



**ALLSTON MULTIMODAL PROJECT**  
**Rail & Transit**  
**Working Group Meeting 1**  
August 21, 2024



# Agenda

- Introductions and Ground Rules
- Task Force Member Goals
- Regional and Intercity Rail Planning
- Existing Rail Conditions and Construction Impacts on MBTA Operations

# Working Group Ground Rules



## **Core Group Representatives:**

- Arrive on time
- Come prepared to discuss the items on the agenda
- Unless you require clarification, please hold your questions and concerns until the speaker has finished presenting
- In the interest of time, keep your questions and feedback clear and concise. If you have more complex questions or feedback, you can send them to the Working Group leader after the meeting
- Groups can have a secondary listening representative if needed

## **Working Group Leaders:**

- Be responsive to questions and concerns arising throughout the process
- Thoroughly document discussions and action items at Working Group meetings. Review action items at the end of meetings, if time permits
- Before each Working Group meeting, Leaders will provide Core Group Representatives a meeting agenda and any background information needed to understand and discuss the agenda items
- Unanimity on all aspects of the is unlikely to emerge. If a particular thought or comment is not reflected in the final design, leaders will earnestly endeavor to explain why this is the case. All viewpoints, whether broadly shared or held by a handful of individuals will be thoroughly documented through the Working Group process



# Kick Off Question

- Introduce yourself!
- Briefly share what your top two goals are for this working group.
- Out of consideration for other participants, please keep your introduction brief

# Attendees



## **Chairs**

Meredith Slesinger, MassDOT

Laura Gilmore, MBTA

## **Core Group Representatives**

Joe Barr, Amtrak

Kristin Elechko, Office of Governor Maura Healy

Seth Gadbois, Conservation Law Foundation

Dennis Giombetti, Office of Senate President Karen Spilka

Amy Ingles, City of Brookline

Chris Hart, MBTA

Jarred Johnson, TransitMatters

Elizabeth Leary, Boston University

Jonathan Lee, Allston Brighton Health Collaborative

Tom Nally, A Better City

Albert Ng, Harvard University

Travis Pollack, Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Matthew Peterson, City of Boston

Patricia Quinn, Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority

Dana Roscoe, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

Frederick Salvucci

Marco Turra, CSX Transportation

Karen Winger, Longwood Collective



# Regional Rail Context



# MBTA Regional Rail is resilient and evolving

- As of March 2024, Regional Rail has experienced a remarkable recovery, skyrocketing to >90% of pre-COVID ridership
- During the pandemic, the MBTA began to move away from traditional peak-service model, and introduced all-day, clockface service
- The MBTA is committed to building upon these improvements over the coming years by increasing frequency, modernizing its fleet, and restoring rail service to southeast Massachusetts





# Regional Rail is making strides in the near-term



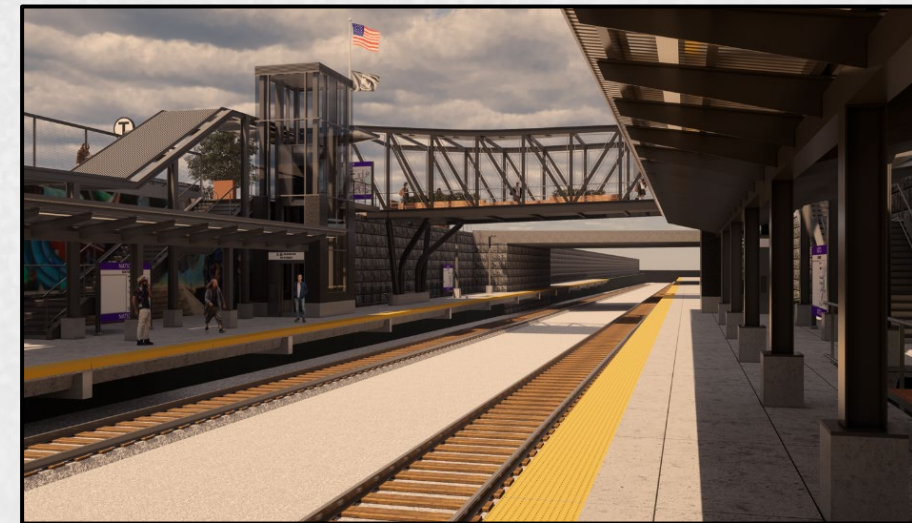
- The MBTA is implementing several important funded initiatives:
- South Coast Rail (Target: May 2025)
  - Restoring rail service to southeastern Massachusetts
- Framingham/Worcester Line 30/30 min service frequencies (Target: 2026)
  - Significant increases in service to Framingham and Worcester built on track improvements
- Fairmount Line Decarbonized Service (Target: 2028)
  - All-day, 20-minute service with Battery Electric Multiple Unit (BEMU) rolling stock
  - Start of new fleet with fast acceleration and higher top speed to reduce journey times to be more competitive with car journeys



# Snapshot: Framingham/Worcester Line Investments



- Speed restriction removal project
  - Improved tracks to raise maximum authorized speed from Lansdown to Auburndale
- Worcester Union Station Platform Rebuild (Estimated completion in 2024)
  - Fully accessible
  - Will allow two trains at a time on the platform
- Framingham/Worcester “30-30” Service (Target: 2026)
  - All-day, 30-minute “Zonal express” bi-directional service to Worcester
  - All-day, 30-minute local bi-directional service to Framingham
  - Requisite track improvements funded with \$20 million in Fair Share funds
- Framingham/Worcester Station Improvements (On-going)
  - Extensive capital upgrades to upgrade several stations, improving accessibility and reducing dwell times
  - Example: Natick Center Station Accessibility Improvements to be completed in Winter 2024
  - Future priorities are Wellesley Square and Newtonville stations





# Regional Rail supports Commonwealth's climate plans

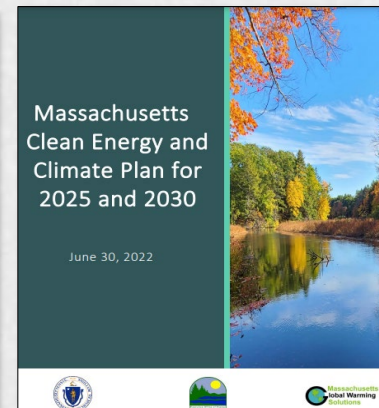
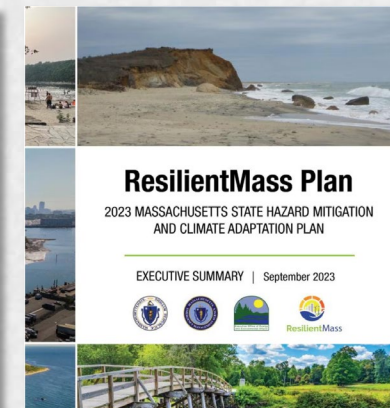


- The Commonwealth is committed to Net Zero by 2050: Requires an 85% reduction in GHG emissions from 1990 levels
- The Commonwealth's Clean Energy and Climate Plans lay out actions required to reduce our GHG footprint, including:
  - Shifting away from private automobiles
  - Fleet electrification
- Regional Rail is critical to mode shift
  - Replaces longer automobile trips into/out of the inner core
  - All-day service serves more types of trips, reducing the need to drive
- Regional Rail decarbonization is underway: BEMU service on Fairmount begins 2028

## Healey-Driscoll Administration Celebrates Plans for Battery Electric Trains on Fairmount Commuter Rail Line

Posted on August 13, 2024

\$54 million agreement to advance acquisition of battery electric trains; Fairmount will be first Commuter Rail line in Massachusetts to provide 100% electric train service.

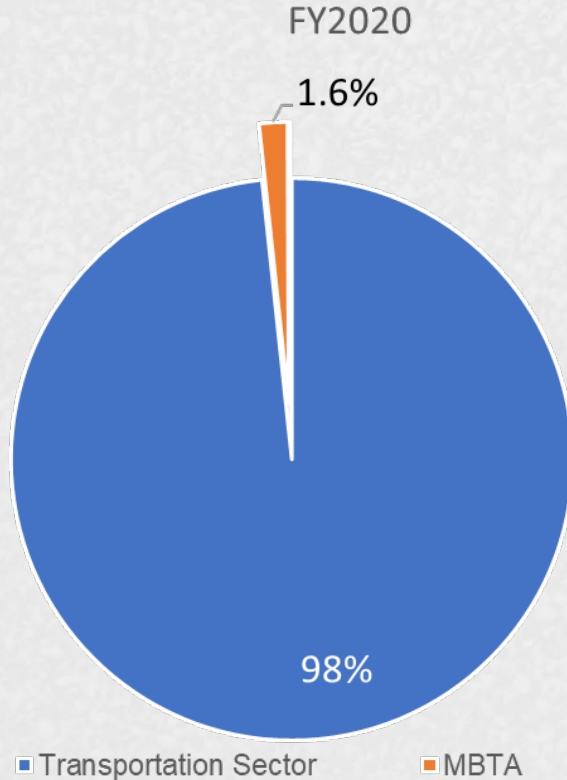




# The MBTA provides low-carbon transportation for the region



- At 37% of emissions, transportation is the largest source of GHG emissions in Massachusetts
- However, MBTA's emissions represent less than ~2% of the sector's emissions and are declining, while accounting for ~10% of commuter trips in the Boston metro area.



MBTA contributes to Massachusetts emission reduction goals through:



Providing transit service as an alternative to single occupancy vehicle (SOV) travel



Fleet and facility decarbonization



Non-revenue fleet electrification

# Regional Rail supports the Commonwealth's housing goals



- Eastern Massachusetts is facing a housing affordability crisis
- Access to frequent and reliable Regional Rail service can stimulate housing production and increase residential density around MBTA facilities
- In addition to service improvements that make Regional Rail access more attractive, the MBTA is taking pro-active steps to support affordable housing development
  - Ex: Collaborative Agreements to Advance Housing Transit-Oriented Development Projects

**MBTA Advances Nearly 1,000 Units of Housing Through Collaborative Agreements, Including Significant Affordable Housing**

Posted on May 17, 2024



# Inter-City Rail Planning Context



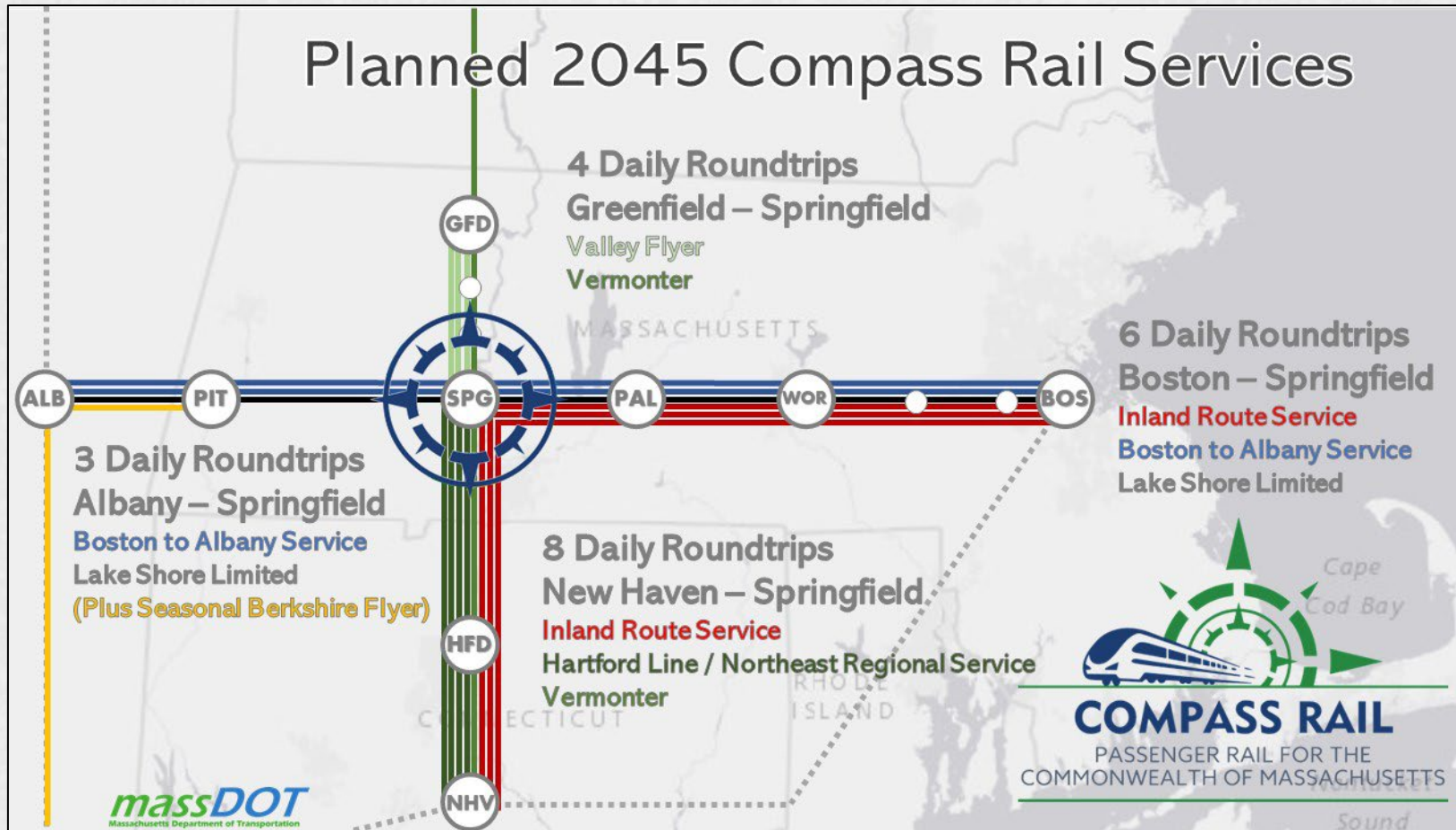
# Compass Rail – Passenger Rail for the Commonwealth



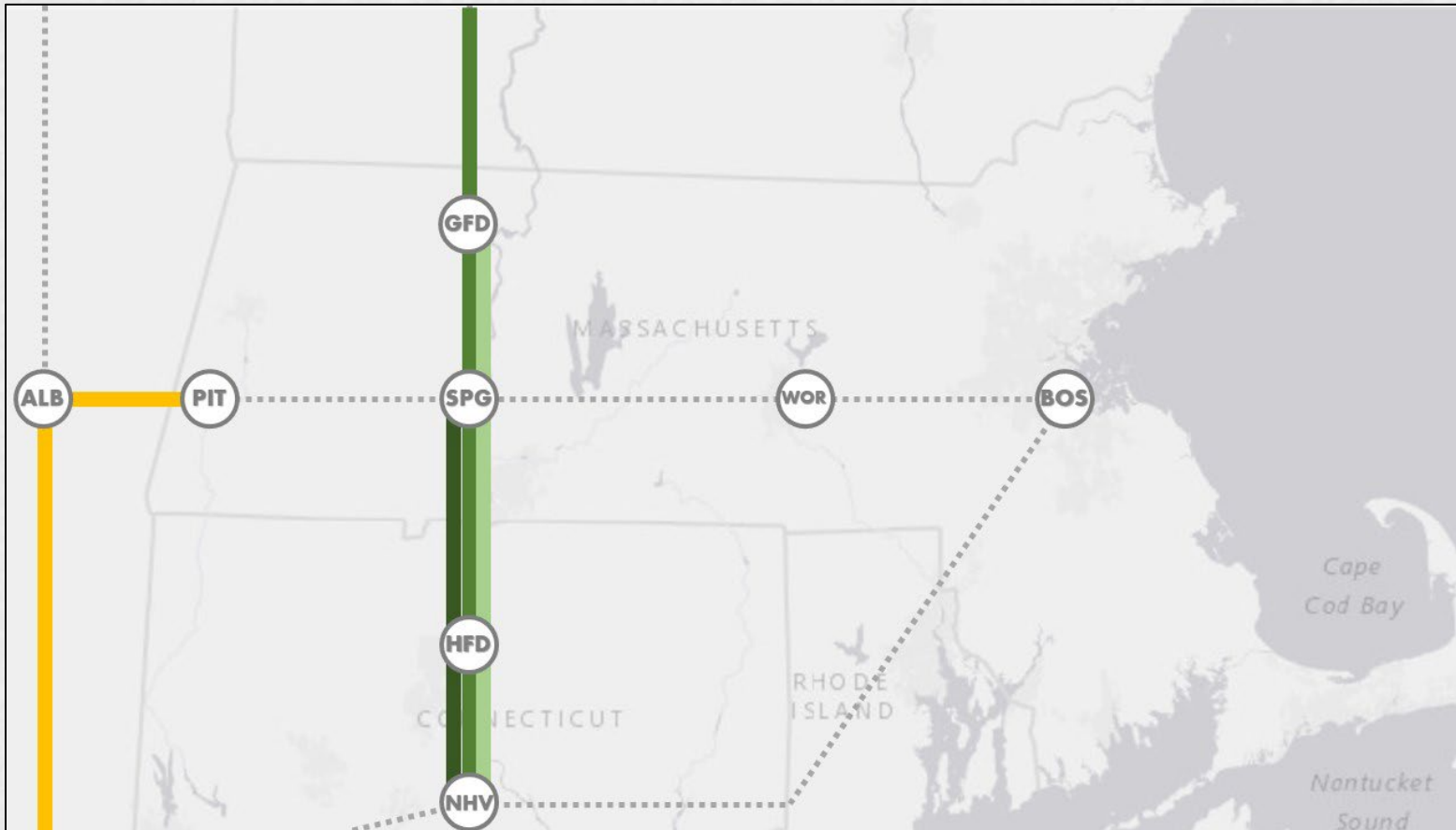
- West-East and North-South services comprise Compass Rail.
- Intercity rail not commuter rail; includes robust Springfield hub
- Administered by MassDOT Rail and Transit Division with partners Amtrak, CSX, CT/NY/VT, and others
- Increases transportation options, supports economic development, improves the freight network, and shifts car trips to greener modes
- Pursue federal funding from historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Law



# 2045 Compass Rail Vision – Service Enhancement and Expansion



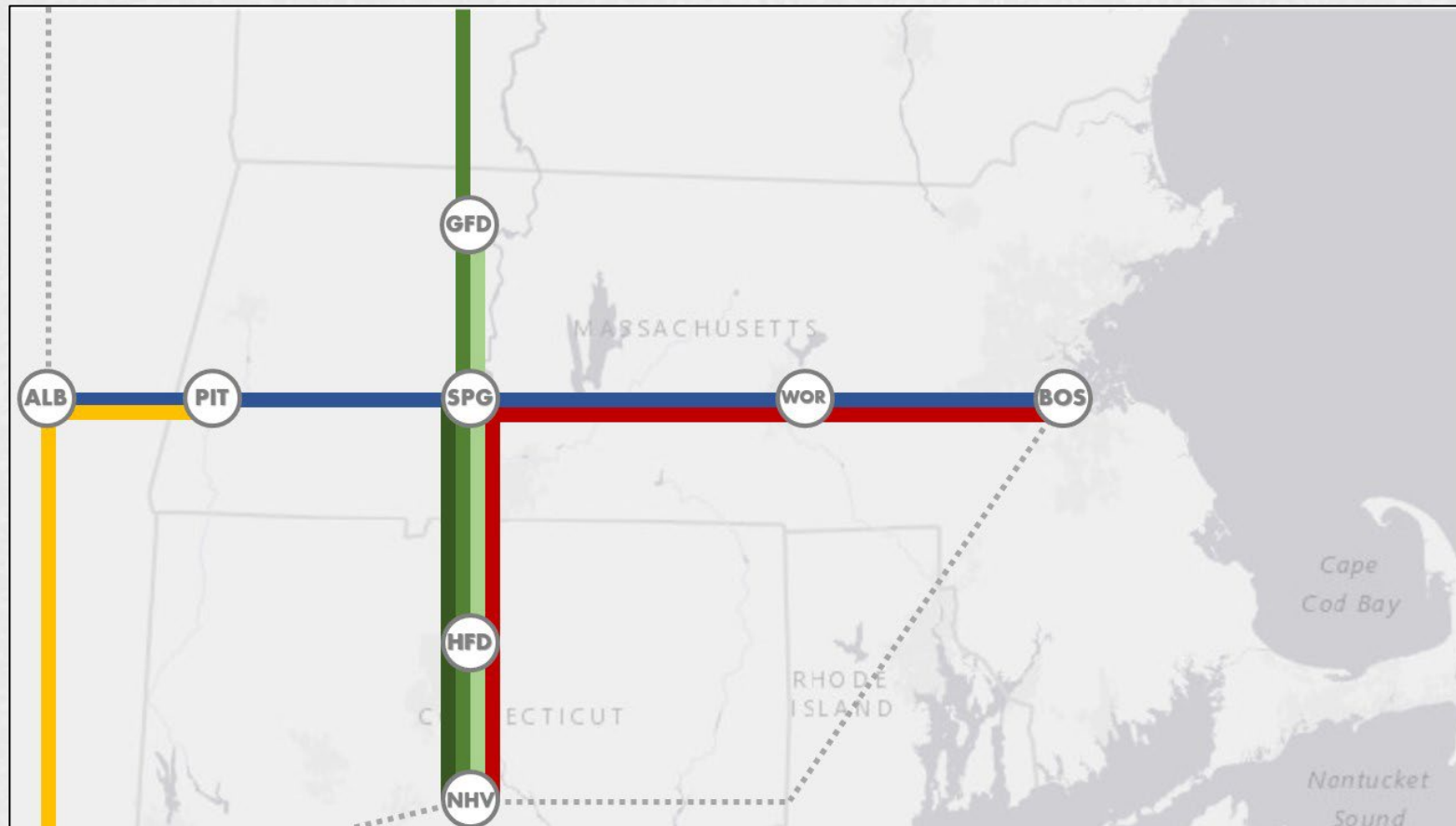
# Existing State-Supported Amtrak Services



- North-South services along the Knowledge Corridor
  - Vermonter,
  - Valley Flyer,
  - Amtrak Hartford Line, and
  - Northeast Regional
- Seasonal Berkshire Flyer service from New York to Pittsfield



# Proposed Services



- **"Inland Route"** from Boston to New Haven, CT via Springfield
- **Boston & Albany** service

# Inland Route Award – Connecting the Commonwealth: Early Actions for the Inland Route



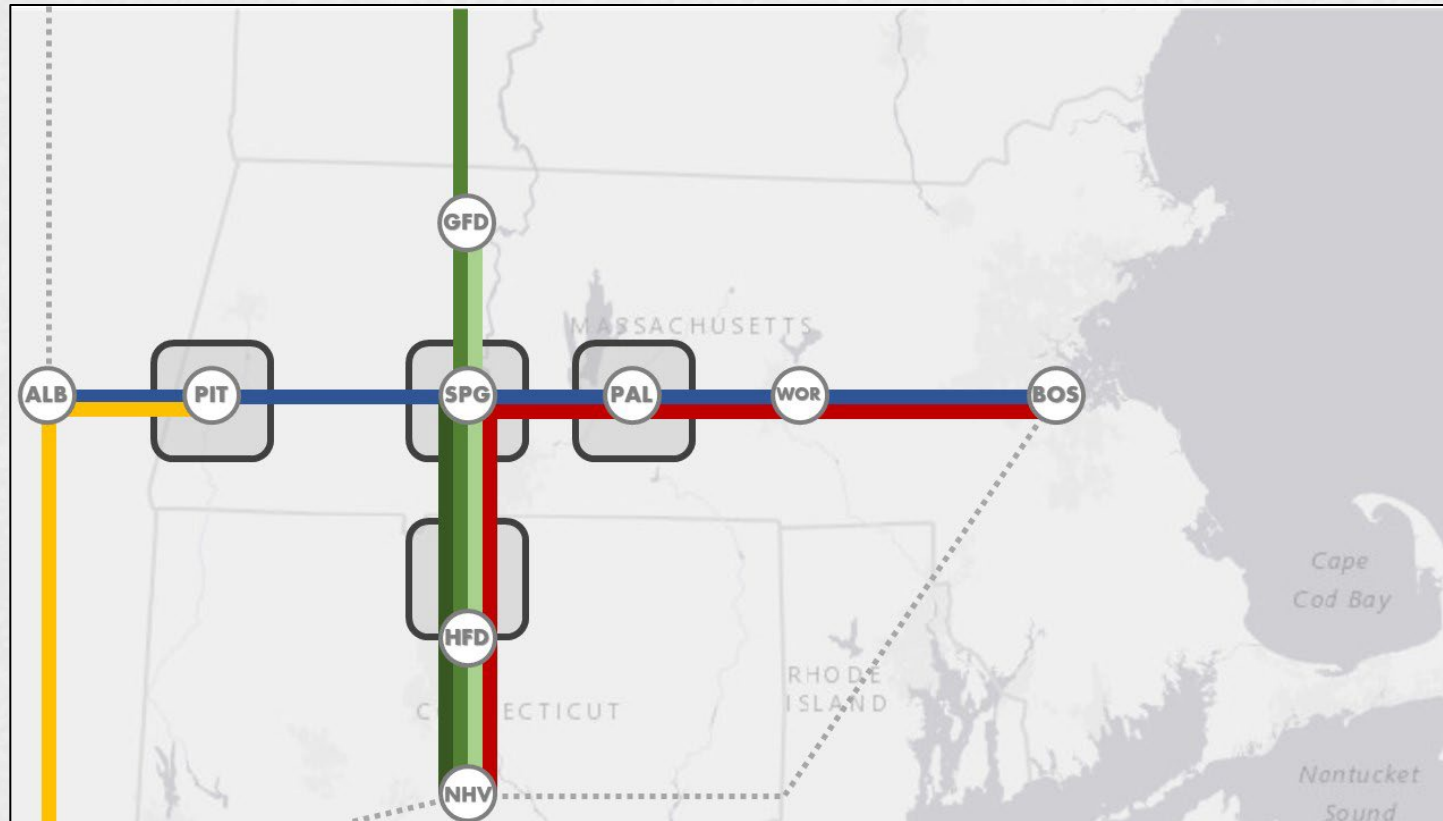
*Governor Healey speaks at 9/22/23 press event announcing \$108 million federal grant for Inland Route*



- \$108M federal + \$27M match = \$135M project
- Planning, design, and construction
- Track realignments and sidings between WOR-SPG
- Adds capacity for freight and passenger trains
- Two round trips between BOS-NHV via SPG; Amtrak-operated
- Reduced travel time (i.e. higher speeds) BOS-SPG
- Working with CSX and Amtrak to refine scope
- 2024: begin design
- 2027: begin construction
- 2029 begin service



# Happening Now – Ongoing projects in support of Compass Rail



- Early actions for the **Inland Route**
- **Boston & Albany** Corridor ID Program
- Springfield Area Track Reconfiguration Project (Final Design federal funding application pending)
- Palmer Station Planning and Design
- Pittsfield Track Capacity Project
- Hartford Line Rail Program Double Track (CTDOT Project)

# Existing Rail Conditions and AMP Construction Impacts on Infrastructure





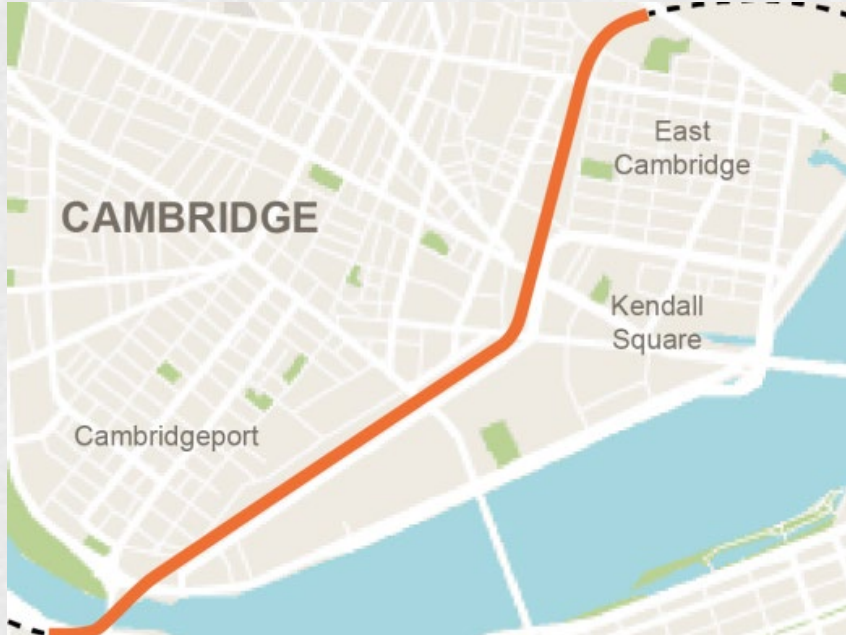
# The Allston Multimodal project area contains critical rail infrastructure



- The Worcester Mainline forms the southern boundary of the project area. Current uses include:
  - MBTA Framingham/Worcester Line
  - Amtrak's Lake Shore Ltd
  - CSX freight operations
- The Grand Junction passes through Beacon Park Yard north of the Worcester Mainline
- Approximately 61 train movements per day in the Beacon Park Yard area, including Amtrak and MBTA movements across the Grand Junction (as of April 2024)



# The Grand Junction is important for its rail operators



The Grand Junction is a critical maintenance link for the MBTA and Amtrak

- Connects MBTA's southside Regional Rail fleet to the Authority's only heavy maintenance facility
- Connects Amtrak's Downeaster fleet (Boston to Portland, ME service) to Southamptton Yard maintenance facility in South Boston
- CSX Transportation has rights to use the Grand Junction

Preferred alternative for the Allston Multimodal project will sever the Grand Junction



MBTA and Amtrak Usage of the Grand Junction		
User	% of locomotive fleet moved each week	Avg Weekly Equipment Moves
Amtrak	50% now 100% with new fleet	2 now 7 with new fleet (2028-30)
MBTA	13-26% of south side fleet	6 moves of 5-10 vehicles
CSX	N/A	0 (though has rights to use)



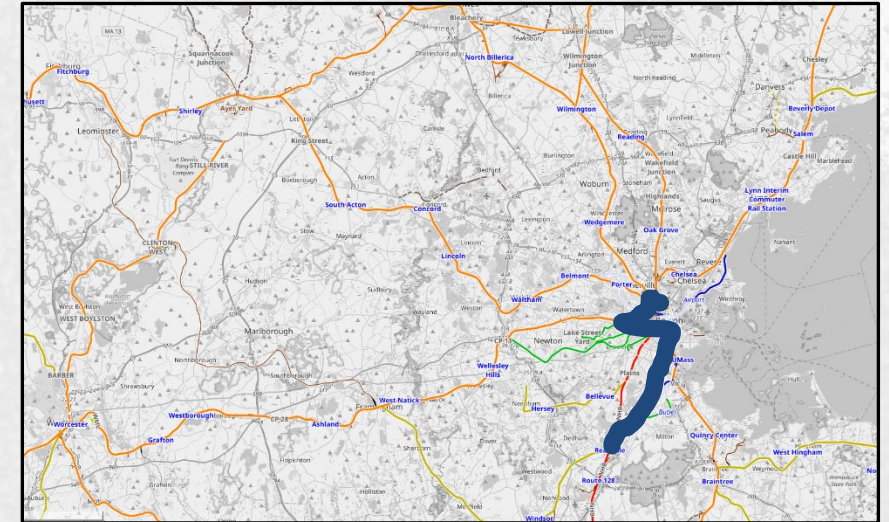
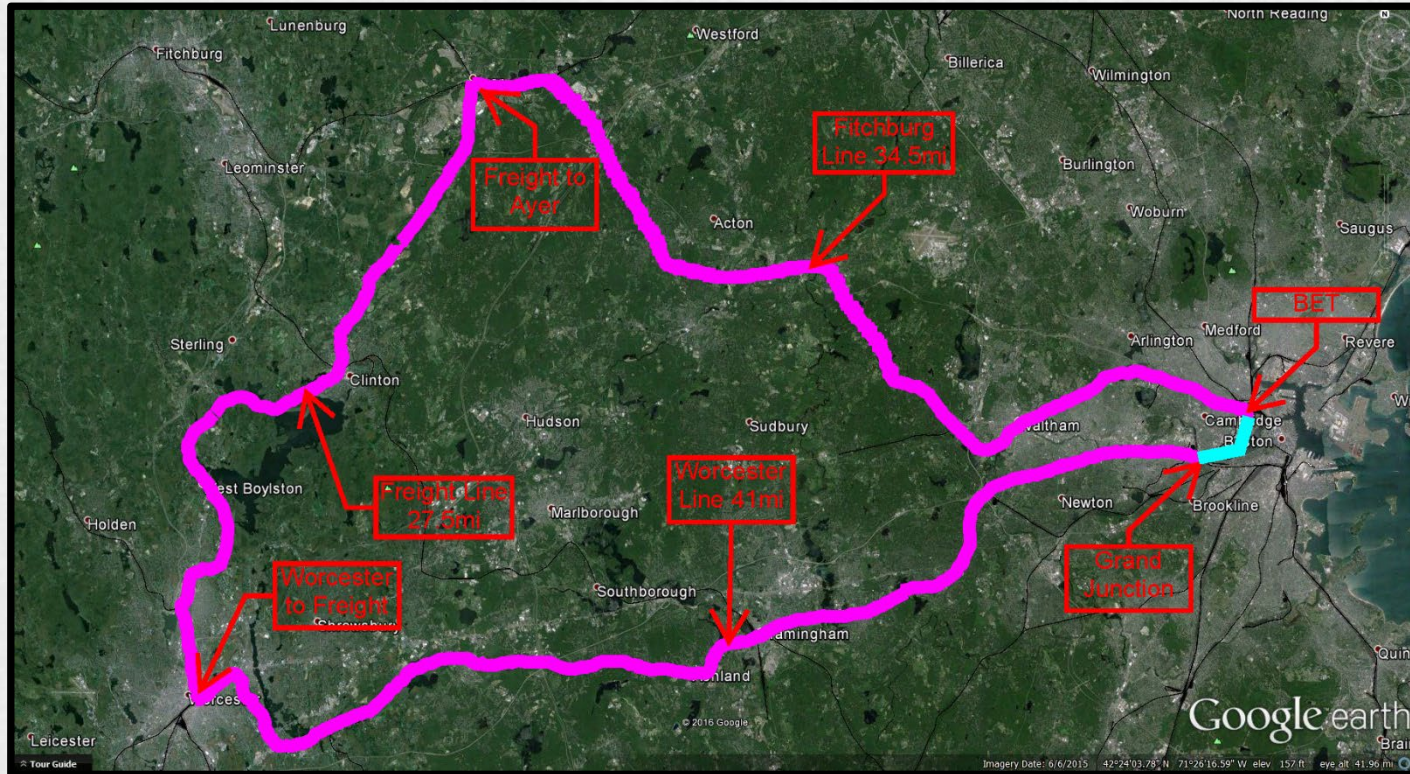
# Closure of the Grand Junction has significant impacts on Amtrak and MBTA maintenance operations



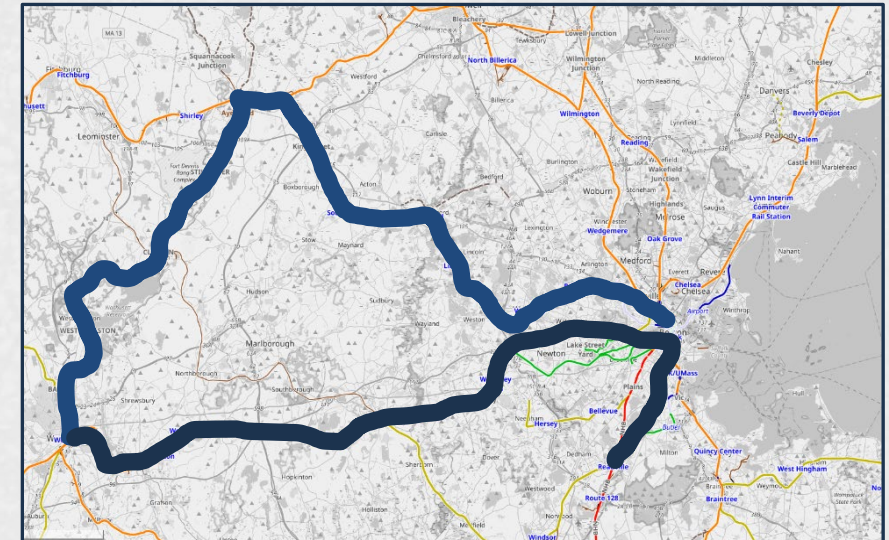
- Without a comparable facility on the southside, MBTA service would cease within weeks due to an inability to conduct required maintenance
- Losing access to Southampton Yard via the Grand Junction will negatively impact Amtrak's Downeaster service
  - Amtrak's new Airo fleet is due to be introduced on a similar timescale and requires daily maintenance inspection
- The only other route to Amtrak/MBTA facilities requires a 100+ mile detour via Ayer, which is not feasible for the MBTA's maintenance needs and poses challenges for Amtrak
- The only feasible way for the MBTA to continue service is to build sufficient maintenance facilities on the southside.
  - However, southside maintenance facilities are unfunded in the Allston Multimodal project, and unfunded in the MBTA's Capital Investment Plan.
- Amtrak will also need to find an alternative solution, or risk reducing Downeaster service during the closure of the Grand Junction



# Closure of the Grand Junction has significant impacts on Amtrak and MBTA maintenance operations



Grand Junction route to MBTA Boston Engine Terminal in Somerville



Detour route to BET via Ayer



# MBTA's layover and maintenance needs

- The closure of the Grand Junction will accelerate the need for layover capacity on the south-side of the MBTA's system
- To accommodate the closure, the MBTA will need to build maintenance facilities on top of existing layover space, which requires replacement layover elsewhere.
- With loss of access to BET, many of these facilities need to be geared towards the needs of the MBTA's current diesel fleet, instead of future fleet electrification
- Most replacement layover space – and all maintenance facilities – will need to be complete before the closure of the Grand Junction to ensure continuity of service
- Regional rail electrification projects will be delayed by use of financial resources and real estate on these diesel projects