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# *The Promises of the Worcester/Framingham Line*

Examining Infrastructure Improvements and Potential Ridership  
Across the Line

**Report 26-03, March 2026**

**April 15, 2026**

RESEARCH IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST



***The Research Bureau serves the public interest of Greater Worcester by conducting independent, non-partisan research and analysis of public-policy issues to promote informed public debate and decision-making***

- **Collecting Objective & Credible Data**
- **Identifying & Analyzing Greater Worcester's Challenges & Opportunities**
- **Issuing Briefs, Reports, & Visualizations**
- **Conducting Briefings for Interested Stakeholders**
- **Convening Issue Based Forums & Programs**
- **Sharing Research Results via Professional & Social Media**
- **Collaborating With Appropriate Partners**

# INTRODUCTION



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Thank you all for coming today

Special thank you to the Barr Foundation, funding from whom has enabled us to do this research

We relied heavily on MBTA, MassDOT, and Census Sources for this report.

This is a follow up report to June 2025's [\*Express for Whom? Ridership, Recovery, and the Importance of the Worcester/Framingham Line\*](#)

That report showed nearly 50% of inbound onboardings in Fall 2024 occurred in the six stops between Worcester and Framingham

# THE PREMISE



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The Research Bureau's starting point:

- ➔ This commuter rail line is a vital corridor for the entire region, and, someday, the entire state

The Bureau laid out four promises it believes the line can achieve:

1. Anyone can get anywhere they need to go, east or west, in a timely and efficient manner
2. That the line should better connect riders to their myriad destinations
3. It should be seen as a viable daily alternative to driving
4. That it should be easy to get to and from a station, connecting roads, sidewalks, bike paths, and bus lines to the stations so that riders can use the rail easily

Ultimately, we want **unimpeded, reliable, frequent,** and **fast** service

# THE PREMISE



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Our report is split into two halves:

**THE NEED** looks at existing commuters, sidewalk access, VMT, parcels, and more to find potential new riders for the line. Seeing the promises through requires knowing who *would or could ride*, but *doesn't*.

**THE PROMISE** looks at Allston I-90, West-East Rail, and the MBTA's 26-30 CIP to explain the future potential (and pitfalls) of the line

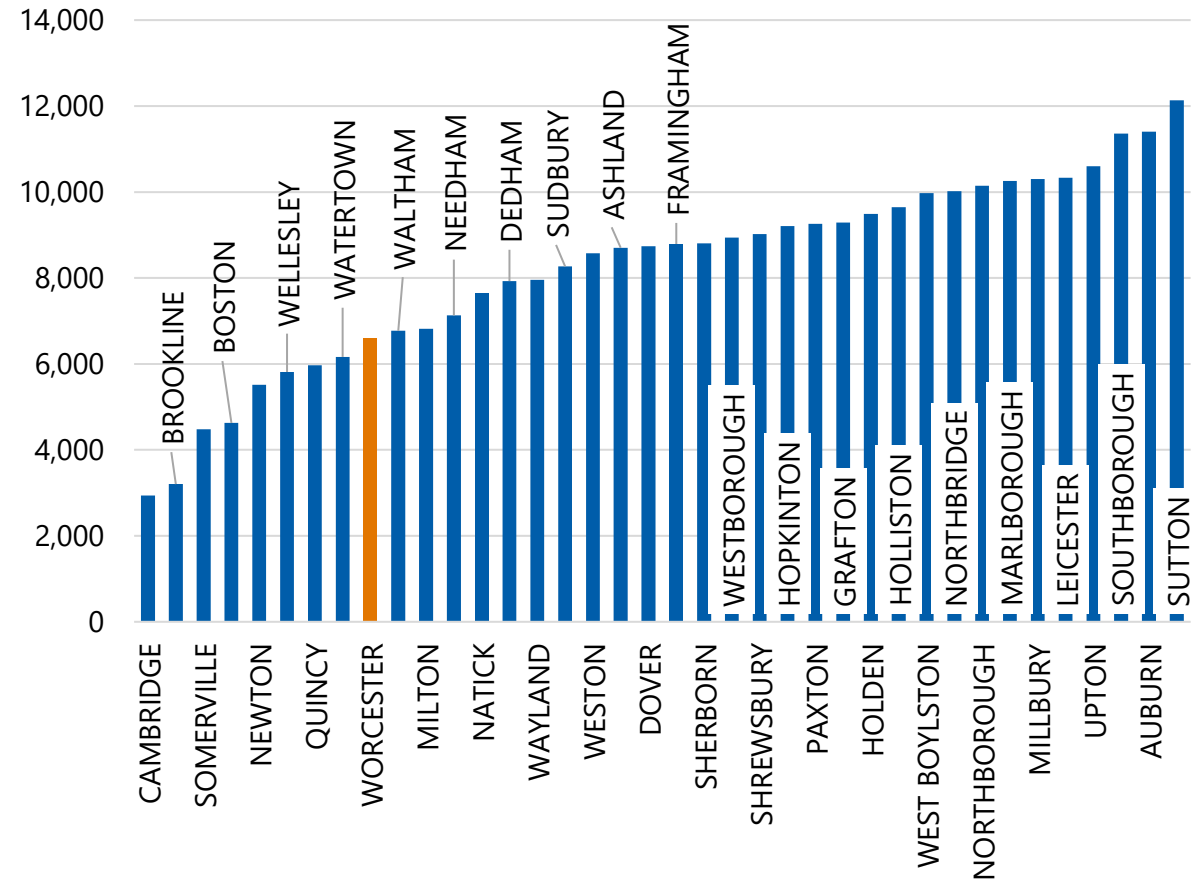
# THE NEED: Vehicle Miles Traveled



How much do people drive?

We used the MA Vehicle Census to look at VMT per capita across our defined region in 2024

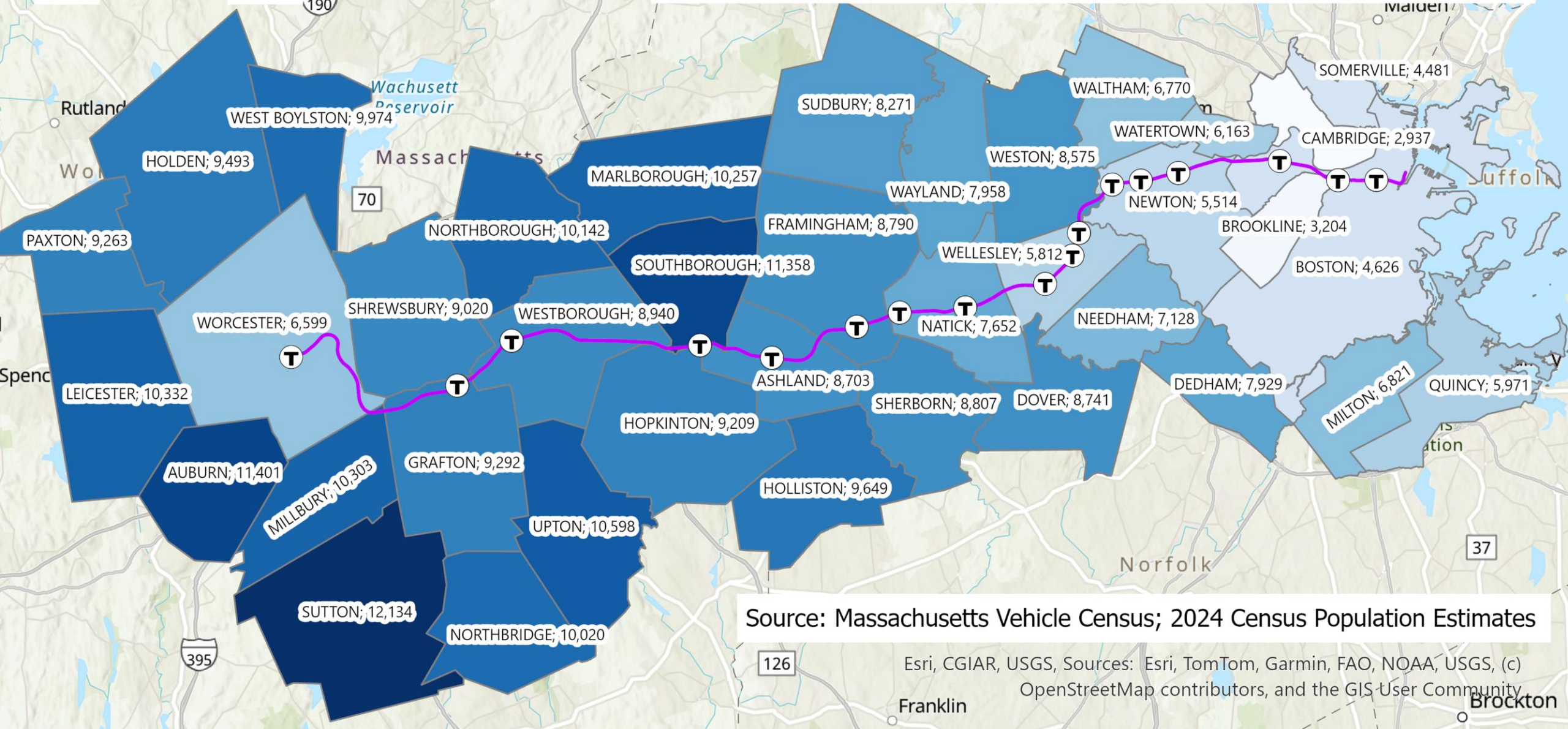
No surprise, but more urban areas tend to have less VMT per capita



# 2024 Vehicle Miles Traveled Per Capita

This measures the 2024 vehicle miles traveled per the total population in each of these communities. It counts all vehicles and types. It uses the Massachusetts Vehicle Census and 2024 Census population estimates.

2,937 → 12,134



Source: Massachusetts Vehicle Census; 2024 Census Population Estimates

Esri, CGIAR, USGS, Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

# THE NEED: Commuting



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We know that the vast majority of commuters use a personal vehicle to get to and from work

In Worcester, there are 134 drivers for every ONE commuter rail rider

For commutes longer than 45 minutes, its 22 to 1

In our 38-community region, nearly 75.9% of workers living in those communities, with primary jobs in Massachusetts, work in one of them

# THE NEED: Commuting



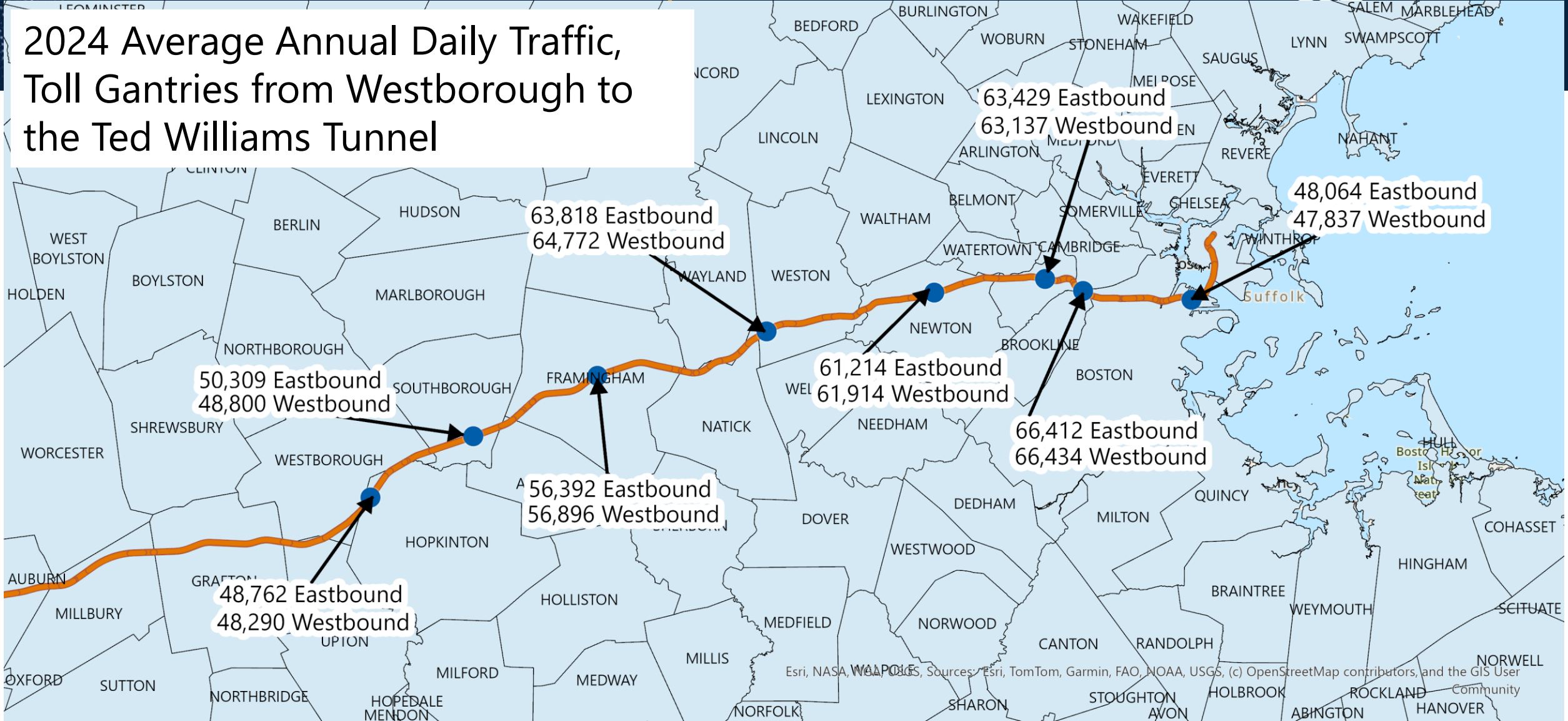
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2022 Workers (with Primary Jobs) from Worcester Line Communities				
		Total	Percent (A)	Percent (B)
Workers with Primary Jobs in Massachusetts (A)		869,804	-	-
Worcester Line Workers Working Within 38 Line Communities (B)		659,919	75.87%	-
Workers Going to These Communities from Other Communities with Direct Stops on Worcester Line				
Worcester Line Workers Working in Selected Communities (Top Six Destinations)	Boston	298,150	34.28%	45.18%
	Cambridge	73,109	8.41%	11.08%
	Worcester	52,428	6.03%	7.94%
	Waltham	27,068	3.11%	4.10%
	Newton	24,692	2.84%	3.74%
	Framingham	20,276	2.33%	3.07%

2022 Workers (with Primary Jobs) coming from Worcester Line Communities, but Do Not Live in Listed Communities (Top Six Destinations)			
Commuting to:	From Outside	Percent	
Boston	135,089	45.31%	
Cambridge	56,595	77.41%	
Worcester	23,177	44.21%	
Waltham	21,738	80.31%	
Newton	20,177	81.71%	
Framingham	15,566	76.77%	
Workers Going to These Communities from Other Communities with Direct Stops on Worcester Line			
Workplace	Workers from Other Communities with Stops (A)	Workers from any Worcester Line Community (B)	(A) as a Percent of (B)
Ashland	855	1,647	51.91%
Boston	31,879	135,089	23.60%
Framingham	7,786	15,566	50.02%
Grafton	803	1,730	46.42%
Natick	5,166	9,074	56.93%
Newton	10,890	20,177	53.97%
Southborough	1,599	3,384	47.25%
Wellesley	4,101	7,428	55.21%
Westborough	4,583	9,127	50.21%
Worcester	5,051	23,177	21.79%



# 2024 Average Annual Daily Traffic, Toll Gantries from Westborough to the Ted Williams Tunnel

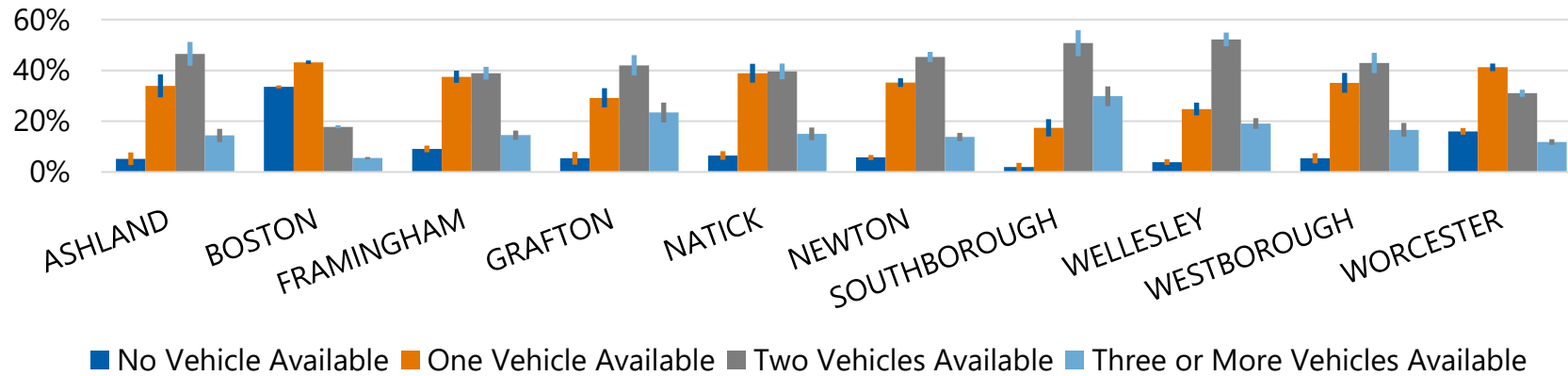


# THE NEED: Vehicle Access



We looked at vehicle access in communities with direct stops...

Household Vehicle Access (ACS 2023, 5-YR, DP04)



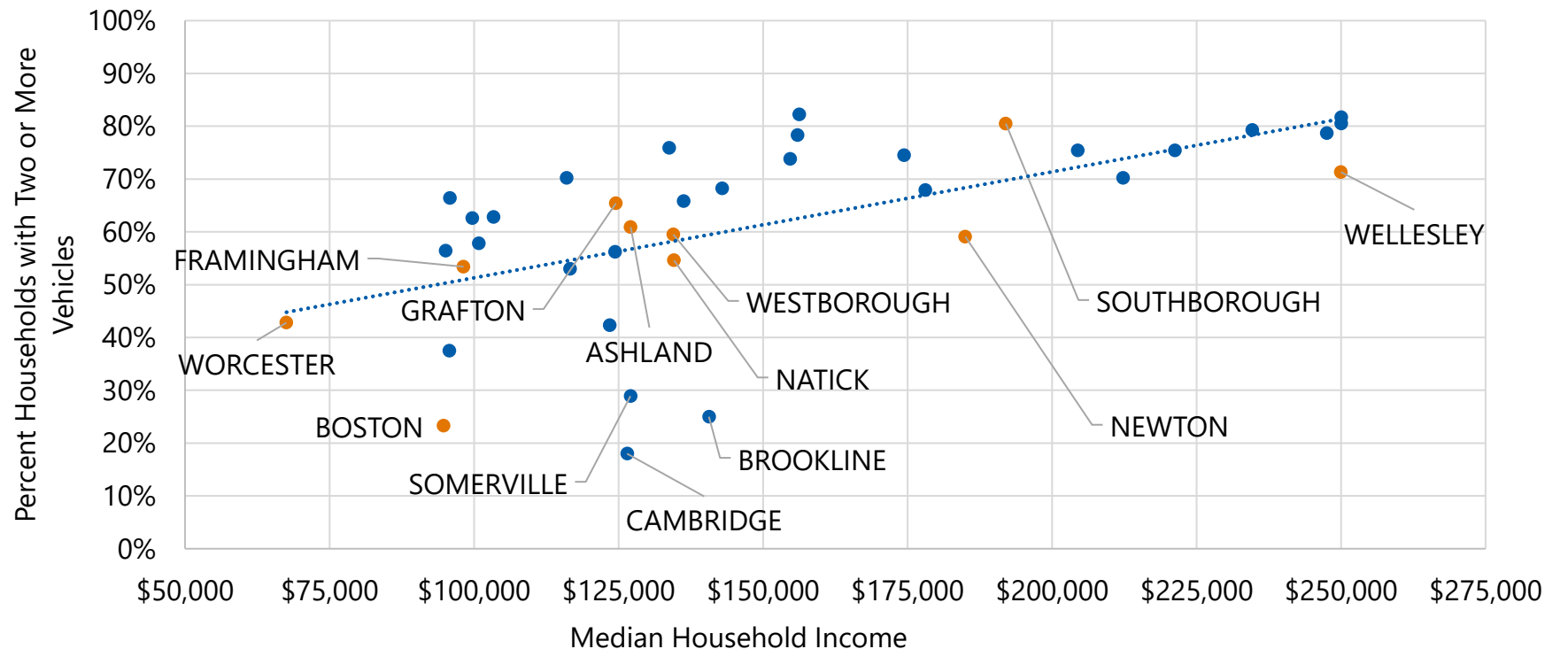
Incongruent Vehicle Access (ACS 2023, 5-YR, B08203)



# THE NEED: Vehicle Access



### Median Household Income and Percent of Households, 2 or More Vehicles



ACS 2023, 5-YR, DP03 and DP04

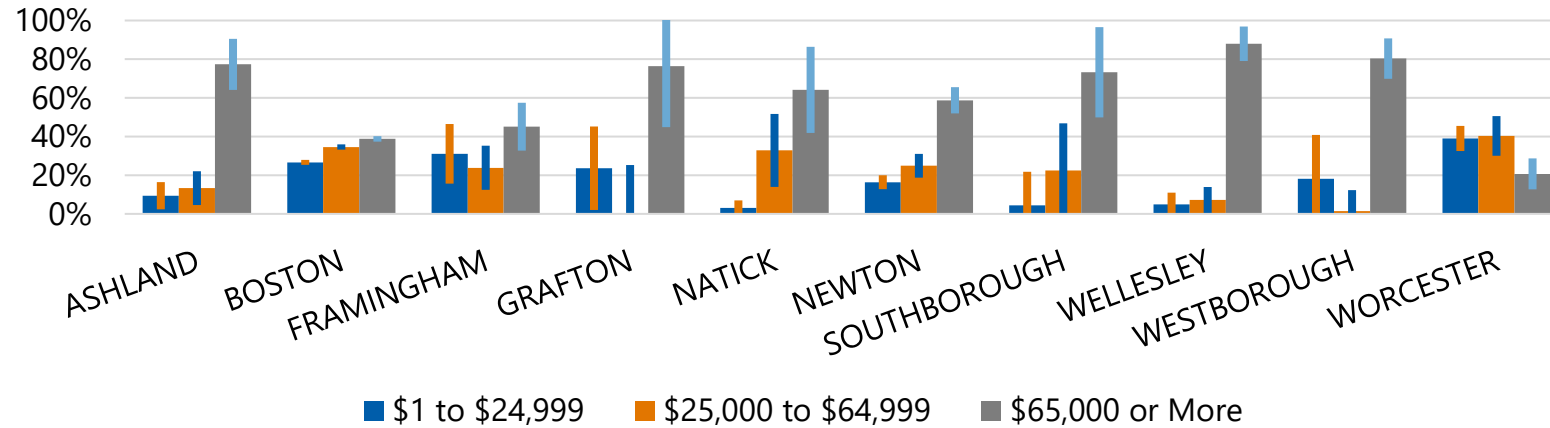
...And income to vehicle differences...

# THE NEED: Vehicle Access

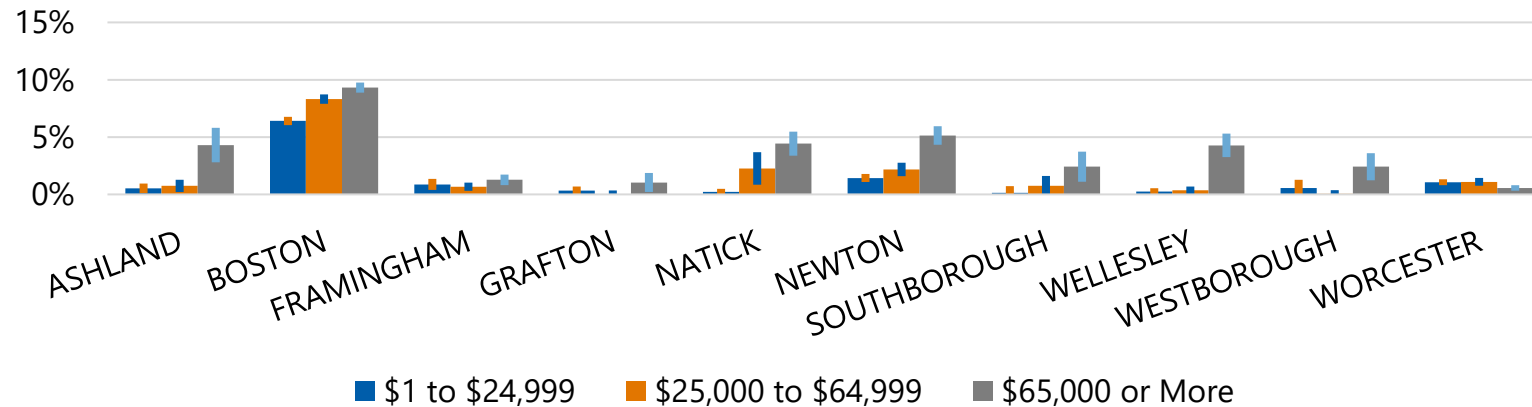


...as well as workers using public transit to get to work using Census Data

Workers Using Public Transit to Get to Work, Separated by Worker Income



Workers Using Public Transit to Get to Work (Compared to All Workers)



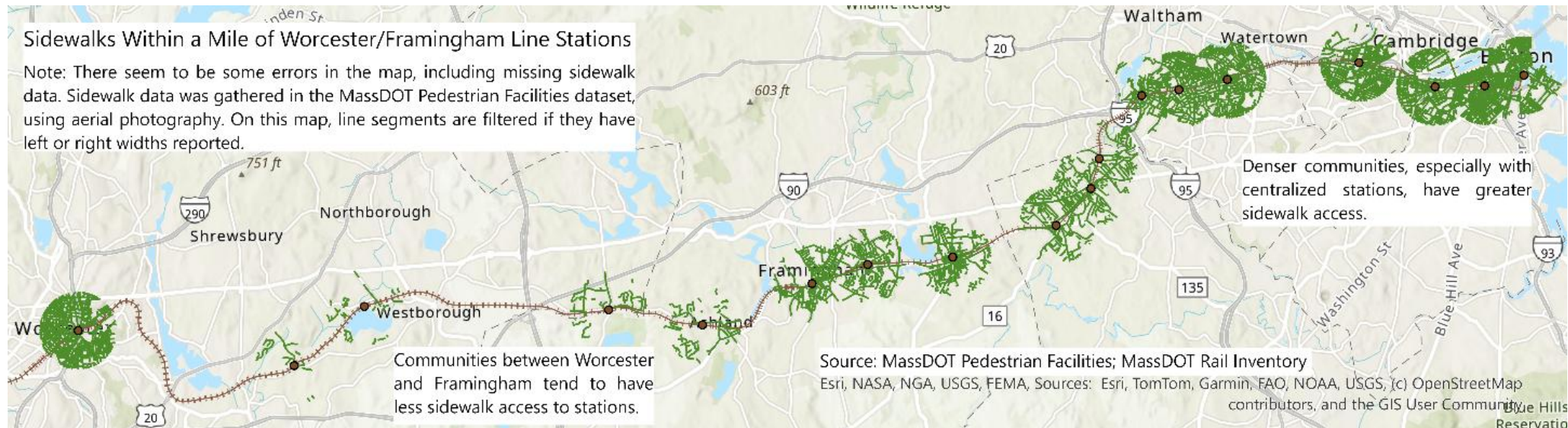
ACS 2023, 5-YR, B08119

# THE NEED: Mobility and Land Use

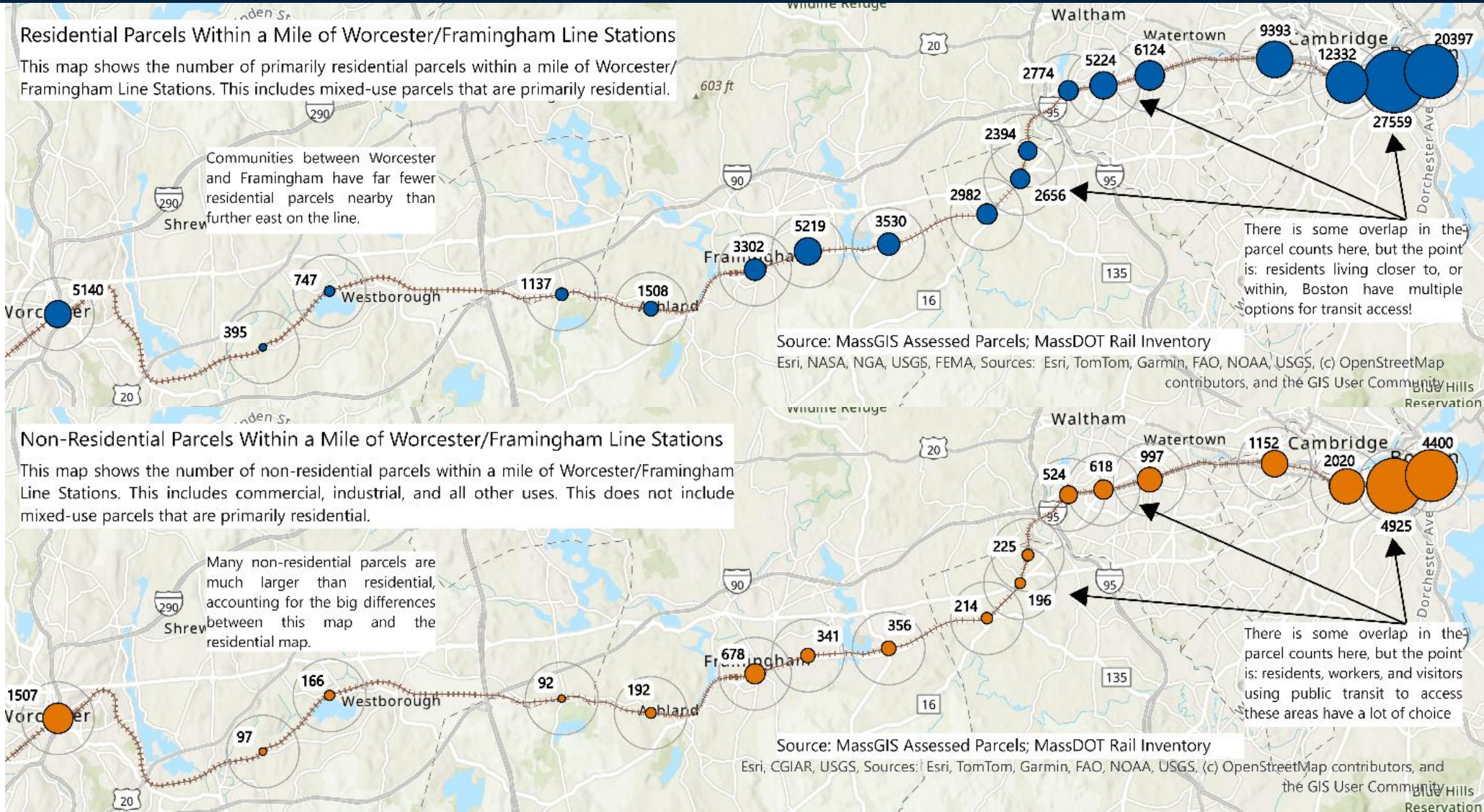


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We also mapped out sidewalk connections and land use within a mile of Worcester Line stops



# THE NEED: Mobility and Land Use



# THE PROMISES



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The second half of the report looks at major infrastructure projects:

- Allston Multimodal
- Compass Rail
- MBTA 2026-2030 Capital Improvement Plan

Each seeks to explain to a wider, public audience why these projects are important, what they mean, and more

# THE PROMISES: Allston



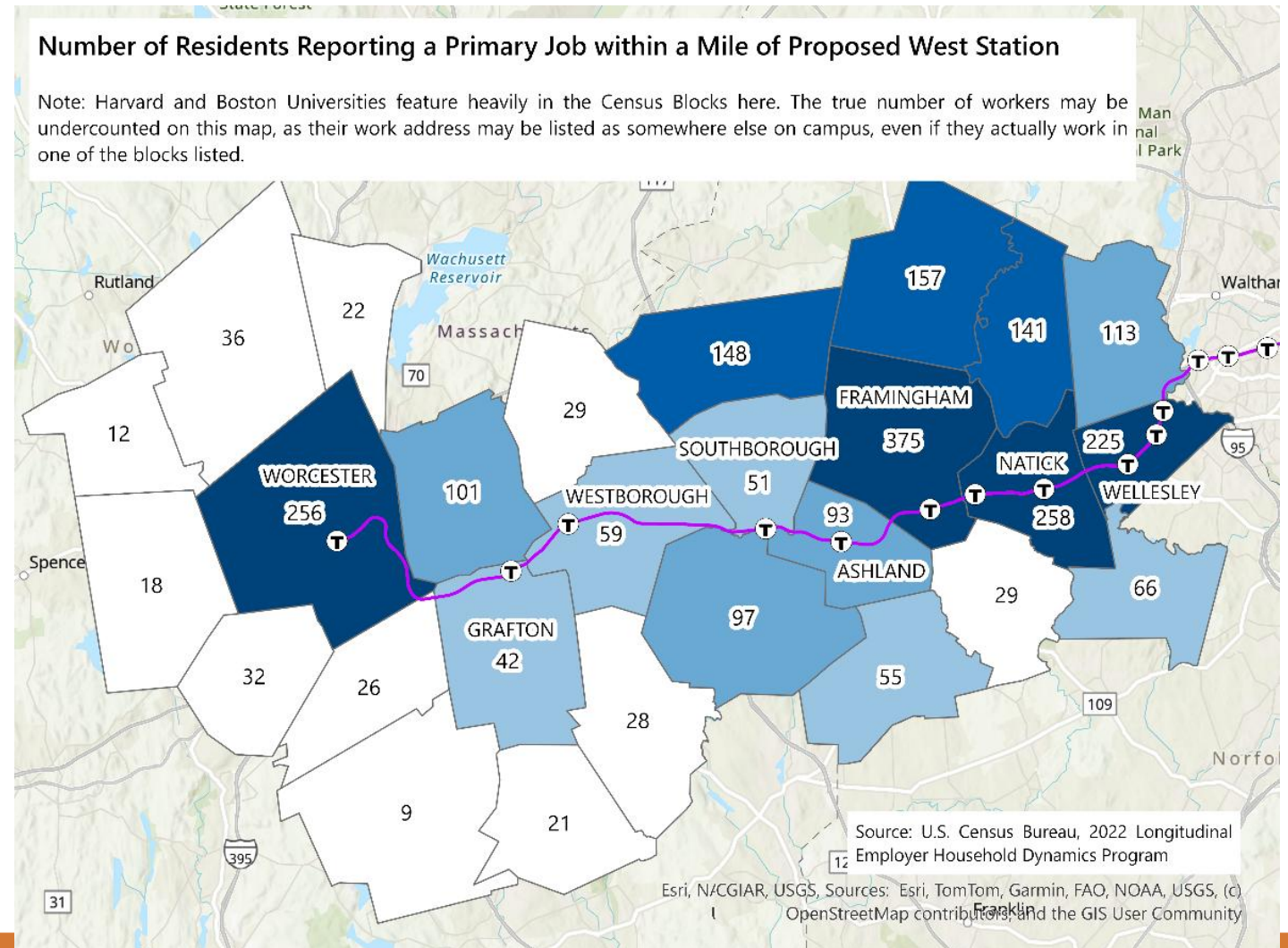
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The Allston section describes:

- West Station, including commuters working within a mile of it
- Layover Railyards in Beacon Park Yard
- The Grand Junction Line, but especially its bridge that serves as the only link to maintenance facilities

## Number of Residents Reporting a Primary Job within a Mile of Proposed West Station

Note: Harvard and Boston Universities feature heavily in the Census Blocks here. The true number of workers may be undercounted on this map, as their work address may be listed as somewhere else on campus, even if they actually work in one of the blocks listed.



# THE PROMISES: Compass Rail



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Compass Rail briefly explains the East-West Rail Passenger Study (from 2021) and any relevant updates (last updates we added were from March 2025)

We also looked at current commuting data from some of the communities along West-East Rail

**Table 7: Home to Work Commuting (Primary Jobs, 2022)**

Home → Work ↓	Boston	Palmer	Pittsfield	Springfield	Worcester	Home → Work ↓	Boston	Palmer	Pittsfield	Springfield	Worcester
Boston	163,061	135	496	1,570	4,178	Boston	55.47%	2.75%	2.79%	2.94%	5.58%
Palmer	23	867	8	310	28	Palmer	0.01%	17.68%	0.04%	0.58%	0.04%
Pittsfield	162	21	9,807	190	128	Pittsfield	0.06%	0.43%	55.08%	0.36%	0.17%
Springfield	609	808	258	22,725	586	Springfield	0.21%	16.47%	1.45%	42.48%	0.78%
Worcester	1,450	99	191	885	29,251	Worcester	0.49%	2.02%	1.07%	1.65%	39.08%
All Others	128,663	2,975	7,044	27,810	40,686	All Others	43.77%	60.65%	39.56%	51.99%	54.35%
Total	293,968	4,905	17,804	53,490	74,857	Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

# THE PROMISES: MBTA 26-30 CIP



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Finally, the Bureau takes a look at ongoing and future infrastructure projects up and down the line, explaining to a lay audience:

- The importance of signals for higher service frequency
- Why station improvements (even if they are not in your community) will lead to better service for everyone (i.e., mini-high levels at Wellesley Hills; the planned upgrades and transformation of Newtonville)
- The third track (between Framingham and Weston) – though unfunded – could be necessary for frequent MBTA and West-East service
- Certain at-grade rail crossings – such as at Route 126/135 and 135 and Bishop Street in Framingham – need to be improved (including separated) to reduce friction between trains, drivers, and pedestrians.

# CONCLUSIONS



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The Bureau ends with four key recommendations, aimed at ensuring that service remains **unimpeded**, **reliable**, **frequent**, and **fast** for all current and *future* riders:

1. Every community along the line must work together for improved and more frequent service now, before any Allston construction begins
2. The Grand Junction bridge must not become inaccessible – or inaccessible for as little time as possible – during construction, as this bridge is the shortest link to key maintenance facilities used by all MBTA trains
3. The third track project, though currently unfunded, should not be forgotten, especially to serve higher frequency service on the line once West-East Rail service really begins
4. Each municipality with stations and tracks should prioritize state investments in rail infrastructure where necessary – to ensure the continued growth and success of the line

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