



# **PALMER STATION**

PLANNING + DESIGN

## **Study Background**

January 2025



# Contents

1. Project Background and Approach
2. Site Identification
3. Alternatives Screening Criteria

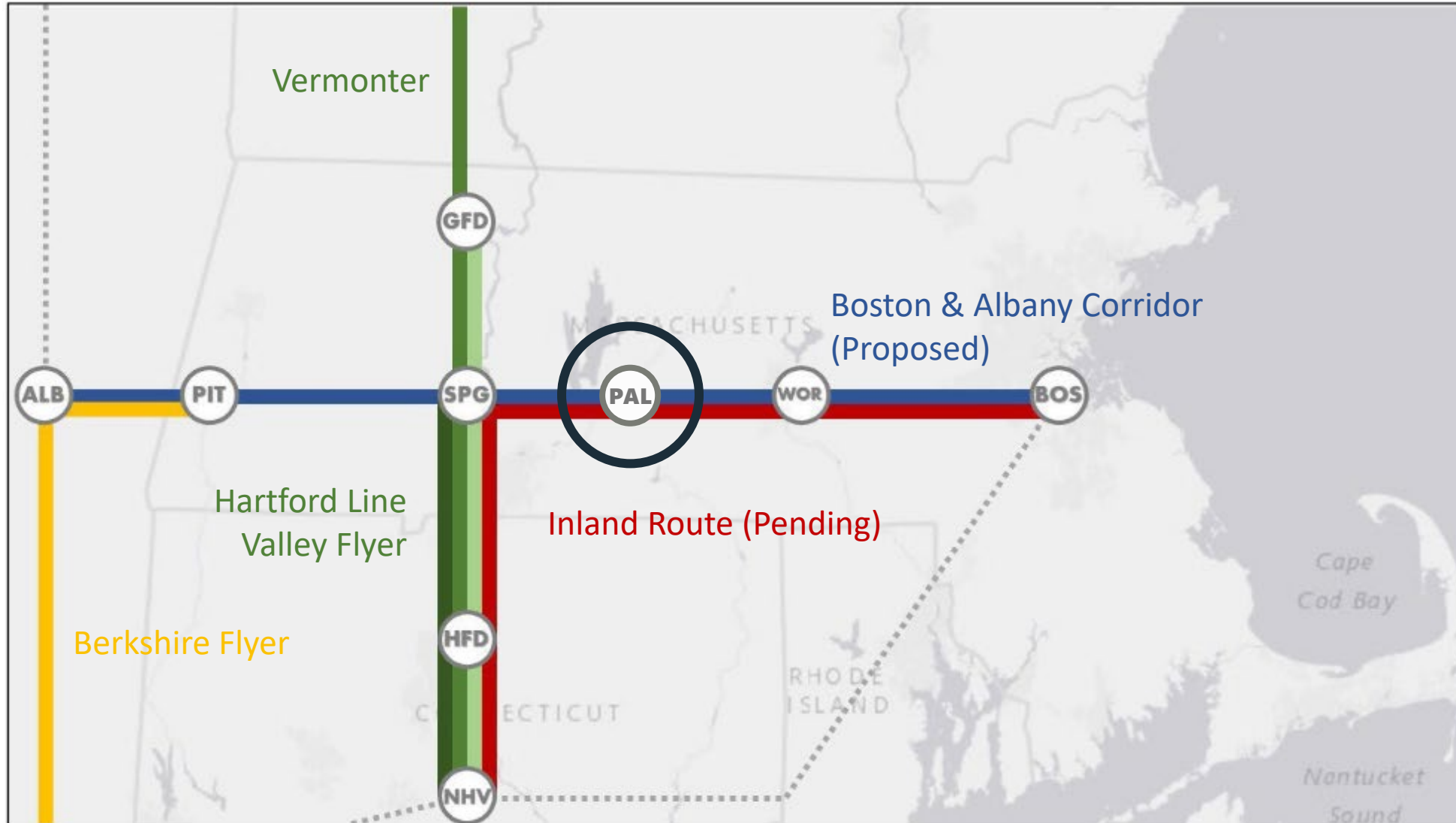


# Project Purpose

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

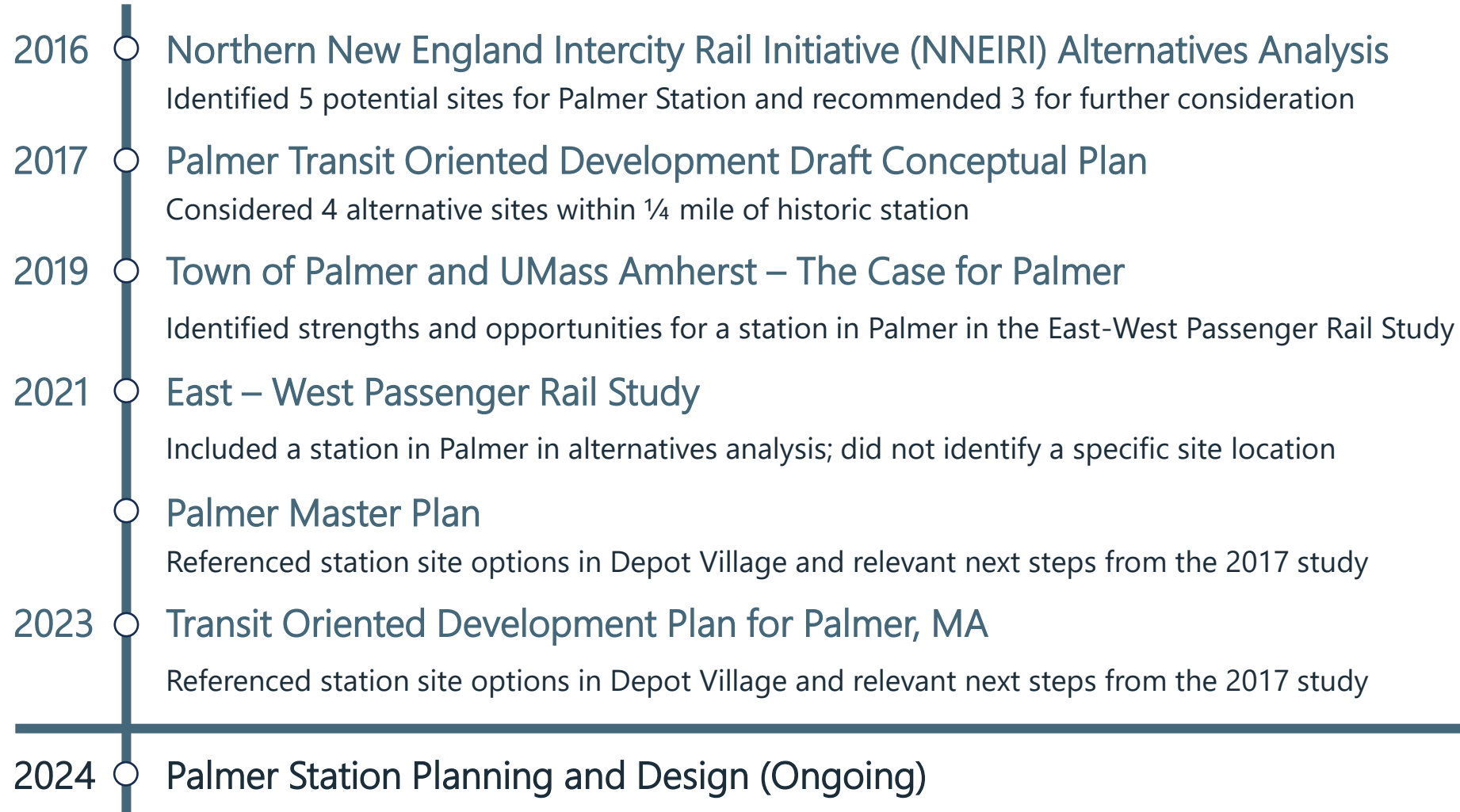
Compass Rail, Passenger Rail for the Commonwealth, is Massachusetts' vision for Amtrak-operated intercity passenger rail.



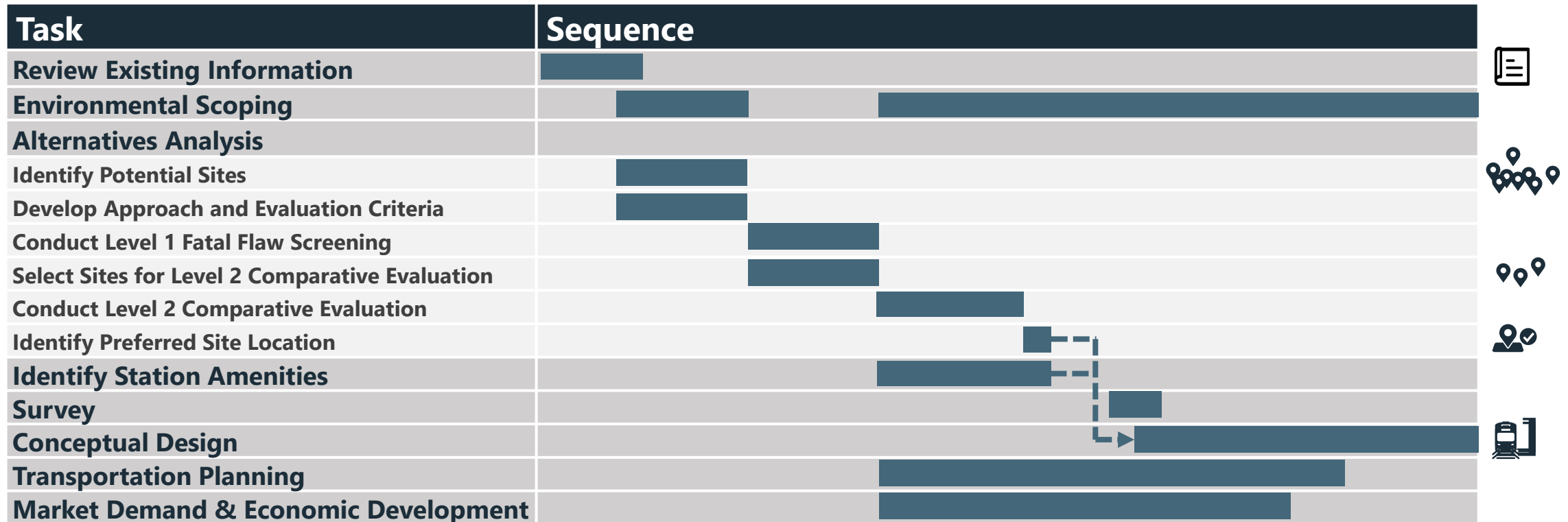
# Goals and Objectives for Palmer Station

- 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

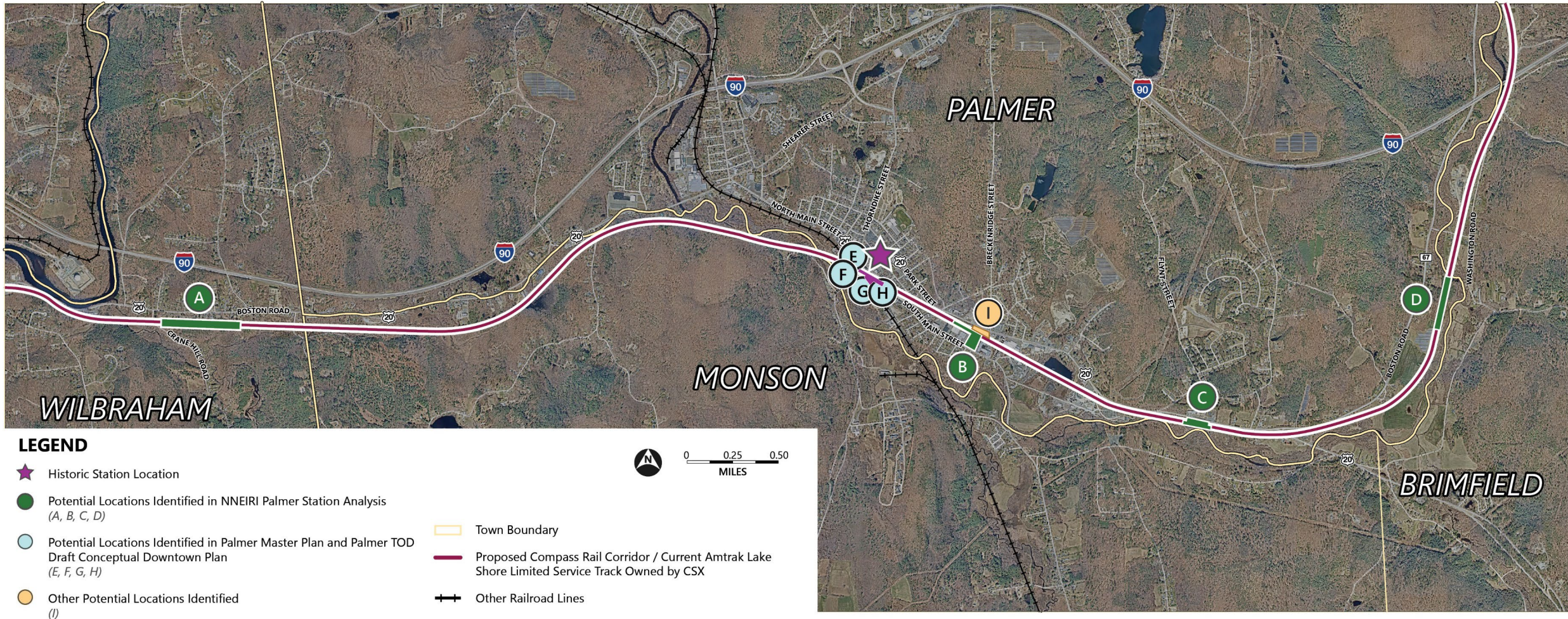
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- A vertical timeline line runs through the center of the list. To the left of the line are the years. To the right of the line are the project titles. For the years 2016, 2017, 2019, and 2021, a horizontal line segment extends to the right from the vertical line, and a smaller horizontal line segment extends further to the right, containing the descriptive text. For the year 2023, a horizontal line segment extends to the right from the vertical line, and a smaller horizontal line segment extends further to the right, containing the descriptive text. For the year 2024, there is no horizontal line segment extending to the right from the vertical line.
- 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





# 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.



L1 Fatal Flaw Screening



L2 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.



L1 Fatal Flaw Screening



L2 Comparative Evaluation



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.

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## Next steps:

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