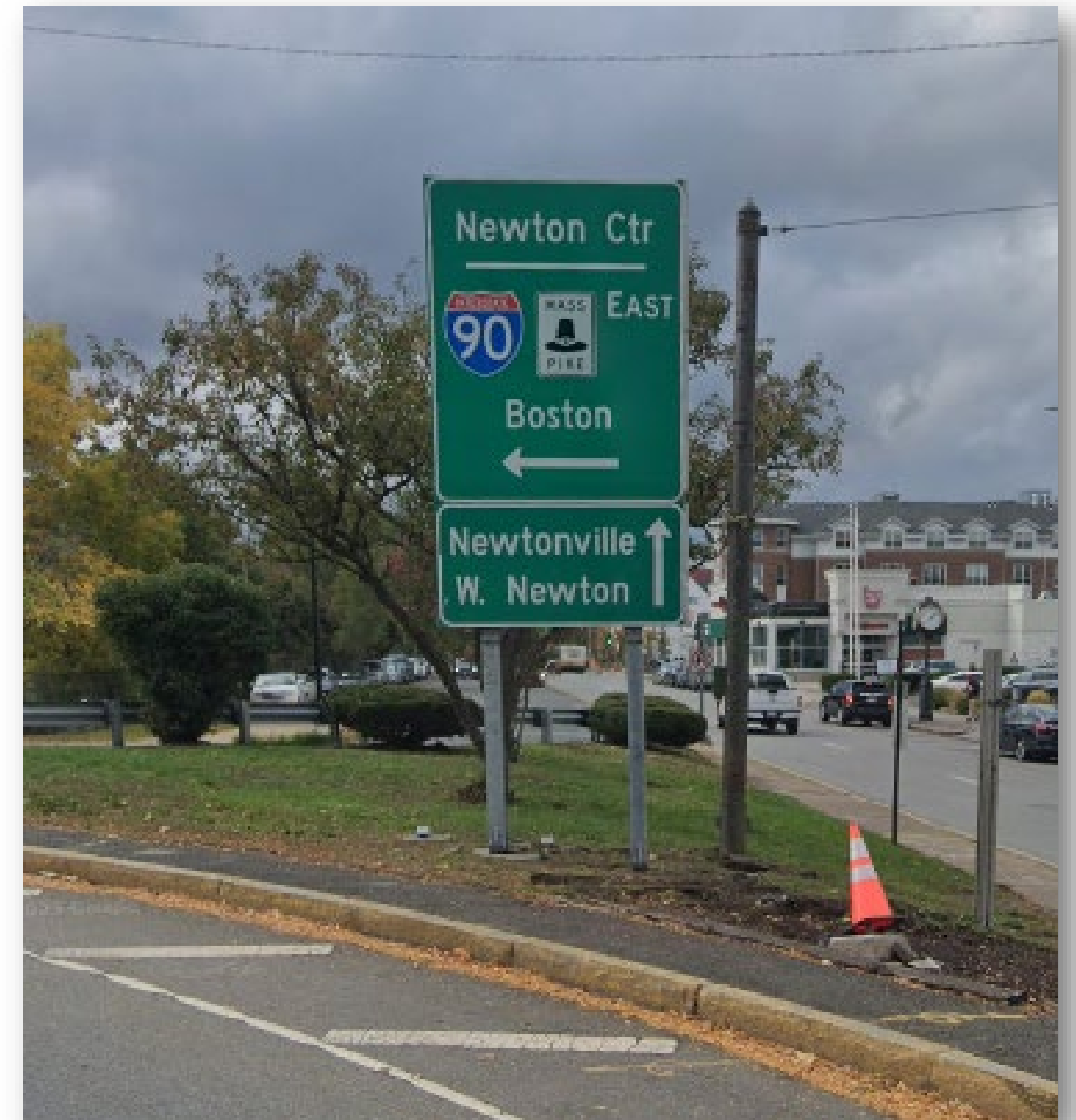


# Study Overview



## Study Overview

- The Newton Corner Long-Term Planning Study will develop **long-term multimodal transportation solutions and safety improvements** to the Newton Corner I-90 Exit 127 Interchange.
- The study area include Newton Corner, West Newton, and DCR Roadway areas in Newton, Brighton, and Watertown.
- The study will develop and analyze alternatives, present recommendations, and develop an approach for potential implementation.
- The study kicked off in Spring 2024, with a planned completion by the end of 2025.



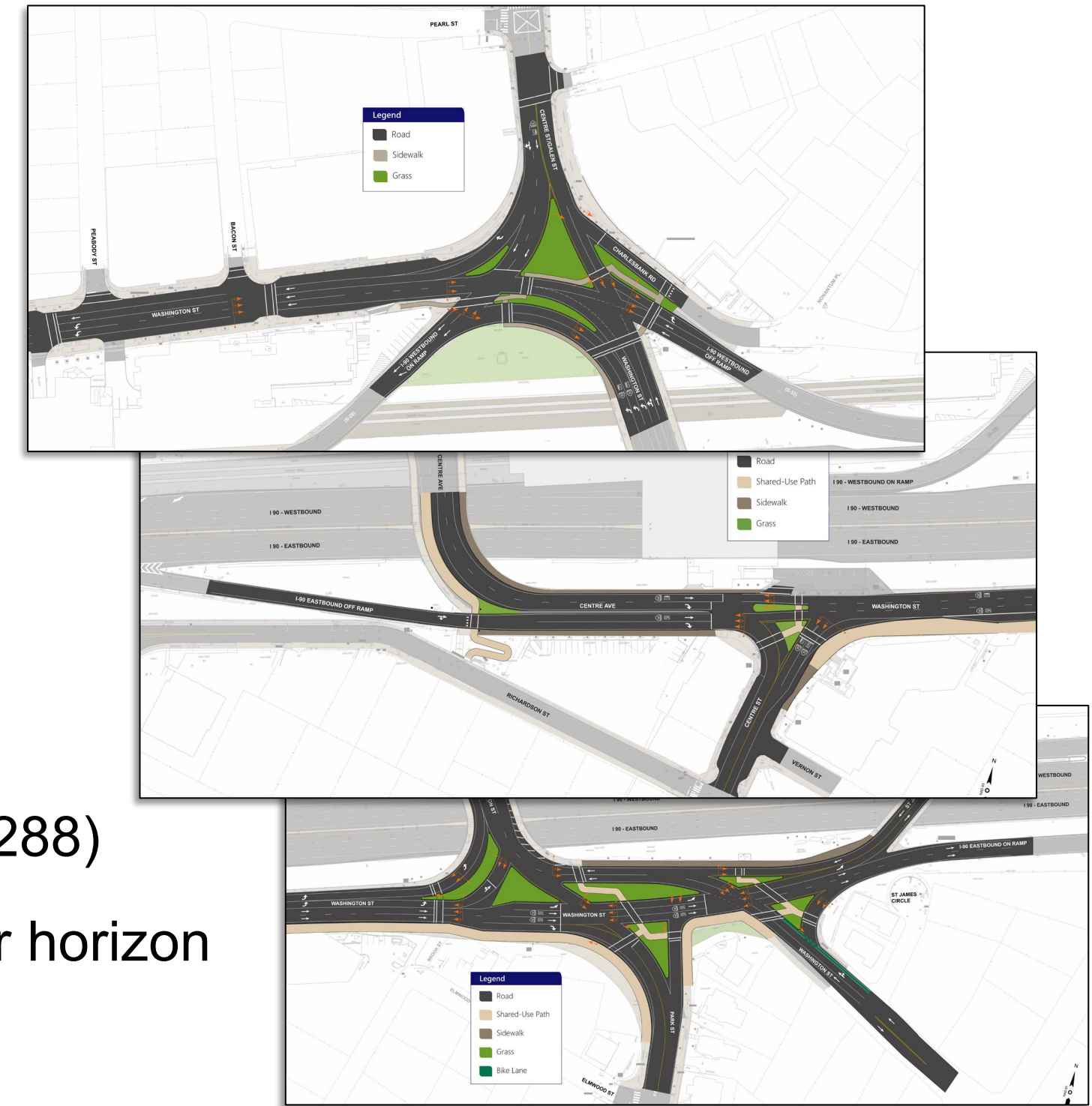
# Study Background

## Previous Studies

- Will leverage previous studies that have occurred, including:
  - Newton Corner Road Safety Audit (2020)
  - Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) Newton Corner Studies (2006, 2009)
  - Local and state planning documents

## Ongoing Projects/Studies

- MassDOT Short- to Mid-term Improvements project (DOT #609288)
  - Focused on operational / safety improvements on a 10-year horizon
  - Publication of Final Report expected in Fall 2024
  - Immediate safety improvements to be implemented Fall 2024

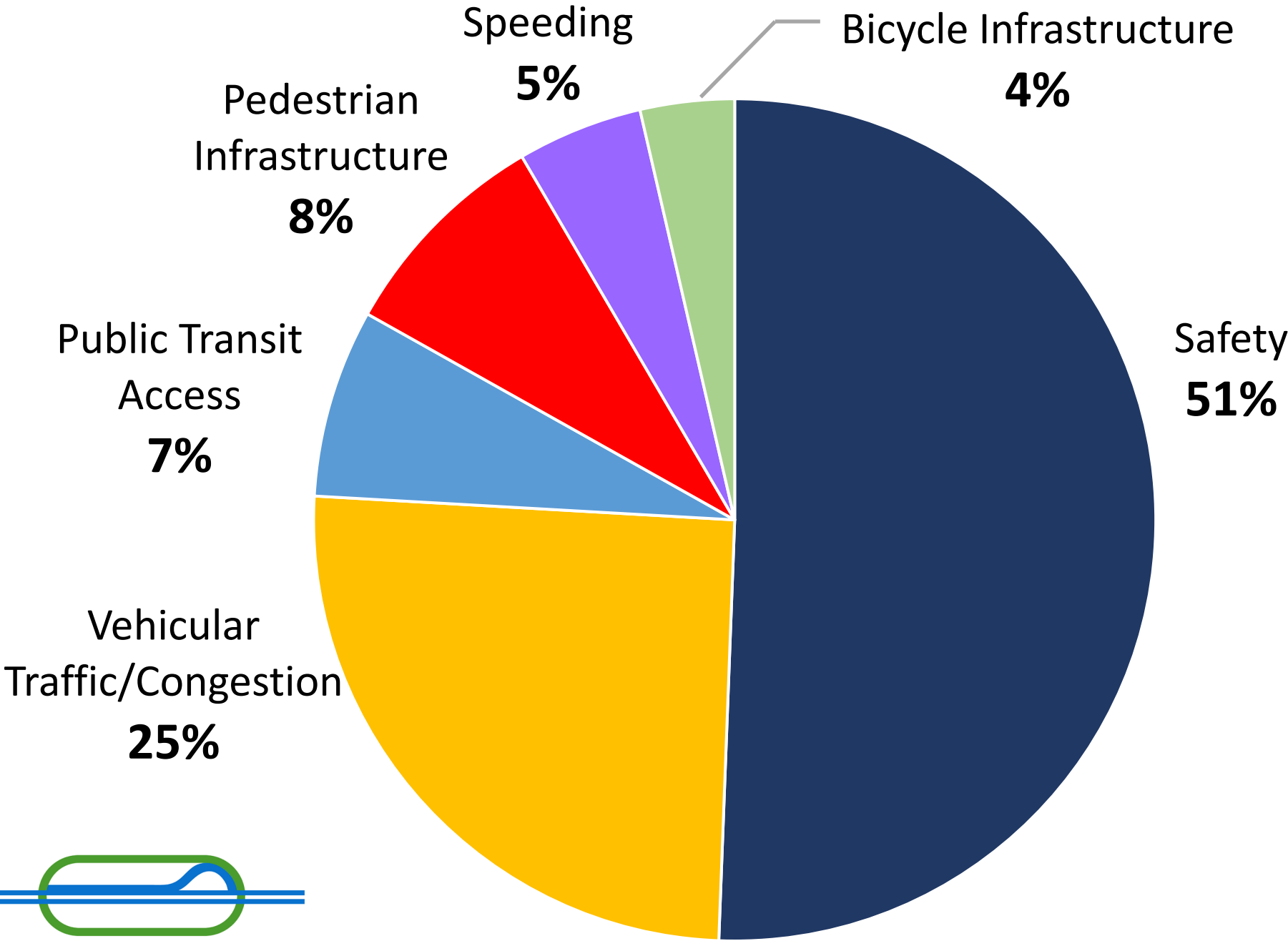




# Previous Themes

## Biggest Transportation Concerns

- Safety
- Vehicular Traffic/Congestion
- Public Transit Access
- Pedestrian Infrastructure
- Speeding
- Bicycle Infrastructure



*"As a pedestrian, this is a nightmare. As a driver, there is not enough distance to merge (especially for visitors)."*

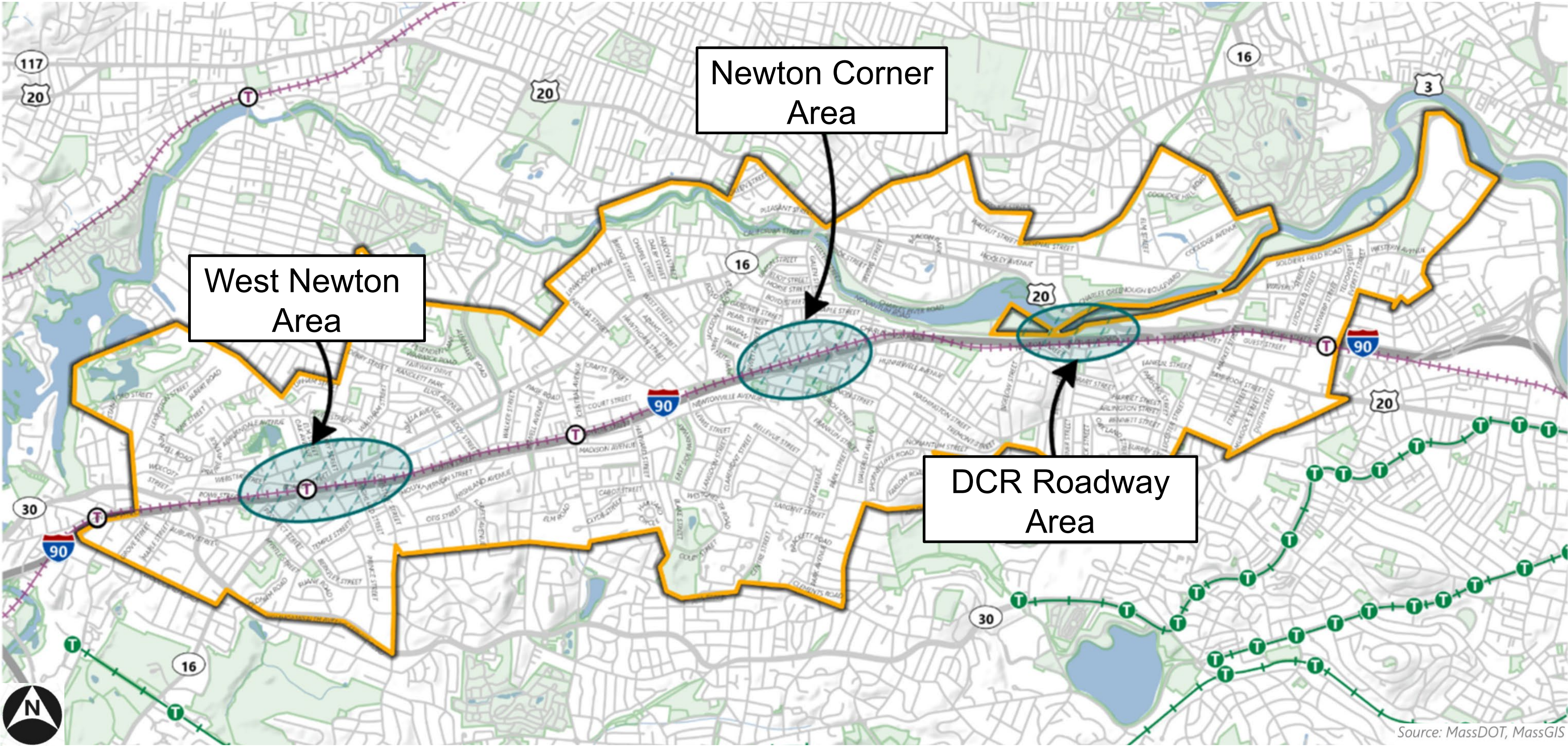
*"Despite being a confident bicyclist, this is not a safe connection."*

*"Lack of clarity and channelization"*

*From Newton Corner Short/Mid-Term Improvements Project  
Public Information Meeting #1  
(September 2022)*

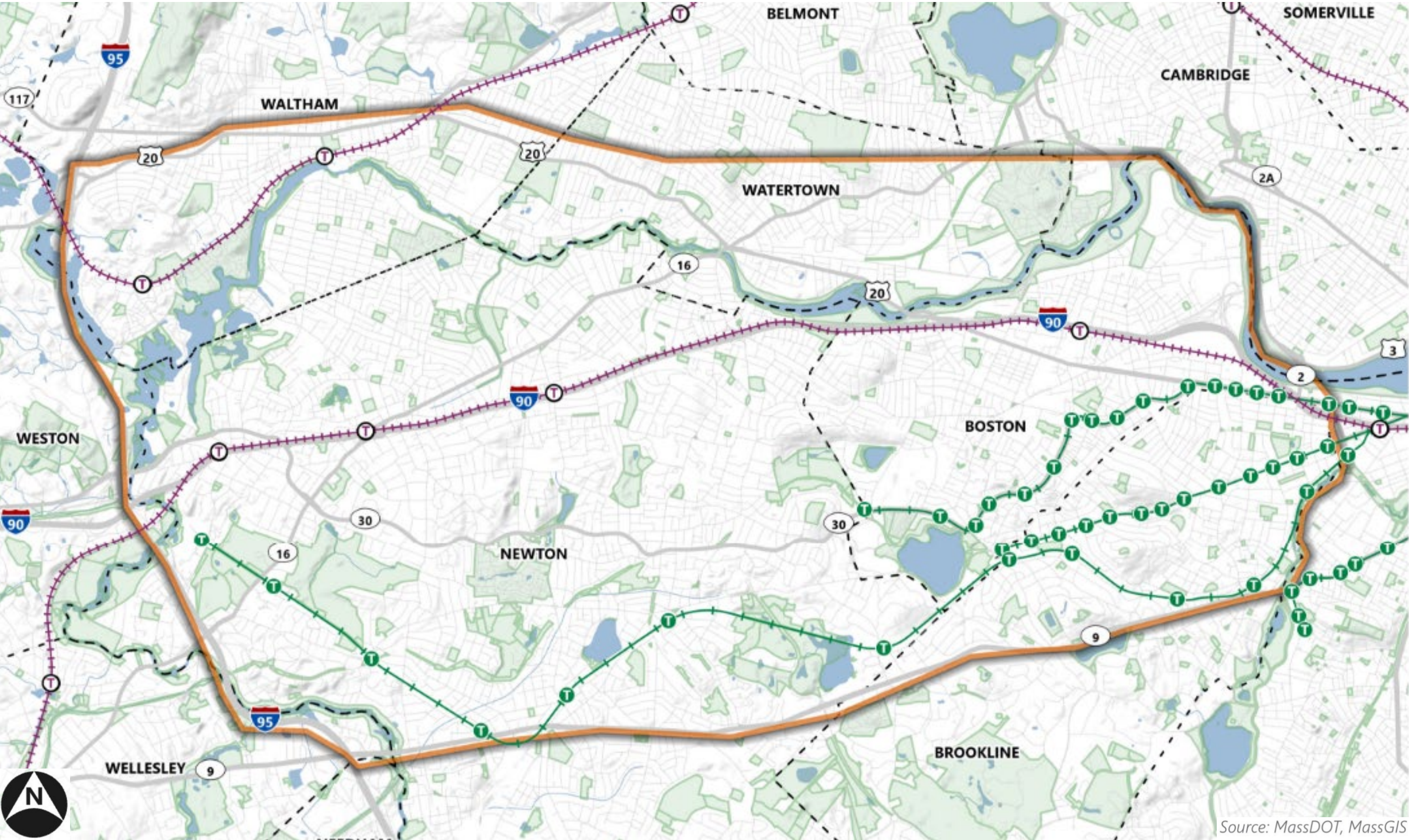


# Local Study Area



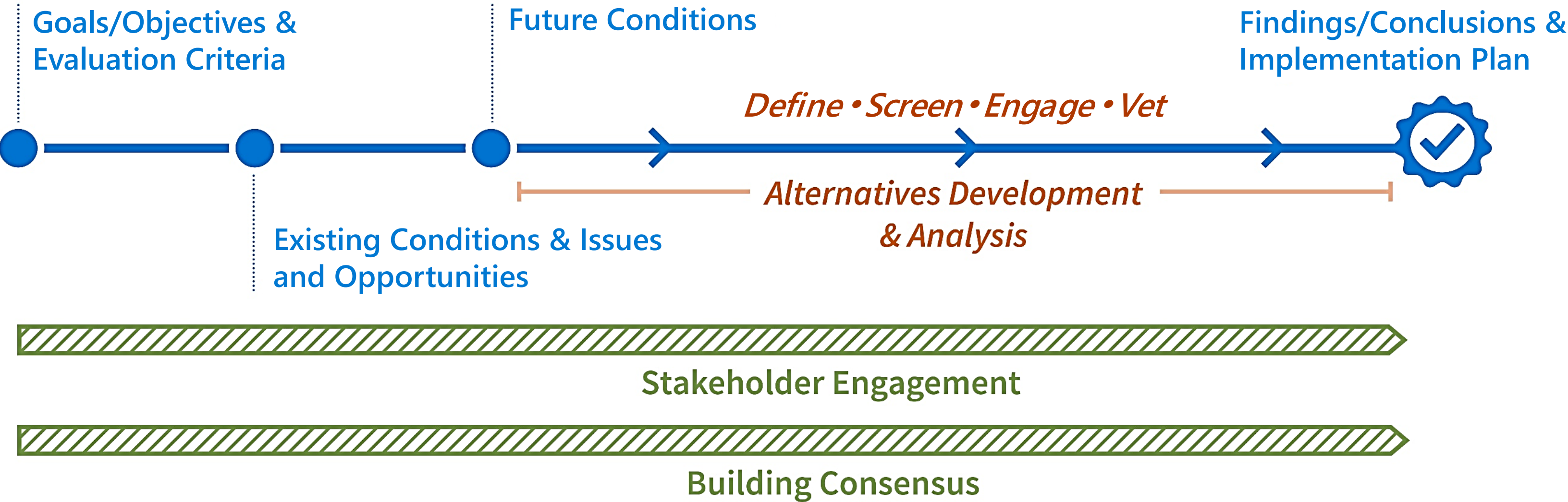


# Regional Study Area






# Study Process





# Public Involvement Plan

- Outreach Approach and Methods
- Outreach Team
- Working Group meetings (6)
- Public Information Meetings (4)
- Online engagement



The screenshot shows a virtual meeting room interface for the Newton Corner Long-Term Planning Study. At the top left is the logo for the Newton Corner Long-Term Planning Study, which consists of a stylized green and blue line graphic above the text "NEWTON CORNER" and "LONG-TERM PLANNING STUDY". Below the logo, the text reads "Welcome to our 360° Virtual Meeting Room!" followed by a thank you message and instructions to provide feedback. To the right, a blue speech bubble icon is next to the text "Your feedback is important!". Below this, it states "We value your feedback as we continue planning our long-term transportation needs." and lists two opportunities for public feedback: "1) The Survey board" and "2) The Interactive Map". At the bottom, a green bar contains the text "Virtual public meeting room instructions:" followed by two instructions: "Hold down the left mouse button and drag to pan around the virtual room" (with a mouse icon) and "Click the boards and surveys to view project information and provide feedback" (with a hand clicking a screen icon). A blue bar at the very bottom contains the text "Click here to begin your tour" and the "massDOT" logo.

**NEWTON CORNER**  
LONG-TERM PLANNING STUDY

**Welcome to our 360° Virtual Meeting Room!**

Thank you for joining us to learn more information and to provide your input on the Newton Corner Long-Term Planning Study.

Please take some time to explore this virtual room and provide your feedback on the Comment Form and the Interactive Map. If you have any additional questions, please contact \_\_\_\_\_ whose information can be found on the front desk.

**Your feedback is important!**

We value your feedback as we continue planning our long-term transportation needs.

This room has two opportunities for public feedback:

- 1) The **Survey** board
- 2) The **Interactive Map**

**Virtual public meeting room instructions:**

Hold down the **left mouse button** and **drag** to pan around the virtual room

Click the **boards and surveys** to view project information and provide feedback

Click here to begin your tour

**massDOT**  
Massachusetts Department of Transportation

## Study Website / Contact Information:

<https://www.mass.gov/newton-corner-long-term-planning-study>

# We Want to Hear From You

- Share your lived experience with us
- Survey available in our Virtual Meeting Room



<https://vmr.vhb.com/v/EI18wZWNqOB>







# Goals and Objectives



## Study Goals

- Improve access, safety, and mobility for all
- Reconnect Newton's neighborhoods
- Enhance quality of life
- Promote sustainable transportation solutions
- Develop actionable recommendations





# Goal: Improve Access, Safety, and Mobility for All

## Objectives:

- Enhance safety for all users
- Expand access to transit options
- Improve transit priority and reliability
- Reduce travel delays for all users
- Protect major east-west regional roadway and transit connections
- Close social and economic transportation equity gaps





# Goal: Reconnect Newton's Neighborhoods

## Objectives:

- Reconnect neighborhoods isolated by the Newton Corner interchange
- Improve safety, convenience, and comfort for all travel
- Capitalize on existing facilities
- Create enhanced regional north/south connections for all users
- Support a welcoming environment through the lens of equity





## Goal: Enhance Quality of Life

### Objectives:

- Ensure that benefits and resources are distributed equitably
- Minimize public health and environmental impacts
- Minimize externalities of I-90 transportation demands
- Enhance economic opportunities
- Support land use and open space plans





# Goal: Promote Sustainable Transportation Solutions

## Objectives:

- Create solutions that include climate change mitigation measures
- Identify and adapt to risks associated with impacts of climate change
- Further the transition to low- and zero-emission transportation modes
- Align the project with local climate mitigation measures





## Goal: Develop Actionable Recommendations

### Objectives:

- Create solutions that have support from the public and host communities
- Identify projects that are cost-effective based on return on investment
- Develop projects that align with possible funding sources





# Evaluation Criteria

- Evaluation criteria are the standards by which the goals and objectives will be measured and evaluated.
- Criteria for each goal and objective are currently being developed and will be used to facilitate the evaluation of the different alternatives.
- Draft evaluation criteria have been posted on study website.

Link to full set of Evaluation Criteria:

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/newton-corner-long-term-planning-study-draft-evaluation-criteria/download>

Goals / Objectives	Evaluation Criteria <sup>a</sup>
<b>Improve Access, Safety, and Mobility for All</b>	
› Enhance the safety of the transportation system for all users.	› Potential reduction in the frequency and severity of crashes. › Reduction in conflict points
› Facilitate access to transit options.	› Accessible, safe, and direct access within ¼-mile of existing or potential relocated transit options.
› Balance travel delays for all roadway users, prioritizing non-auto modes.	› Shortens vehicle, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian travel times and improve reliability/operations.
› Protect the integrity of the I-90 corridor and parallel railroad tracks as major east-west regional connections.	› Maintains or improves operations and capacity on I-90 and the parallel railroad right of way.
› Leverage and improve upon the transportation system to close social and economic equity gaps.	› Provides equal or improved access, safety, and mobility to environmental justice (EJ) populations relative to public at large.
<b>Reconnect Newton’s Neighborhoods</b>	
› Reconnect neighborhoods currently isolated by the Newton Corner interchange.	› New multimodal connections created across Newton Corner and the I-90 corridor and increased placemaking and cohesion with the urban landscape.
› Improve travel experience for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders.	› Quality, location, comfort, safety, and connectivity of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit accommodations.
› Capitalize on the presence of existing regional pedestrian and bicycle facilities and recreational resources.	› New and improved safe and comfortable connections to existing regional facilities and resources.
› Create direct regional north/south connections for all users.	› More direct low-stress connections created.
› Promote placemaking/placekeeping opportunities and support a welcoming urban environment through the lens of equity.	› Increased opportunities for public open space, green space or public art in locations benefiting EJ and/or Title VI populations.



## Poll Question

- If you could envision the future of Newton Corner, what word would you use to describe it?







# Existing Conditions



# Existing Conditions Review

## Previous Planning Efforts:

- Primarily looked at Newton Corner, focused primarily on vehicles and intersection-level analysis.

## Current Study:

- Explores a broad range of information, understanding transportation impacts in a broader context.
- Considers not just vehicles but land use, public health, environmental, demographics and more.
- Informs a variety of solutions that go beyond the current scope of previous efforts.



# Previous Planning Efforts

## Relevant Documents

### Mobility Planning Documents (highlights)

- CTPS Newton Corner Studies (2006 and 2009)
- Newton Corner Road Safety Audit (2020)
- Congestion in the Commonwealth (2019)
- MBTA Bus Network Redesign (2022 and ongoing)
- MassDOT Beyond Mobility (2024)

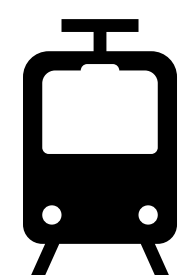
### Mobility Key Takeaways

- Recommendations to improve the local and regional study area, including reconfiguring roadways and installing new pedestrian and bicycle accommodations.
- Enhanced pedestrian, bicycle, and transit accommodations need to be a critical component of all local and statewide infrastructure projects.
- Improving roadway safety and reducing the number of collisions needs to be a key objective of infrastructure projects.



# Mobility: Mode Share & Vehicle Ownership

- While people travel through the study area for all purposes, commuter data provides insight on existing mode share and travel patterns.



< 10% of commuters who live in Newton take public transit

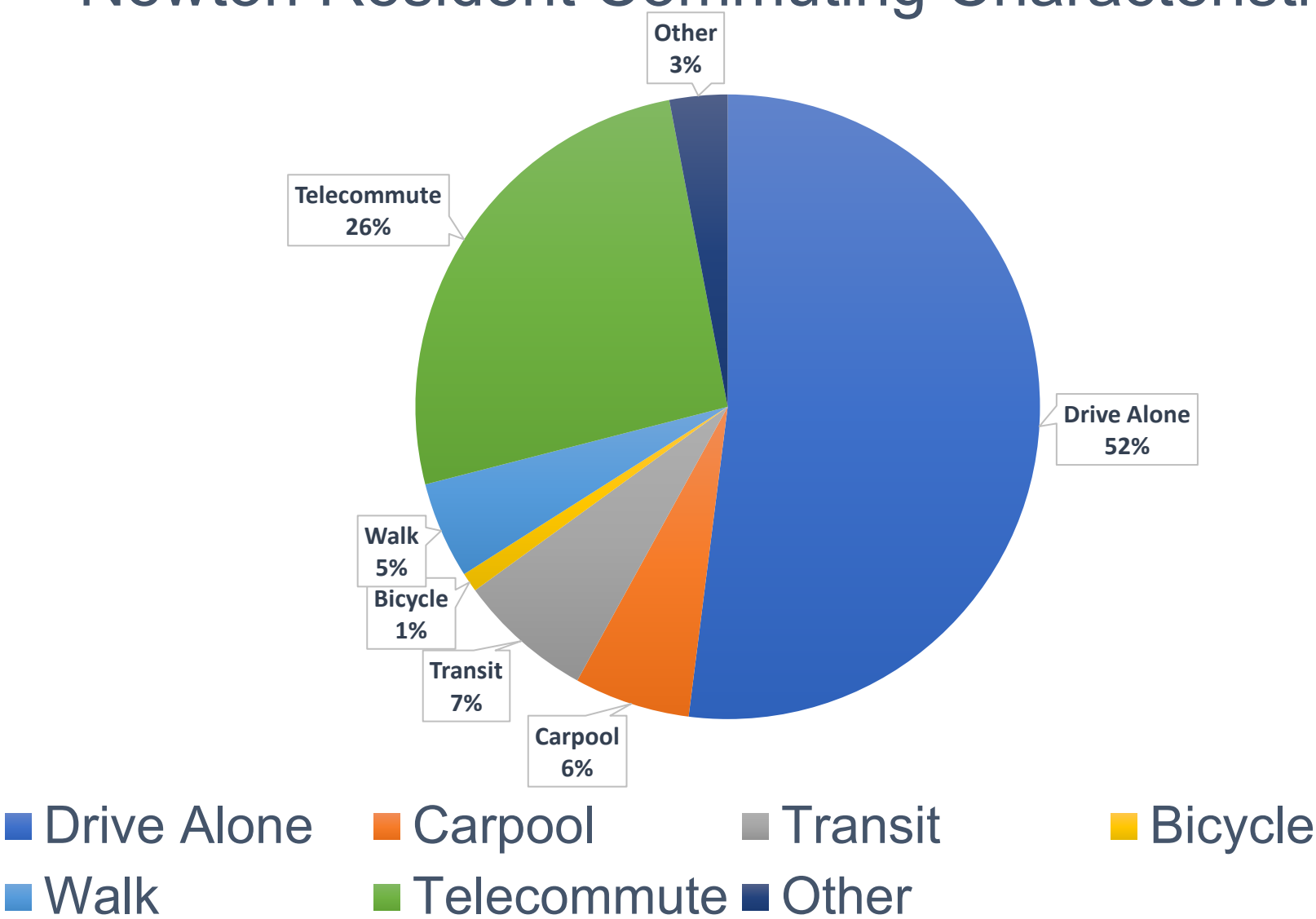


6% of the Newton population are zero-car households



52% of commuters who live in Newton drive alone

Newton Resident Commuting Characteristics



The current design of Newton Corner is oriented toward driving and does not optimally serve alternate modes.



# Mobility: Pedestrians

- Pedestrian accommodations through Newton Corner are limited and uncomfortable.
  - Some locations are not ADA compliant.
- Pedestrians experience a high level of traffic stress when walking along major roads.
- Newton Corner is a critical pedestrian area due to bus stops and its proximity to a village center and the Charles River.

North-south connections require an indirect route that could be made more efficient, safe, and low-stress.

## Examples of Non-Accessible Accommodations



*An uncomfortable and wide pedestrian crossing location*



*A curb ramp where the transition to the street is not flush*

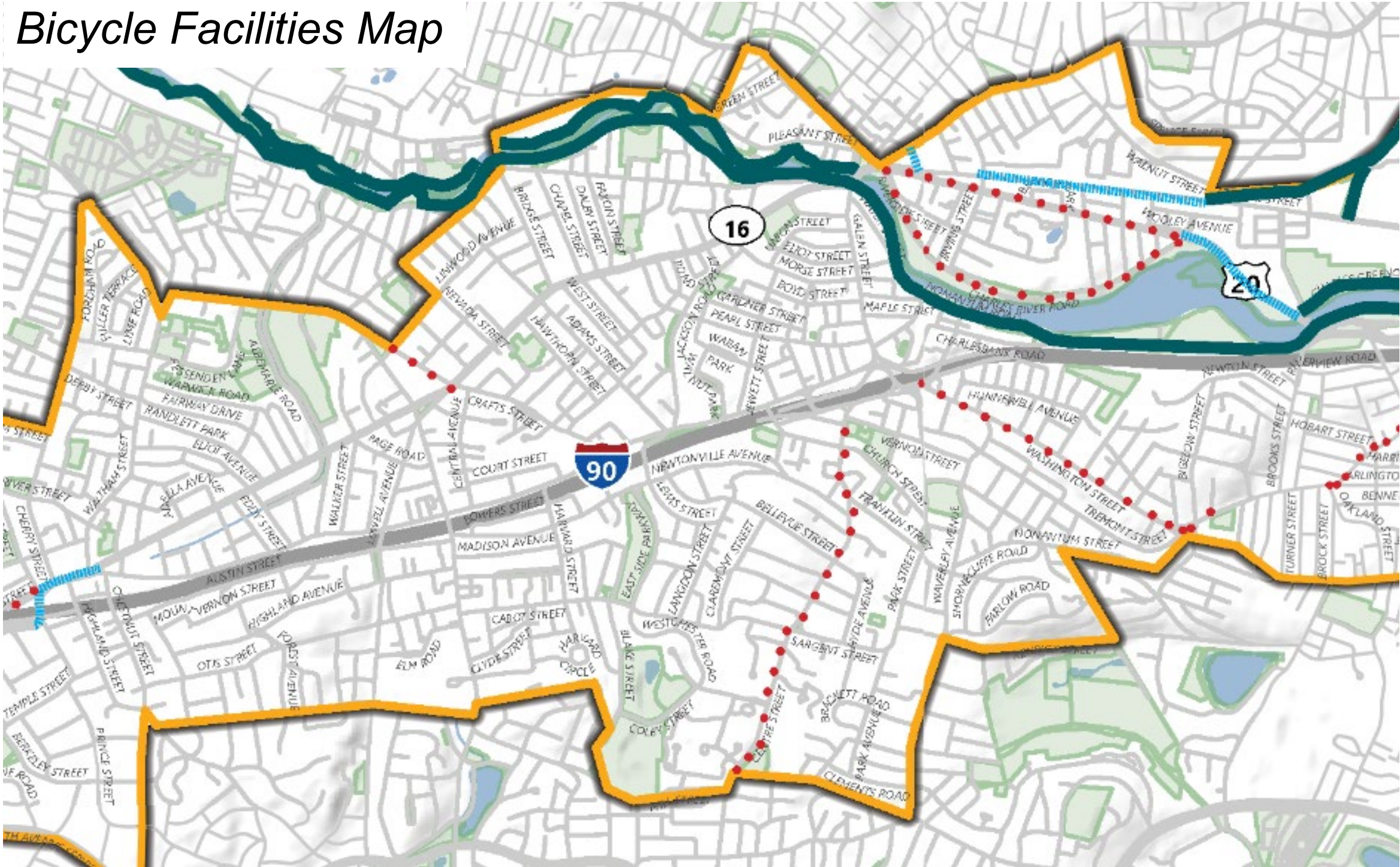


# Mobility: Bicycles

- Dedicated bicycle facilities are limited and those that exist are disconnected
- The Charles River paths are a key east-west bike route, but lack neighborhood connections
- There is demand for north–south connections.

This study will consider ways to create more direct and comfortable connections to existing facilities.

Bicycle Facilities Map



- Local Land Use/Environmental Study Area
- Open Water
- Open Space
- Paved Path
- Bike Lane
- Protected Bike Lane

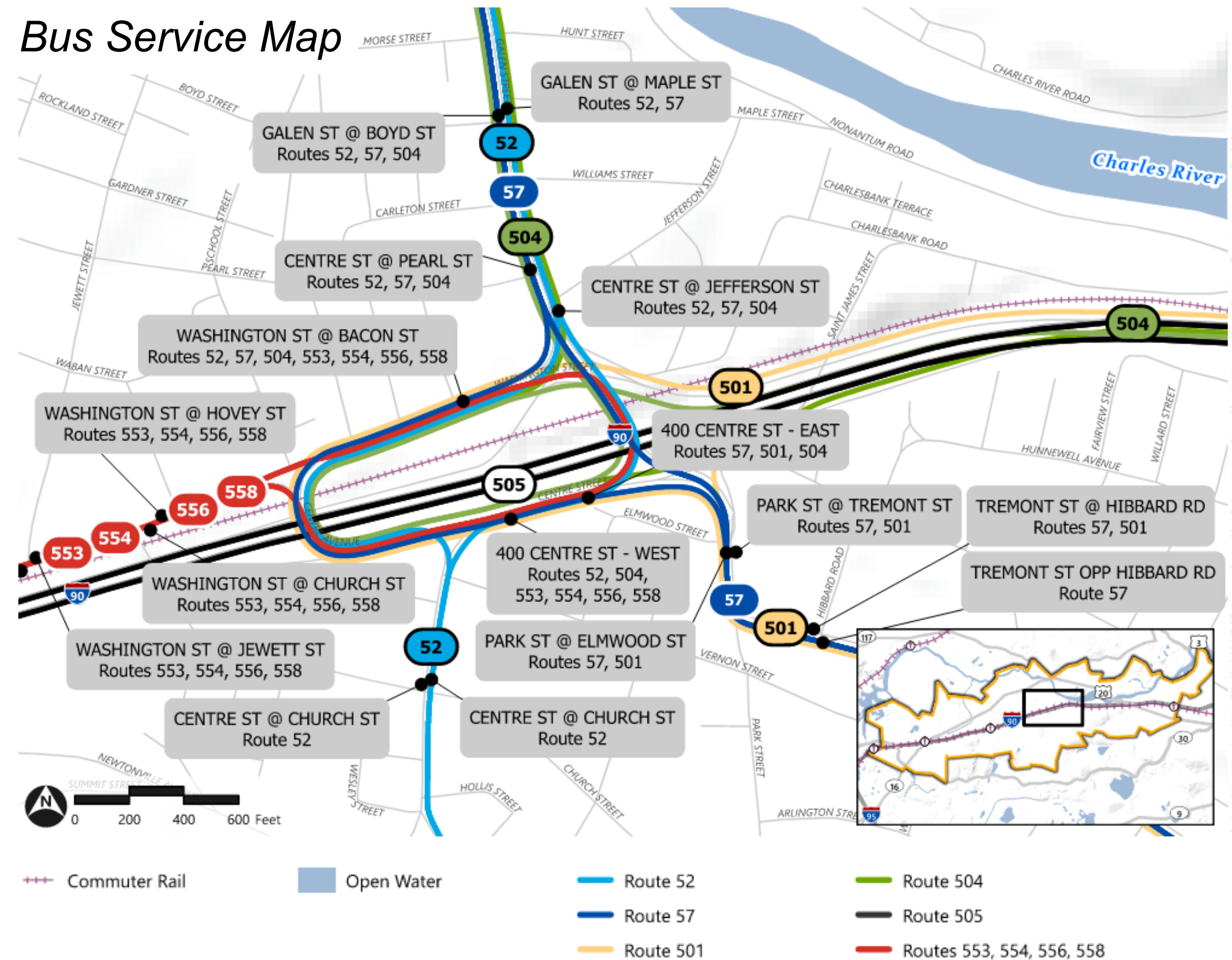


## Mobility: Transit (Buses)

- Bus transit hub that will see high frequency service under MBTA Bus Network Redesign.
- Washington St @ Bacon St bus stop sees over 600 boardings / alightings per day (busiest in study area).
- Private shuttles are provided in study area by local colleges, Transportation Management Associations, and others.

Newton Corner is a large transfer bus hub with high ridership, which could merit transit priority treatments.

*Bus Service Map*

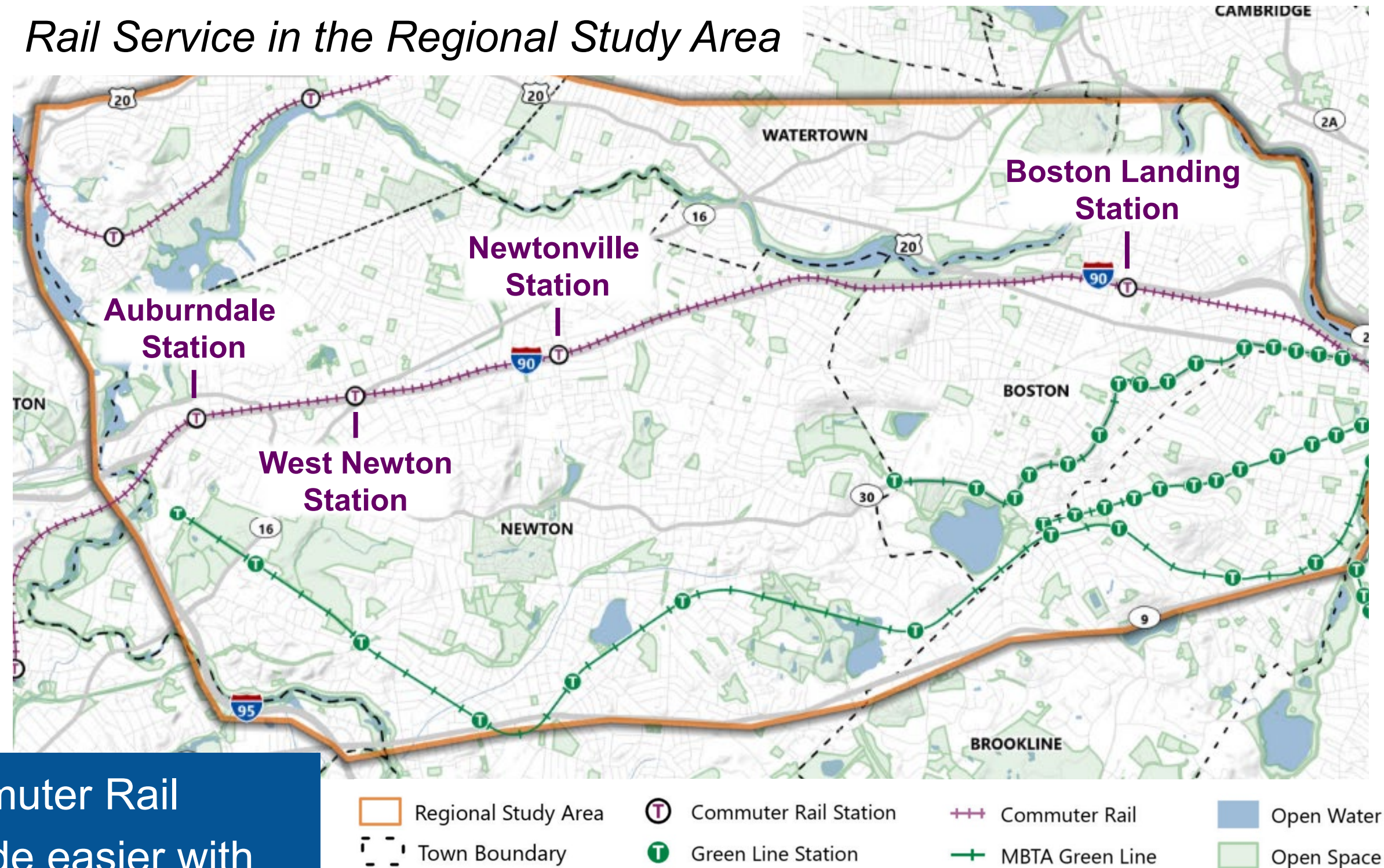




## Mobility: Transit (Rail)

- 4 Worcester/Framingham Line MBTA Commuter Rail stations in the regional study area.
- The 3 Newton stations are stair-access only and are not accessible.
  - Ongoing MBTA projects to address.
- Other rail options include the Green Line south of I-90 and the Fitchburg Line in Waltham.

*Rail Service in the Regional Study Area*



Connections to Commuter Rail stations could be made easier with improved bus, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities.

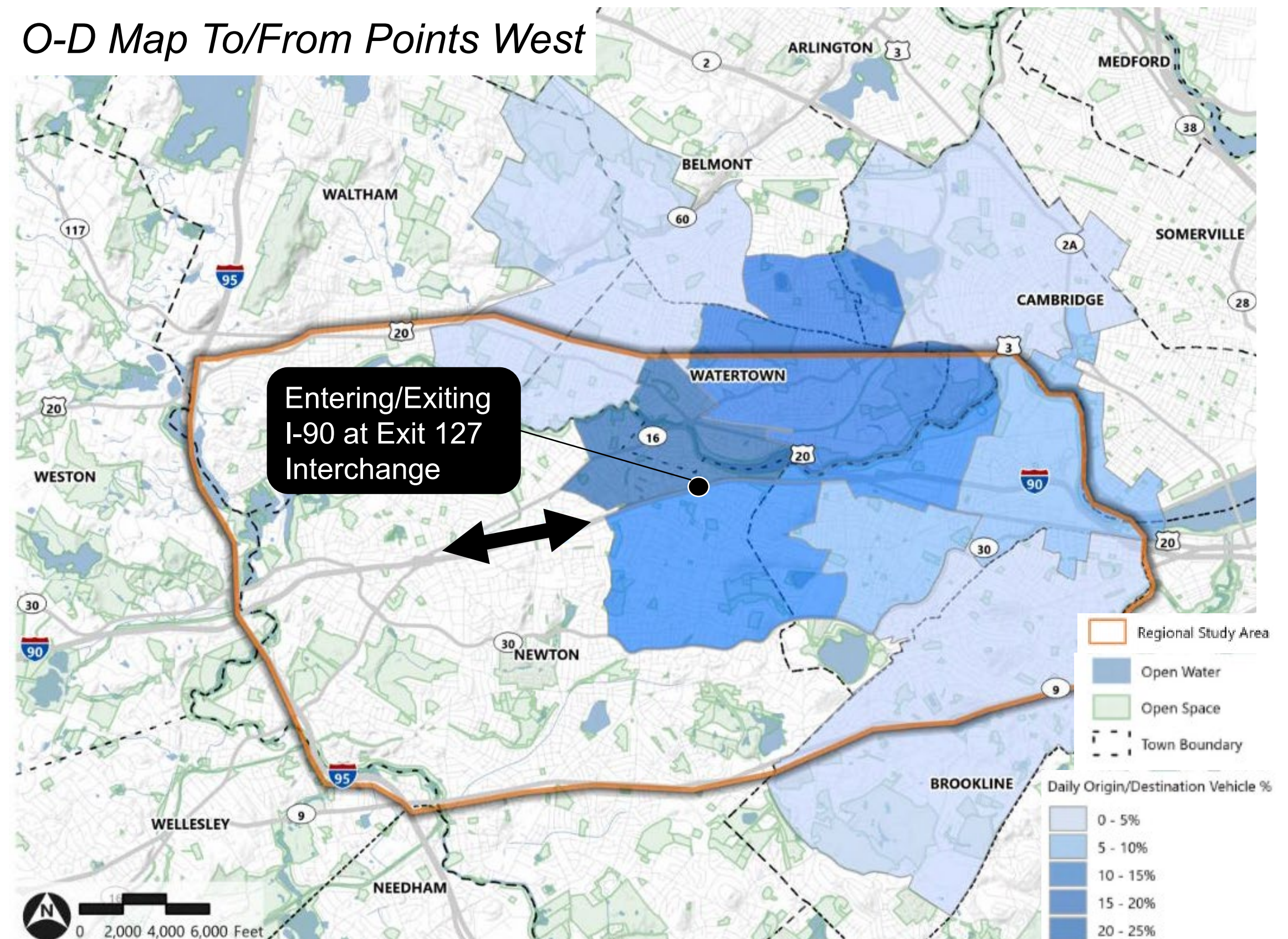


## Mobility: Existing Travel Patterns (Origin-Destination Data)

- Most vehicles using the Newton Corner interchange are local, with origins and destinations in the study area.
- Majority of vehicle traffic is bound for destinations in the immediate Newton Corner area, with some destinations beyond that.

Existing trip patterns indicate heavy reliance on Exit 127, which must process large traffic volumes.

## O-D Map To/From Points West





## Mobility: Vehicles

- Many roadways are over capacity, notably the I-90 eastbound off-ramp
- The roadway network can be confusing with lane weaving and inadequate wayfinding

Existing street network operates inefficiently with the number of lane changes required and merge/conflict points

*Washington Street Eastbound Bridge (Newton Corner)*



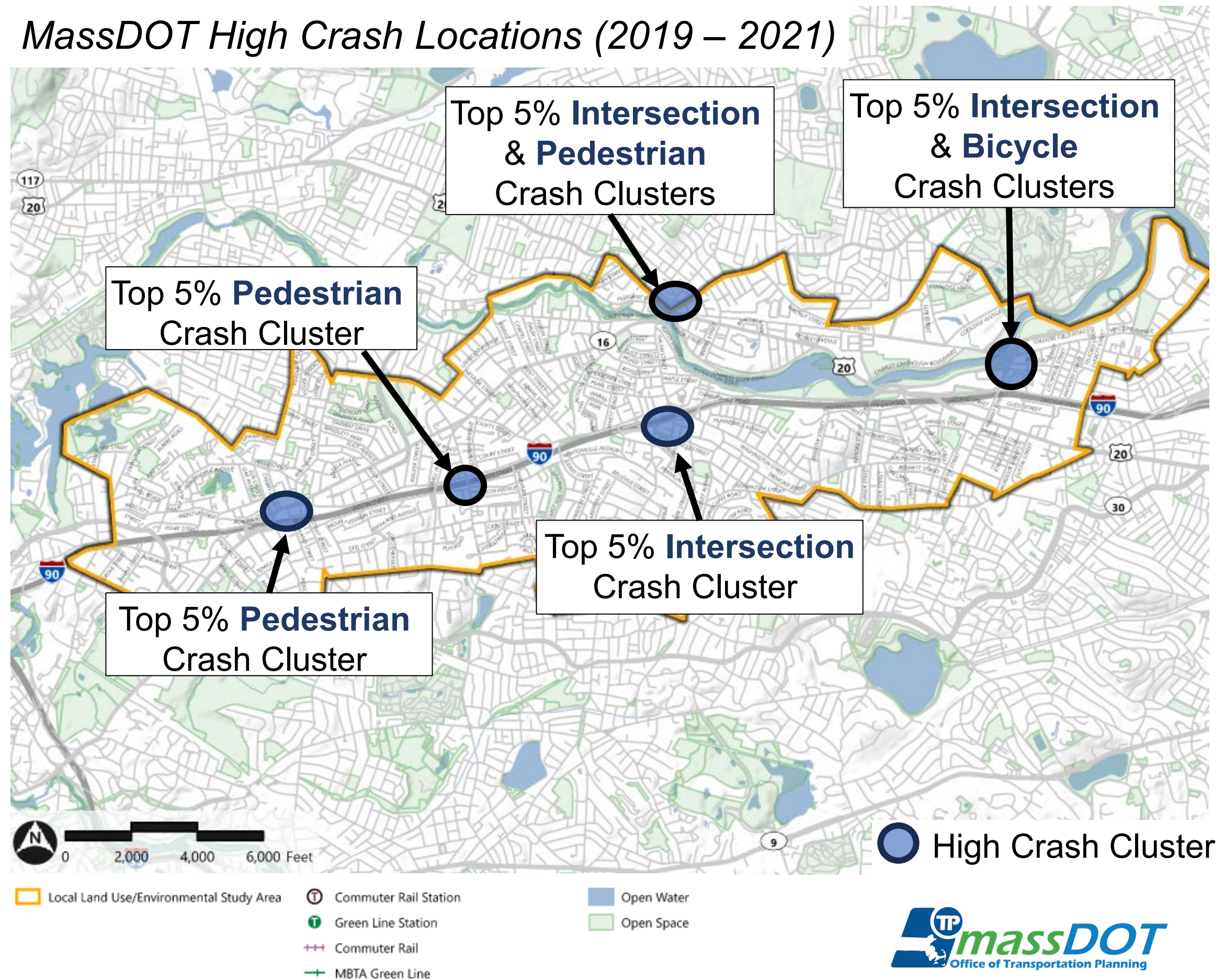


# Safety: High Crash Locations

- Several Road Safety Audits identified safety issues and potential enhancements.
- 3% of crashes inventoried at study area intersections in 2018, 2019, and 2021 involved pedestrians or bicyclists.

Alternatives will consider long-term safety improvements and safer, more comfortable accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclists.

*MassDOT High Crash Locations (2019 – 2021)*



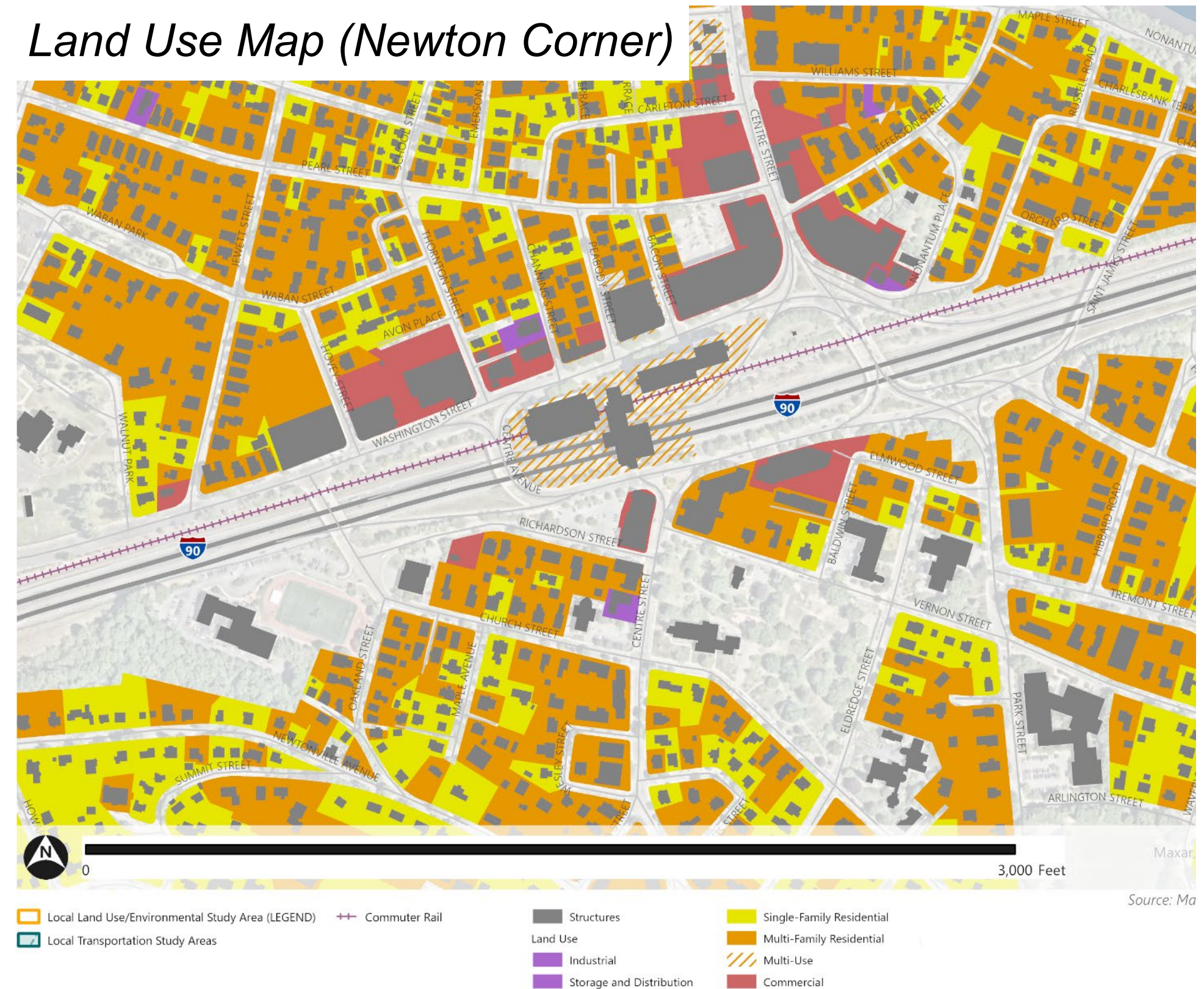


# Land Use & Zoning

- The study area is primarily residential with commercial and mixed-use zones in village centers and along key corridors.
- Future development may be focused in current zoning overlay districts such as West Newton village and Arsenal Street in Watertown.
- Office space has grown by nearly 40% in the past decade.

Develop alternatives that consider current and future land use, with likely further office development and moderate increase in density.

*Land Use Map (Newton Corner)*





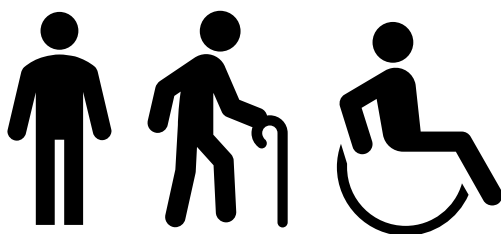
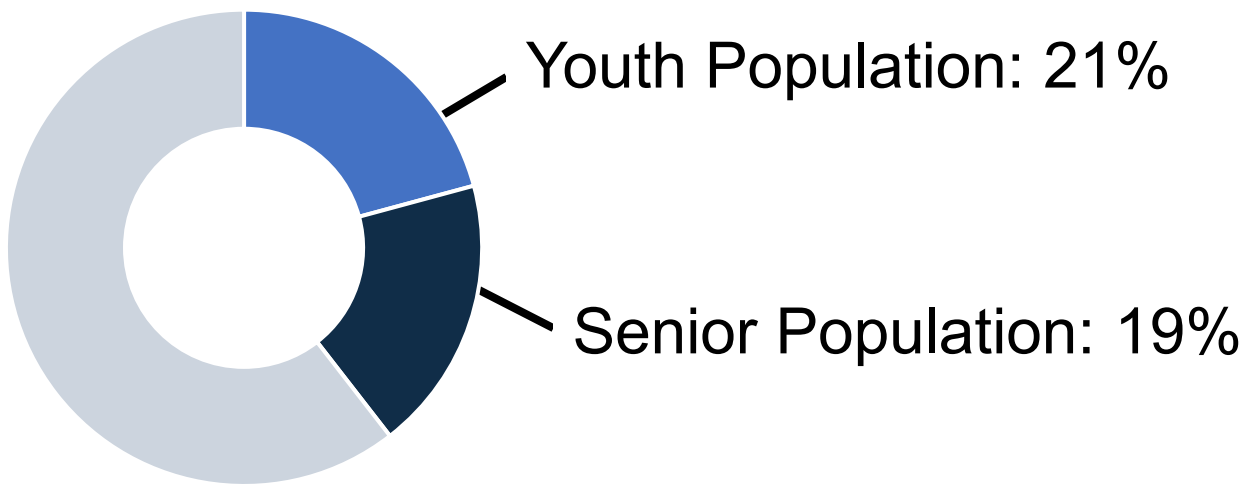
# Population & Employment

- Newton has lower population and employment densities than Watertown, Cambridge, and Boston.
- Minority populations in Newton (27%) and Watertown (29%) are slightly below the statewide average (31%).
- The local study area hosts over 3,000 businesses and nearly 40,000 employees.
- Significant employment hubs in the study area include Boston Landing and the Arsenal Street corridor.

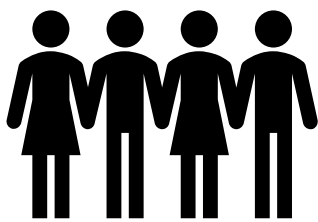
Consider equity and the variety of populations that use the Newton Corner area for travel.

## Newton Demographics\*

**Total Population: 88,453**



8% of the population identify as having a disability



27% of the population identify as minorities

\*Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2022)

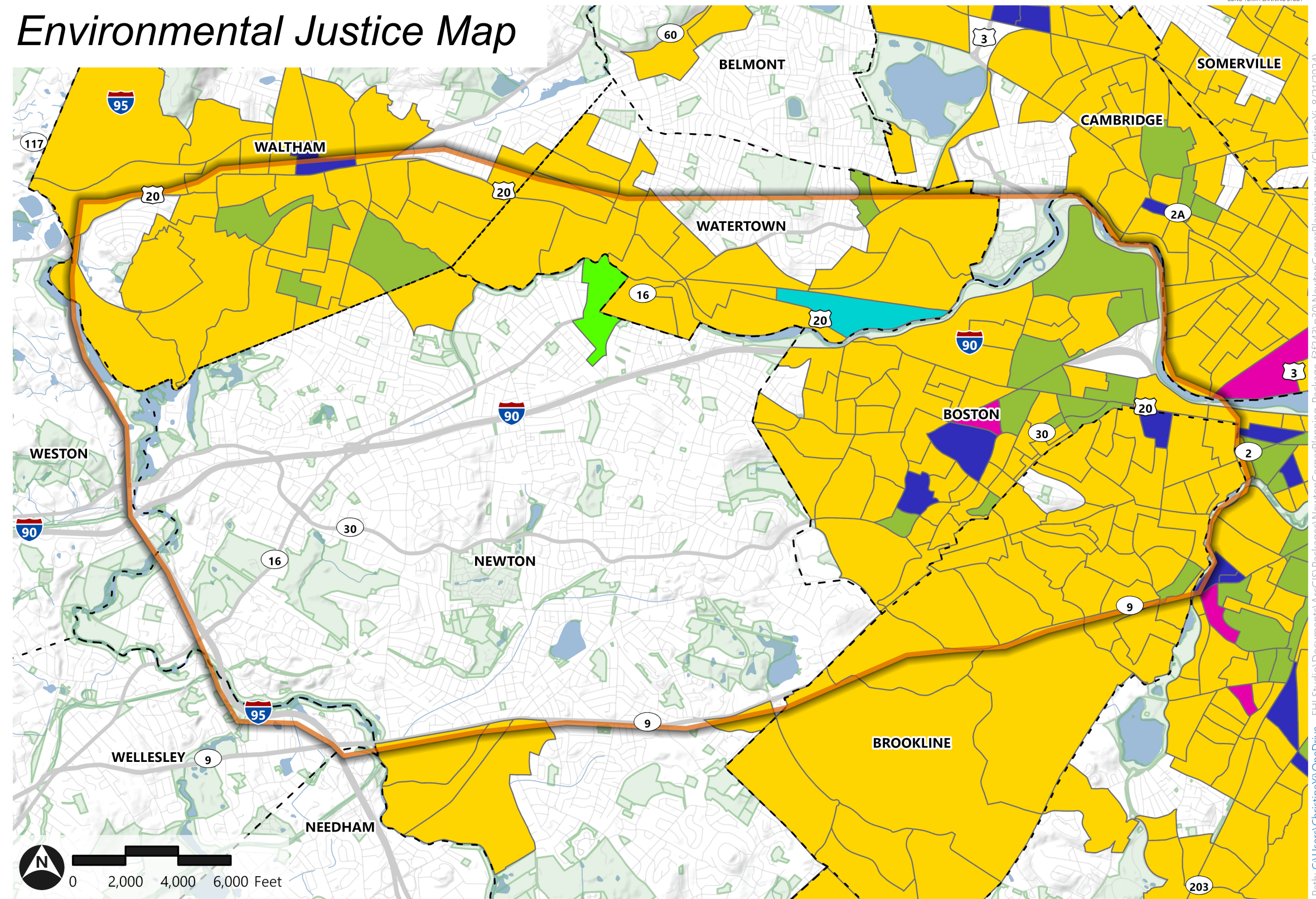


# Environmental Justice (EJ) & Public Health

- Within the regional study area, several EJ neighborhoods are in Waltham, Watertown, Boston, and Brookline.
- Compared to the U.S. and the Boston Metro Area, the study areas display lower prevalence of all chronic diseases, except for asthma.

Consider public health and environmental concerns when developing alternatives to improve quality of life.

## Environmental Justice Map



Source: MassDOT, MassGIS



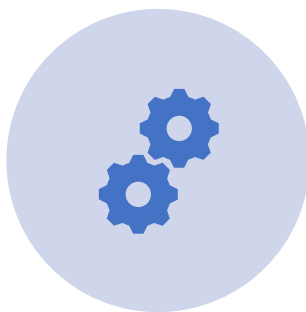
# Preliminary Existing Conditions Issues, Opportunities & Constraints



Roadway Geometry & Safety: Existing roadway geometry and congestion linked to safety issues.



Transportation Infrastructure Barrier: MBTA rail line and I-90 hinder north-south mobility



Interchange Reliance: Lack of access points along I-90



Automobile Commute: 60% of Newton residents commute via automobile modes



Non-Resident Workforce: 94% of the workforce commutes from outside the area, causing congestion and demand

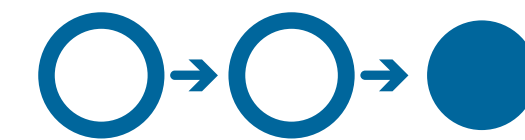


Natural & Historic Resources: Natural, historic and archeological resources constrict alternatives



Climate Vulnerability: Extreme heat is a significant concern in local climate resiliency plans.





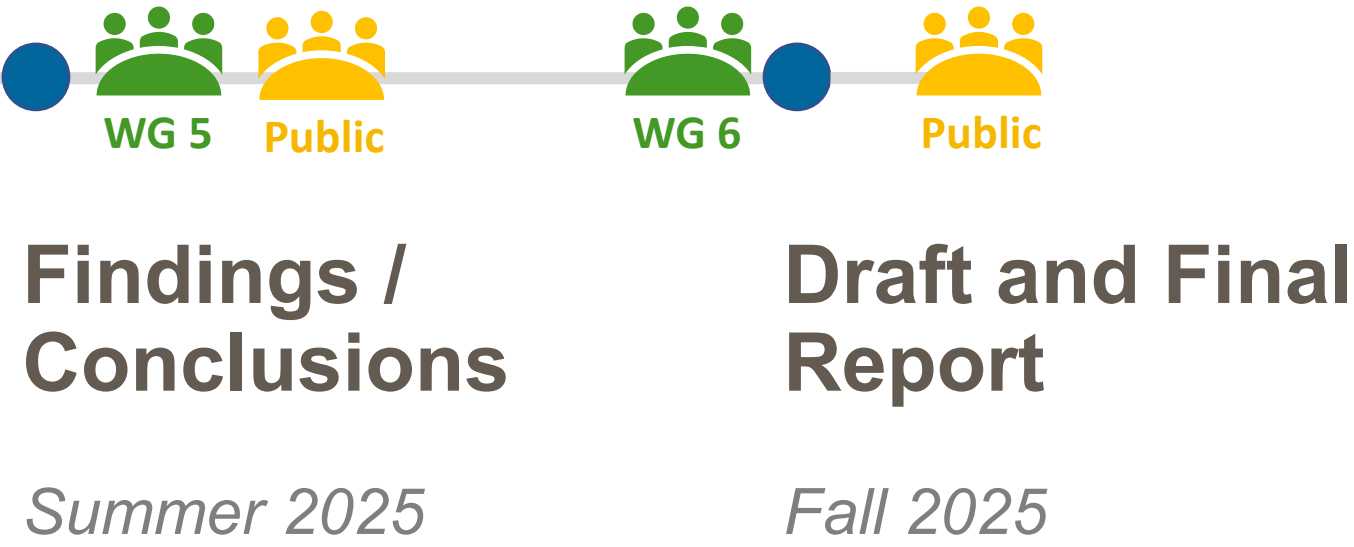
# Schedule and Next Steps




# Study Schedule




Note: Estimated Timeline that is subject to change.



**6 Working Group meetings  
and 4 Public meetings  
throughout duration of study**



WG



Public

*Working Group Meeting*

*Public Meeting*



## Our Next Steps

- Tonight's presentation and Zoom recording will be posted to the study website.
- Incorporate public input from this meeting
- Finalize Existing Conditions Review
- Study team will kick-off Future Conditions Analysis and summary of Issues, Opportunities, and Constraints
- Once Future Conditions are complete, the initial alternatives development phase will begin
- Working Group Meeting #3: Future Conditions & Alternative Development (Winter 2024/2025)
- Public Meeting #2 (Winter 2024/2025)





**Public  
Comment  
Period**



## Questions and answers



- “Raise your hand” to be unmuted for verbal questions (\*9 if using a phone)



- Submit your questions and comments using the Q & A button



- Please state your name and affiliation before your question



- Please share only 1 question or comment at a time, limited to 2 minutes, to allow others to participate



- To ask a question via phone, dial \*9 and the moderator will call out the last 4-digits of your phone number and unmute your audio when it is your turn

**All questions and comments are subject to disclosure for public records. Please use these functions for project related business only.**



# How to Reach Us

## Study Website / Contact Information:

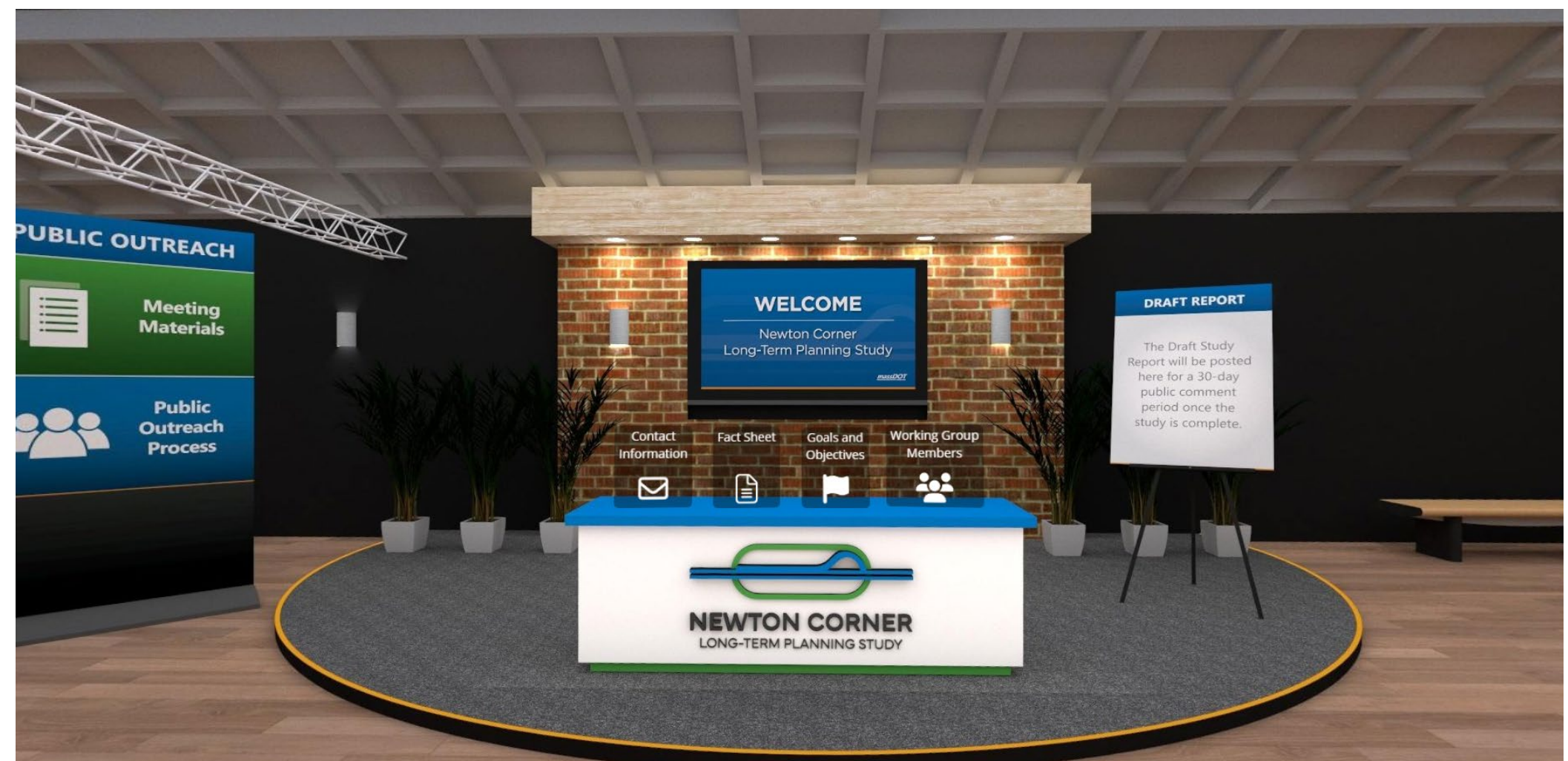
<https://www.mass.gov/newton-corner-long-term-planning-study>

## Virtual Meeting Room:

<https://vmr.vhb.com/v/EI18wZWNqOB>

## Via Email:

[planning@dot.state.ma.us](mailto:planning@dot.state.ma.us)







# ***Thank You***

**Study Website:**

<https://www.mass.gov/newton-corner-long-term-planning-study>

**Patrick Snyder, Project Manager**

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