

Portland Train Platform and Station Site Alternatives Evaluation - Public Meeting



August 13, 2024





Introduction

About NNEPRA

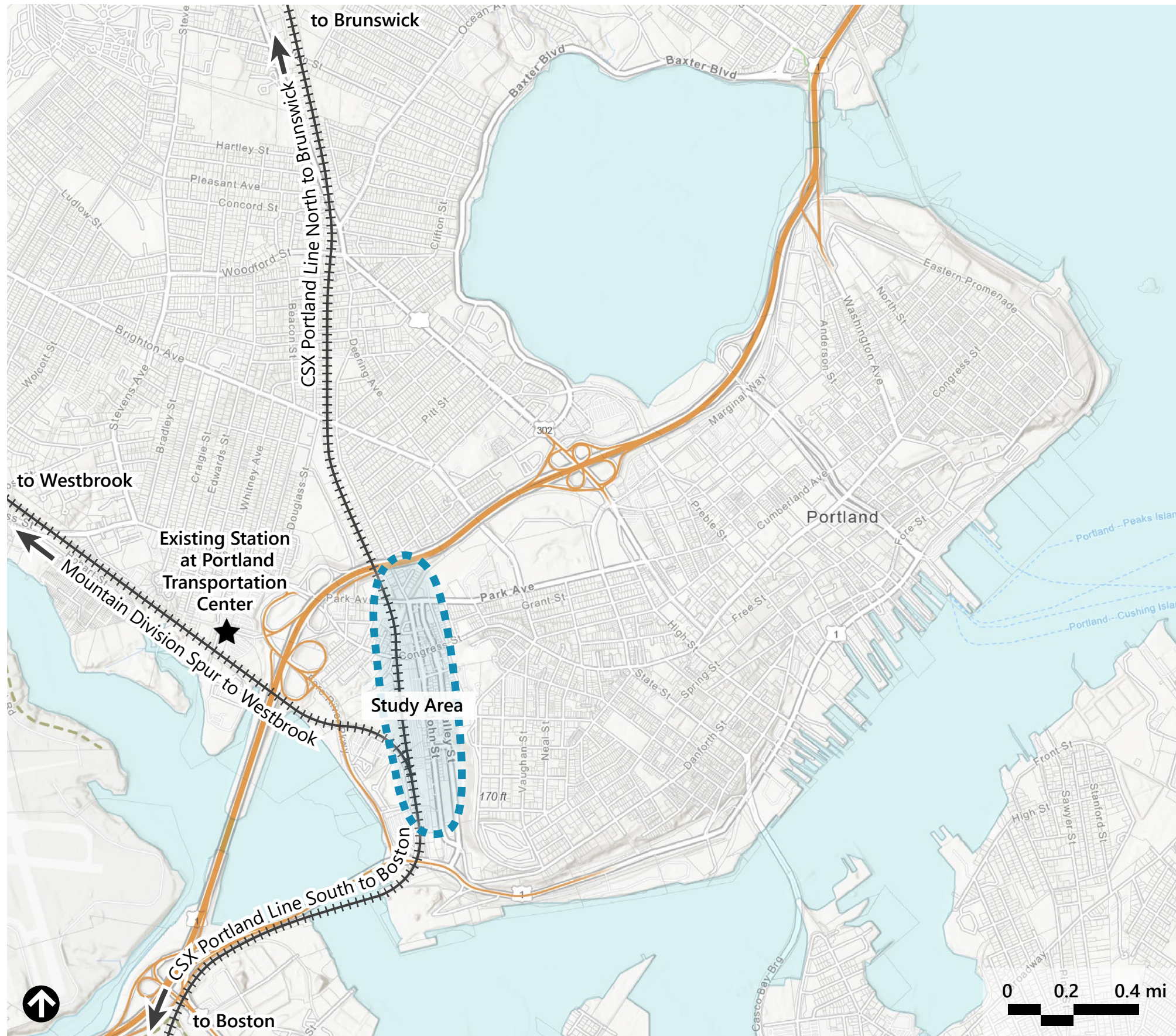
- Quasi-government agency established by the Maine State Legislature to oversee the operation of passenger rail service to and within Maine
- Holds Service Agreement with Amtrak for operation of Downeaster
- Establishes schedules, fares, marketing programs
- Manages strategic planning and capital projects
- Holds agreements with station community partners to maintain platforms, provide parking and passenger amenities

Downeaster Operations

- 5 round-trips daily between Brunswick, ME and Boston, MA (North Station)
- Serves 12 station communities in 3 states
- 600,000+/- passengers annually

Strategic Initiatives

- Relocate Downeaster station in Portland to a mainline location
- Add passenger platform in West Falmouth near exit 53 off I-95
- Add 6th daily round trip to support southern Maine commuter service into Portland
- Expand service to Bath, Wiscasset, and Rockland, ME



Project Overview

Problem Statement

The current Downeaster Portland station is located at the Portland Transportation Center (PTC) which is on a branch line approximately 1 mile from CSX mainline. Accessing the current station requires time consuming reverse moves, creating conflicts between freight and passenger trains. This constrains growth and causes passengers additional travel time.

Project Purpose

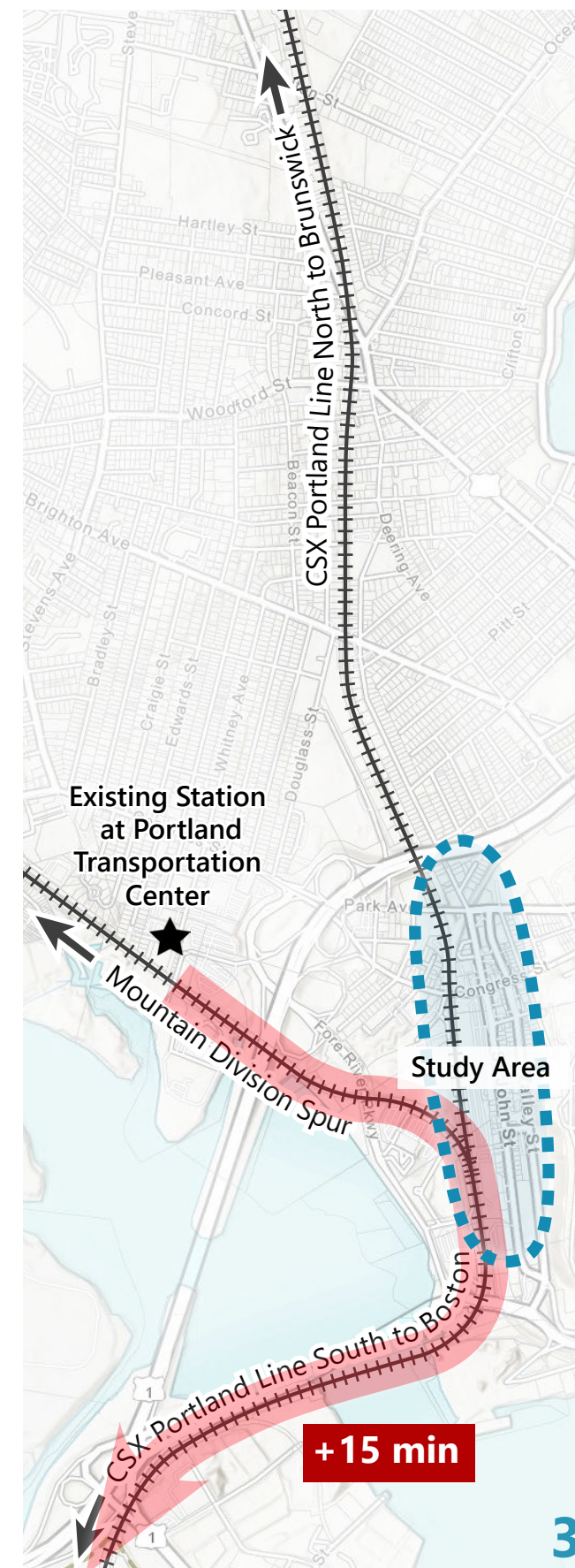
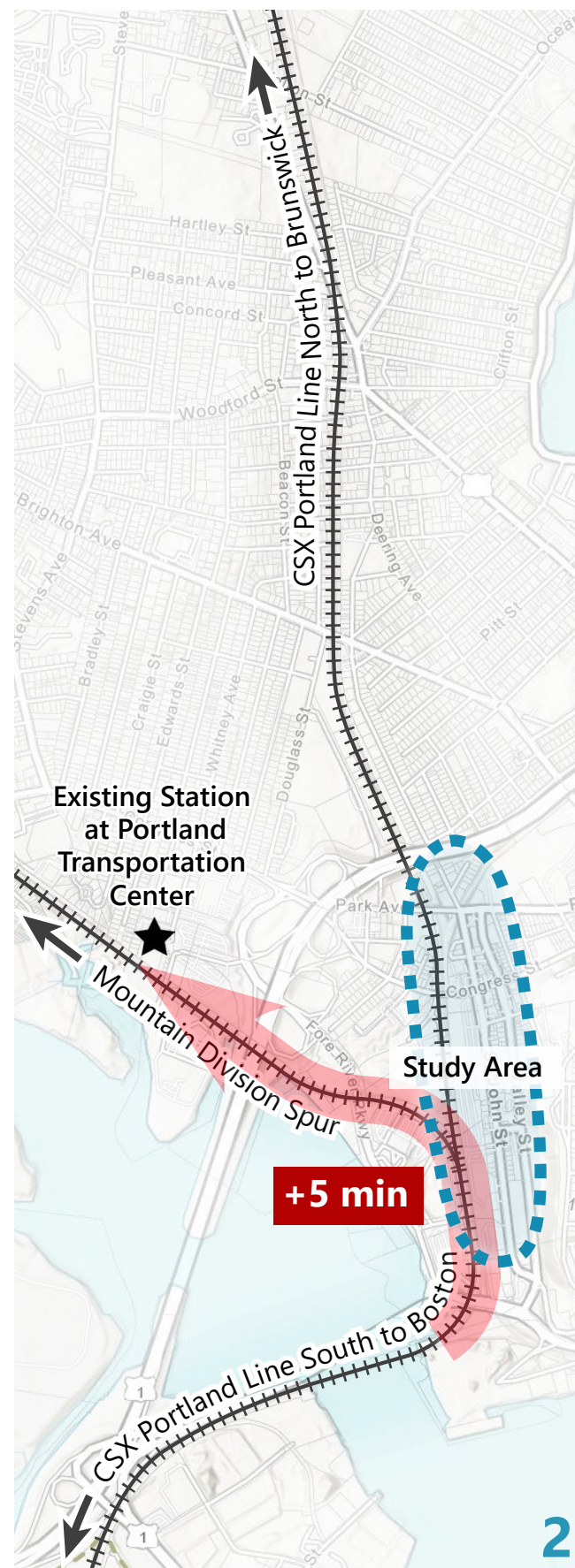
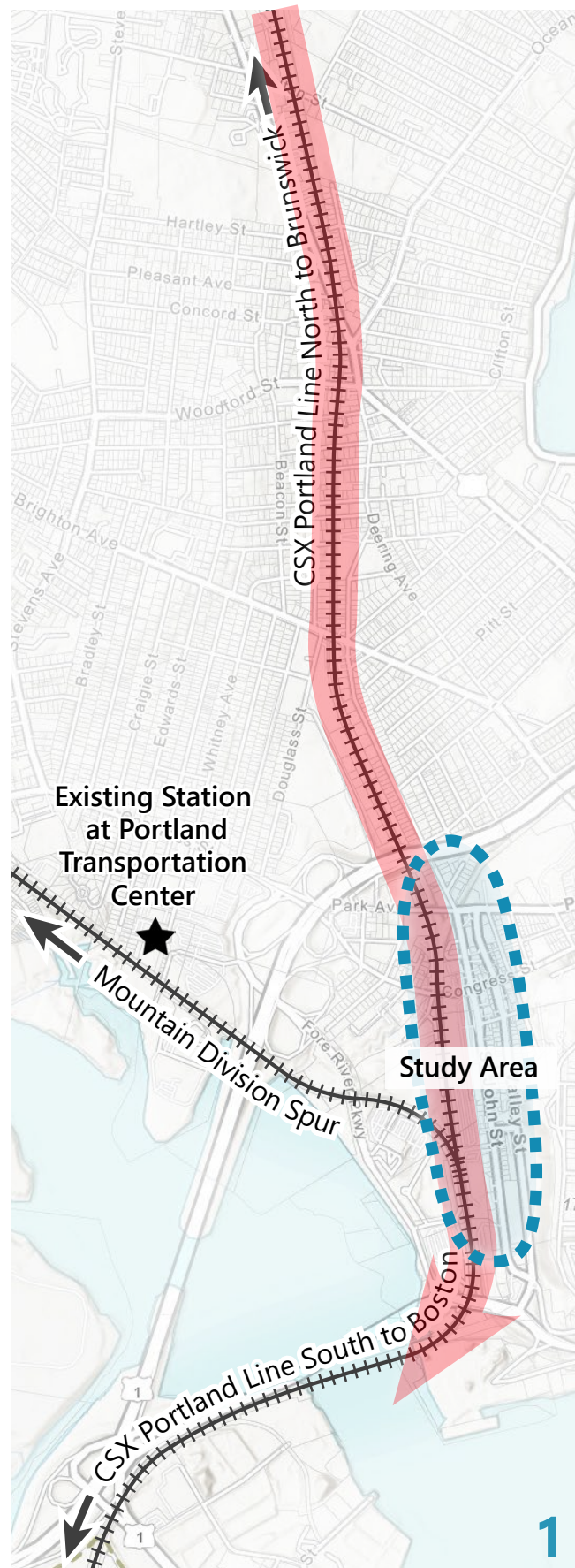
Explore alternative locations for a new Downeaster train station on the CSX mainline east of I-295 and closer to Portland peninsula to support Downeaster Operations and Strategic Initiatives.

Previous Studies

- In 2019-2020 MaineDOT studied needs of intercity bus, rail, and related modes at PTC from a customer and regional system perspective. A detailed evaluation of a new rail facility on the mainline with appropriate shuttle connections to the PTC was recommended.
- In 2023 VHB analyzed Downeaster parking demand and anticipated a parking requirement of 105 spaces in Portland

Previous Public Meetings During this Phase

- April 24, 2024 NNEPRA and VHB held an initial public meeting to gather public input and comments on the project.
- June 24, 2024 NNEPRA and VHB presented the site analysis and summary of public input at the public NNEPRA Board of Directors meeting.

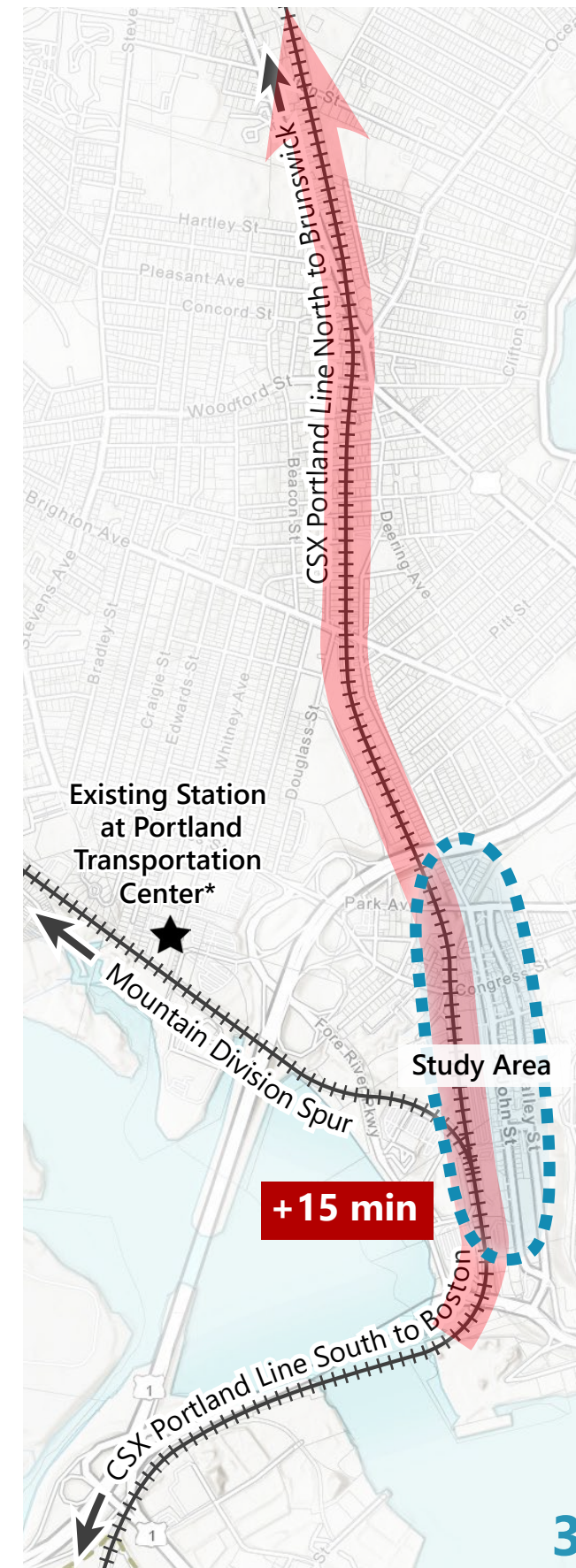
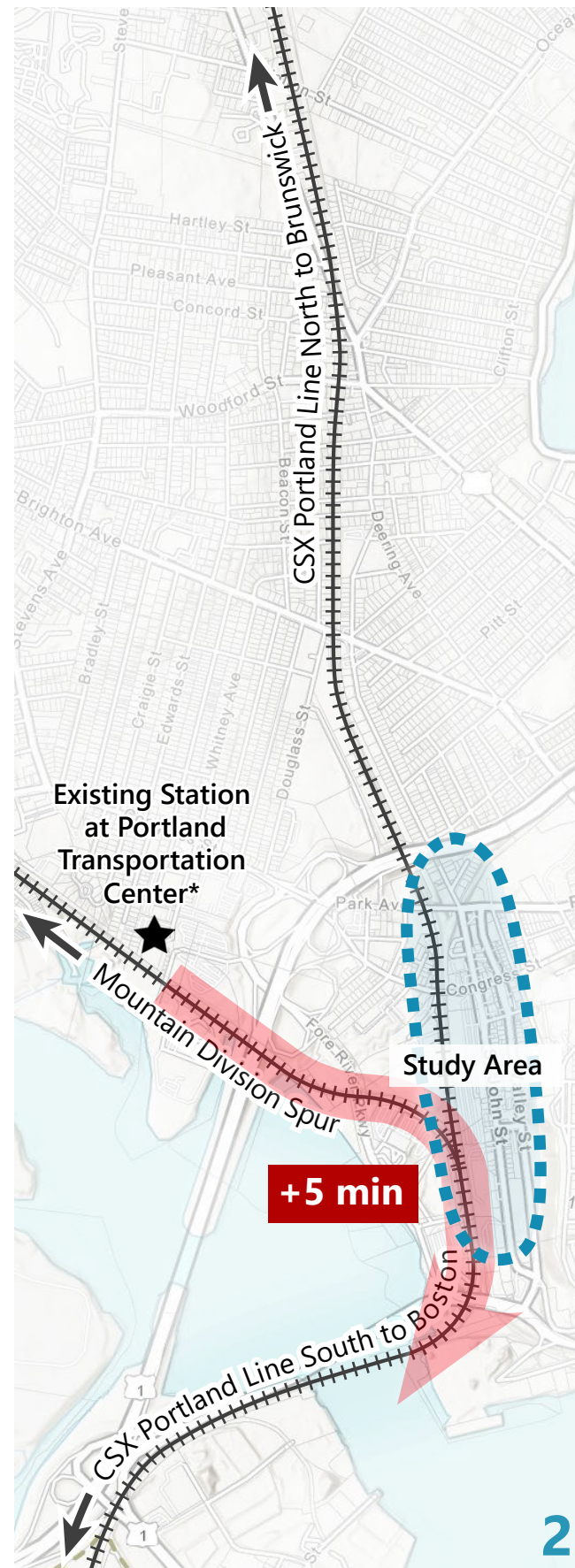
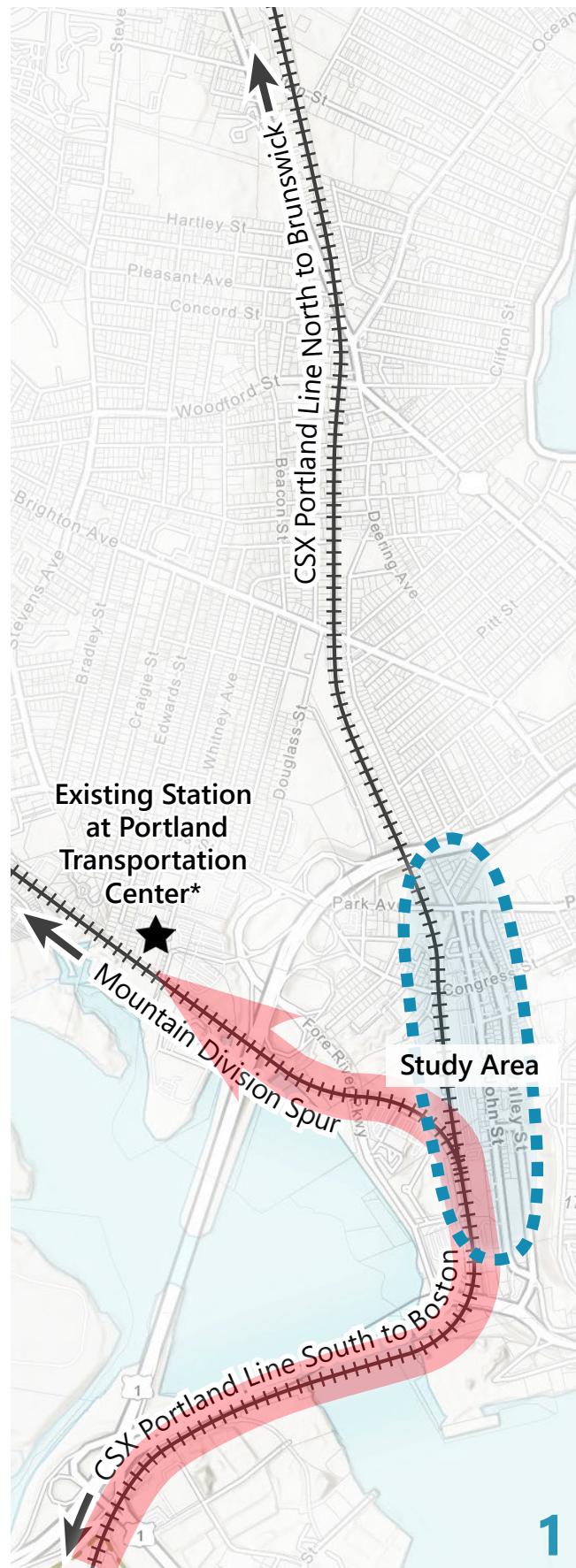


Current **Southbound Downeaster** Operation

Every Downeaster train must make 3 movements to access the PTC:

- 1** Clear the split on the mainline, stop, then back onto the branchline into the PTC (5 minutes)
- 2** Stop at PTC. Those continuing to points south of Portland wait in the station to align crews and change direction (5 minutes)
- 3** Travel back to the mainline to continue their trip south (5 minutes)

In total, this causes 15 additional minutes of travel time for passengers on each train. 75 minutes of impact daily.



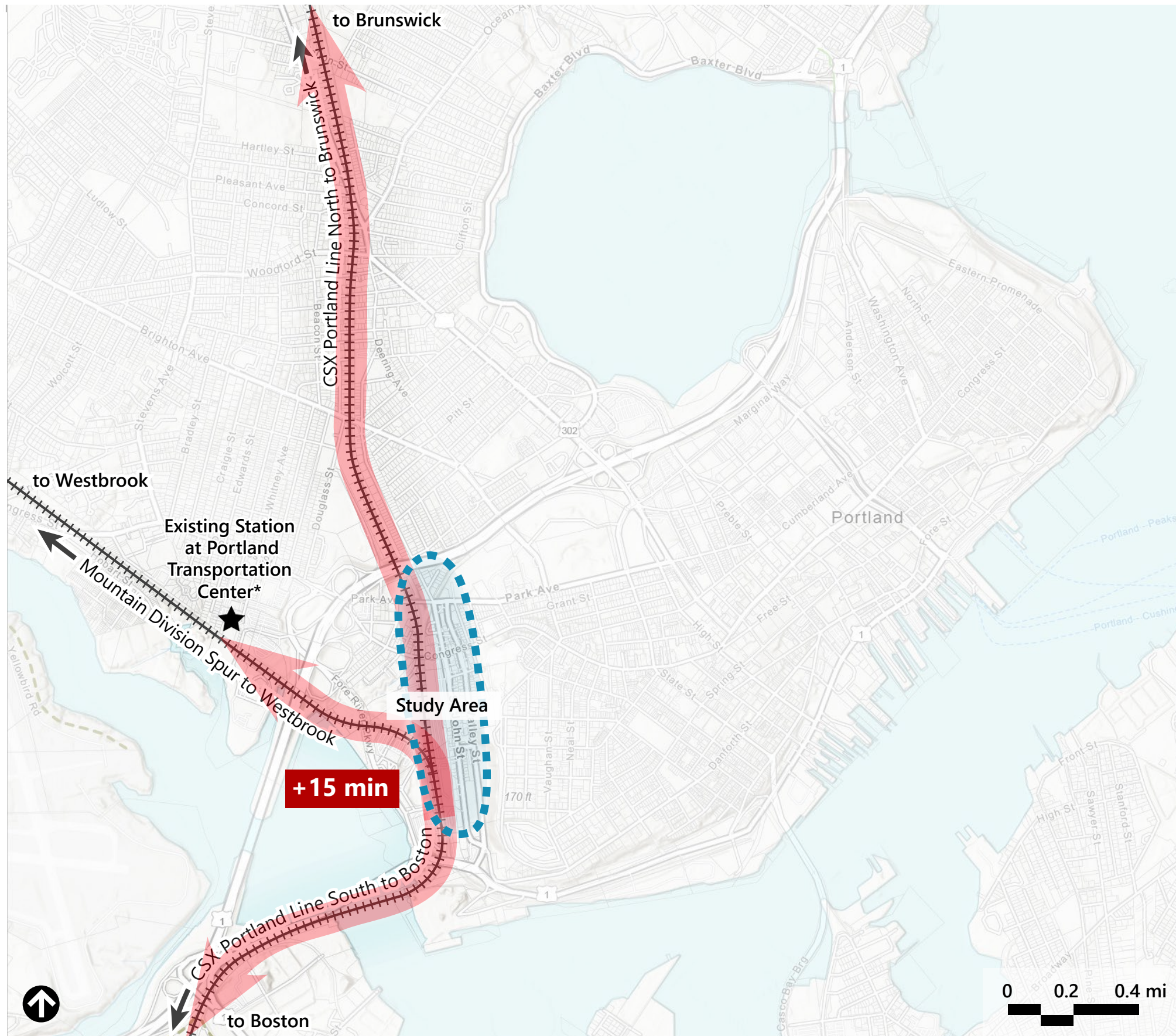
Current **Northbound** Downeaster Operation

Downeaster passengers travelling north from stations located south of Portland:

- 1** Travel 5 minutes from the mainline to the PTC platform, located on the branch line (5 minutes)
- 2** Stop at PTC. Those continuing to points north of Portland wait in the station to align crews and change direction (5 minutes)
- 3** Reverse back onto the mainline from the branch line and clear the split to continue the trip north to Freeport/Brunswick (5 minutes)

In total, this causes 15 additional minutes of travel time for passengers on each train. 75 minutes of impact daily.

* Original northern terminus of the Downeaster before service was expanded to Brunswick in 2012



Constraints of Current Station Location

- 20 additional daily train movements are needed to access the PTC daily
- The additional moves take 150 minutes each day
- The resulting additional scheduled travel time makes the Downeaster less competitive with roadway modes impeding ridership growth and increasing labor and fuel costs
- The additional moves constrain and delay freight and passenger trains on the mainline
- The constraints of the branch line station location (at the PTC) limit schedule flexibility and prohibits additional frequencies or future connecting services
- In CY2023:
 - 125,000 riders collectively spent more than 31,000 hours on Downeaster trains backing in and out of the PTC
 - This maneuver resulted in 3,650 hours of crew overtime and consumed 8,600 gallons of fuel
 - This resulted in approximately \$973K in costs

A mainline station with double platforms would only require a 2-minute station stop.

* Original northern terminus of the Downeaster before service was expanded to Brunswick in 2012



Project Goals

1. Relocate station to main line location with double tracked section
2. Minimize grade crossing impacts and conflicts between passenger and freight trains
3. Enhance rider experience by reducing passenger travel time
4. Improve reliability of the Downeaster service
5. Provide access to vehicular, pedestrian/bike, and transit connections.
6. Support regional transportation goals, to make transit easier, create frequent connections, and create transit-friendly places
7. Increase regional ridership by providing time competitive service and proximity to demand generators
8. Reduce train movement and noise
9. Support Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) as well as economic development and land use opportunities
10. Maximize ridership on new inbound commuter service from southern Maine into Portland (estimated 2026)
11. Preserve existing connections to Portland Layover Facility (PLF), Portland Transportation Center (PTC) and potential future east/west rail services.



Project Needs

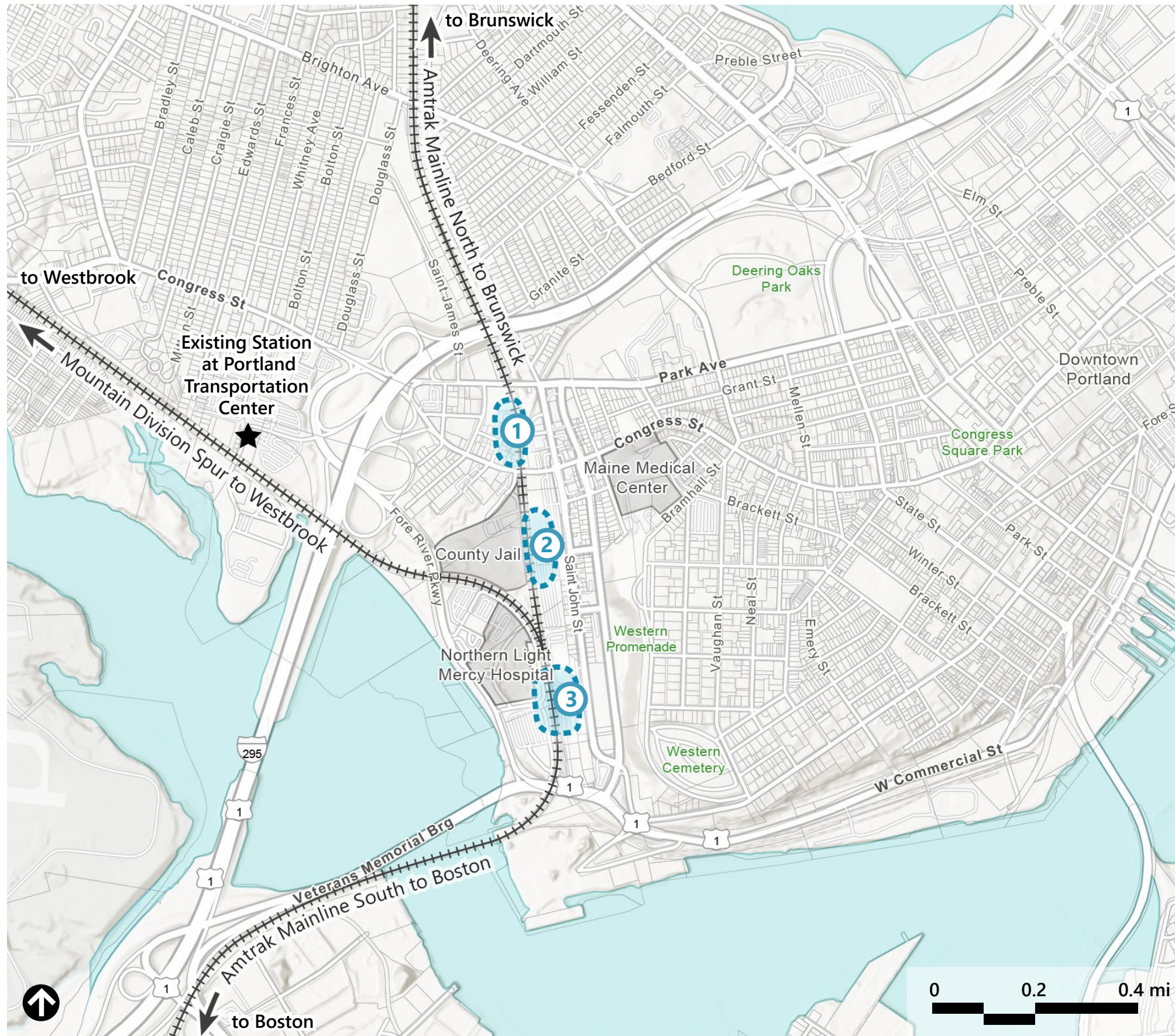
- A Downeaster platform and station facility on the freight mainline double track
- A site with no adverse impact on at-grade crossings
- Two boarding platforms (one on each side of tracks) to maximize schedule flexibility and reliability; passenger trains travelling in opposing directions can board and alight riders simultaneously
- Parking for approximately 105 vehicles to support Downeaster riders
- Convenient vehicular access with pedestrian, transit and bike connectivity/access from various directions
- Efficient access to train servicing and storage facilities (Portland Layover Facility - PLF) located on branch line to minimize freight and passenger train conflicts
- Ability to support potential connecting services to/from locations north and west of Portland
- Minimize passenger and freight train interference
- Proximity to demand generators

Proposed Platform and Station Configuration



- Two boarding platforms (one on each side of tracks) within the railroad right-of-way
- ADA pedestrian bridge over tracks for multi-directional access
- Climate-controlled passenger waiting area with ticketing and restrooms (approx. 750 s/f) located within the platform structure
- Adjacent parking with circulation area for drop off/pick up



Rendering of a proposed station in Wells, ME.

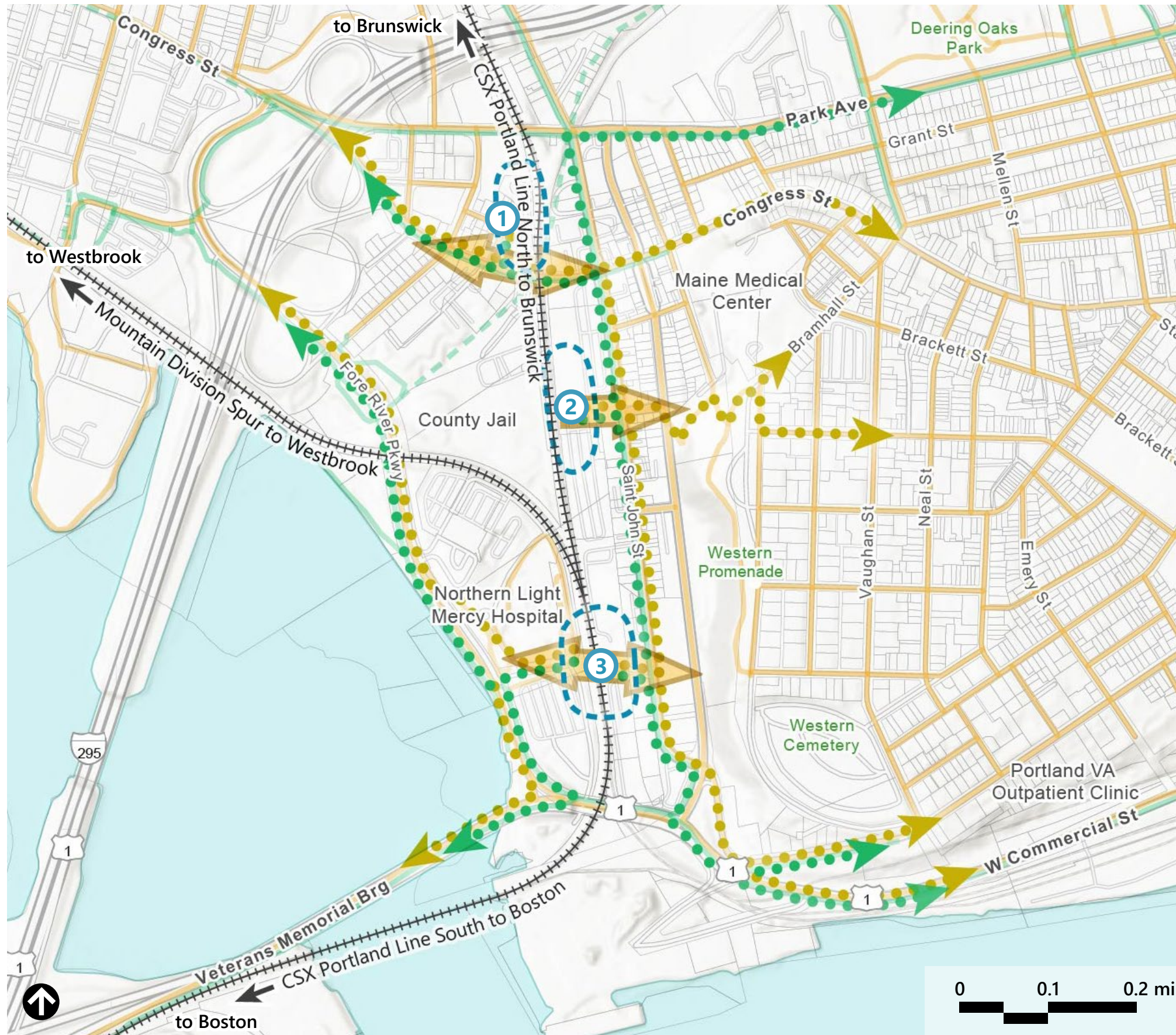


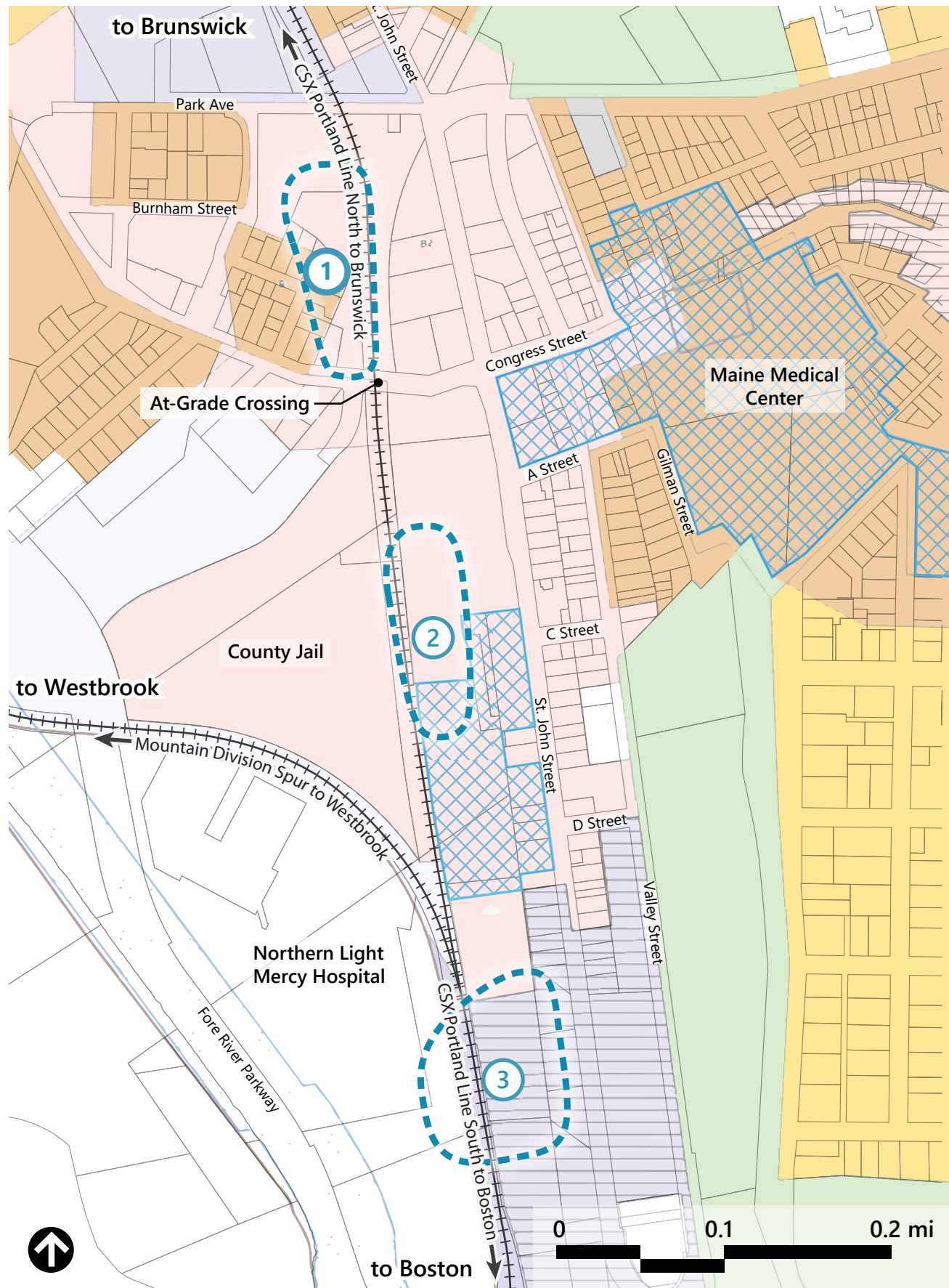
Portland Train Station - Sites Considered:

- ① Between Congress Street and Park Ave, behind Amato's/McDonald's on St. John St. (access via Congress Street)
- ② South of Congress Street near Union Station Plaza, between Cumberland County Jail and St. John Street
- ③ Southern end of St. John Street, between Northern Light Mercy Hospital and St. John Street




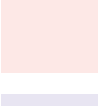


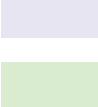


Bike/Pedestrian Routes East & West

-  Bike Routes
-  Pedestrian Routes





Zoning

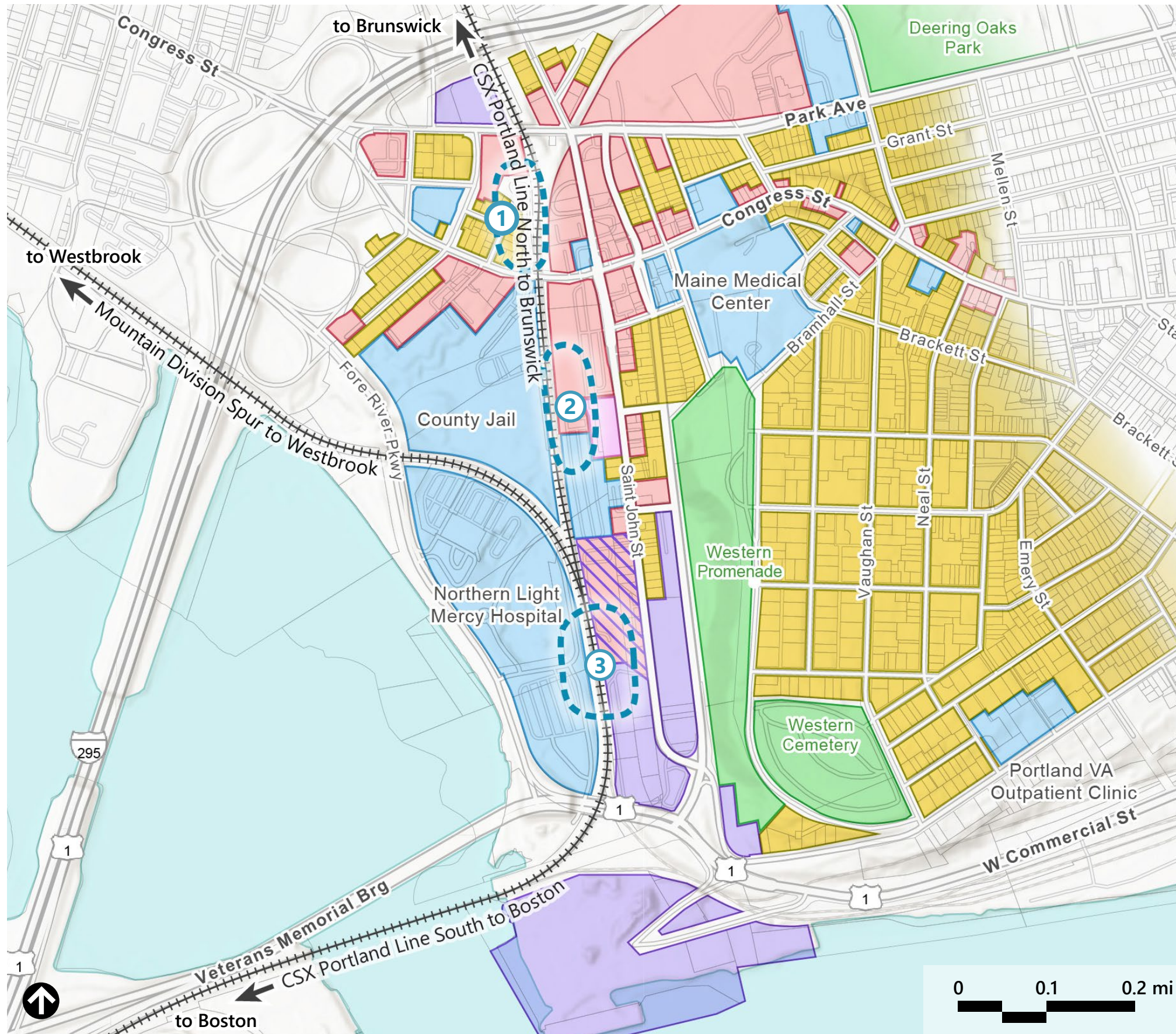
-  R4 Residential
-  R5 Residential
-  R6 Residential
-  B2 Business Community
-  IM Industrial - Moderate Impact
-  IMb Industrial - Moderate Impact
-  IH Industrial - High Impact
-  ROS - Recreation Open Space
-  MMC Overlay Zone

Intent & allowable uses:
 "To set aside areas on the peninsula for housing characterized primarily by **multi-family dwellings at a high density** providing a wide range of housing for differing types of households."

Intent & allowable uses:
 "To provide appropriate locations for the development and operation of community centers offering a **mixture of commercial uses, housing, and services** serving the adjoining neighborhoods and the larger community... The zone should provide locations for moderate to high-density housing in urban neighborhoods along arterials."

Intent & allowable uses:
 "To provide zones in areas of the city in which low- and moderate-impact industries and **transportation-related uses** will coexist...Often uses may be highway-oriented and **transportation-related**, thus relying on citywide and **regional transportation infrastructure**"

Intent & allowable uses:
 "All development proposed by Maine Medical Center (MMC) within the boundary of the MMC Institutional Overlay Zone (IOZ) shall be consistent with the approved Institutional Development Plan (IDP)"

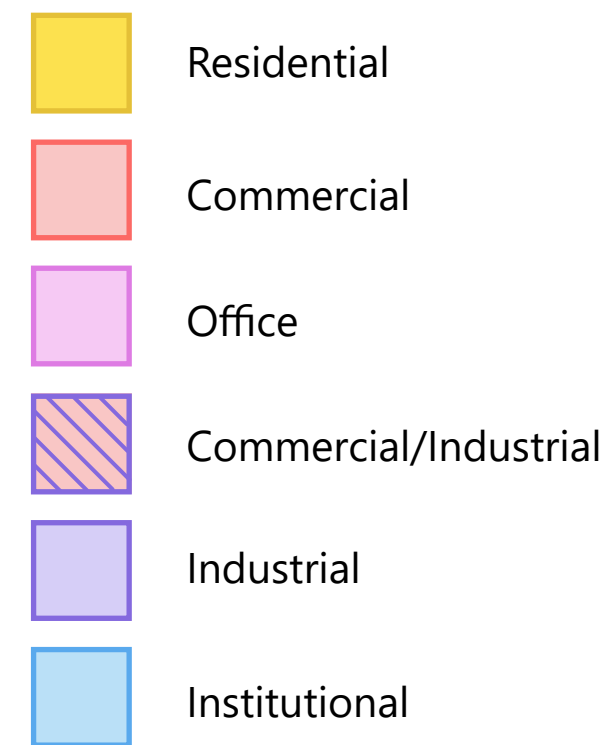


Local Land Use

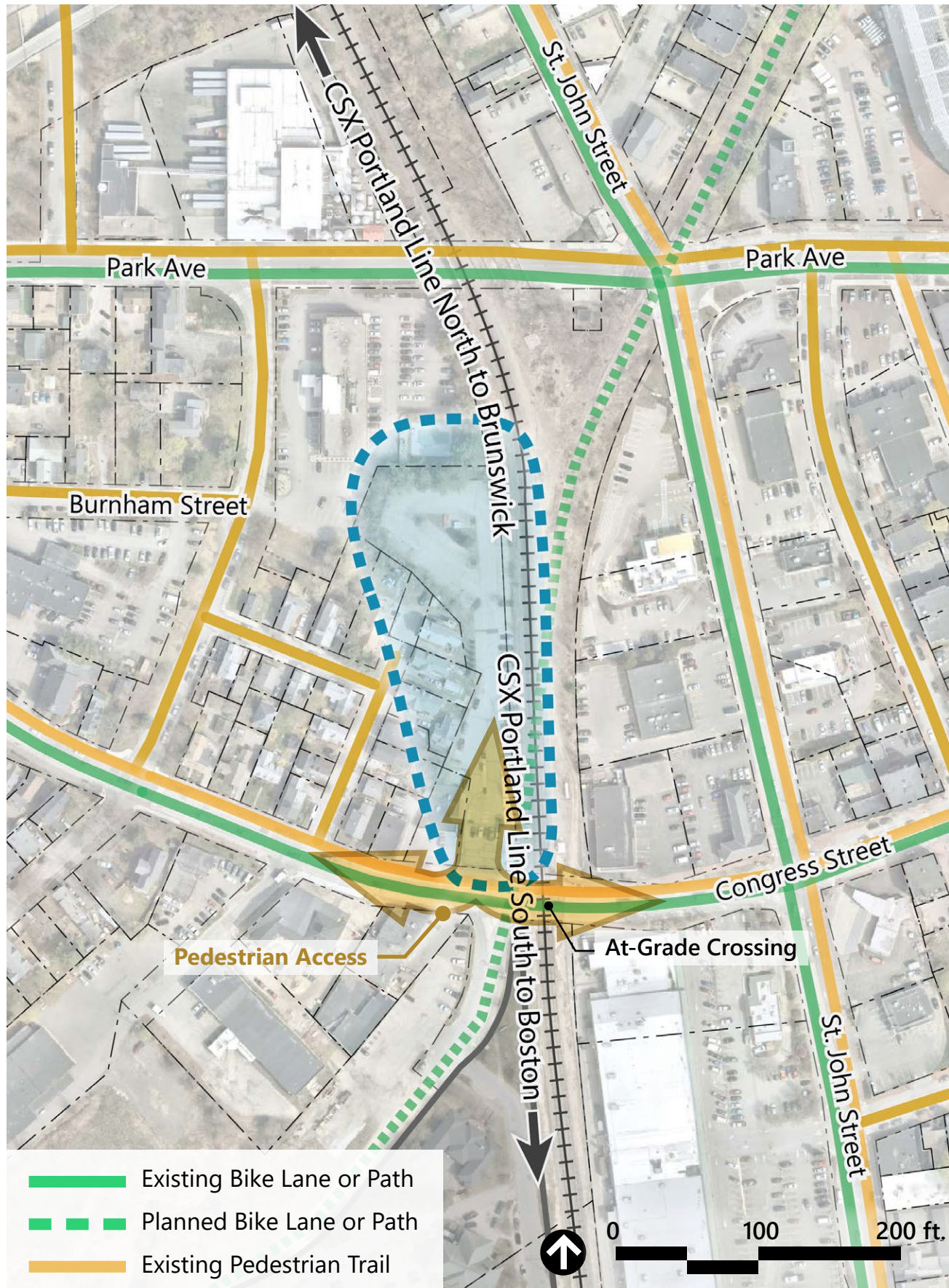
Site 1: Commercial & Residential

Site 2: Commercial, Office & Institutional

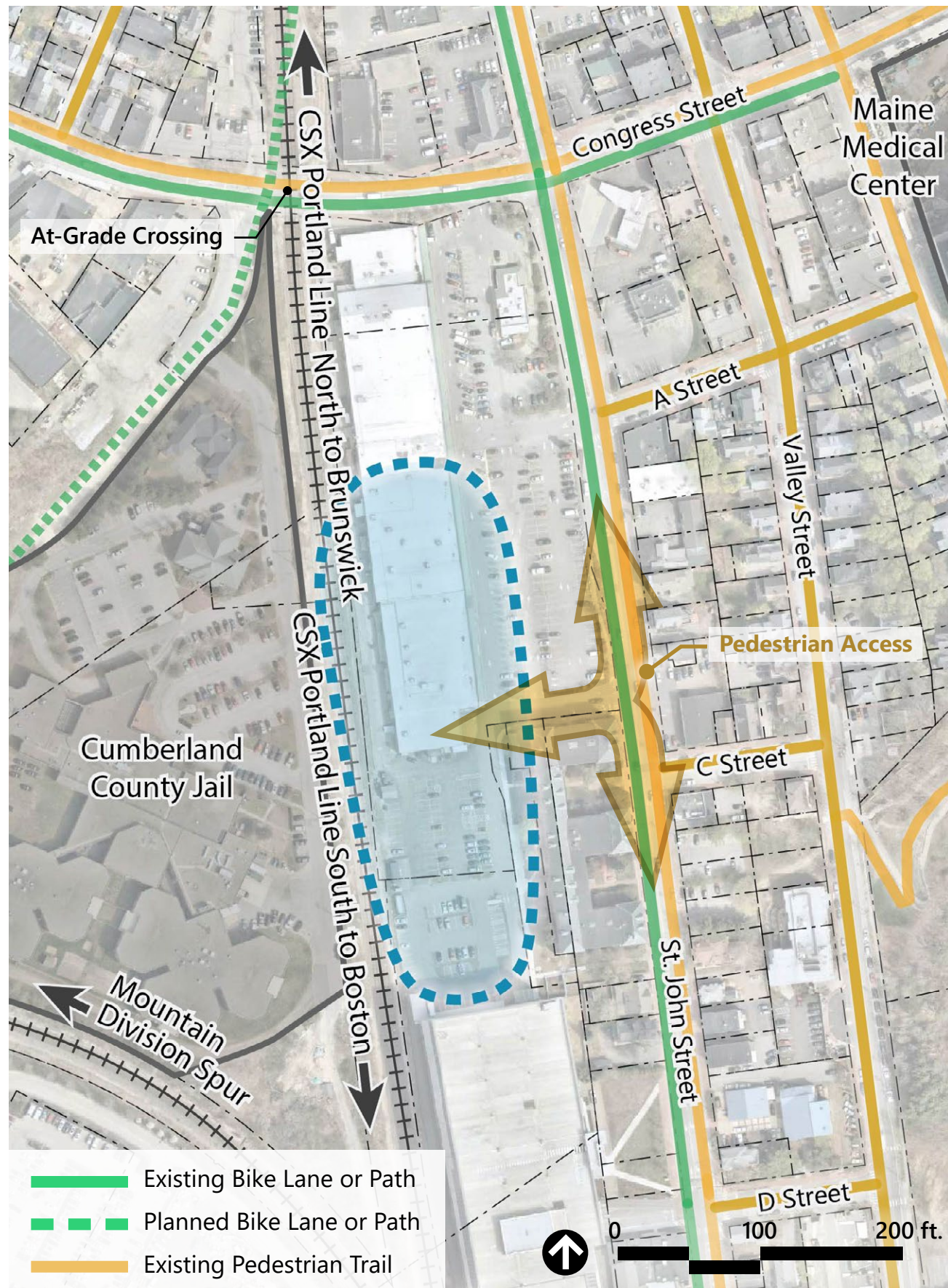
Site 3: Commercial/Industrial



Station Site Comparison: Site 1



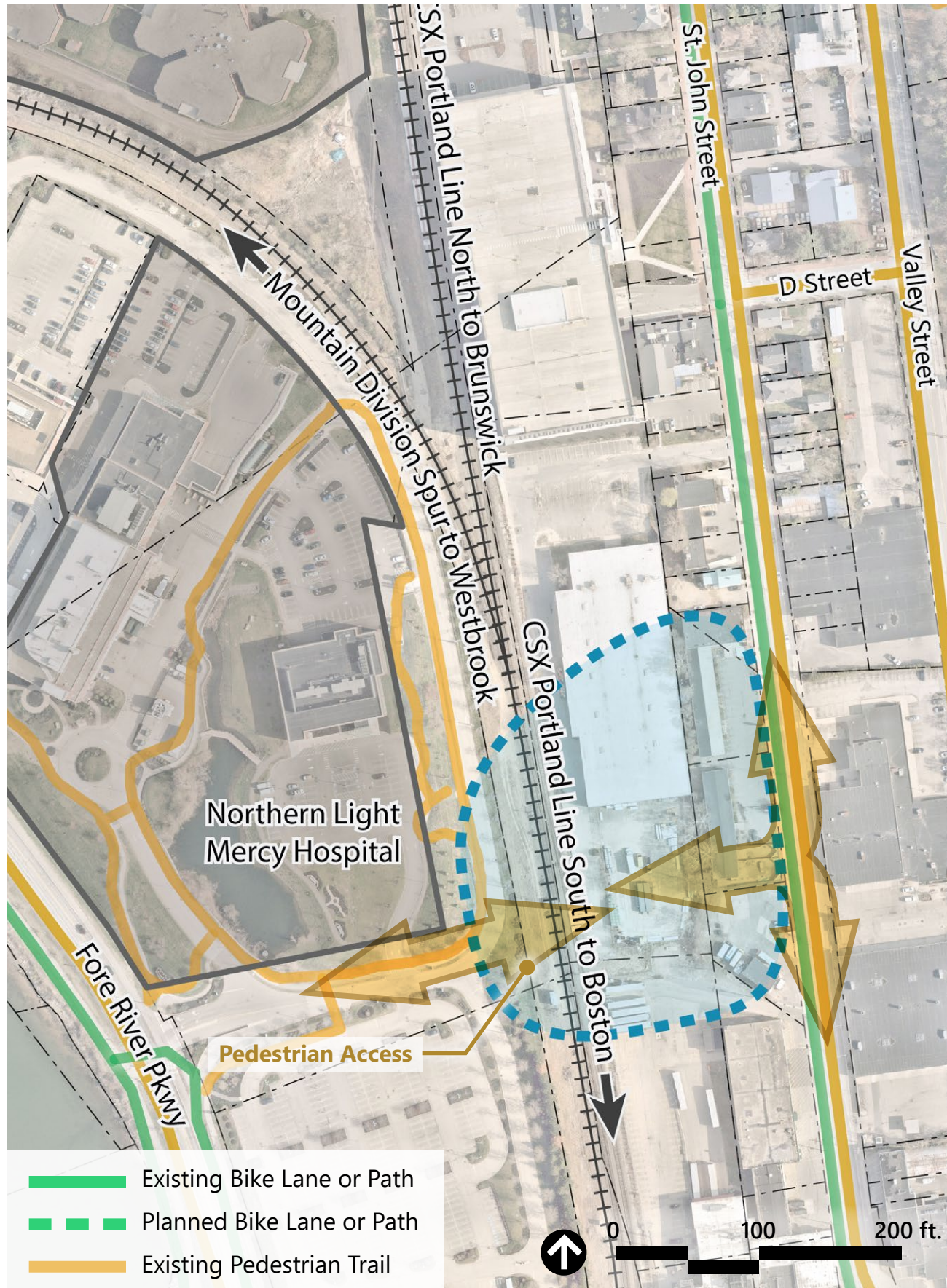
PROJECT NEEDS/GOALS	SITE CHARACTERISTICS
<p>Railroad operations considerations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proximity to Congress St. grade crossing impedes traffic flow while train is at station, causing congestion at the intersection • Railroad converges to single track at this location • Less desirable for passenger operations
<p>Parking for 105 cars</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awkward parcel layout; possible to accommodate with site modifications
<p>Connectivity: Vehicular Pedestrian/Bike Transit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicular access via Congress St. only • Pedestrian access to neighborhood, Congress St. and St. John St. • Bike lanes on Congress St. • METRO bus
<p>Access to servicing facility (PLF) with minimal train conflicts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back-up move required on mainline for PLF access • Potential for conflicts between passenger and freight trains
<p>Supports additional rail service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Station track needed for connecting service from north • Does not support east/west connections
<p>Land Use</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undeveloped lot adjacent to residential and commercial uses (hotel/retail)



Station Site Comparison: Site 2

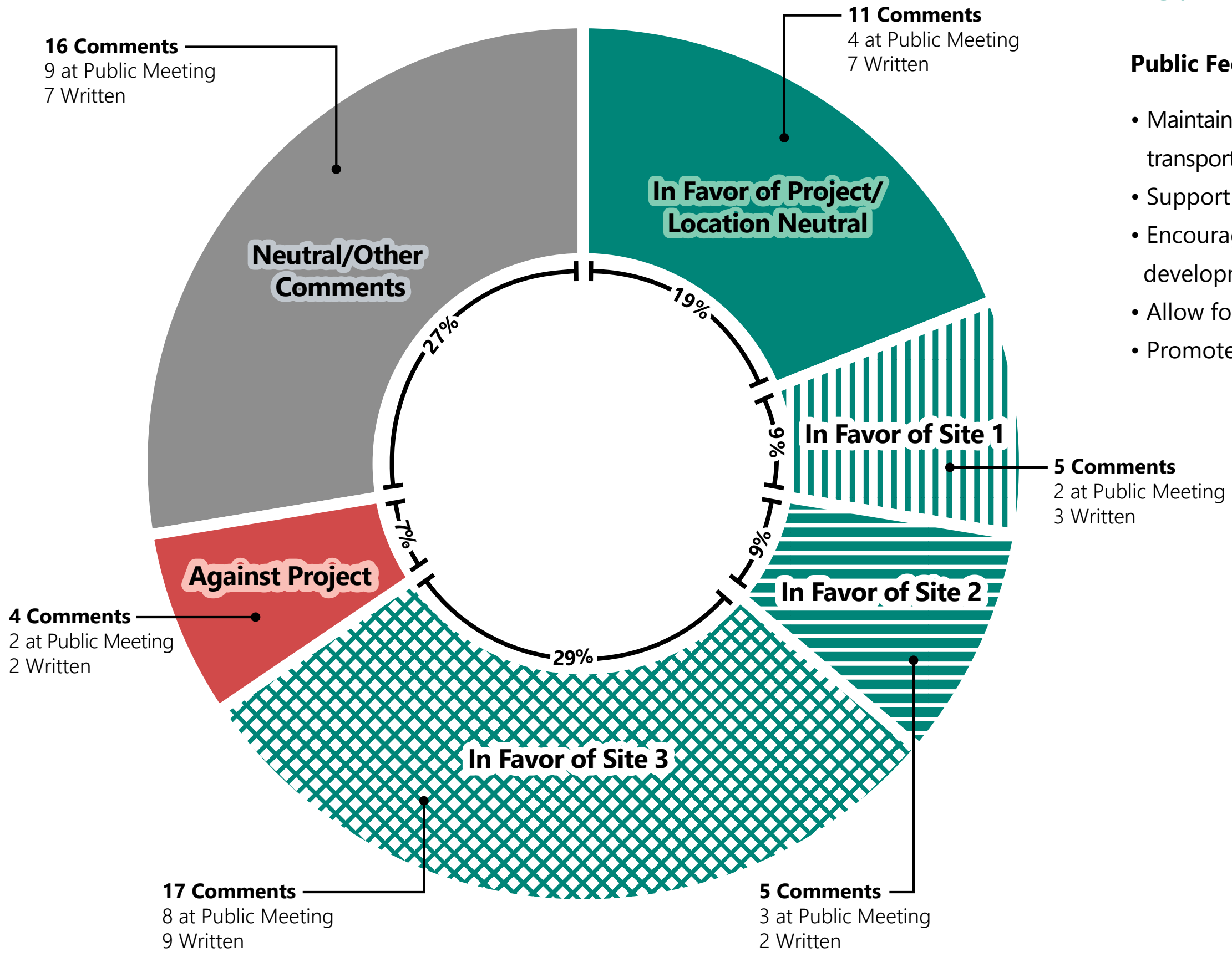
PROJECT NEEDS/GOALS	SITE CHARACTERISTICS
Railroad operations considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proximity to Congress St. grade crossing impedes traffic flow while train is at station, causing congestion at the intersection Less desirable for passenger operations
Parking for 105 cars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible to accommodate needed spaces onsite. Property owned by Maine Health with alternate development plans
Connectivity: Vehicular Pedestrian/Bike Transit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vehicular access from Congress St. and St. John St. Pedestrian access from Congress St. and St. John St. side only Bike lanes on St. John St. Abuts County Jail METRO and BSOOB bus routes, Maine Med shuttle
Access to servicing facility (PLF) with minimal train conflicts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Back-up move required on mainline for PLF access Potential for conflicts between passenger and freight trains
Supports additional rail service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Station track needed to support connecting service from north Does not support east/west connections
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mix of commercial uses with supporting surface parking and institutional parking (surface and structured)
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location adds complexity to train movements and does not support dual-sided pedestrian access

Station Site Comparison: Site 3



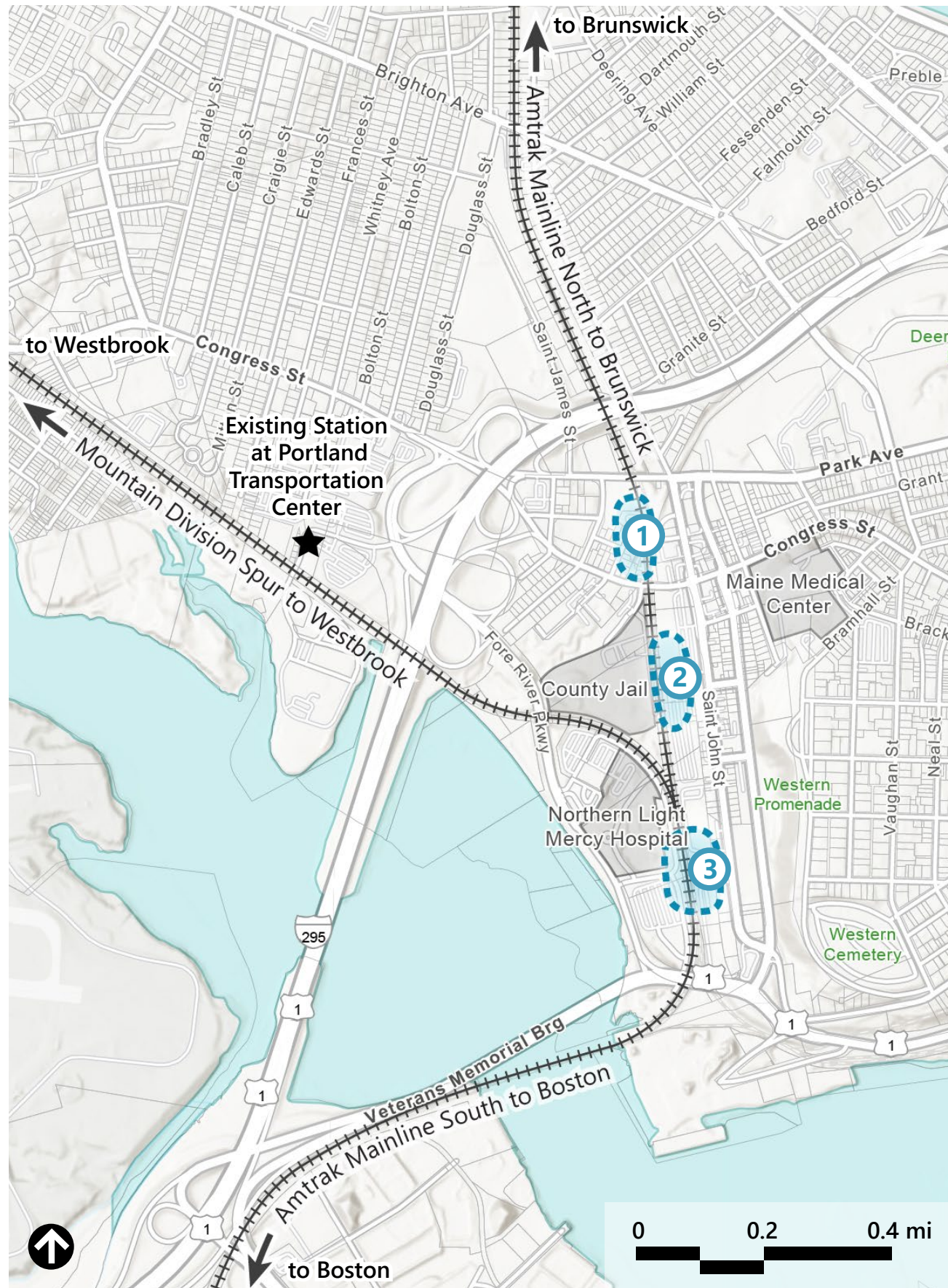
PROJECT NEEDS/GOALS	SITE CHARACTERISTICS
Railroad operations considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No traffic or grade crossing impacts Strongly preferred for passenger operations
Parking for 105 cars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible to accommodate needed spaces onsite Property owned by private businesses
Connectivity: Vehicular	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vehicular access from both sides of station structure (via Congress St., St. John St., Fore River Parkway) as well as Veterans Memorial Bridge (I-295 exit 4 / South Portland) and Commercial St.
Pedestrian/Bike	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct pedestrian access to Northern Light Mercy Hospital campus and Fore River Pkwy. to the west and St. John St. to the east Bike lanes on St. John St.
Transit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> METRO and BSOOB bus routes at St. John and Fore River Parkway; Maine Med shuttle
Access to servicing facility (PLF) with minimal train conflicts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct access to PLF without mainline back-up Minimal potential for train conflicts
Supports additional rail service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can support connecting service from north Supports east/west connections
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mix of commercial and light industrial uses Adjacent to commercial/residential mixed use area
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location provides multi-directional and multi-modal access with minimal traffic impacts or train interference Closest proximity/best access to PTC

Summary of Public Input



Public Feedback/Public Priorities:

- Maintain connections to other forms of public transportation
- Support bicycle and pedestrian connections
- Encourage transit-oriented development/mixed use development
- Allow for connections to future east/west rail service
- Promote safety of new station location



Summary of Stakeholder Input

Amtrak Input

- Site 3 is the preferred alternative from a railroad operations standpoint.
- Sites 1 and Site 2 present operational challenges due to their proximity to Congress Street.
- Site 1 and Site 2 limit connections to the Portland Layover Facility.
- Site 3 is likely to require less extensive modifications to existing track and infrastructure than Site 1 or Site 2.

CSX Input

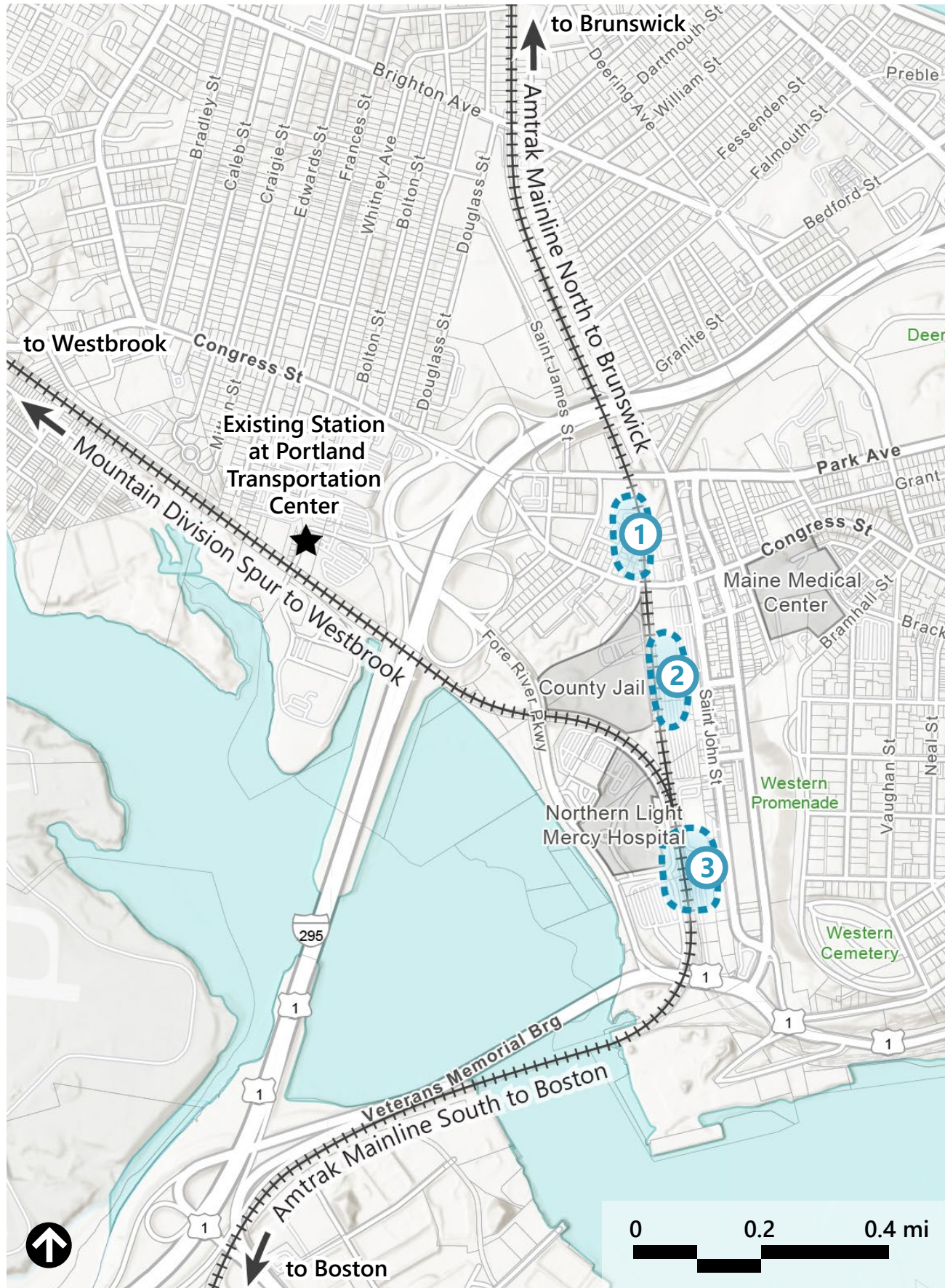
- Site 3 is the preferred location from an operational standpoint.

MaineHealth

- The proximity of Site 2 to Congress Street and potential for increased railroad gate closure time on this primary ambulance route is concerning.
- Site 2 parking is fully subscribed.
- Use of Site 2 for other long-term purposes would limit Maine Medical Center's ability to expand in the future to accommodate the community's increasing health-care needs and would jeopardize plans to rehabilitate a large, historic structure.
- Site 2 includes travel corridor for MaineHealth shuttles; increased pedestrian traffic through this area raises safety concerns.

Northern Light Mercy Input

- NL Mercy does not have a preference on the site selection.
- In the event Site 3 is selected, Mercy is willing to work collaboratively to explore options that can be mutually beneficial as long as the integrity of our campus and the safety of our employees and patients are preserved.



Station Site Comparison

Project Consideration	SITE 1	SITE 2	SITE 3
Railroad Operation Considerations	Does not Meet Project Goals	Does not Meet Project Goals	Meets Project Goals
Parking for 105 Cars	Does not Meet Project Goals	Partially Meets Project Goals	Partially Meets Project Goals
Vehicular Connectivity	Meets Project Goals	Meets Project Goals	Meets Project Goals
Pedestrian/Bike Connectivity	Partially Meets Project Goals	Partially Meets Project Goals	Meets Project Goals
Transit Connectivity	Partially Meets Project Goals	Meets Project Goals	Meets Project Goals
Access to Servicing Facility w/ minimal train conflicts	Does not Meet Project Goals	Does not Meet Project Goals	Meets Project Goals
Supports Additional Rail Service	Does not Meet Project Goals	Does not Meet Project Goals	Meets Project Goals
Land Use	Partially Meets Project Goals	Partially Meets Project Goals	Partially Meets Project Goals

Legend:

Meets Project Goals	Partially Meets Project Goals	Does not Meet Project Goals
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Conceptual Site 3 Rendering

Site 3 best meets the project goals.

This past June, NNEPRA's Board of Directors passed a resolution directing NNEPRA to pursue Site 3. The board agreed that the site best fulfilled the goals of the project.



Next Steps

- Begin Preliminary Engineering Design and Estimate for Site 3
- Begin Pre-Environmental Compliance Phase for Site 3
- Seek Federal Funding and Non-Federal Match for Final Design and Construction



Public Input

- Public input limited to two minutes per person
- Meeting recording and presentation slides will be available on NNEPRA's website (NNEPRA.com) within 2 business days
- A form will be posted on NNEPRA.com for submitting written public input through August 27, 2024

Patricia Quinn - NNEPRA Executive Director
Gordon Edington, PE - VHB Project Manager
Dave Senus, PE - VHB Civil Engineer