

PALMER STATION
PLANNING + DESIGN

Study Background

January 2025

massDOT
Massachusetts Department of Transportation

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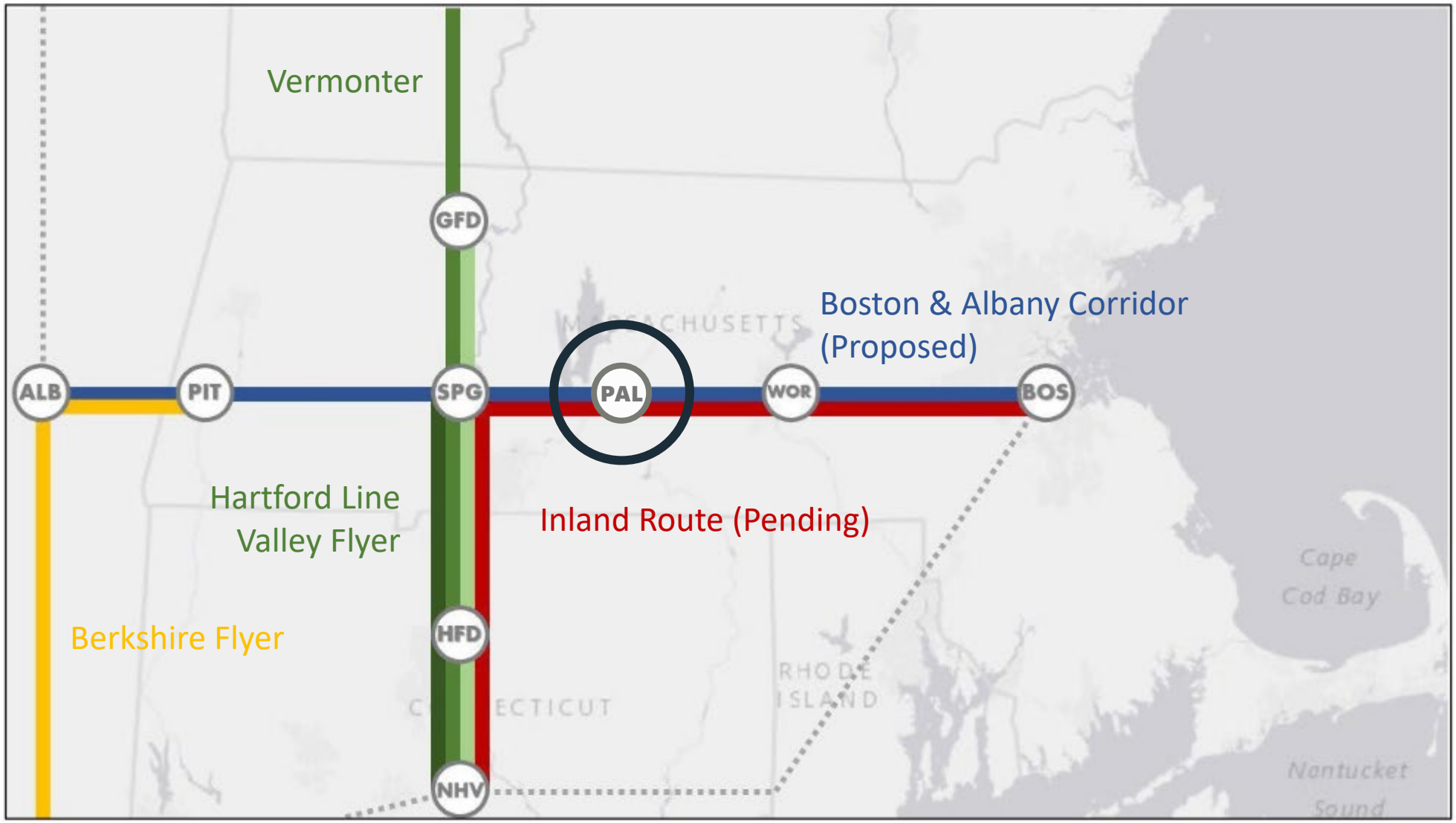


Project Purpose

The purpose of this project is to identify a new passenger rail station along the proposed Compass Rail Corridor serving the Town of Palmer and surrounding communities that will enhance mobility and connectivity, support local planning goals, and drive economic development

Compass Rail

Compass Rail, Passenger Rail for the Commonwealth,
is Massachusetts' vision for Amtrak-operated intercity passenger rail.



Goals and Objectives for Palmer Station

- Provide and create an **intercity rail stop** on the proposed Compass Rail corridor while meeting **operational requirements** for Amtrak, CSX, and other freight operators and **minimizing freight operations impacts**
- **Enhance passenger mobility and connectivity** for local and regional growth and to support access to the Five College Consortium
- Improve local and regional **economy and livability**
- Support local and regional goals to **reduce dependency on auto transportation** by offering an alternative choice for travelers and providing opportunities for multimodal station access
- **Avoid and minimize** social, cultural, and natural **environmental impacts**

Summary of Previous Work

2016 — Northern New England Intercity Rail Initiative (NNEIRI) Alternatives Analysis

Identified 5 potential sites for Palmer Station and recommended 3 for further consideration

2017 — Palmer Transit Oriented Development Draft Conceptual Plan

Considered 4 alternative sites within ¼ mile of historic station

2019 — Town of Palmer and UMass Amherst – The Case for Palmer

Identified strengths and opportunities for a station in Palmer in the East-West Passenger Rail Study

2021 — East – West Passenger Rail Study

Included a station in Palmer in alternatives analysis; did not identify a specific site location

Palmer Master Plan

Referenced station site options in Depot Village and relevant next steps from the 2017 study

2023 — Transit Oriented Development Plan for Palmer, MA

Referenced station site options in Depot Village and relevant next steps from the 2017 study

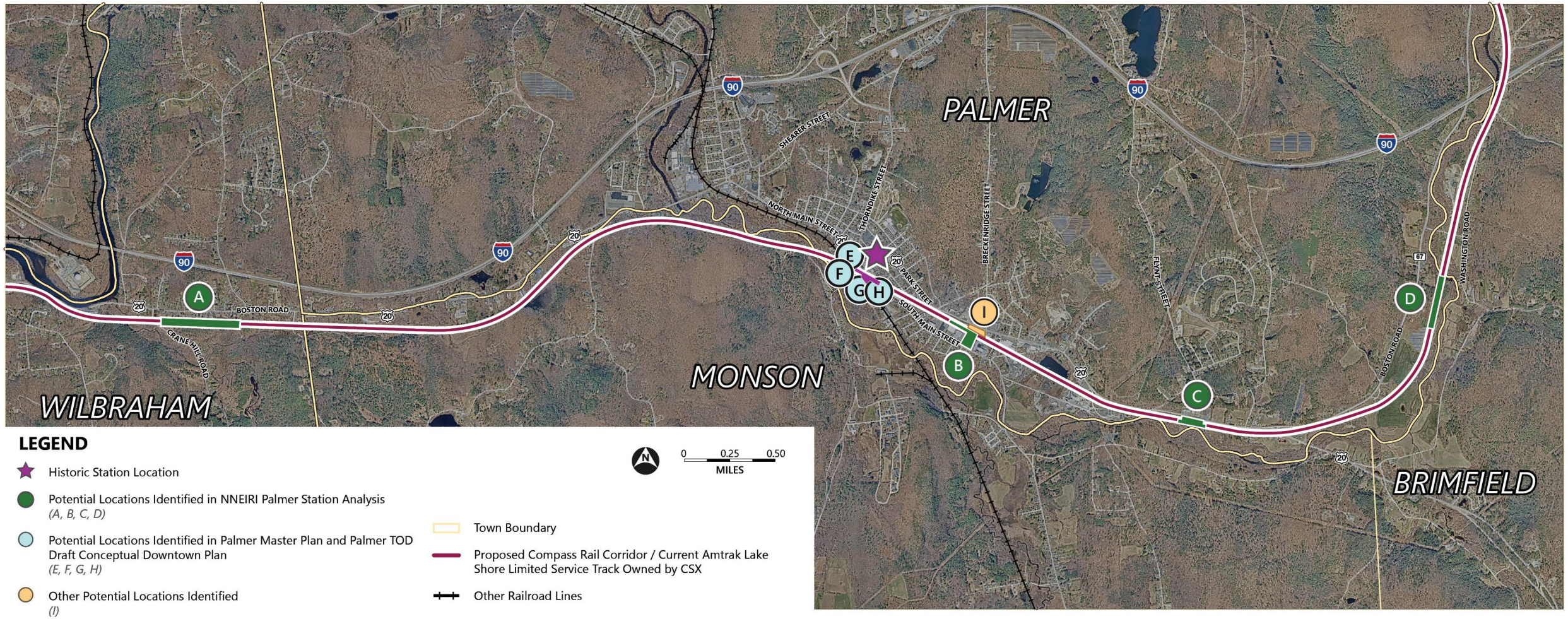
2024 — Palmer Station Planning and Design (Ongoing)

Project Schedule

Task	Sequence
Review Existing Information	
Environmental Scoping	
Alternatives Analysis	
Identify Potential Sites	
Develop Approach and Evaluation Criteria	
Conduct Level 1 Fatal Flaw Screening	
Select Sites for Level 2 Comparative Evaluation	
Conduct Level 2 Comparative Evaluation	
Identify Preferred Site Location	
Identify Station Amenities	
Survey	
Conceptual Design	
Transportation Planning	
Market Demand & Economic Development	



Sites Evaluated in Alternatives Analysis



Level 1 Fatal Flaw Screening

Focused on **operational feasibility** based on high-level sketches:

Operational Compatibility

Is the site on the Compass Rail Corridor?

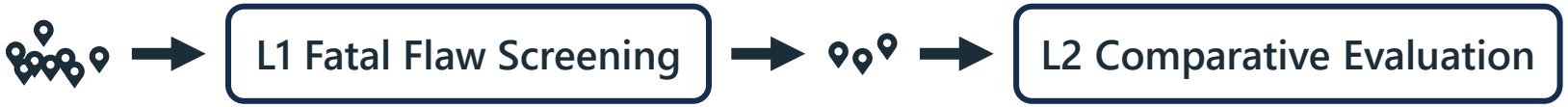
Track Geometry and Right-of-Way (ROW) Limits

Does sufficient space exist to accommodate station on a siding track with associated track and signal infrastructure meeting minimum standards?

Freight Operations Impacts

Does the site interfere with the diamond junction (CP-83, between CSX and NECR) or the CSX Palmer Yard?

Sites passing the Level 1 Fatal Flaw Screening will advance to Level 2 Comparative Evaluation.



Level 2 Comparative Evaluation

Focused on **relative** differences between potential sites:

Engineering and Operations	At a high level, what are the anticipated track geometry constraints and freight operations impacts?
Environment	What are the potential environmental impacts of the site?
Mobility	What are the potential access opportunities, vehicular accommodations, and anticipated traffic impacts?
Economic Development	What is the potential for transformative economic development? How compatible is the site with local planning and zoning?
Implementation	What are the comparative order of magnitude capital costs and estimated project duration?

The Level 2 Comparative Evaluation will inform the selection of a preferred site to advance to conceptual design.



Project Deliverables & Next Steps

The planning and design effort will produce:

Conceptual Design

Design at 10% will show the station's location and characteristics, including track work and multimodal access.

Environmental Scoping

This project will document environmental analyses that will inform the need to obtain future permits and approvals.

Market Analysis

A planning document will assess development potential and building a station within the context of the local community.

Next steps:

With a conceptual design, environmental analyses, and public support, MassDOT would strategize opportunities to obtain construction funding.