



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**THE PROMISES OF THE WORCESTER/FRAMINGHAM LINE** follows The Research Bureau's previous work from June 2025, [\*Express for Whom? Ridership, Recovery, and the Importance of the Worcester/Framingham Line.\*](#) Underscoring the possibilities of this regional rail line that runs between Worcester and Boston dozens of times a day, this report looks at the *need* and the *vision* of what that service could look like. This report explains the ongoing and future work along the line that could unlock its promise.

This report begins by examining **the need**: understanding the possibilities existing in those who could ride but do not, bringing to attention the *promises* of turning residents from could-be-rider to actual-rider.

**Pages 3-6** examine "vehicle miles traveled" among the 38 municipalities identified as Worcester Line communities, finding that in general the communities with the most transit access and the densest populations drive the least.

**Pages 6-8** describe traffic and commuting. There are an estimated 869,804 workers living in the communities above with primary jobs in Massachusetts; of those, 659,919 workers stay within them. Most, however, do not commute by rail.

**Pages 8-12** look at household vehicle access and mobility connections in the communities with direct Worcester Line stops, including bus stops, sidewalk connections, and residential and non-residential parcels within a half mile of all of the stops.

**Page 12** begins **the vision** – the ongoing and future infrastructure projects that could transform the Worcester/Framingham Line. The major projects discussed include the Allston Multimodal Project and Compass Rail (which includes West-East Rail Service); this section also discusses the MBTA's 2026-2030 Capital Improvement Plan at length, and considers far-off infrastructure improvements that could transform the line.

**Pages 14-19** begin with the Allston Multimodal Project. This is a long-planned reconstruction of an aging viaduct on the MassPike between Boston University and the Charles River that has major implications for commuter rail – as the Worcester Line *also* passes through this area.

First, construction-related traffic delays might encourage more ridership on the Worcester Line, so it is crucial that the line is ready to support new riders *and keep them* after construction is ended. Second, the project includes

construction of "West Station," that in the short term would provide easy access to riders to and from Allston and in the long term potentially connecting rail service to Cambridge. Finally, the project will likely include layover rail yards in "Beacon Park Yard" that the MBTA has said it intends to use to support increased frequencies across the Worcester Line.

**Pages 20-23** discuss Compass Rail. Compass Rail will connect the Worcester/Framingham Line to points west of Worcester, with several daily round trips (separate from existing commuter rail services) between Pittsfield and Boston, and enabling connections North and South at Springfield (i.e., to all the points on the compass). Work is underway on the track between Worcester and Springfield to begin those processes, which will unlock new intra-state tourism and economic opportunities.

**Pages 24-29** focus on the 2026-2030 MBTA Capital Improvement Plan and far-off infrastructure improvements, explaining signals, at-grade rail crossing improvements, and the important updates to Natick Center and Newtonville Stations. It ends with a discussion of the promises of electrification, and the transformative effect it would have on the experience of every rider.

*The Promises of the Worcester/Framingham Line* ends with several key conclusions and recommendations:

1. **Every community along the line must work together for improved and more frequent service now**, before any Allston Construction begins – and after it does so, to ensure *minimal* disruptions to commuter service (p. 14-19)
2. These communities must work together to ensure that the **bridge to Grand Junction does not become inaccessible to MBTA commuter rail trains** – as this bridge is the shortest link to key maintenance facilities used by *all* MBTA trains. (p. 19)
3. The third track project may currently be unfunded and considered unnecessary for future MBTA service – **but it should not be forgotten as potentially necessary for full Compass Rail service in the future.** (p. 26-27)
4. **Communities themselves must prioritize state infrastructure projects on the line**, including improvements to at-grade crossings (where tracks cross roads) to reduce friction between cars and trains, and to ensure that every other municipality can continue to access the line. (p. 25; at-grade, p. 28)