Image source: GPCOG

Transit Together Public Meeting

How would you improve transit in southern Maine?

February 17, 2022

Audio and video from this meeting are recorded.

GPCOG
GREATER PORTLAND COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

NELSON NYGAARD

ASG PLANNING

Image source: Nelson\Nygaard

Tonight's Topics

1. The Transit Together Study
2. Transit Demand
3. Ridership
4. Service Design
5. Making Regional Transit Seamless
6. Next Steps

We want to hear from you!

- Use a phone, tablet, or laptop to respond to questions
- Responses are anonymous

Two ways to participate:

1

Go to **www.menti.com** *and enter code* ***9138 9165***

or

2

Scan above QR code with your phone

The Transit Together Study

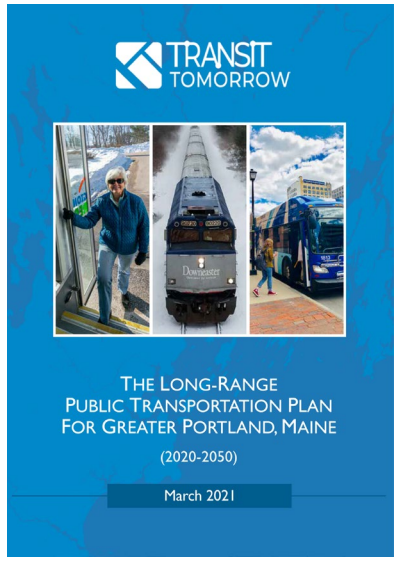
Image source: Nelson\Nygaard

How did we get here?

Long-Range Transportation Plan

A transportation plan update is underway...

Long-Range Transit Plan



Implementation

Transit Together

Other Studies & Investments

More Seamless & Enhanced Transit

Transit Tomorrow goals

Goal 1: *Make Transit Easier*

Goal 2: *Create Frequent Connections*

Goal 3: *Improve Rapid Transit*

Goal 4: *Create Transit-Friendly Places*

Transit Tomorrow goals

Goal 1: *Make Transit Easier*

Goal 2: *Create Frequent Connections*

Goal 3: *Improve Rapid Transit*

Goal 4: *Create Transit-Friendly Places*

Goal 2 Action

Conduct *Transit Together* Study

- **Plan a regionally coordinated and integrated transit network.**
- **Make the system more seamless to ride and more efficient to operate.**

THE TRANSIT TOGETHER STUDY

Transit
Biddeford | Saco | Old Orchard Beach

Casco Bay Lines
Portland, Maine

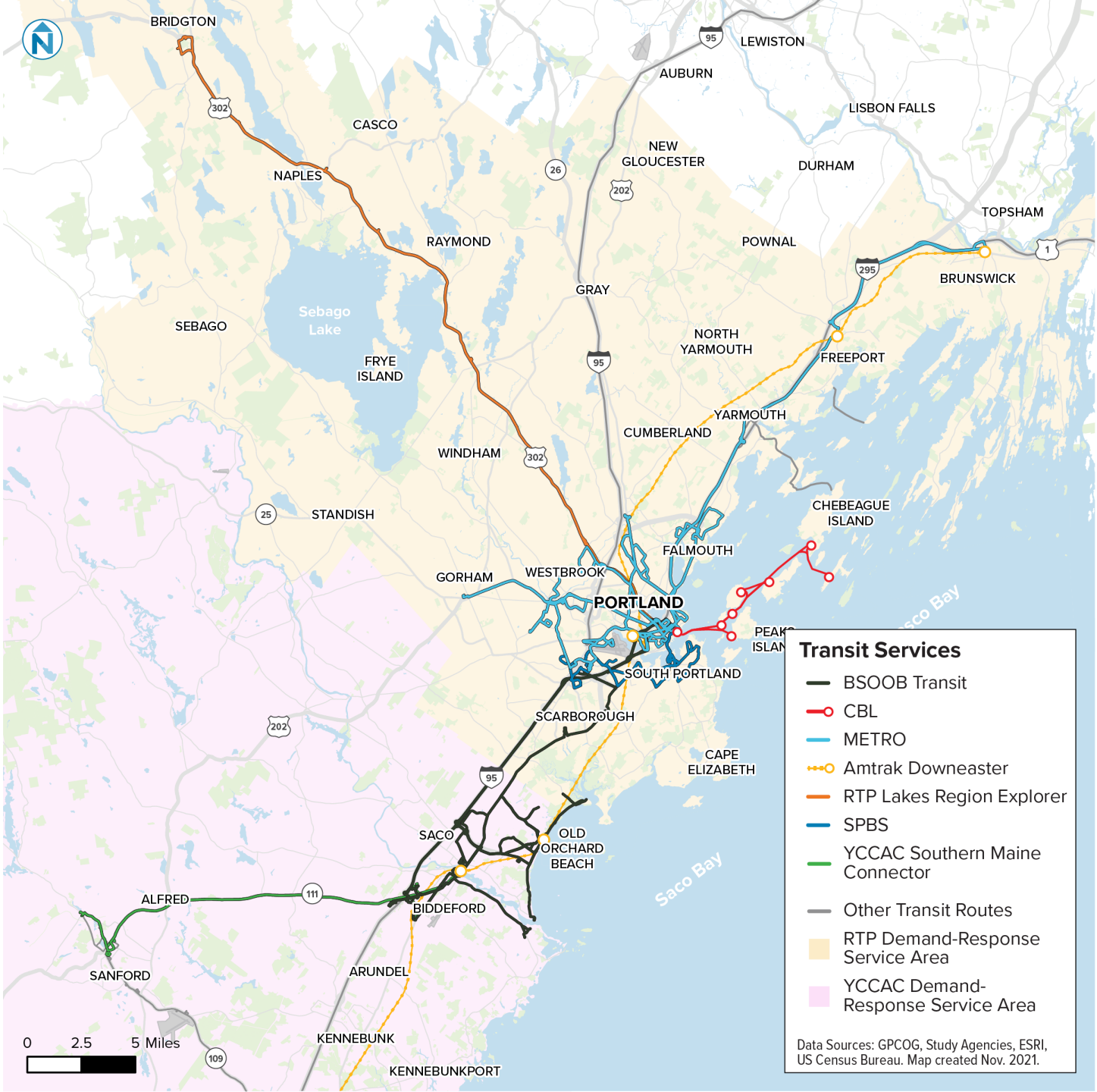
GREATER PORTLAND metro

AMTRAK Downeaster

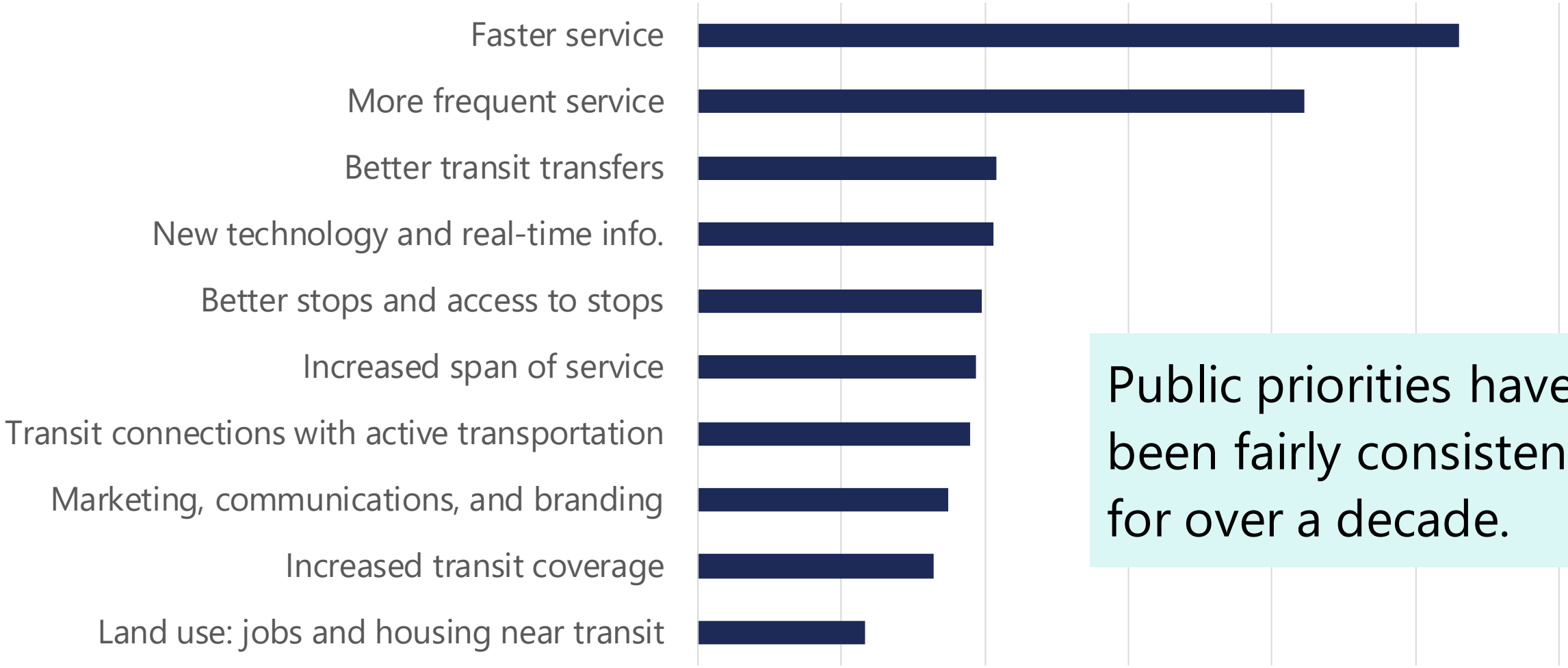
rtp
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

York County
COMMUNITY
ACTION
Corporation

City of South Portland
Bus Service



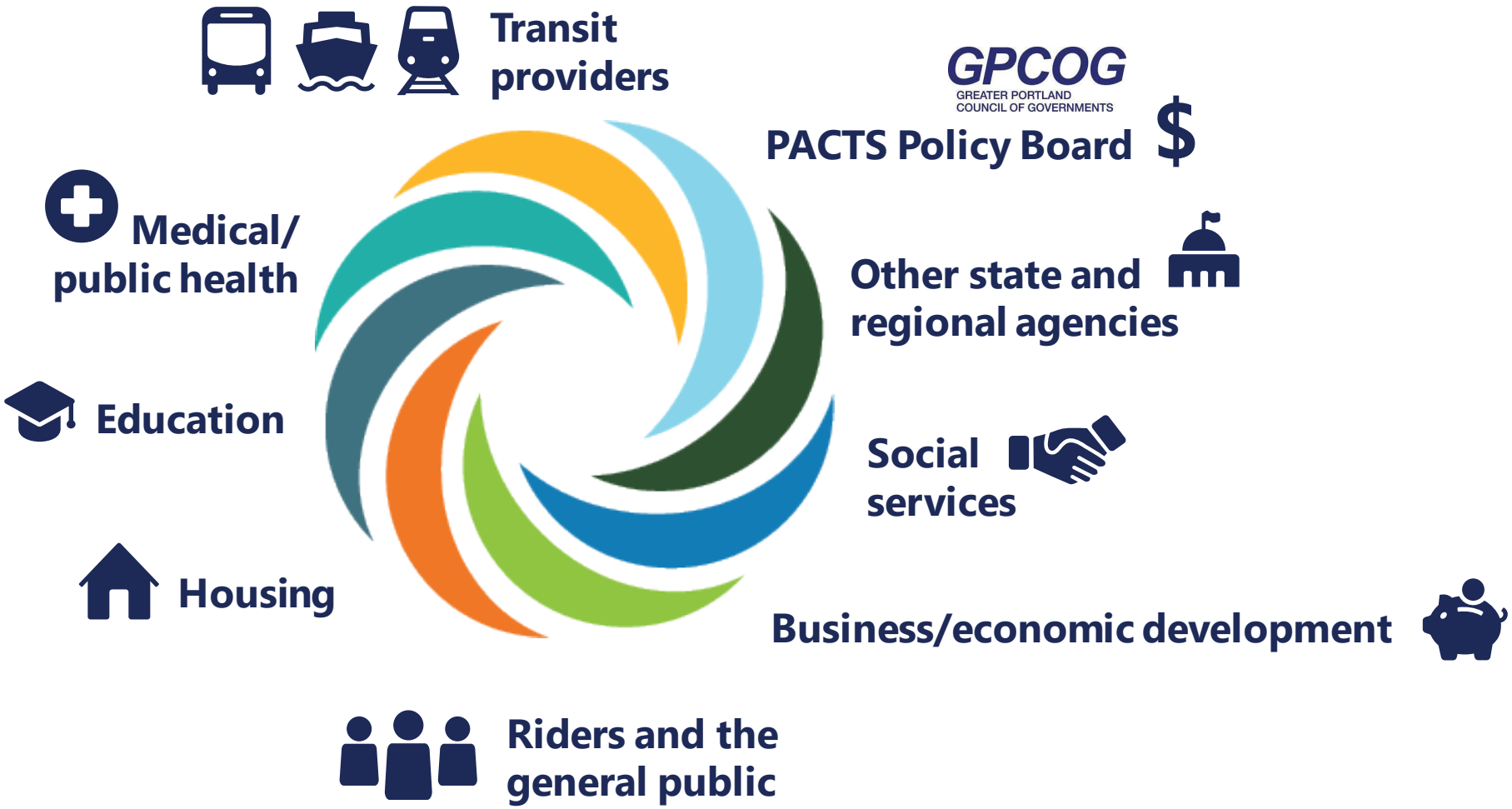
Public priorities guide this study



Public priorities have been fairly consistent for over a decade.

Project Advisory Group

A range of perspectives inform this study



Key tasks

Evaluate Existing Conditions

Service Improvement Opportunities

We are here!

Public Input (Round #1)

Coming in 2022

Consider New Service Models

Identify Coordination Opportunities

Public Input (Round #2)

Recommendations & Implementation Actions

Instructions

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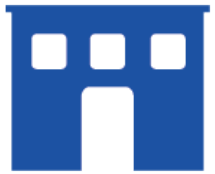
Transit Demand in Greater Portland

Image source: Nelson\Nygaard

Factors driving transit demand

Population and Population Density



Employment and Employment Density

Socioeconomic Characteristics

Major Activity Centers

Development Patterns

Travel Patterns

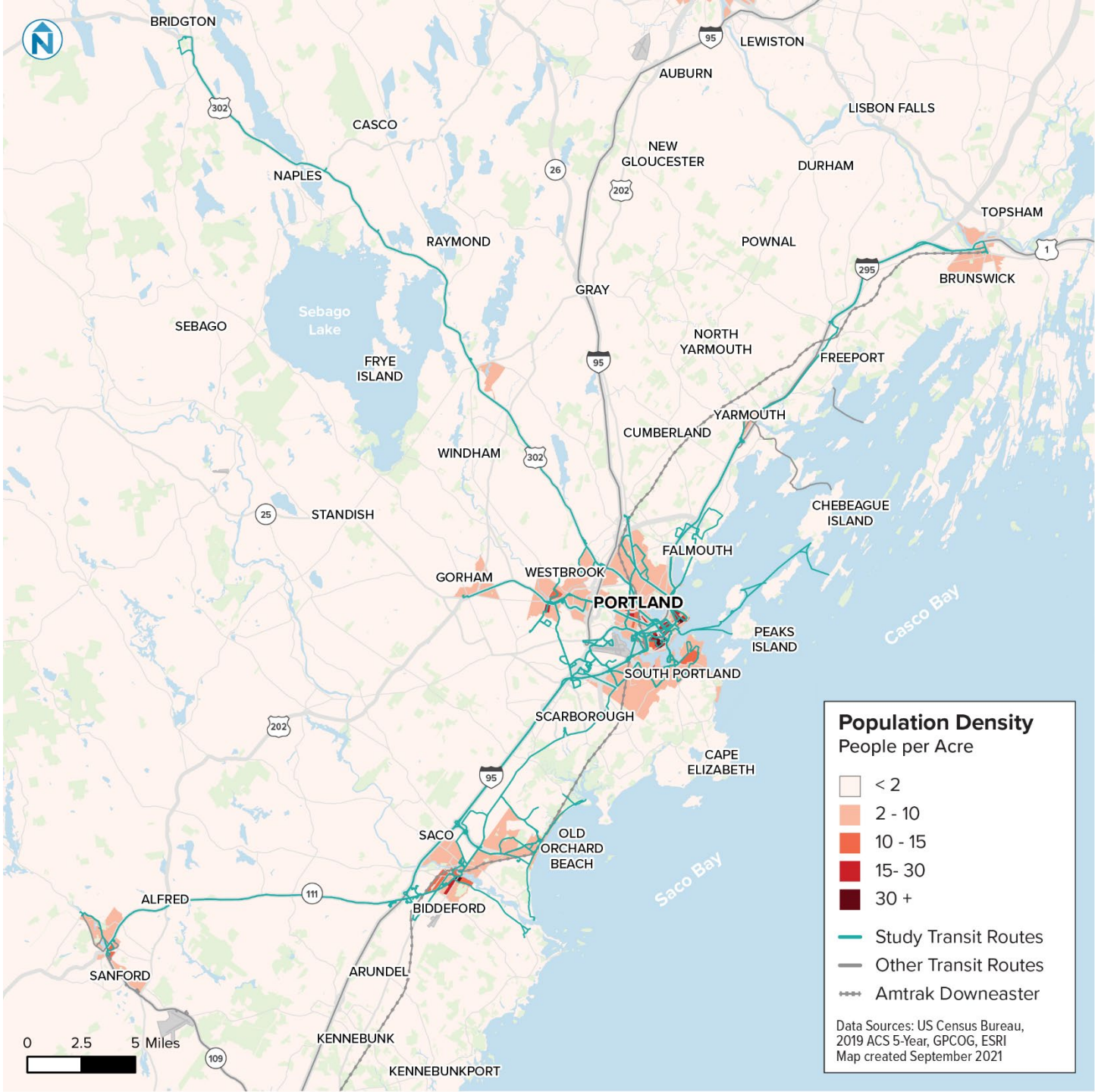
Understanding transit demand

- Density helps us understand where transit demand exists and determine appropriate service levels
- It also helps identify gaps between demand and existing service

LAND USE			TRANSIT		
Land Use Type	Residents per Acre	Jobs per Acre	Appropriate Types of Transit	Frequency of Service	Other Modes
Urban Core	>30	>15	Light Rail, BRT & Rapid Bus, Commuter Bus, Local Bus	15 minutes or better	Interstate Rail
Urban & Neighborhood Mixed-Use	15-30	10-15	Commuter Bus, Local Bus	15-30 minutes	
Mixed-Density Neighborhoods	10-15	5-10	Commuter Bus, Local Bus	30-60 minutes	Land Use and Frequency Varies
Low Density	2-10	2-5	Demand Response (microtransit)	60 mins or less, or on-demand	Passenger Ferry
Rural	<2	<2	Demand Response (microtransit)	On-demand	

Population-based demand

Most of the greater Portland region is relatively low-density.



Population density

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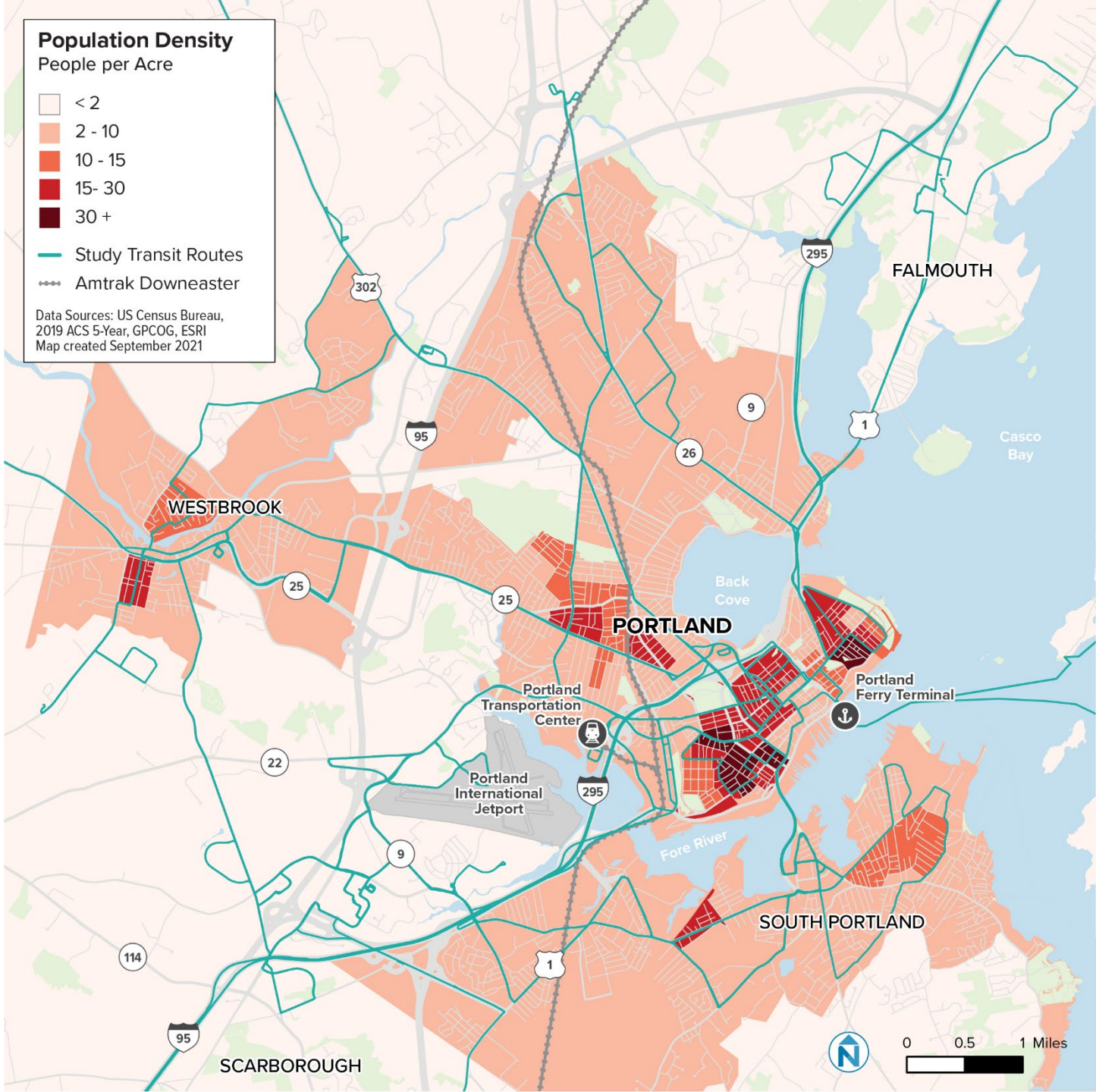
Most population density in the region is focused in and around Portland.



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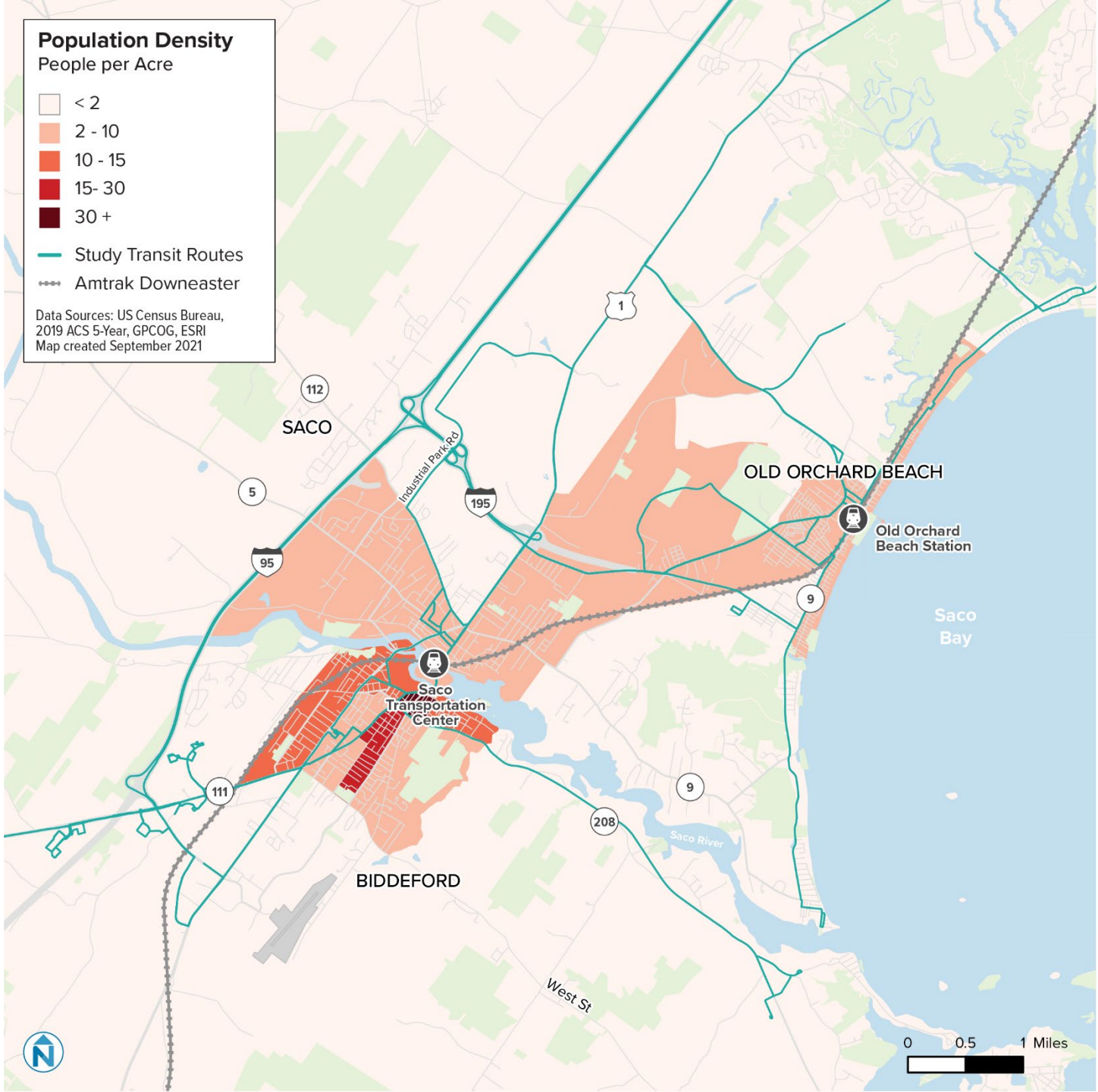
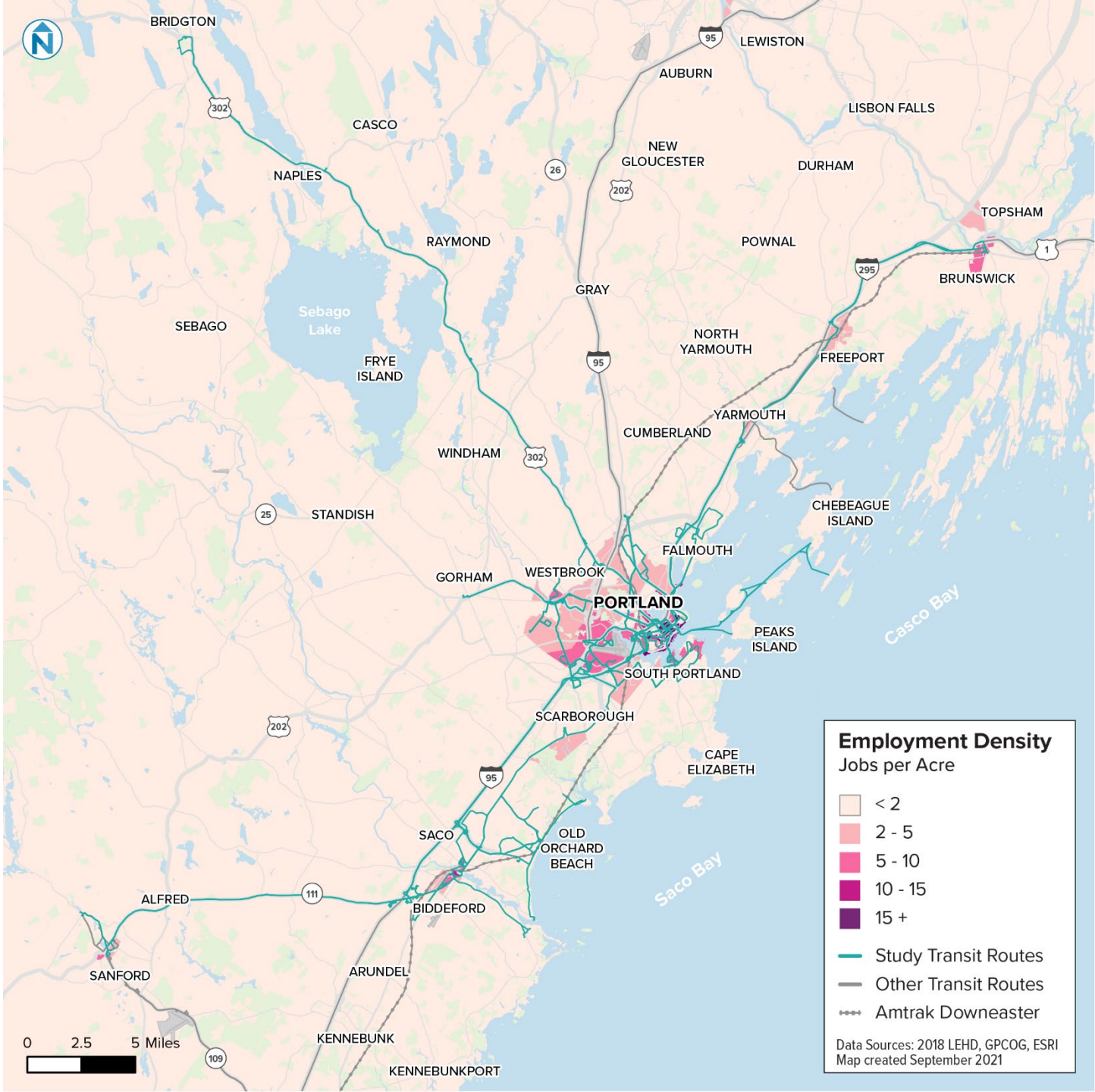
There are some high-density neighborhoods in the Biddeford-Saco-Old Orchard Beach area.



Employment-based demand

Employment density is one of the foundations of transit demand.



Employment density

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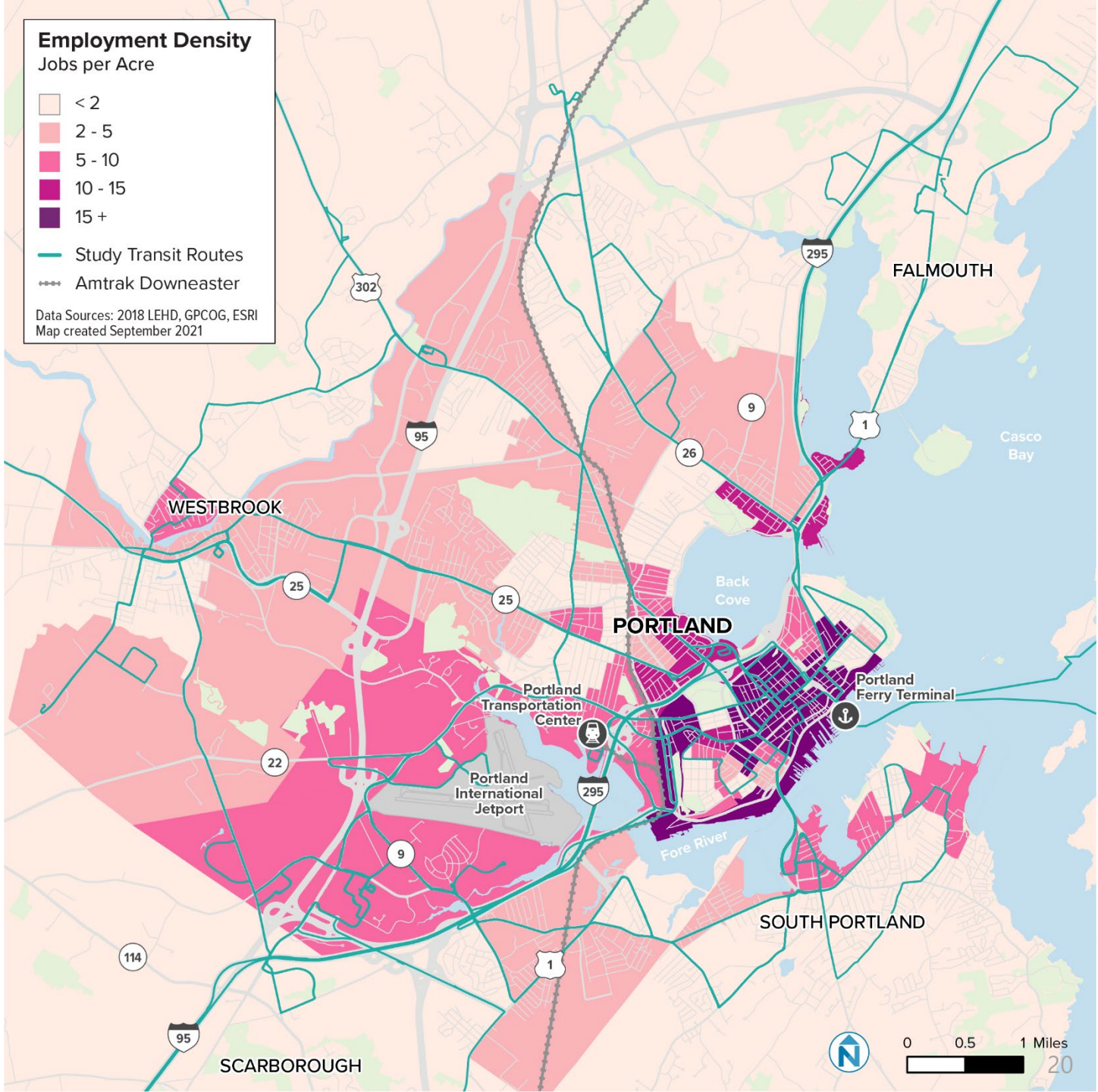
Employment density is concentrated on and near the Portland Peninsula, in Knightville, near SMCC, the Maine Mall, and in Westbrook.



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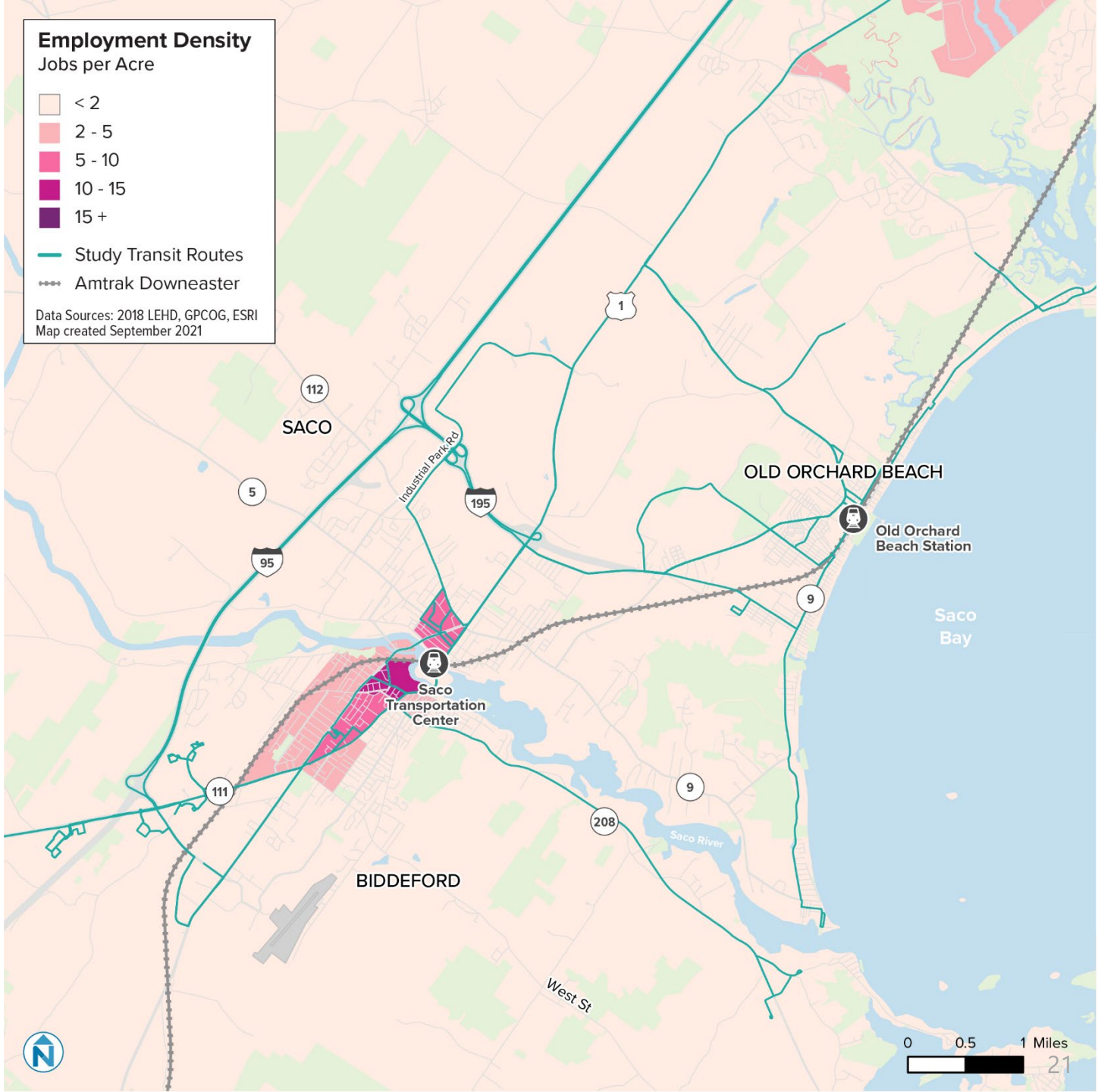
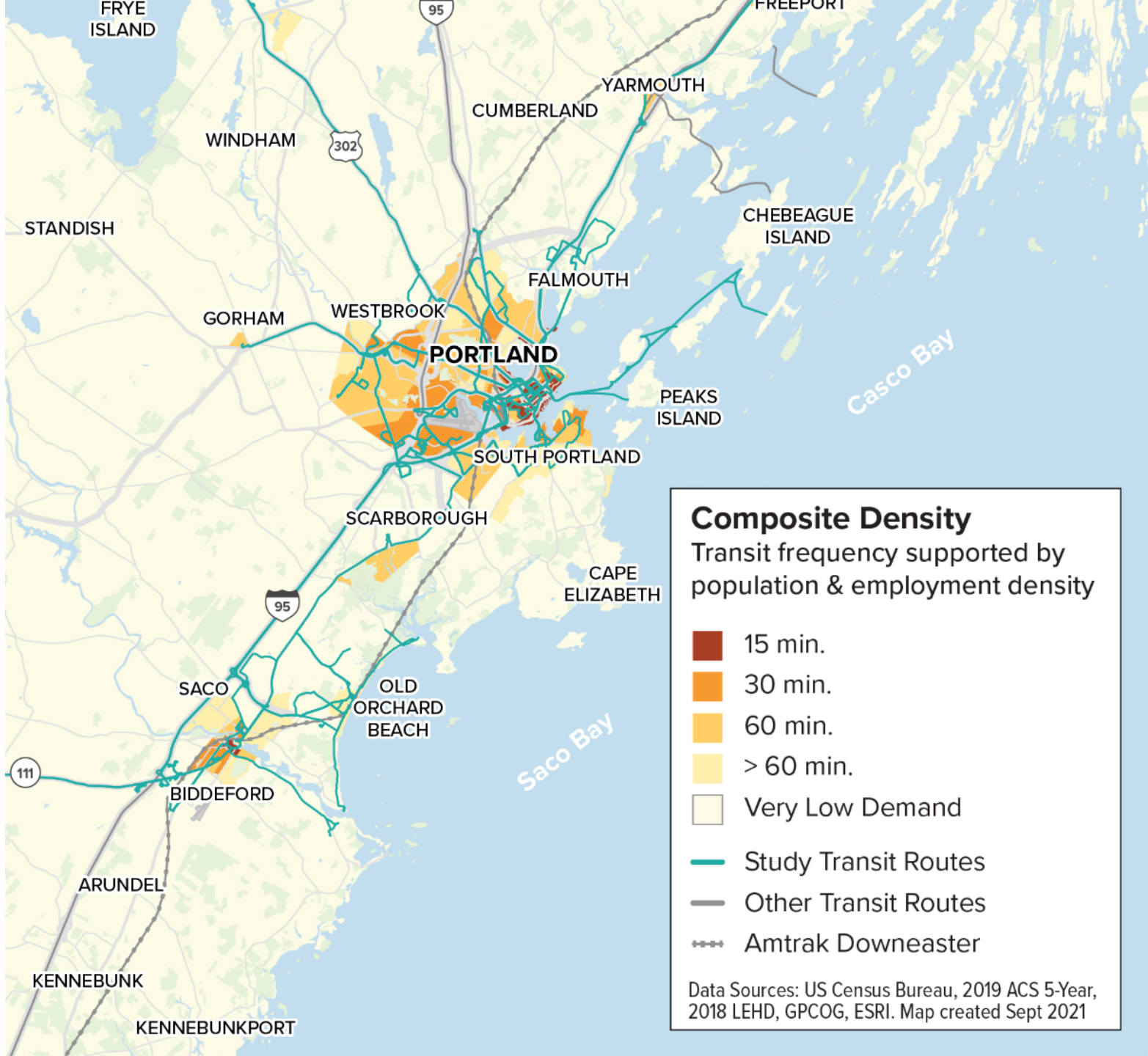
Employment in the Biddeford-Saco area is concentrated downtown. In summer, employment density dramatically increases in Old Orchard Beach.



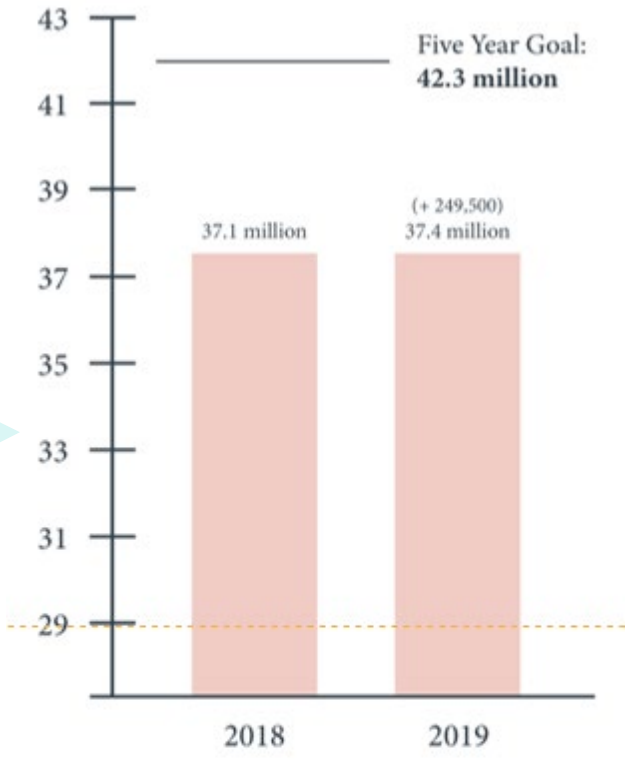
Composite density

The greatest transit demand is in places where lots of people live and work.



Tourism

Over 37 million people visit Maine every year. Although many drive, this represents a significant increase in transit demand.



Source: Maine Office of Tourism, 2019 Tourism Highlights

Instructions

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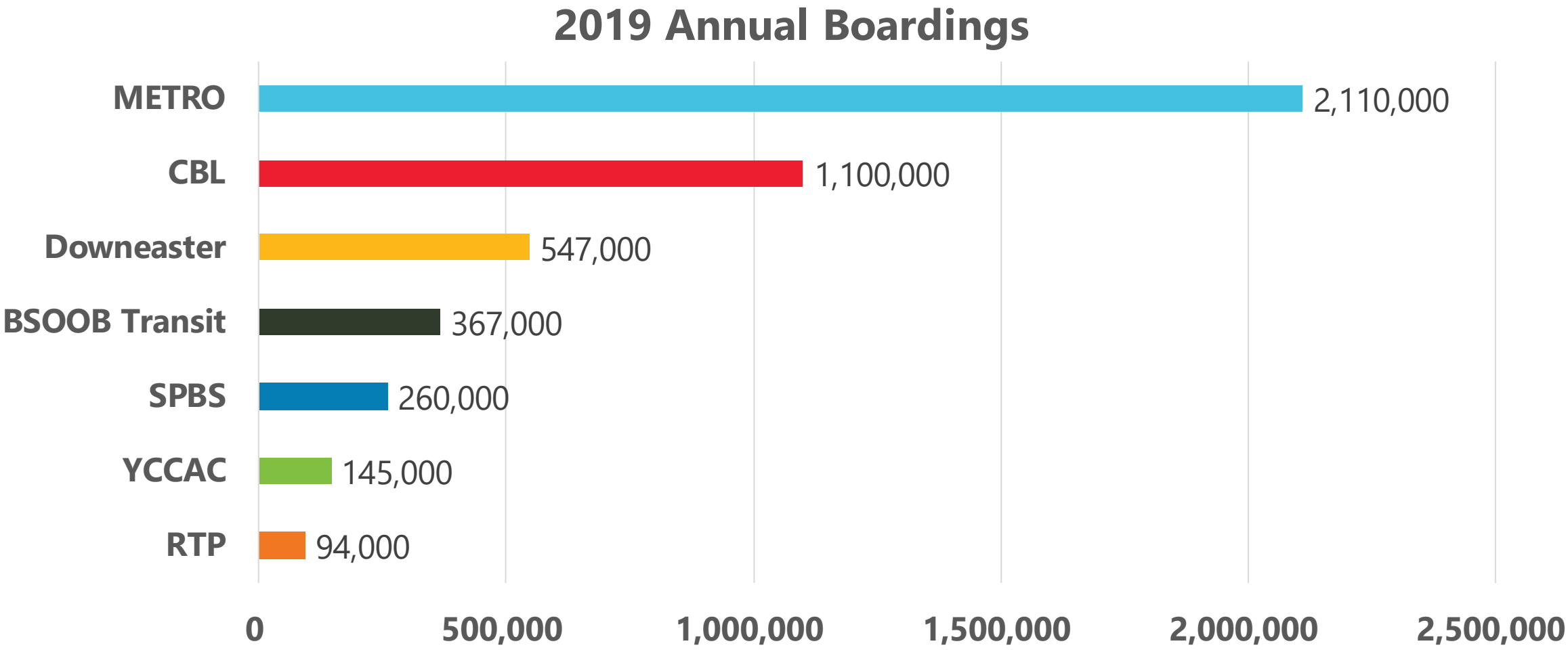
Ridership

Image source: Nelson\Nygaard

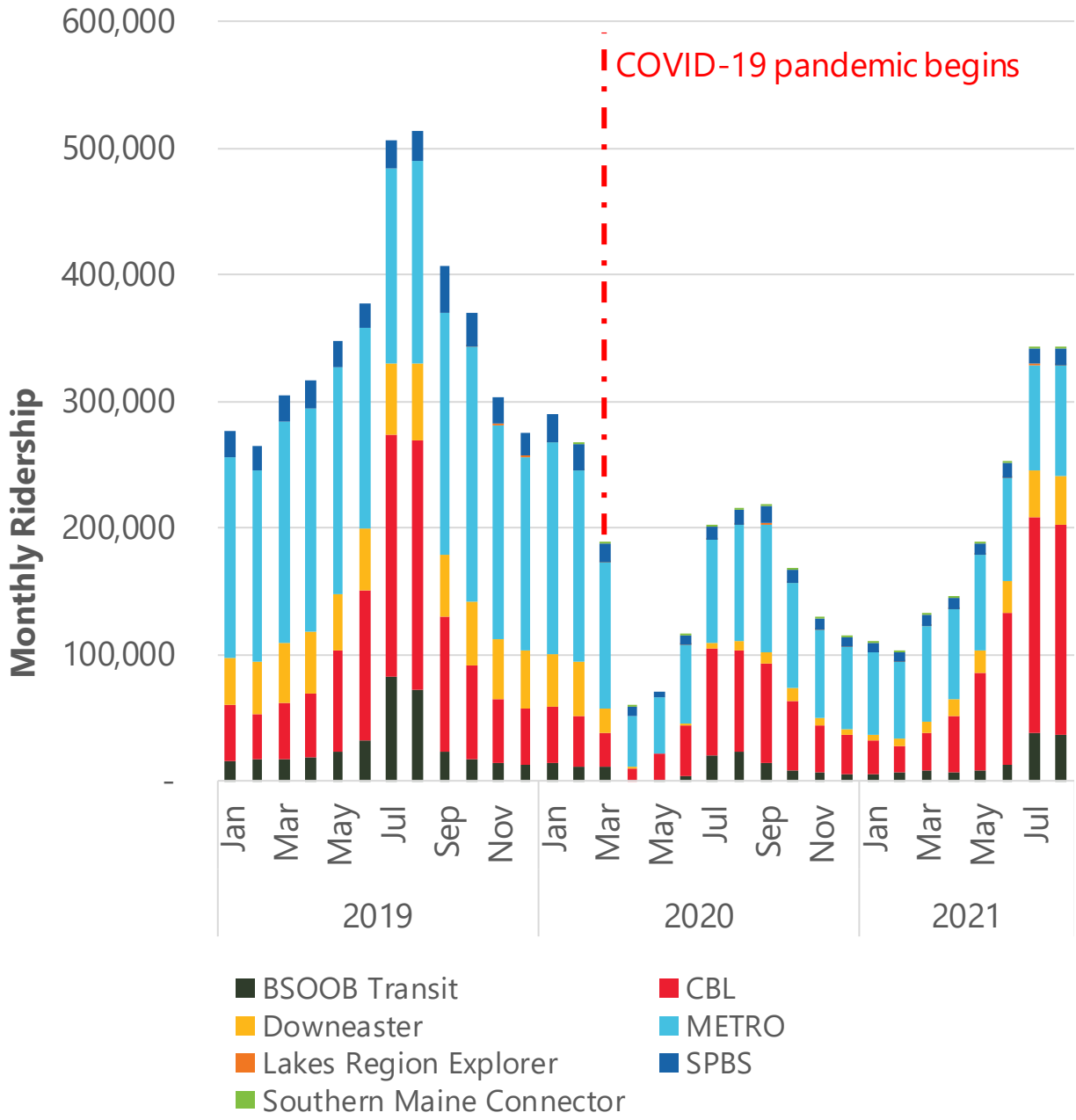
Ridership by transit provider



COVID impacts

- Today, ridership in the Greater Portland region is at 67% of pre-pandemic levels

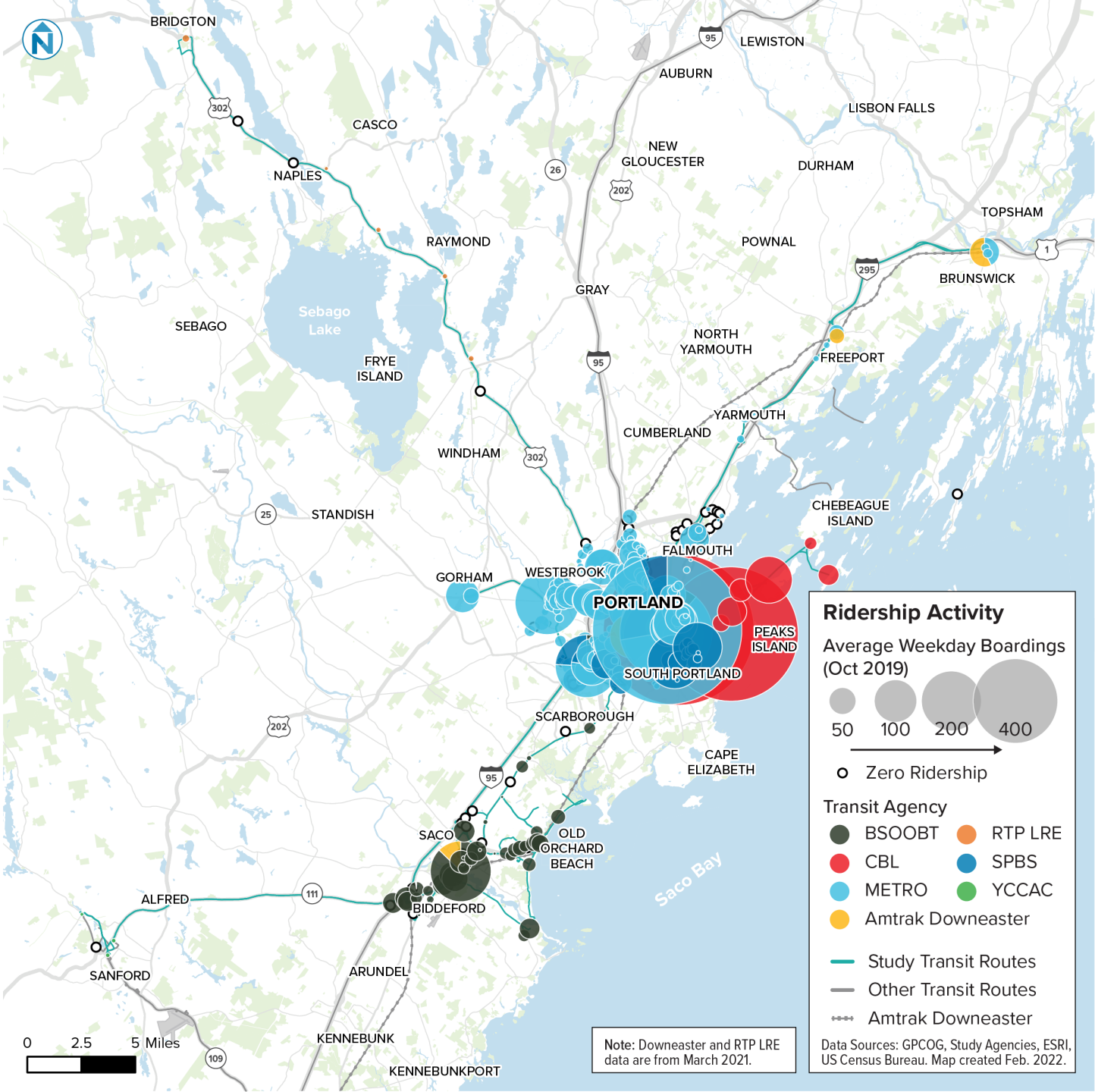
	Aug. 2019	Aug. 2020	Aug. 2021
Average Daily Ridership	16,500	6,900	11,000
Percent Change from 2019		-58%	-33%



Ridership

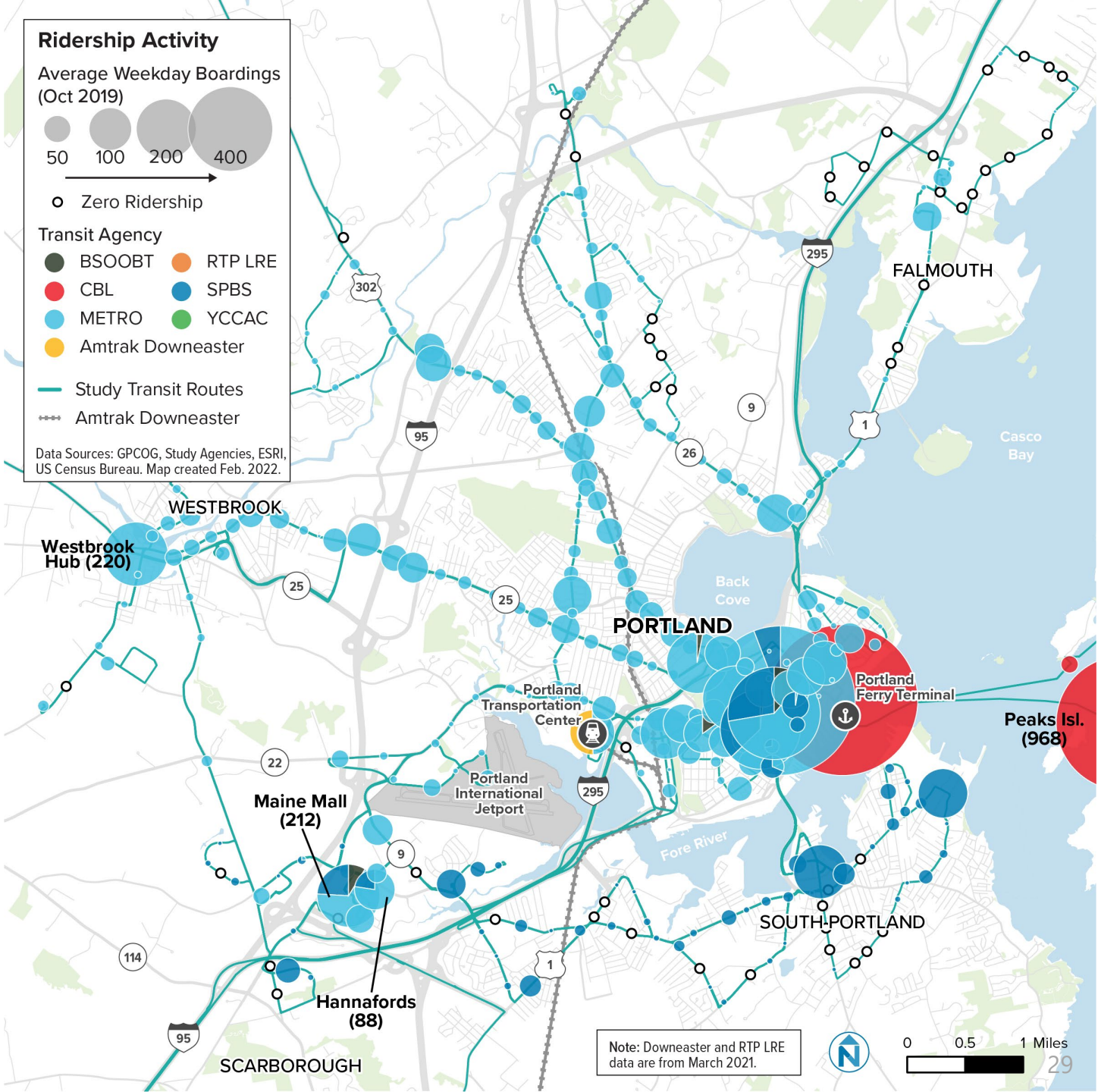
Areas with high ridership include:

- Portland Peninsula
- Peaks Island
- Biddeford-Saco-Old Orchard Beach
- Downtown Westbrook
- At and around the Maine Mall
- The Mill Creek Transit Hub and Southern Maine Community College
- The Rock Row/Sagamore Village area



Portland-area ridership

Highest ridership is on the Peninsula, on Peaks Island, around Maine Mall, at Mill Creek, at SMCC and in downtown Westbrook.

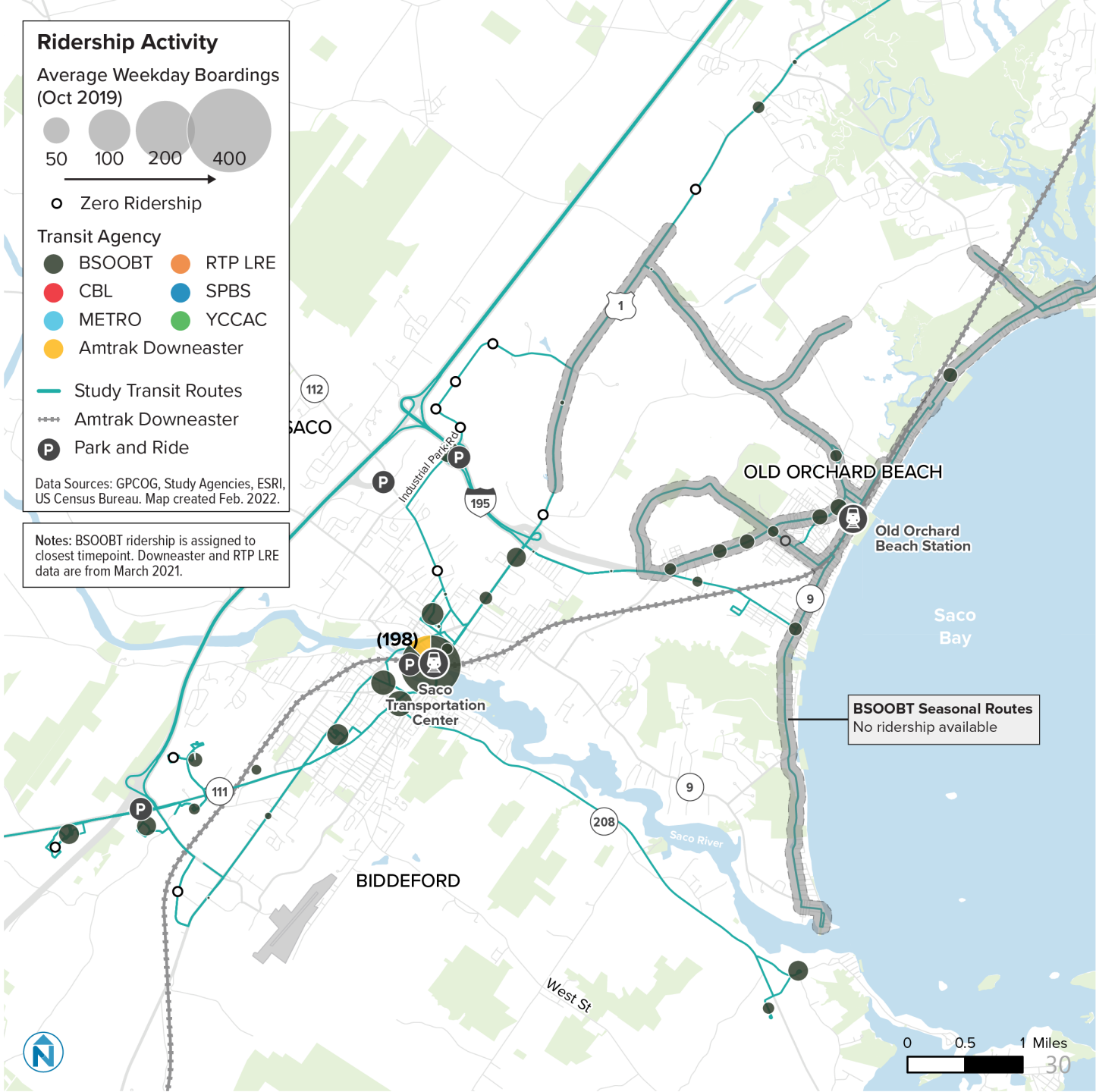


RIDERSHIP

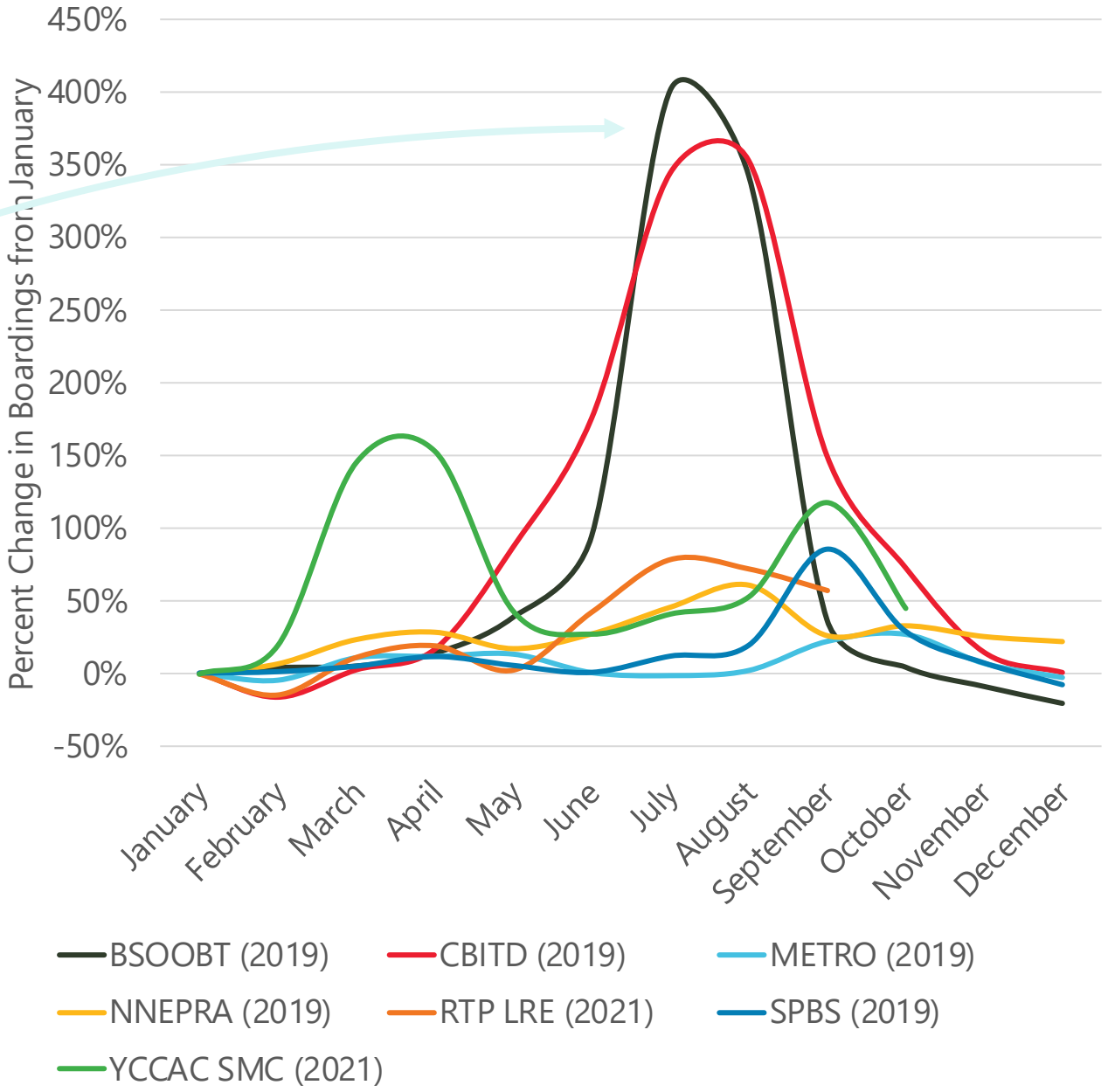
Biddeford-Saco-area ridership

Year-round ridership focused on downtown Biddeford-Saco, along Rte. 111, and at UNE.

BSOOB Transit ridership increases by 400% in summer, with much of that growth occurring in Old Orchard Beach.



Seasonal ridership



Ridership for some agencies - especially Casco Bay Lines and BSOOB Transit - is highly seasonal.

Service Design

Image source: Nelson\Nygaard

SERVICE DESIGN

Transit
Biddeford | Saco | Old Orchard Beach

Casco Bay Lines
Portland, Maine

GREATER PORTLAND metro

AMTRAK Downeaster

rtp
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

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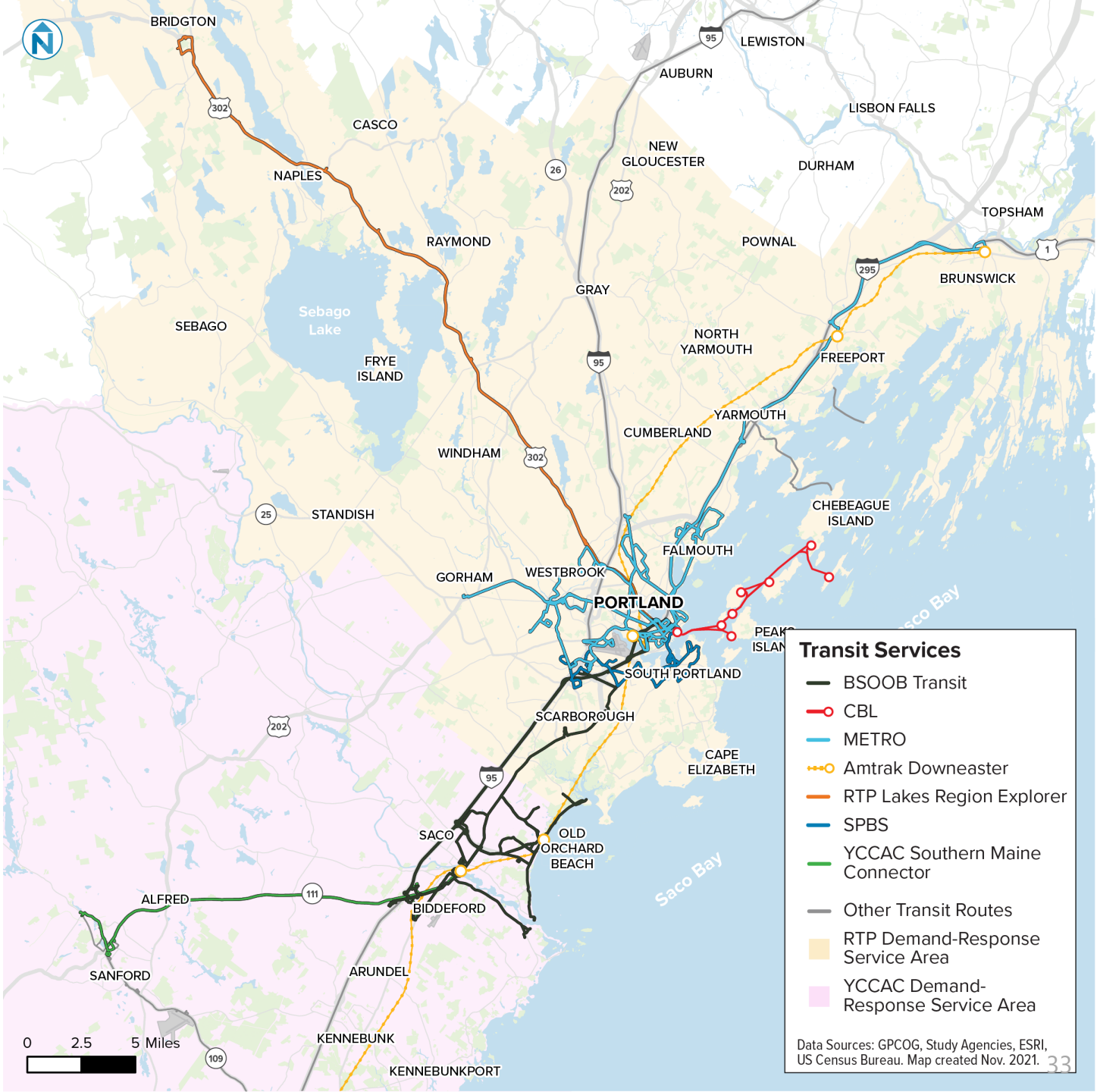


A family of transit services

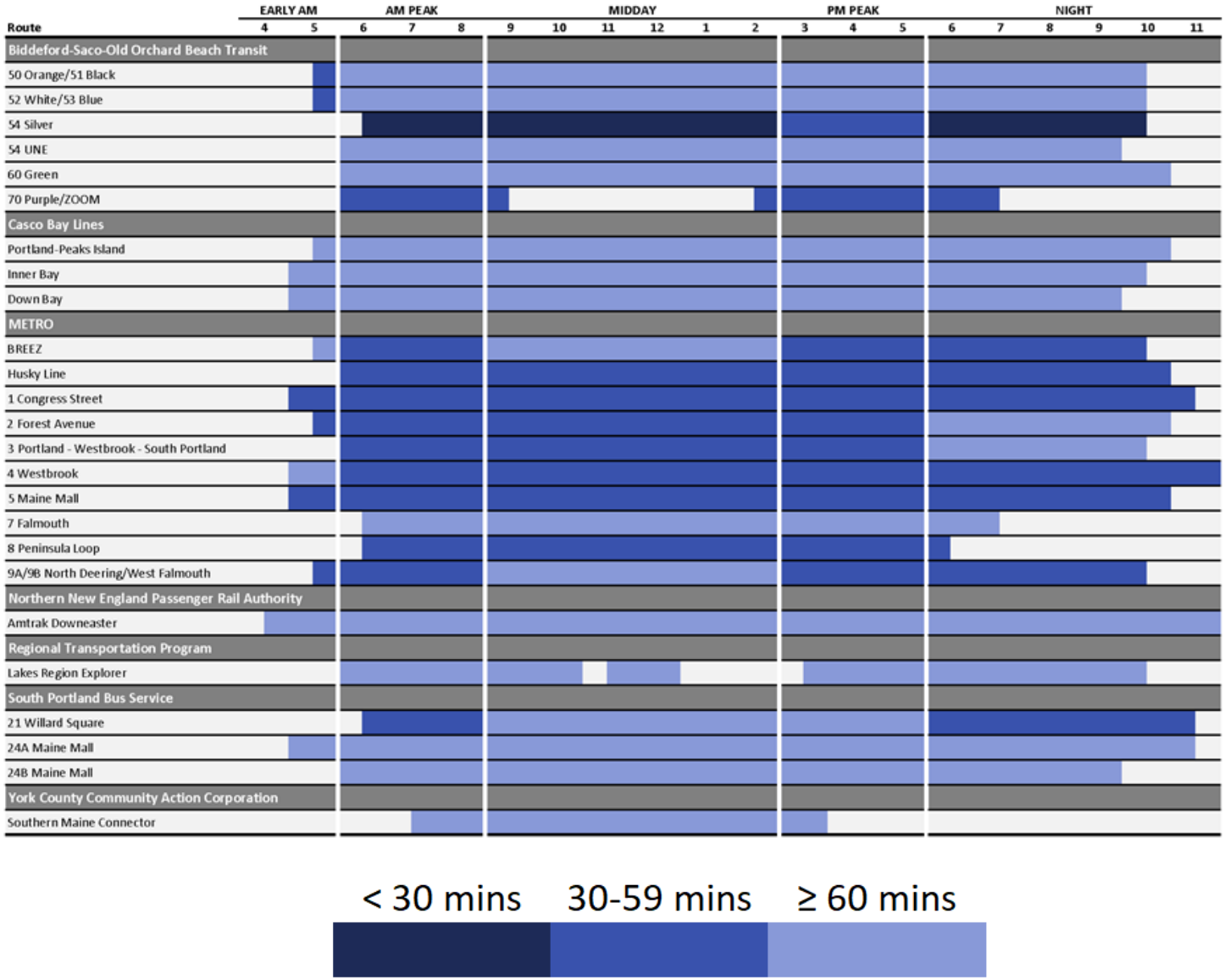
Local Bus	Express Bus	Deviated Fixed-Route Bus	Rail	Ferry	Demand Response
SPBS Route 21	BSOOB Transit Route 70	Lakes Region Explorer	Downeaster	CBL	ADAPT Paratransit
SPBS Route 24A	METRO BREEZ	Southern Maine Connector			Connecting to Cancer
SPBS Route 24B	METRO Husky Line				RTP Rides
METRO Route 1					Shopper's Shuttle
METRO Route 2					Veteran's transportation
METRO Route 3					Volunteer Drivers
METRO Route 4					Volunteer Rides
METRO Route 5					YCCAC WAVE
METRO Route 7					Weekly Local Rides
METRO Route 8					Other demand-response
METRO Route 9A/9B					
BSOOB Transit Route 50/51					
BSOOB Transit Route 52/53					
BSOOB Transit Route 54					
BSOOB Transit Route 60					
BSOOB Transit Seasonal Trolleys					

Service design
Frequency

Key findings:

- **<30-minute frequency:** no routes consistently operate this frequently; some operate this often for select periods of time
- **30 to 59-minute frequency:** Most METRO routes and some other routes, at select periods of time
- **≥60-minute frequency:** About half of all routes operate very infrequently
- Most routes operate on weekends but Sunday service is often very infrequent.

Weekday Service Frequency by Route and Time of Day

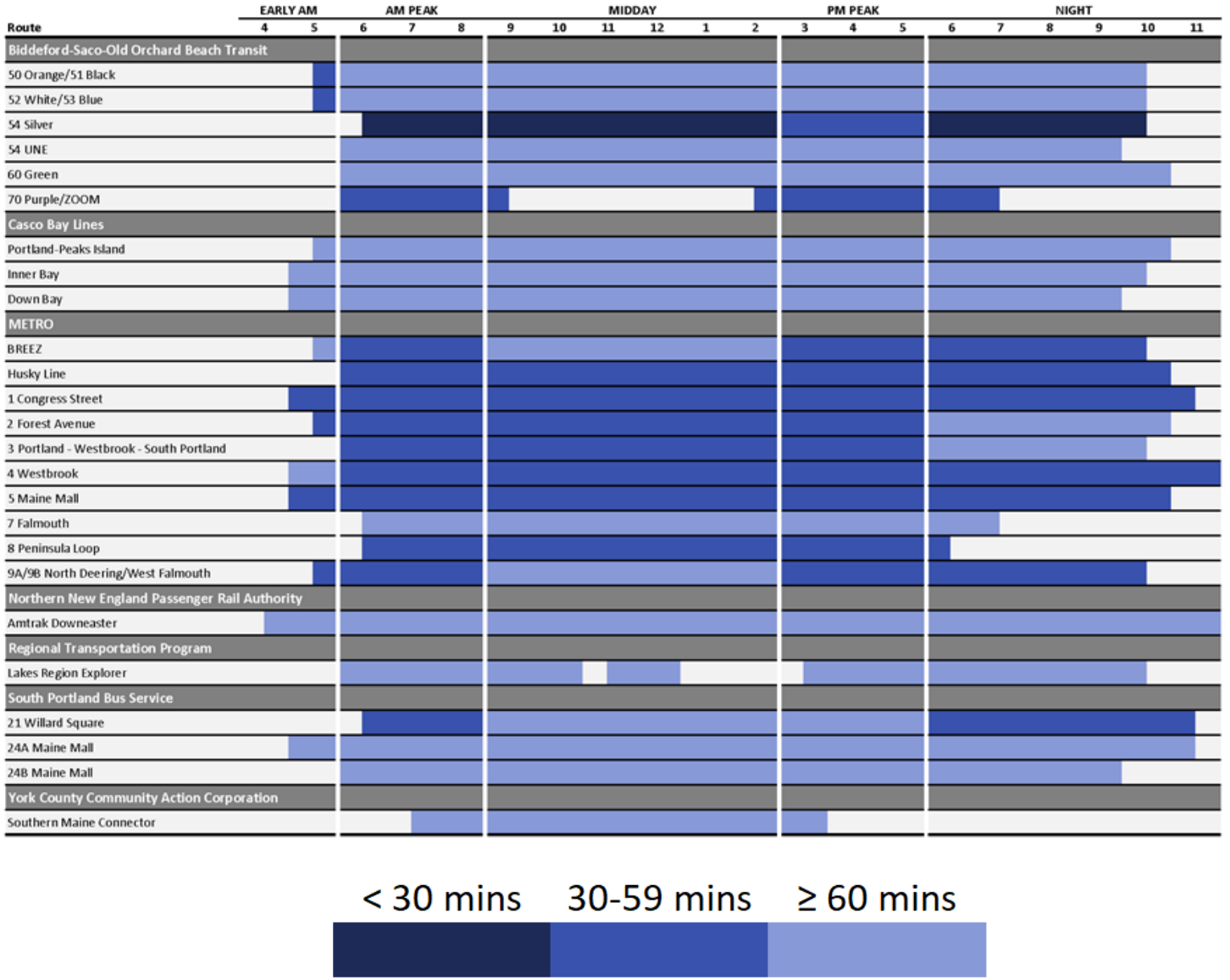


Service design
Span of service

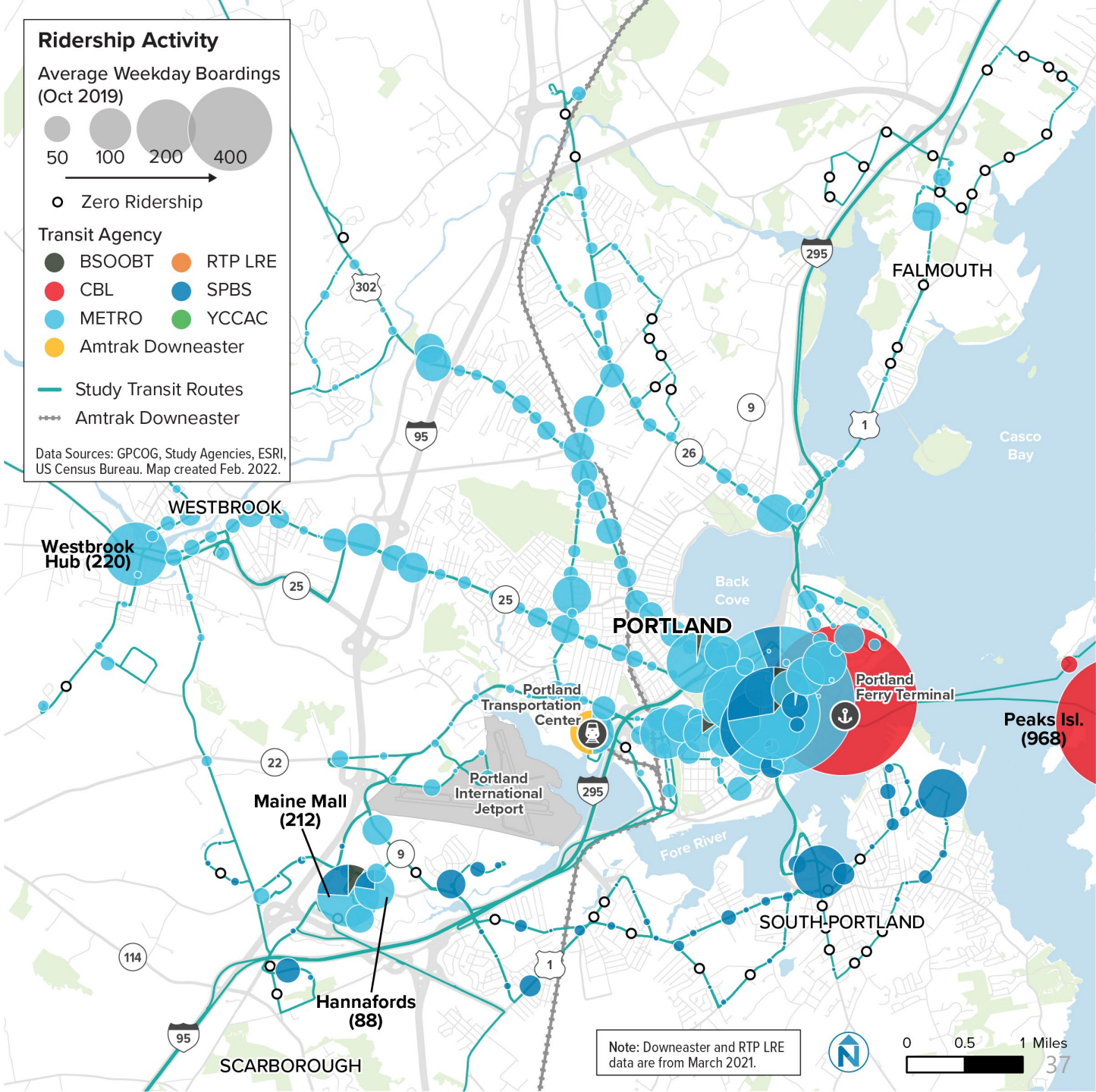
Key findings:

- Weekday and Saturday spans of service are generally good across the region. Service starts in early morning and ends in late evening.
- Sunday service span is much shorter, with most service ending by 7PM.

Weekday Service Frequency by Route and Time of Day

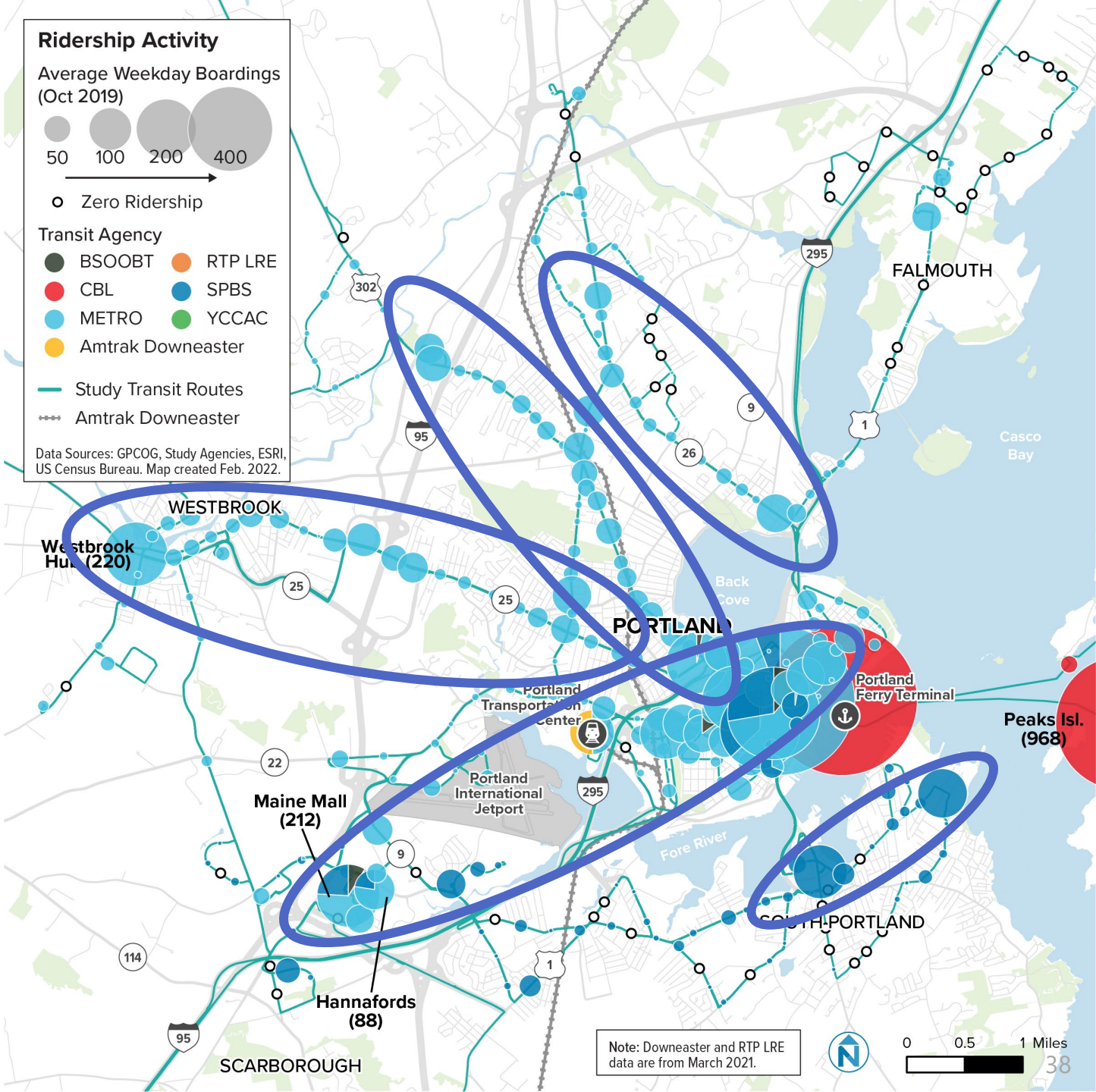


Service design



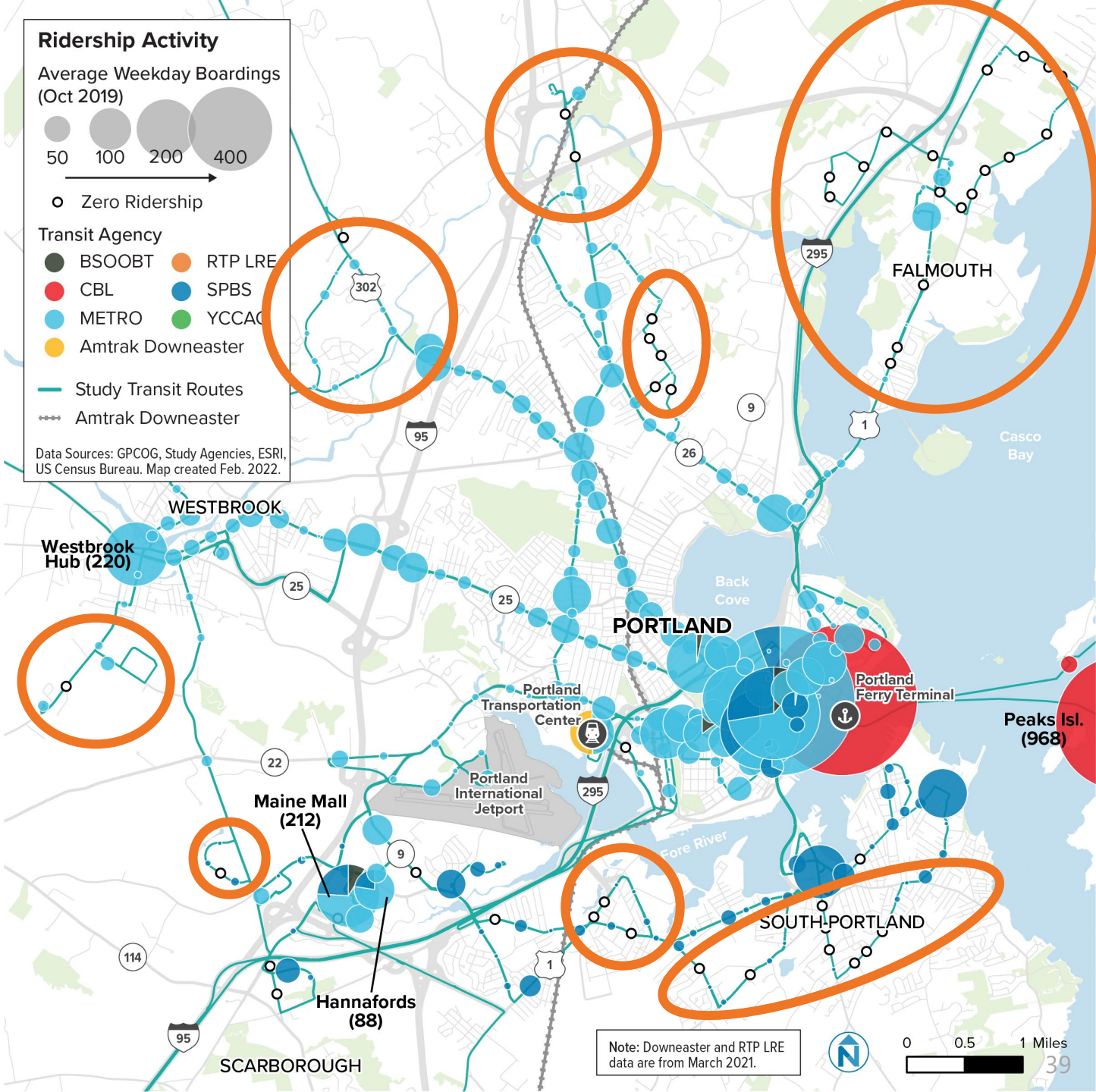
Service design

- **Corridor-oriented** service is relatively successful in the region



Service design

- **Corridor-oriented** service is relatively successful in the region
- **Coverage-based** service provides access but produces limited ridership



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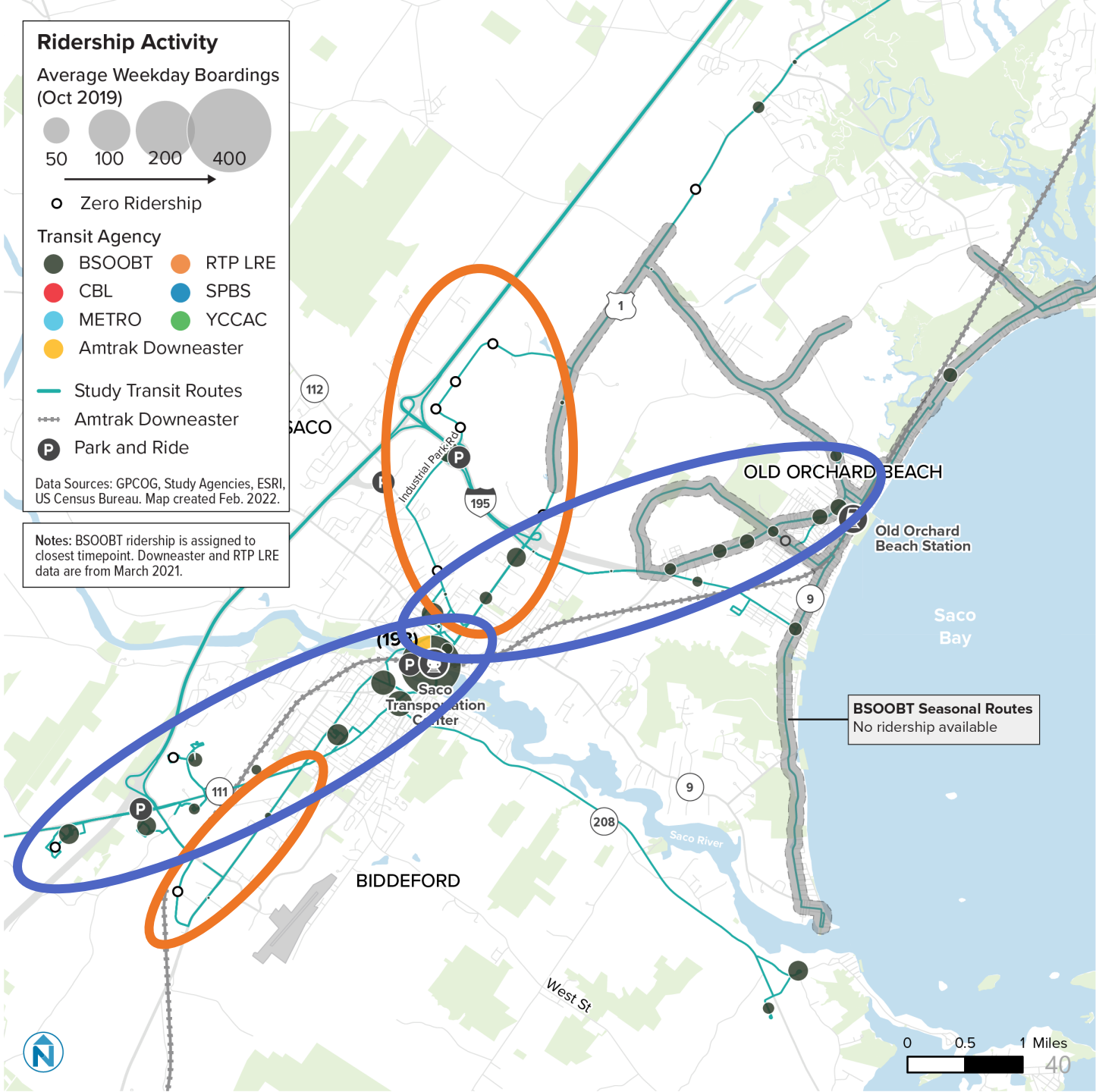

Service design
Non-rubber tire modes

Key findings:

- The Downeaster train and Casco Bay Lines ferries have unique service design.
- Railroad schedules are affected by track capacity, as tracks are shared with other users.
- Ferries provide a critical lifeline service to islands and carry mail, freight, and vehicles.
- Both can modify schedules to meet seasonal and periodic changes in demand.
- Rail lines and ferry docks are difficult and costly to move.

Image sources: Top: Nelson\Nygaard; Bottom: GPCOG

Instructions

Go to

www.menti.com

Enter the code

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Route profiles

Opportunities

- Increase focus on demand-based services
- Improve service design
- Increase frequencies
- Improve access to transit

METRO

ROUTE 4 WESTBROOK

Route Overview

Route 4 connects Portland with Westbrook via Brighton Avenue and Main Street (Route 25), serving the Oakdale, Rosemont, and Nason's Corner neighborhoods in Portland before continuing to Main Street in Westbrook and ending at the Westbrook Hub. Key destinations on the route include USM, the Pine Tree Mall/Westbrook Plaza/Rock Row mall district, Sagamore Village low-income housing, Hannaford, Hamlet Park, IDEXX, and Abbott Labs. The route only serves Hannaford with a deviation on 12 trips each weekday. This route connects several low-income communities to employment, shopping, and educational opportunities.

Alignment

Route 4 primarily operates bi-directionally on Forest Avenue, Bedford Street, Brighton Avenue, and Main Street, with quasi-alternating route extensions to Hamlet Park mobile home community and IDEXX/Abbott Labs industrial park. The route sometimes deviates to serve the Westbrook Hannaford. Route 4 operates on much of the same alignment as The Husky Line, creating a higher-frequency transit corridor for riders traveling between select destinations.

Connections

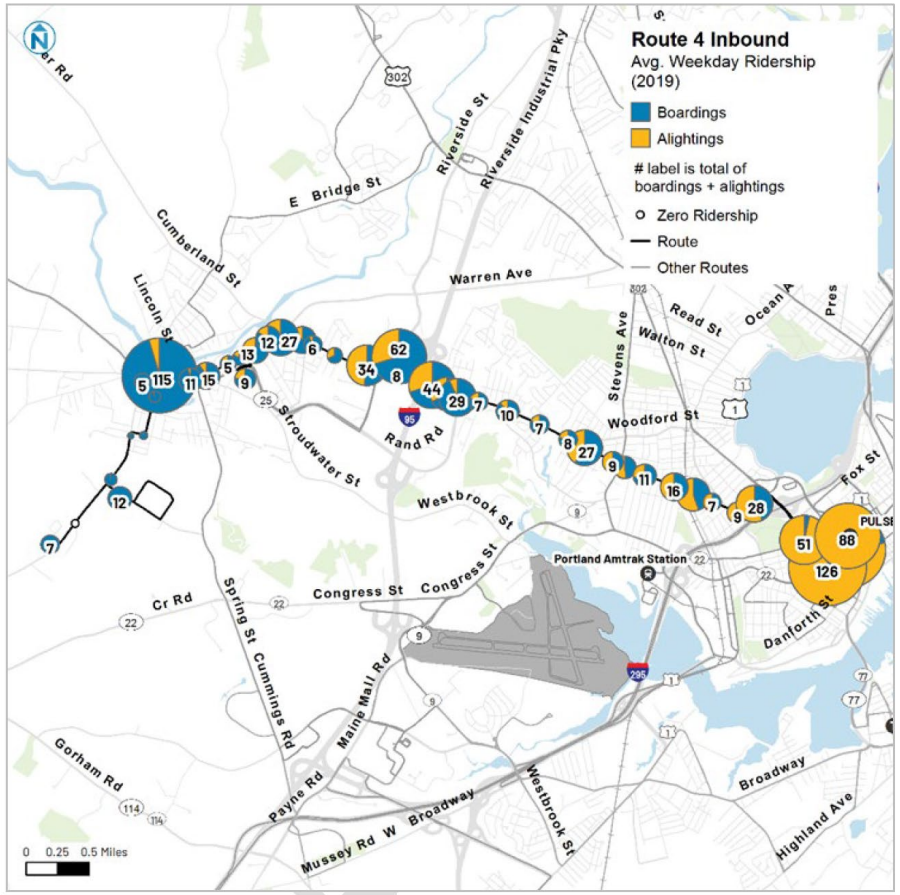
Transfers to Route 3 and the Husky Line can be made at the Westbrook Hub, and transfers to BSOOB Transit, METRO, RTP, and SPBS bus routes are possible at the PULSE. Transfers to Route 9A/9B are possible at Stevens Avenue.

Route profiles

What are we looking for?

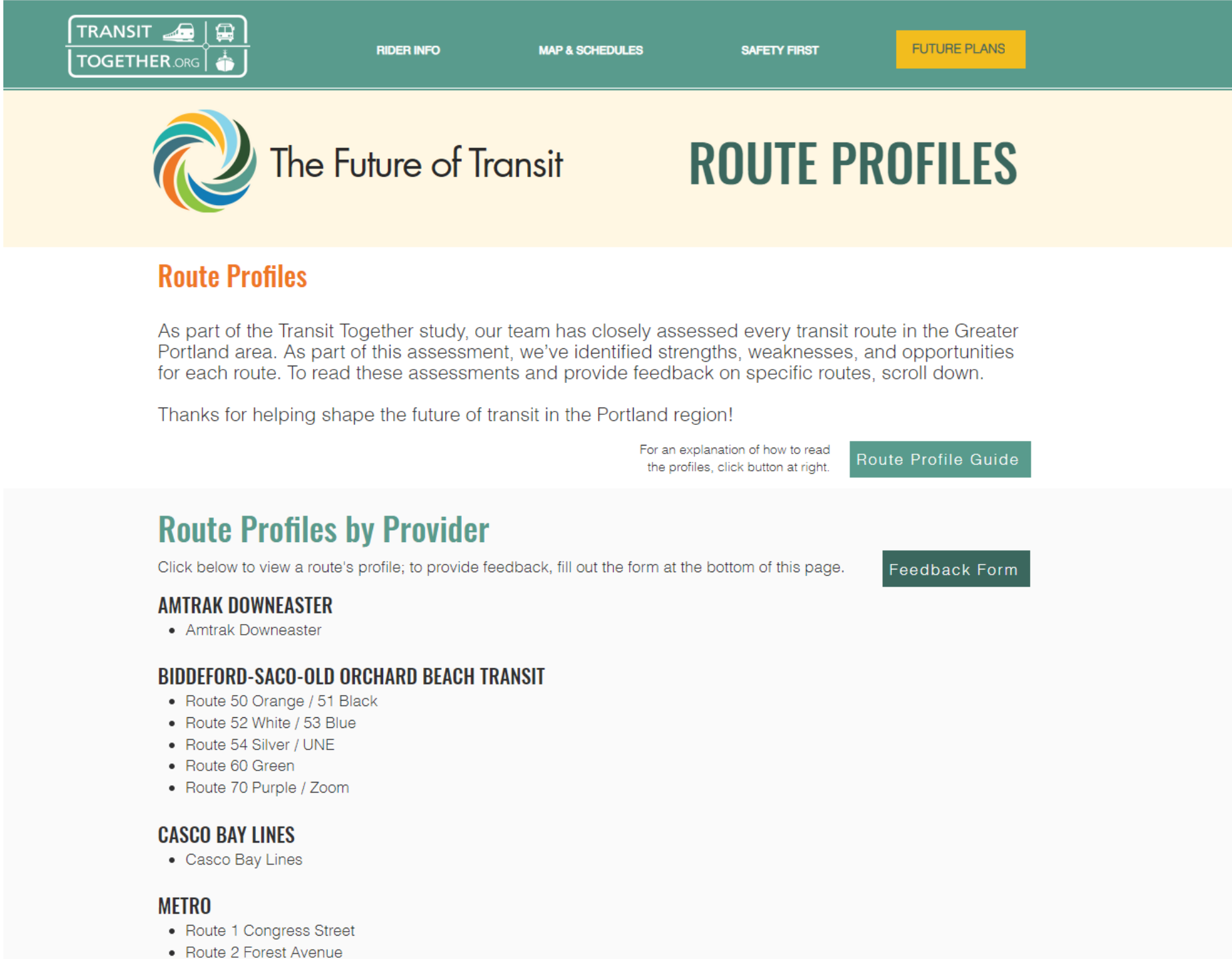
- What works well?
- What doesn't?
- What changes could make service better? For example:
  - Does the route serve a unique and defined market?
  - Is the route direct and simple?
  - Are schedules easy to understand?
  - Do service levels match ridership levels?
  - Where are people riding…or not riding?
  - Are stops spaced appropriately?

Weekday Ridership by Stop Map



SERVICE DESIGN

Route profiles



Making Regional Transit Seamless

Image source: Nelson\Nygaard

Making regional transit seamless

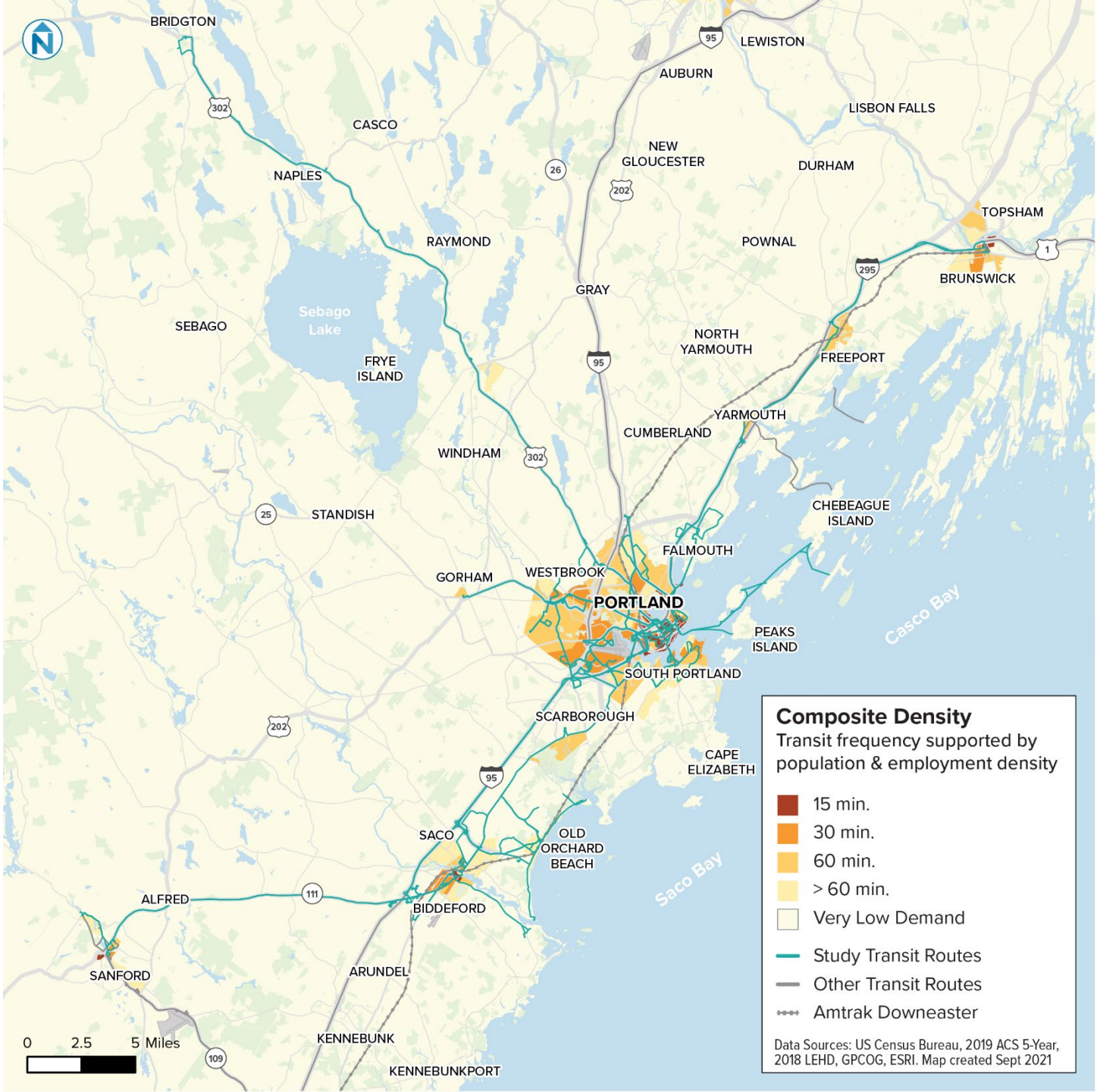
Some initial opportunities to consider

- More transit options in low-density areas
- Improved regional connections
- Service aimed at the tourism market
- Improved customer information
- Better stops, shelters, and signage
- Regional branding
- Coordinated fare payment

Transit options for low-density areas

Key findings

- Transit demand is generally low outside of the Portland and Biddeford-Saco areas
- RTP and YCCAC already offer on-demand service
- METRO pursuing microtransit pilot



Regional connections

Key Findings

- Roughly 25 stops where different services meet today
- Schedules at hubs are not coordinated
- Some transfer points have limited passenger amenities
- Connections among rail, bus, and ferry on the Peninsula are challenging

Image sources: Top: Nelson\Nygaard; bottom: GPCOG

Better serve tourism market

Key findings:

- Ridership on some services has strong seasonal fluctuations
- Limited connections between Portland Transportation Center, Old Port, and CBL ferries
- Separate fares and schedules
- Limited joint marketing

Image sources: Nelson\Nygaard

Customer information

Key findings:

- Customer information is shared through different channels and varies across providers
- Bus stop information is confusing
- SPBS, METRO, and Casco Bay Lines use SMTT
- Free bus trackers, such as Transit App, are available for riders

Branding

Key findings:

- Seven transit providers is a high number for a small urban area
- Each agency wants to remain independent, but the array of services may be confusing for new riders and visitors
- Agencies did work together toward a common logo, but it was never advanced

GO Triangle GO Raleigh

GO Durham GO Cary

Image source: GPCOG

Fare payment

Key findings:

- BSOOB Transit, METRO and South Portland Bus Service use DiriGO
- Others use independent fare payment systems
- Base bus fare and transfer policies vary
- Regional vs. local bus fares can differ

Instructions

Go to

www.menti.com

Enter the code

9138 9165

Discussion

Next Steps

NEXT STEPS

Improvement scenarios

State of Regional Transit

Key findings and opportunities

Route Profiles

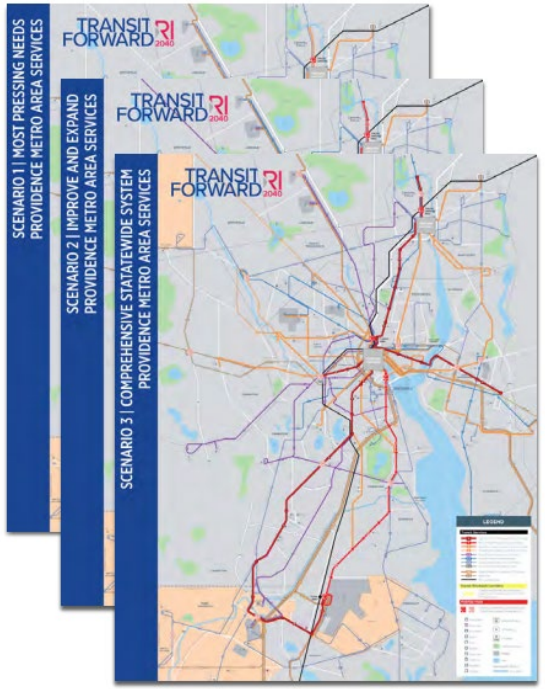
Mix of ideas for route-level changes

Public Input

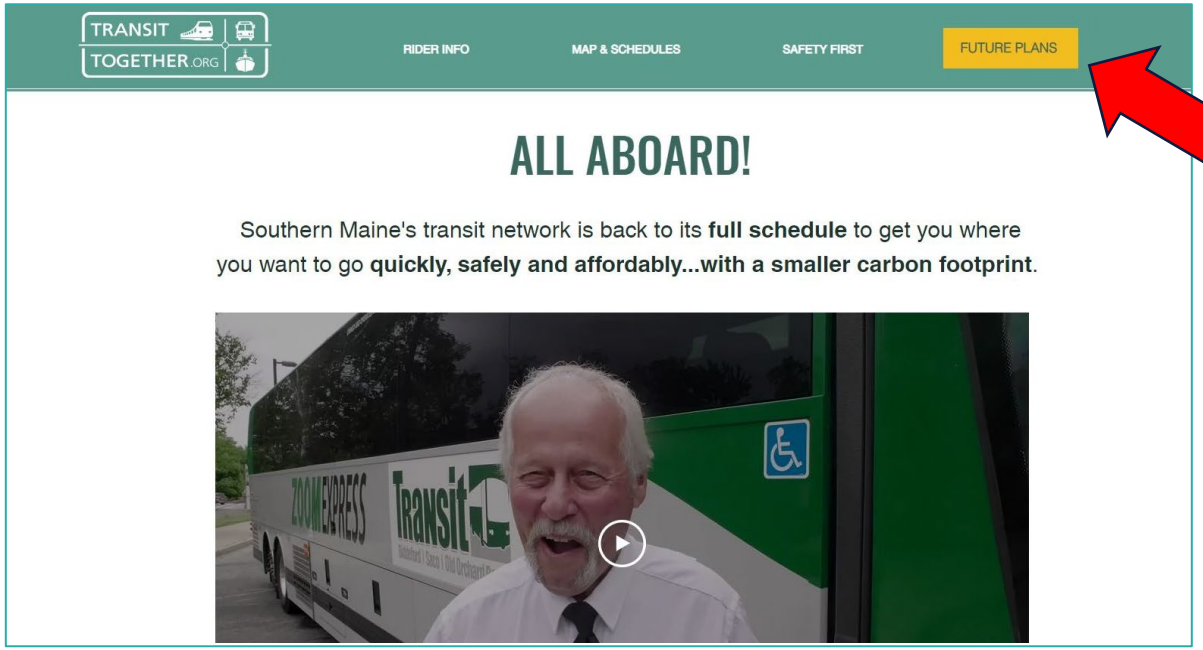
Your comments submitted via TransitTogether.org

Network Scenarios

Two or three contrasting options for improving Portland's transit services



Visit TransitTogether.org



- **View route profiles**
- **Share your comments!**
- **Sign up for e-mail notifications**
- Coming soon:
  - State of Regional Transit
  - Other project materials
- Watch for next public meetings

Thank you!

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