



Atlanta-Savannah Passenger Rail Study

Alternatives Development
Small Group Stakeholder Meetings
May 2025





Welcome to the Atlanta-Savannah Passenger Rail Study

Meet the Project Team:

- **Joanna Campbell**, Assistant Division Director of Intermodal
- **Phillip M. Peevy**, Intermodal Planning and Environmental Manager
- **Caleb Stubbs**, Rail and Transit Planning Lead
- **WSP Team**

Today's Objectives

Alternatives Development

How will the study identify alternatives?

Alternatives Evaluation

How will the alternatives be evaluated?

Passenger Rail Opportunities and Challenges

How have other states implemented passenger rail?

Opportunities and Challenges specific to Georgia

Project Background



Highlights from the Stakeholder Kickoff Meeting

Six Things to Know About ATL-SAV

1. GDOT is leading the study with FRA oversight and stakeholder involvement.
2. ATL-SAV is following the new FRA Corridor ID Program.
3. GDOT will coordinate with other Corridor ID projects in the Southeast.
4. The final product of this study will be a Service Development Plan.
5. GDOT will start with a wide range of route options and follow the data.
6. Freight Rail is important to the state and will be a key consideration for ATL-SAV.

Visit the ATL SAV Project Website

<https://atlsavpassrail-gdot.hub.arcgis.com/>



Stakeholder Introduction Meeting Video Available

Initial Public Survey Open 4,400+ responses to date

Initial Public Survey

After watching the video, please help us by providing your feedback in the short survey below. This is the first of many public outreach touchpoints as part of the project; check back for more opportunities to participate!

[Take Survey](#)

Public Survey Results

4,473 Responses So Far

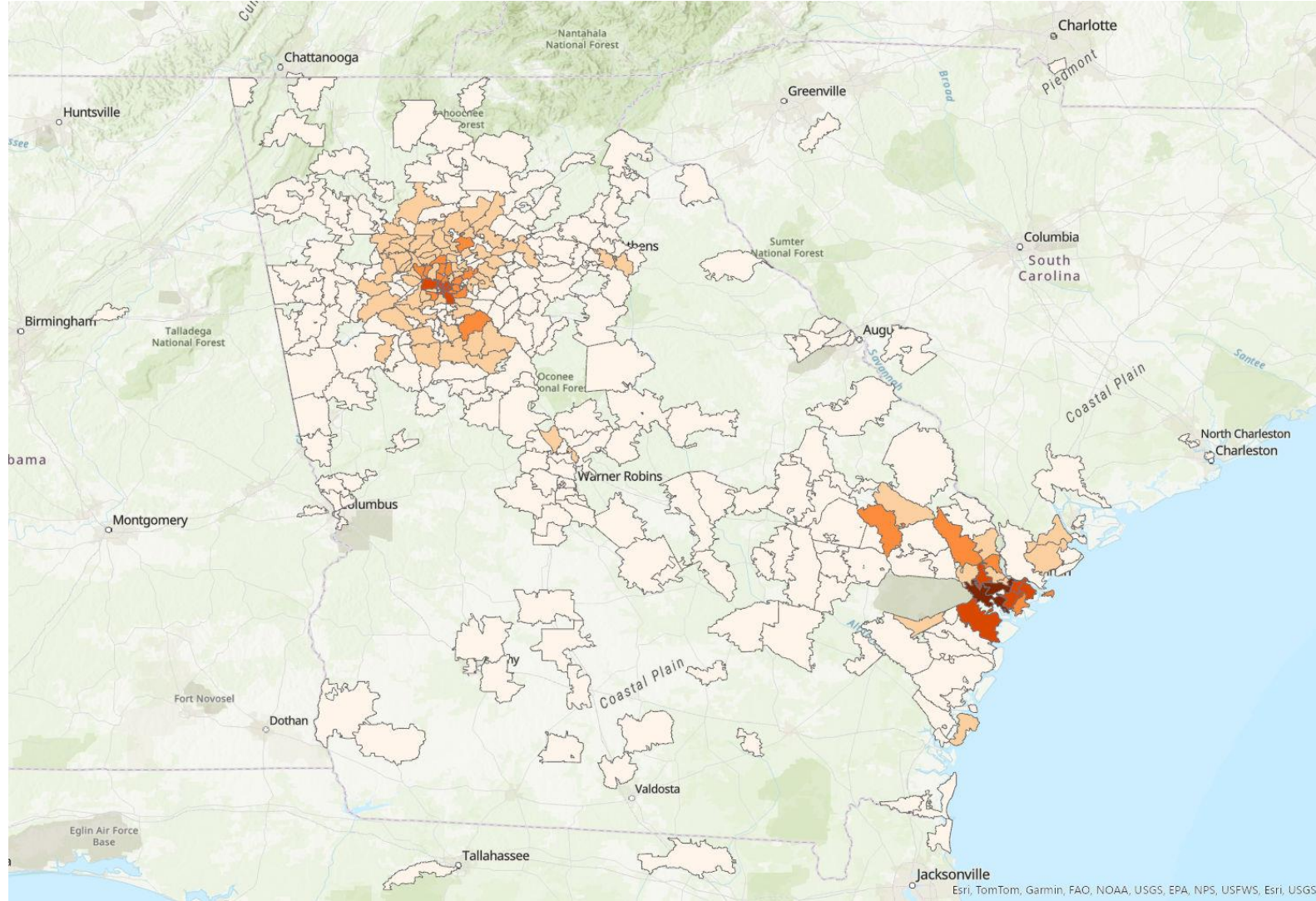
Travel Trends

- 65% of respondents travel between Atlanta and Savannah at least a few times per year by car, up to once per month
- Very few fly, notably because of the expense
- 86% of respondents have traveled by intercity rail; 28% have used Amtrak in Georgia

Service Preferences

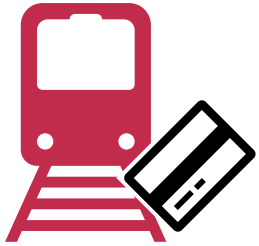
- Responses are split between preferring faster, more direct service and service with more stop opportunities
- Most respondents prefer a balance between implementing service sooner and achieving a high-quality service

Respondents' Zip Codes



Received responses from FL, AL, NC, TN, VA, and as far away as CA!

Passenger Rail Services



Rail Transit

- All-day frequent service
- Serves the densest urban areas
- Service based on headways (time between repeated trains)
- Most stations, closest together
- Regulated by the FTA



Commuter Rail

- Serves a major metro region
- Provides daily access for workers between suburbs and the city center during peak commute times
- Many stations, close together
- Regulated by the FTA



Intercity Passenger Rail

- Serves long distance trips and connects multiple major cities
- Stations are spaced further apart to preserve higher speeds and faster travel times
- Regulated by the FRA



Alternatives Development

Identifying the range of options to be studied



Alternatives Development

What is our study area?

Look at the big picture – identify the study area



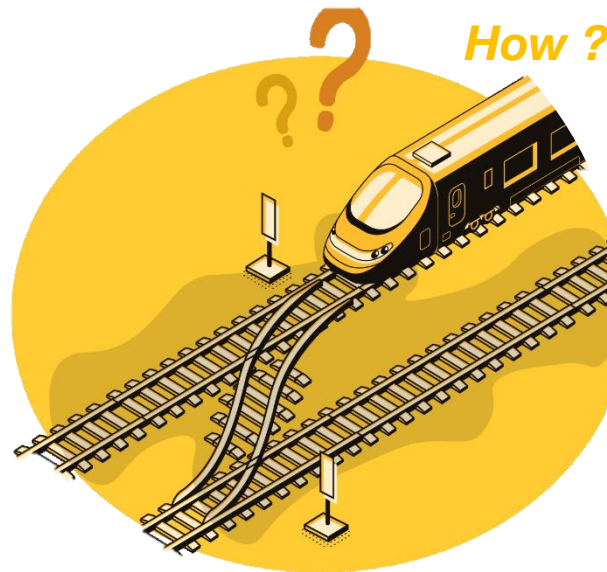
Where do the station markets exist?

Identify the universe of station markets within the study area

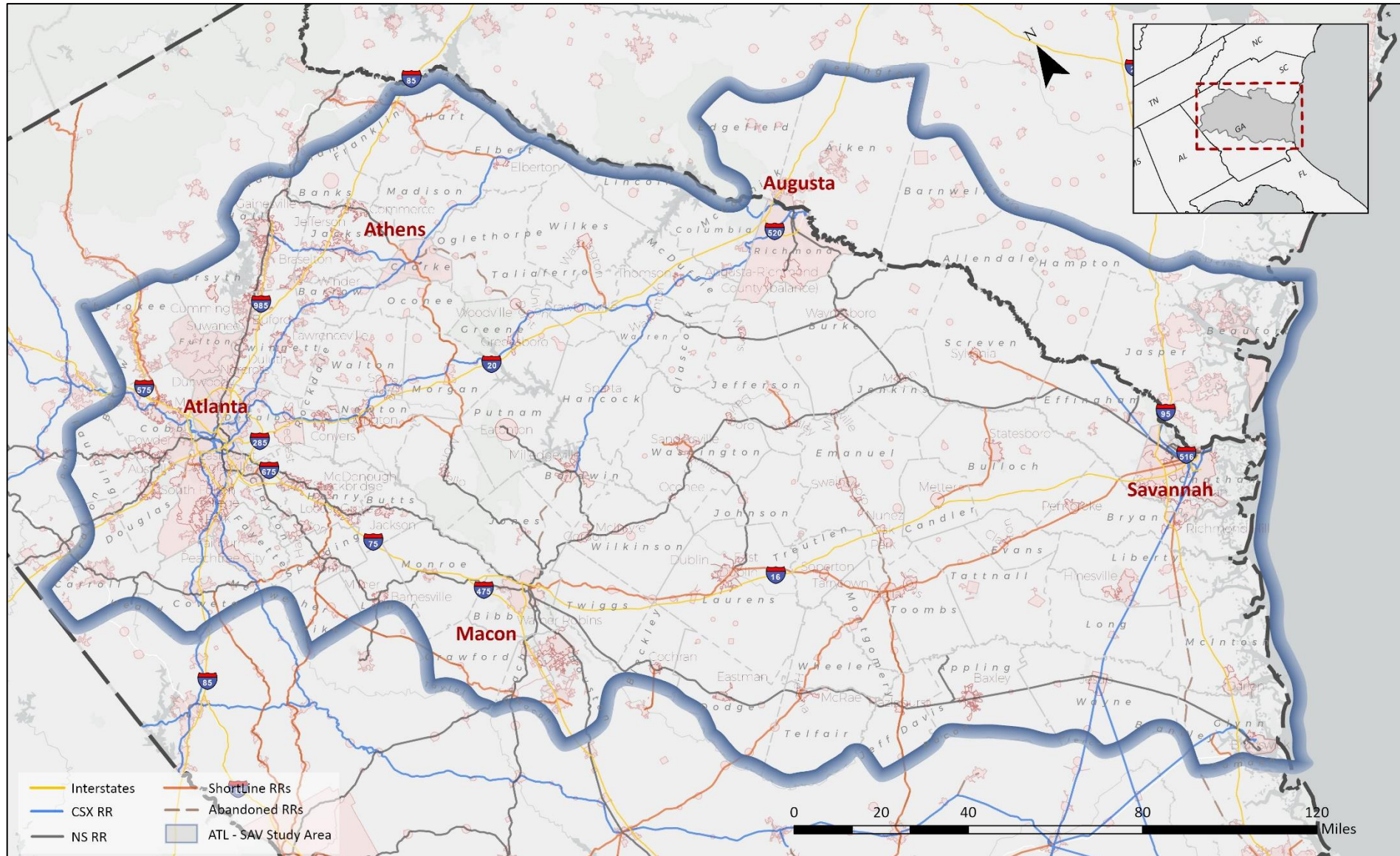


How do we evaluate various route options?

Considerations for comparing the various route options and station markets



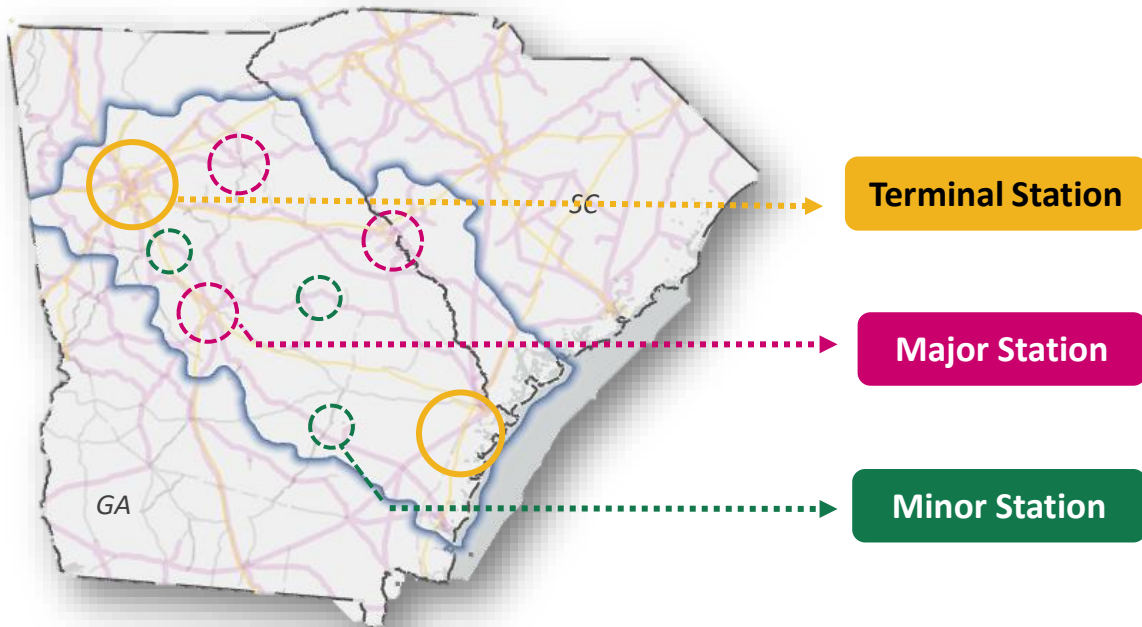
1 Study Area



Where would our stations be?

2 Identifying Station Markets

- Identify and assess a Universe of **Station Markets** ★



Terminal Station – Atlanta and Savannah

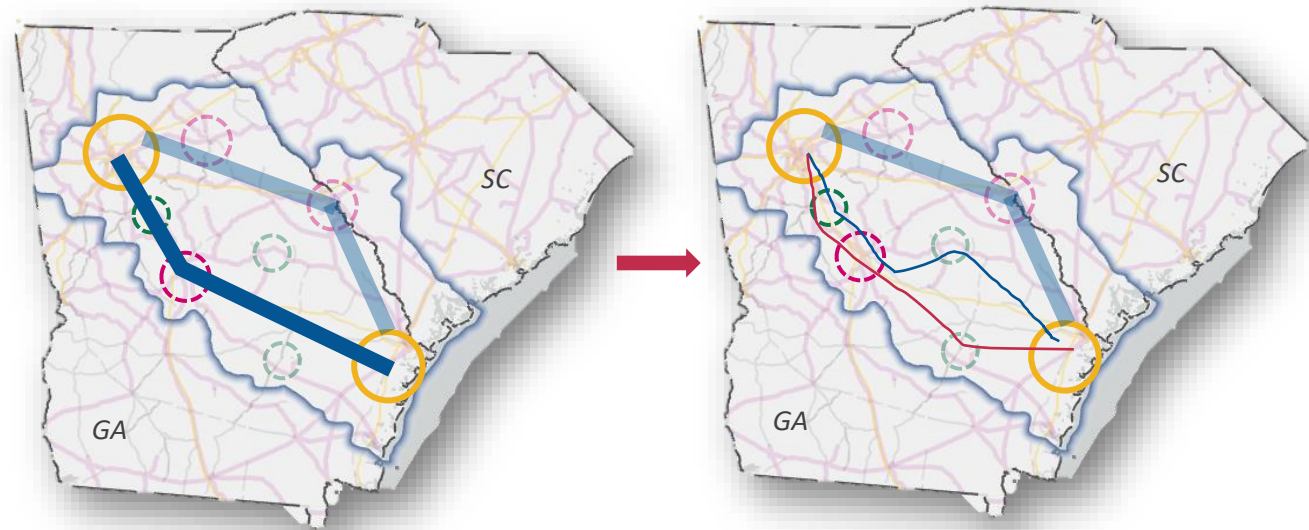
Major Station – highest scoring Station Markets that serve distinct, non-overlapping markets

Minor Station – Station Markets that do not rise to the level of Major Stations

Which routes makes the most sense?

3 Service Corridors & Route Options

- Create and assess **Service Corridors** linking **Major Stations** ★
- Determine and assess **Route Options** developed from the service corridors



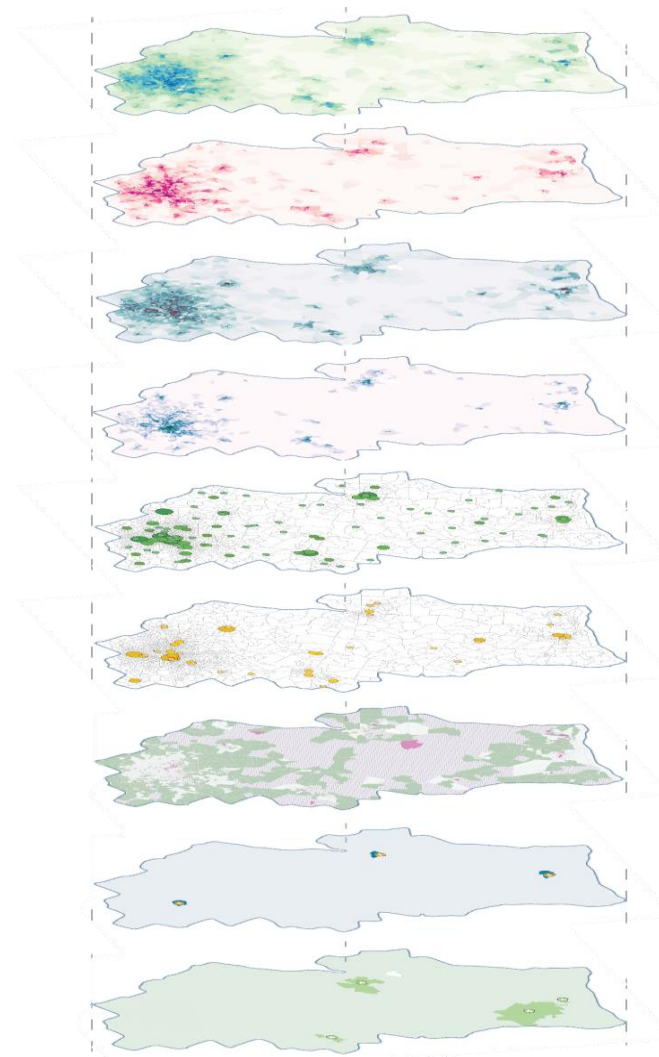
★ These steps will be discussed today

Diagrams are for illustrative purposes only.

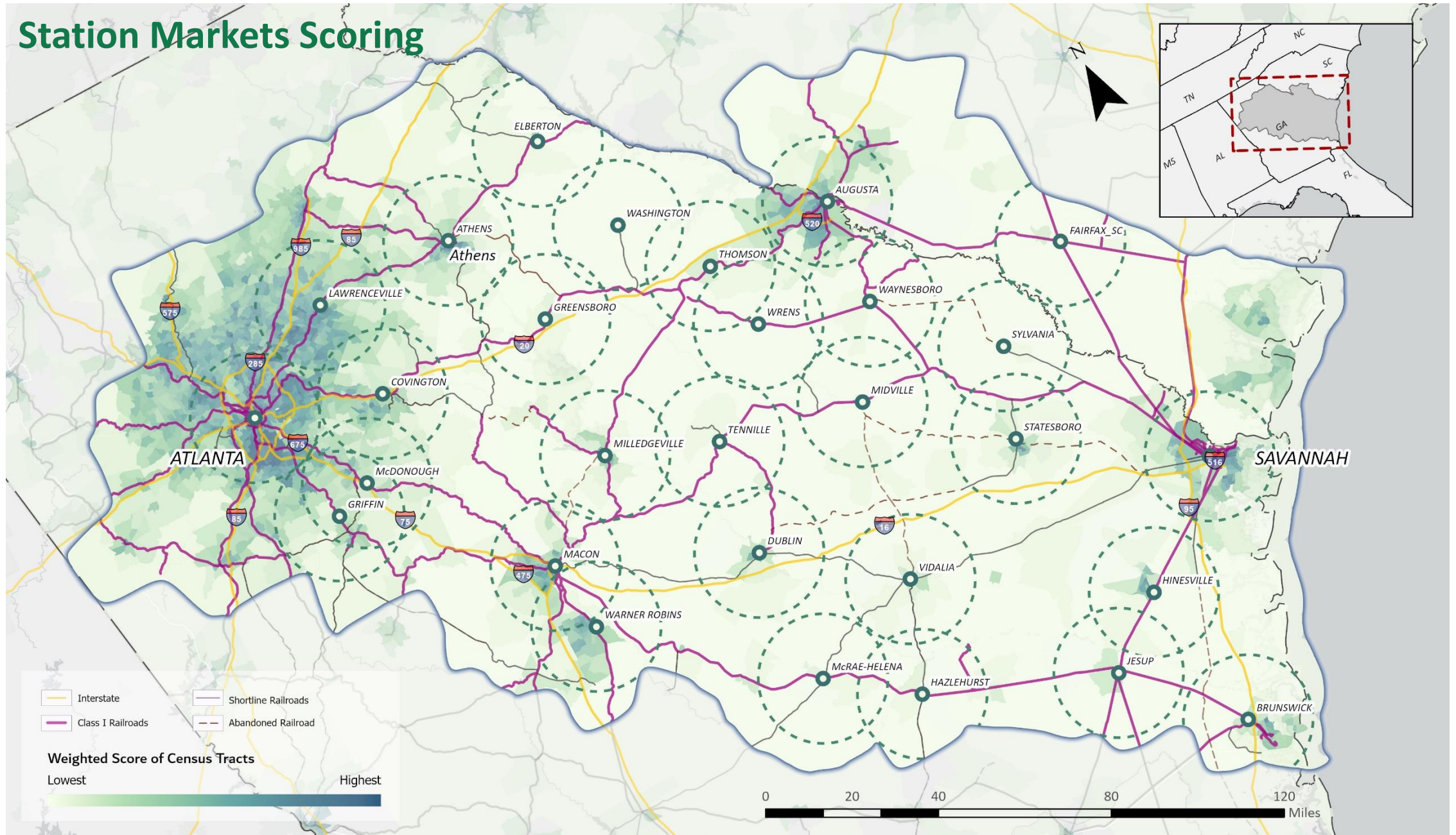
2 Identifying Station Markets

Several Demographic and Socioeconomic factors were analyzed to determine suitable locations for station markets.

- 1. Population Centers
- 2. Job Centers
- 3. Tourism
- 4. Households without Vehicle Access
- 5. Healthcare Facilities
- 6. Educational Facilities
- 7. Historically Disadvantaged Communities
- 8. Airports
- 9. Military Installations

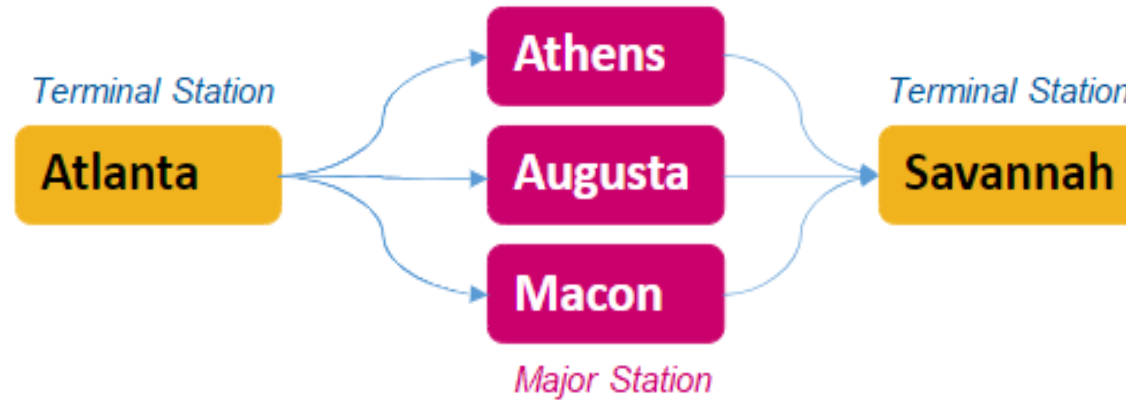


Station Markets Scoring



3.1 Service Corridors Development

Once the Terminal and Major Stations are identified, the next steps include -
Create and Assess Service Corridors that linked Major Stations



PRIMARY SERVICE CORRIDORS

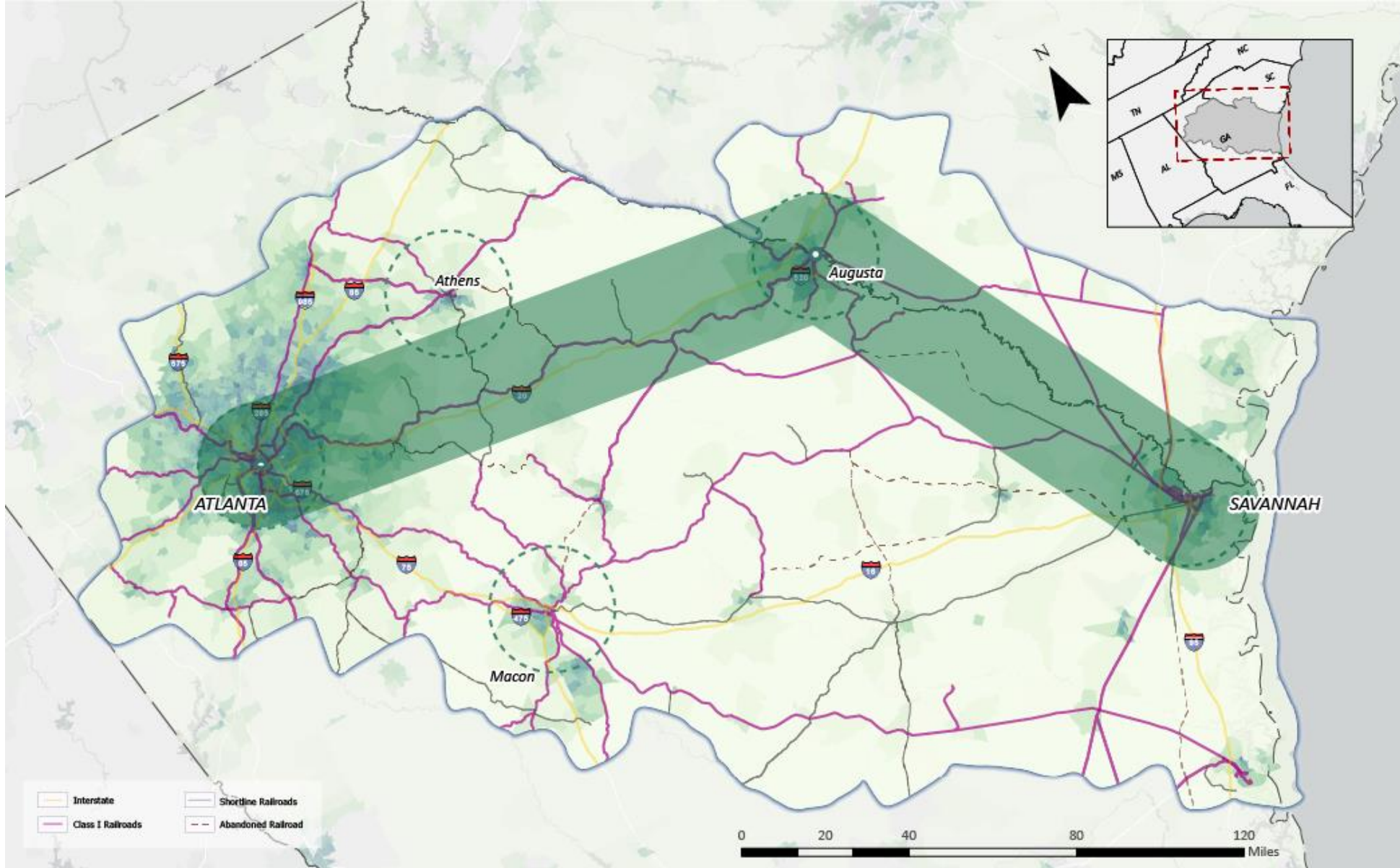
Corridor	Major Stations			
ATL-AUG-SAV	Atlanta	Augusta	Savannah	
ATL-ATH-SAV	Atlanta	Athens	Savannah	
ATL-MCN-SAV	Atlanta	Macon	Savannah	
ATL-ATH-AUG-SAV	Atlanta	Athens	Augusta	Savannah
ATL-SAV	Atlanta	Savannah		

1 Major Station

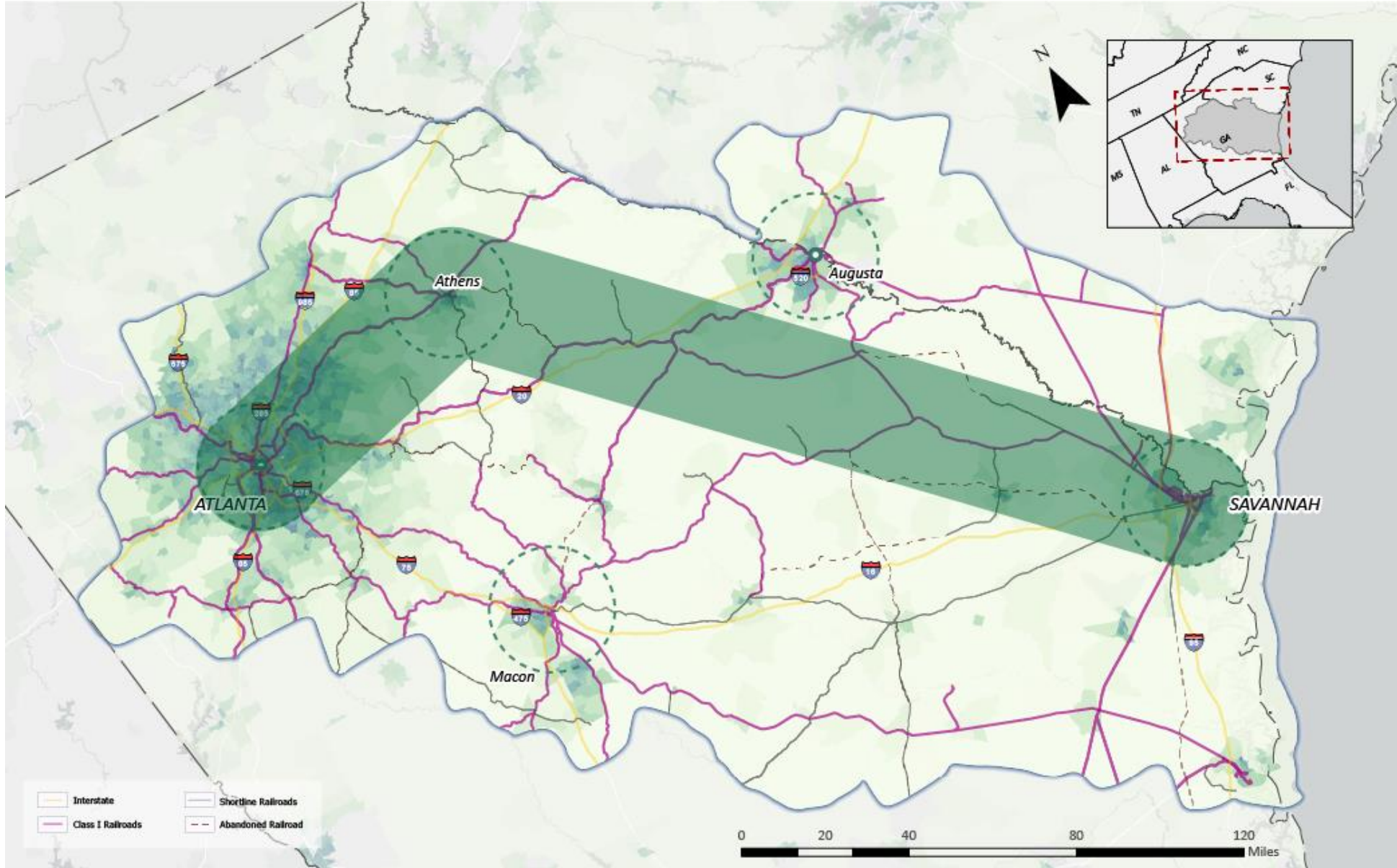
2 Major Stations

Direct Corridor

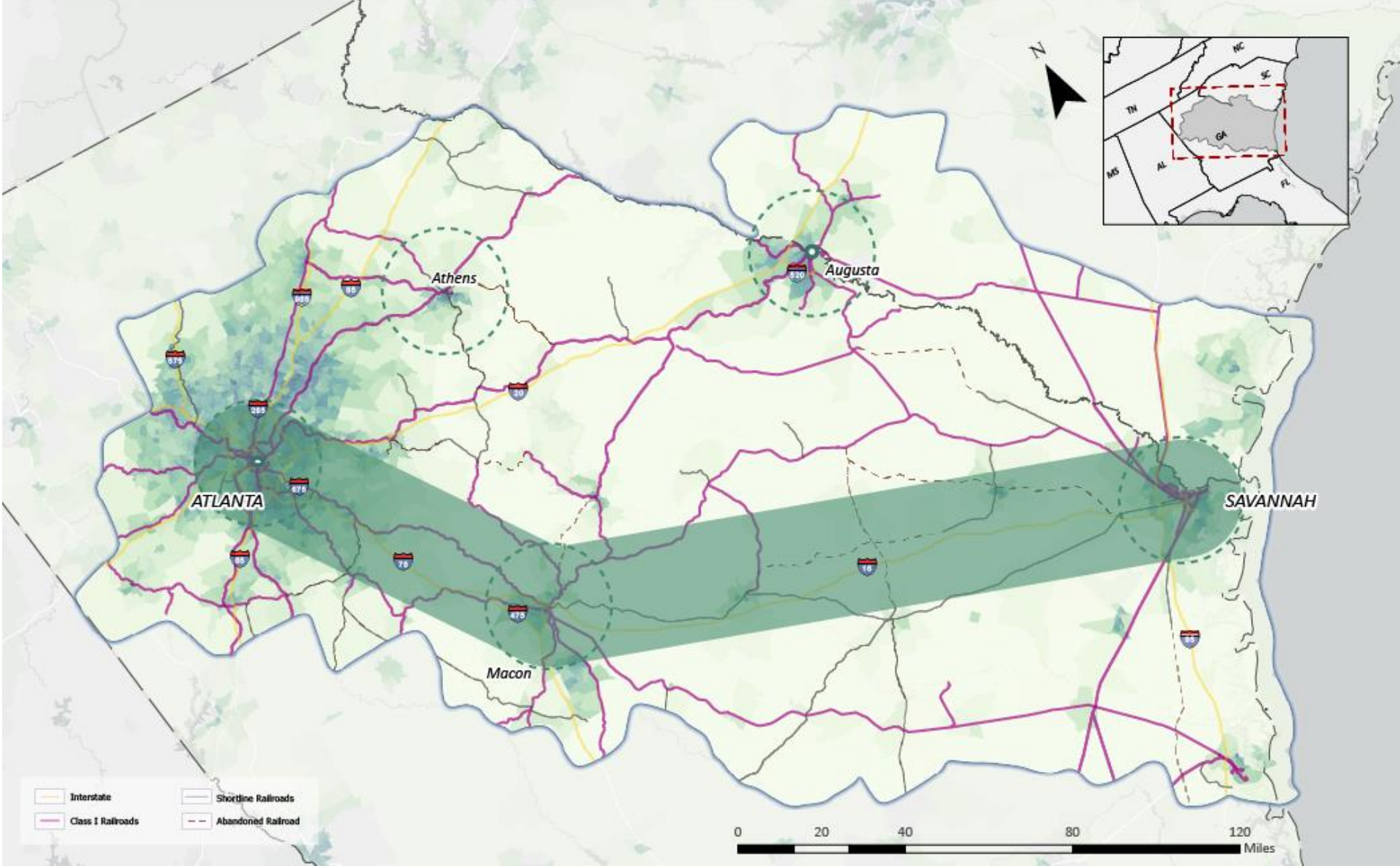
ATL – AUG – SAV



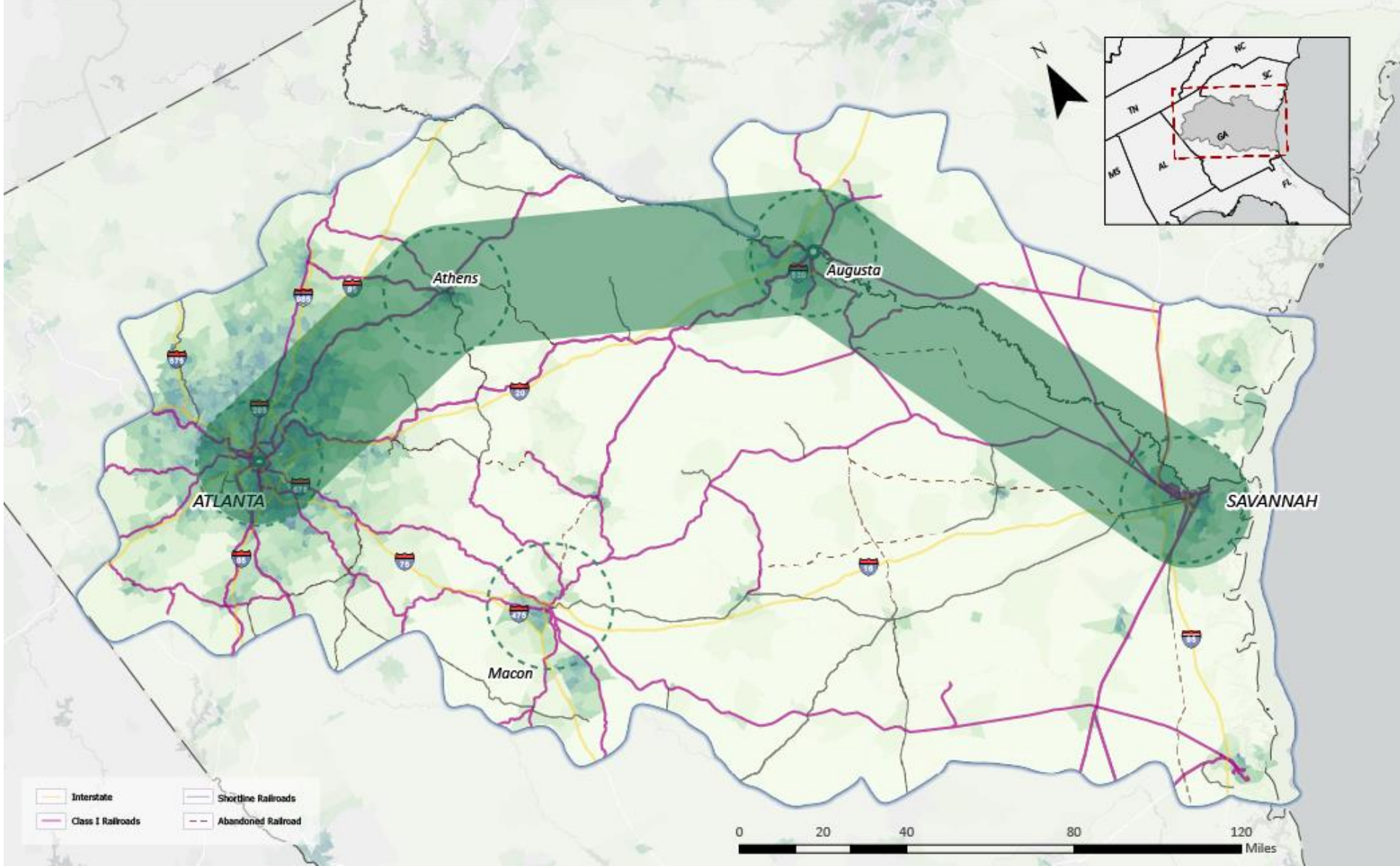
ATL – ATH – SAV



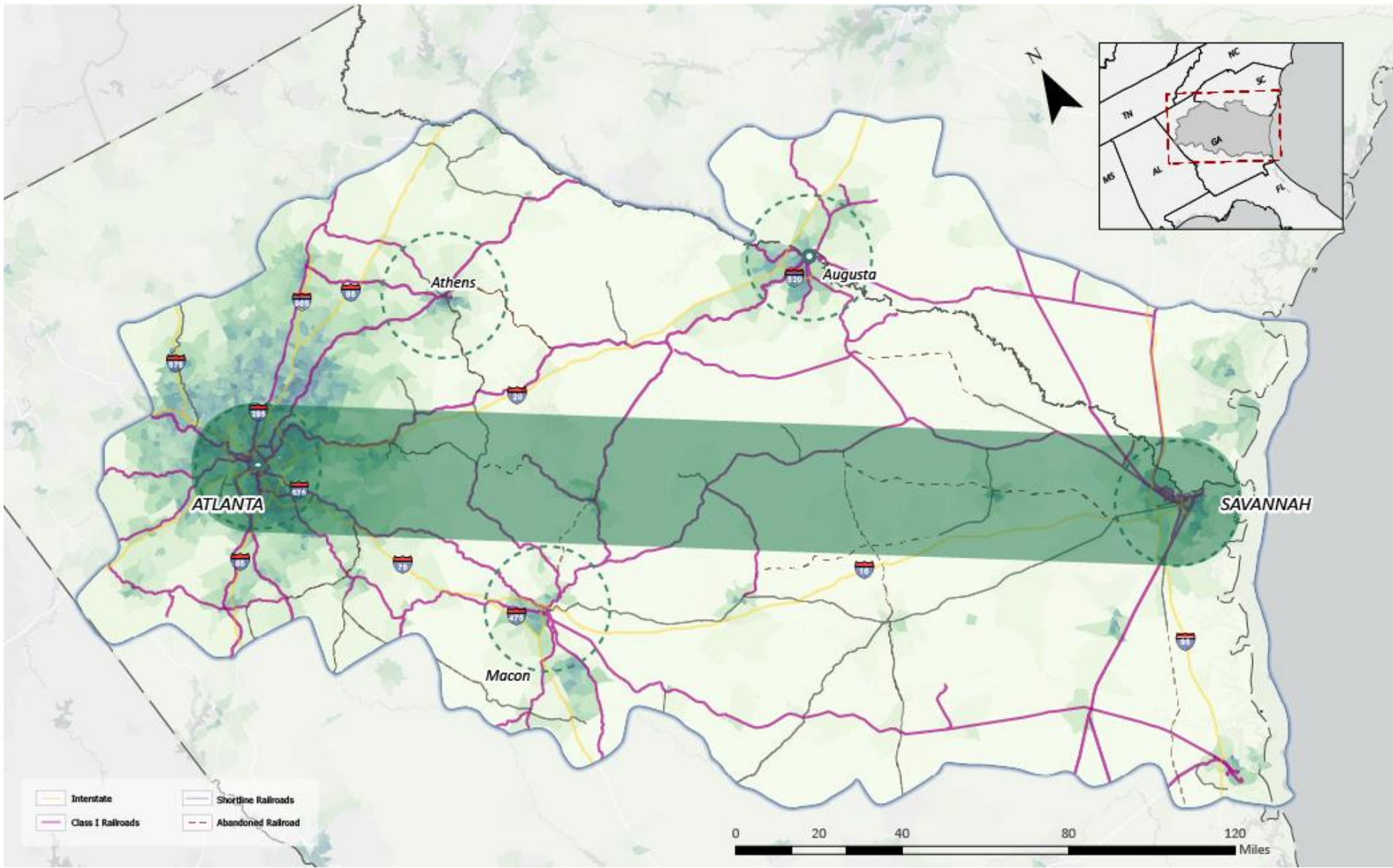
ATL – MCN – SAV



ATL – ATH – AUG – SAV



ATL – SAV



Route Options Development

What Where How

Determine and Assess Route Options

Each Service Corridor, will examine multiple Route Options that serve the exact same major destinations, but they have very different routings, distances, and serve different minor stations.

Assess the Infrastructure of the Routes

Examine the type of existing rail infrastructure (if any) along the specific routes.

These types of Route Infrastructure can be categorized as:

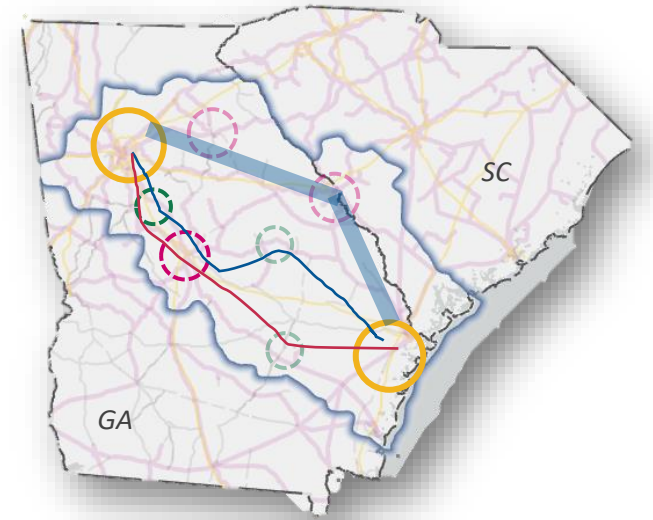
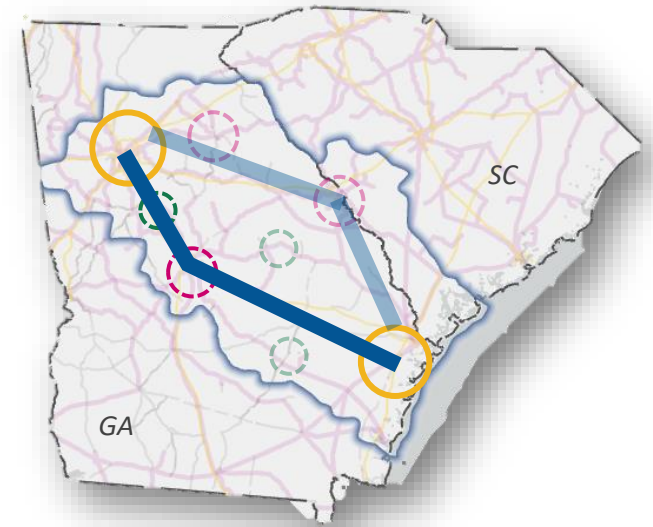
Class I Railroads

Short Line Railroads

Abandoned Railroads

Greenfield Routes

Highway Routes

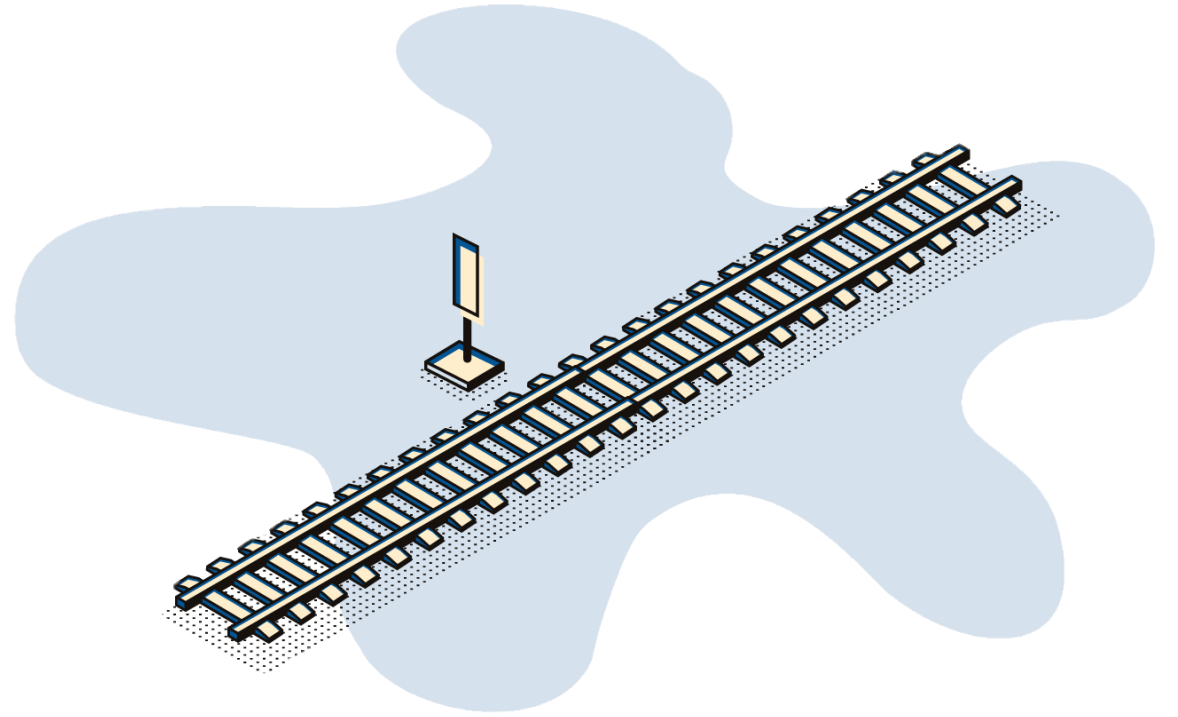


Class I Railroads

- *Existing Infrastructure*

Short Line Railroads

- *Existing Infrastructure*

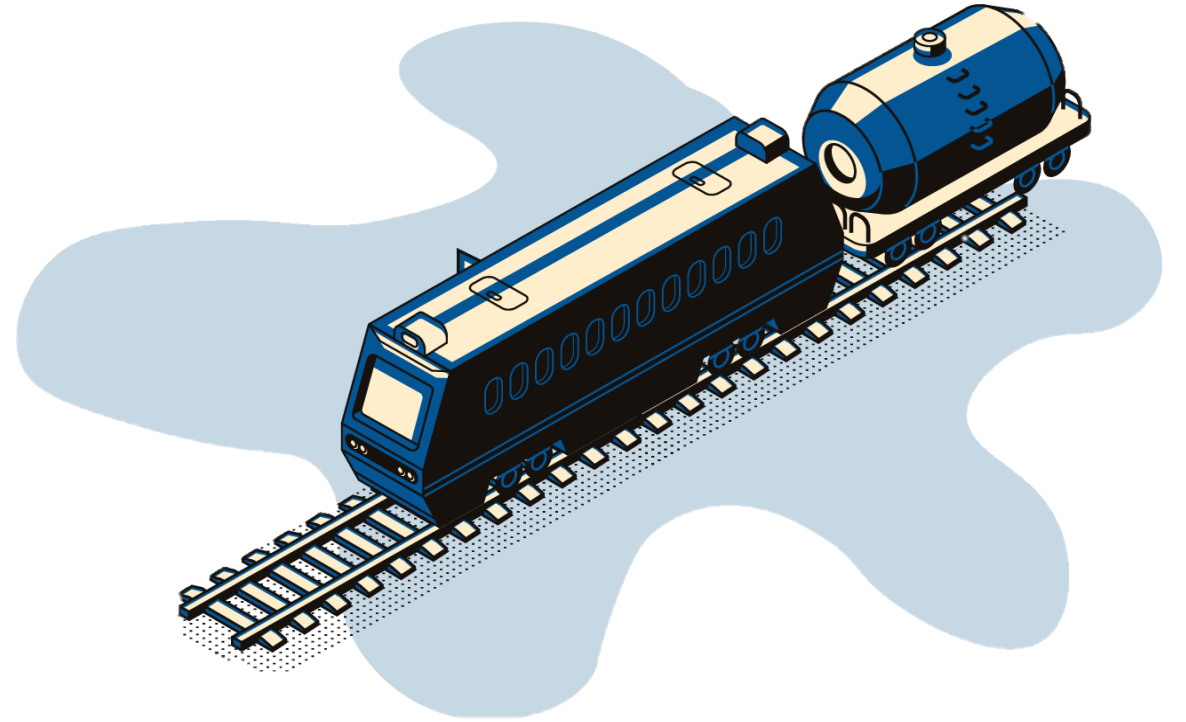


Class I Railroads

- *Existing Infrastructure*
- *Provide long distance freight services*

Short Line Railroads

- *Existing Infrastructure*
- *Provide 'first-mile last-mile' connectivity to the rail system: connects local industries with lesser service needs to the Class I network*

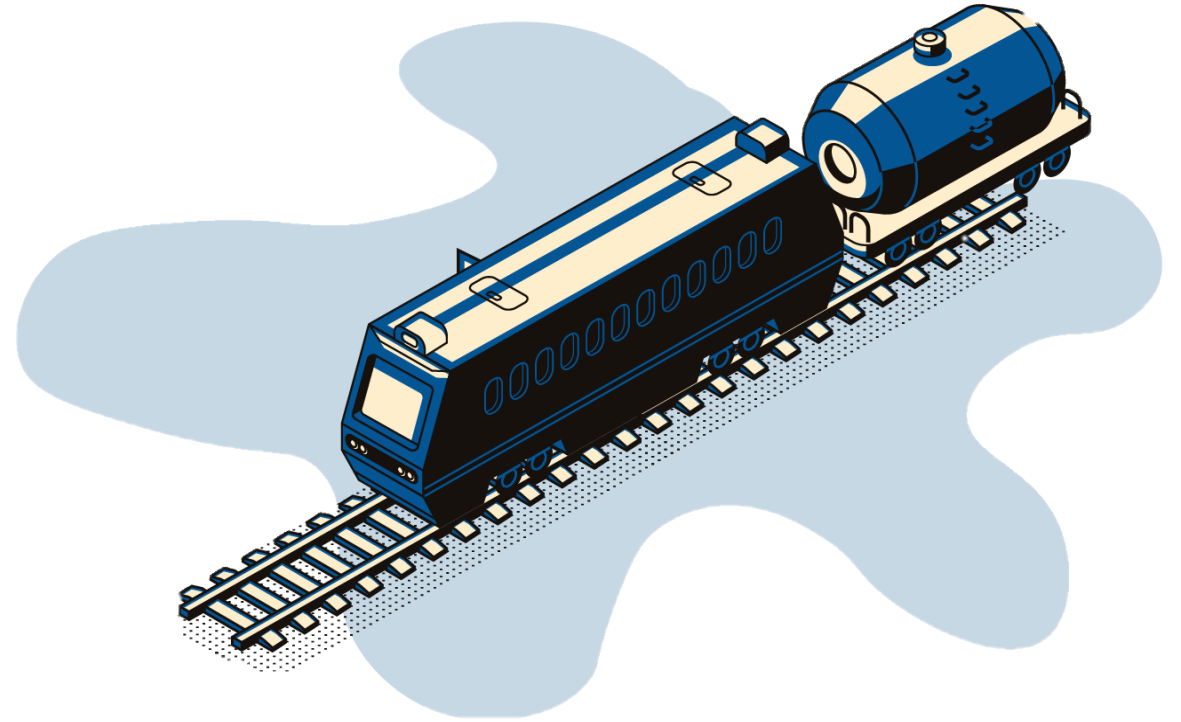


Class I Railroads

- *Existing Infrastructure*
- *Provide long distance freight services*
- *6 Class I railroads in North America, two operate in Georgia*

Short Line Railroads

- *Existing Infrastructure*
- *Provide 'first-mile last-mile' connectivity to the rail system: connects local industries with lesser service needs to the Class I network*
- *25+ Short Lines in Georgia*
- *Support economic development in rural Georgia*



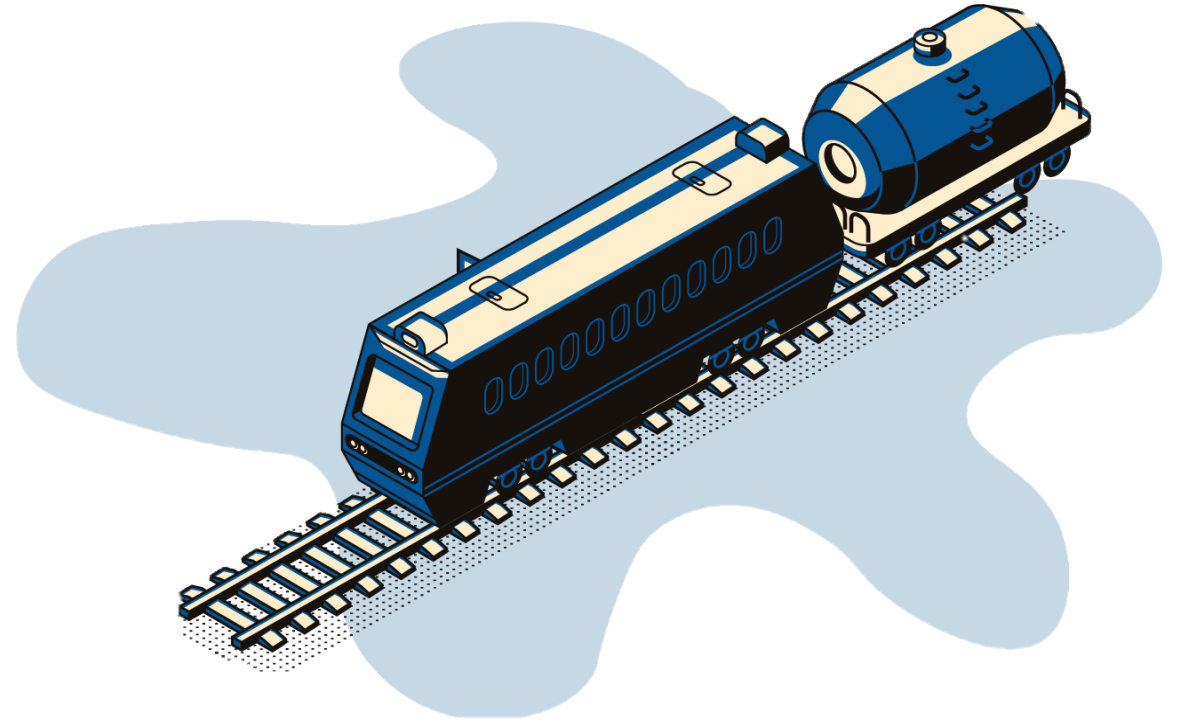
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“ Shared – Use ”



Class I Railroads

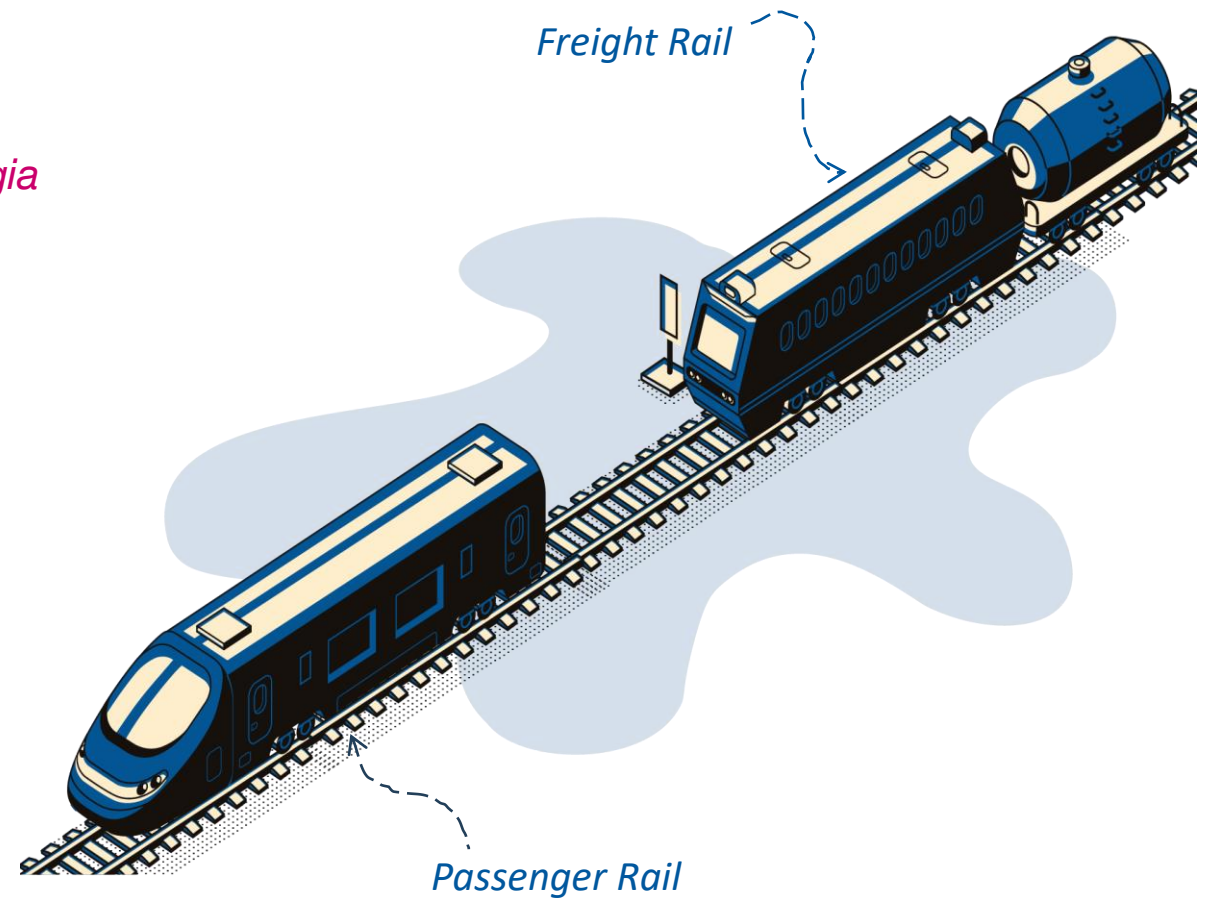
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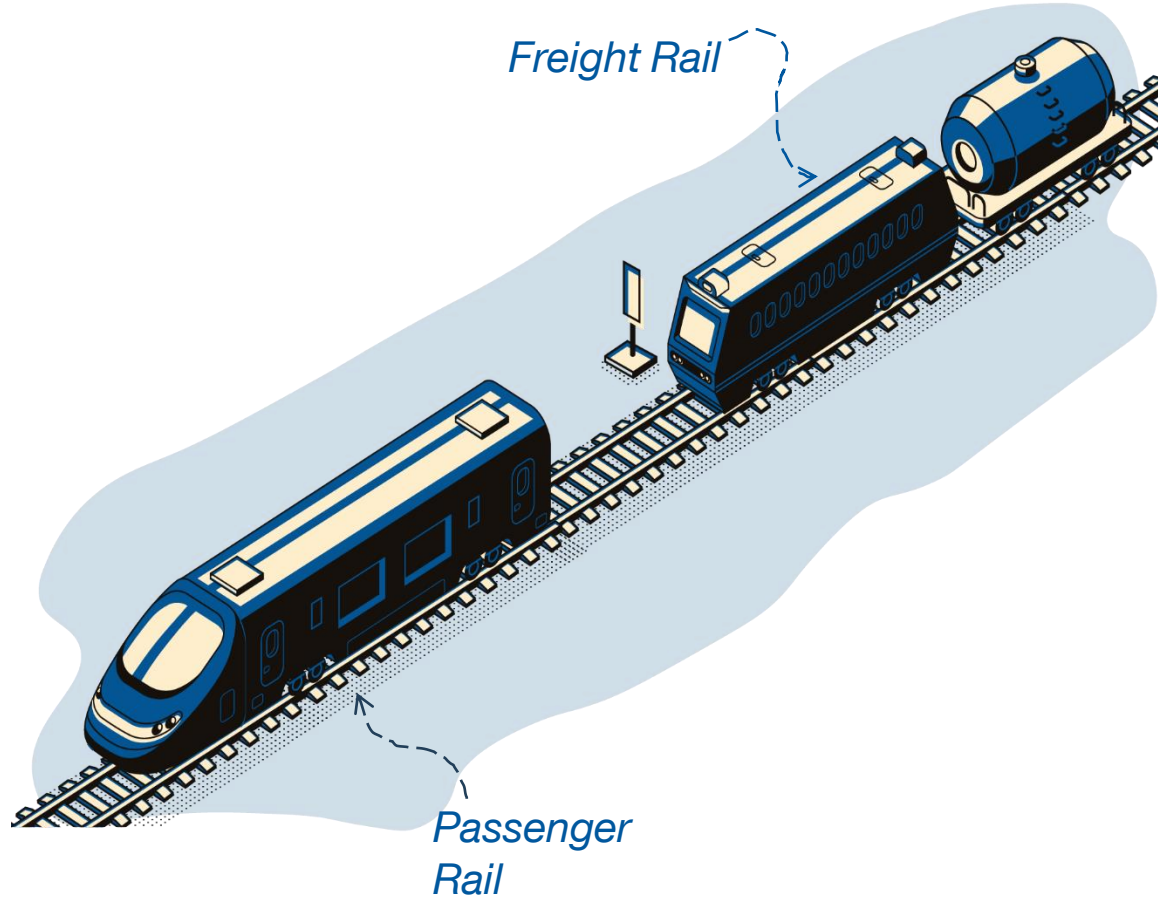
“ Shared – Use ”

Infrastructure shared by Freight and Passenger Rail Service

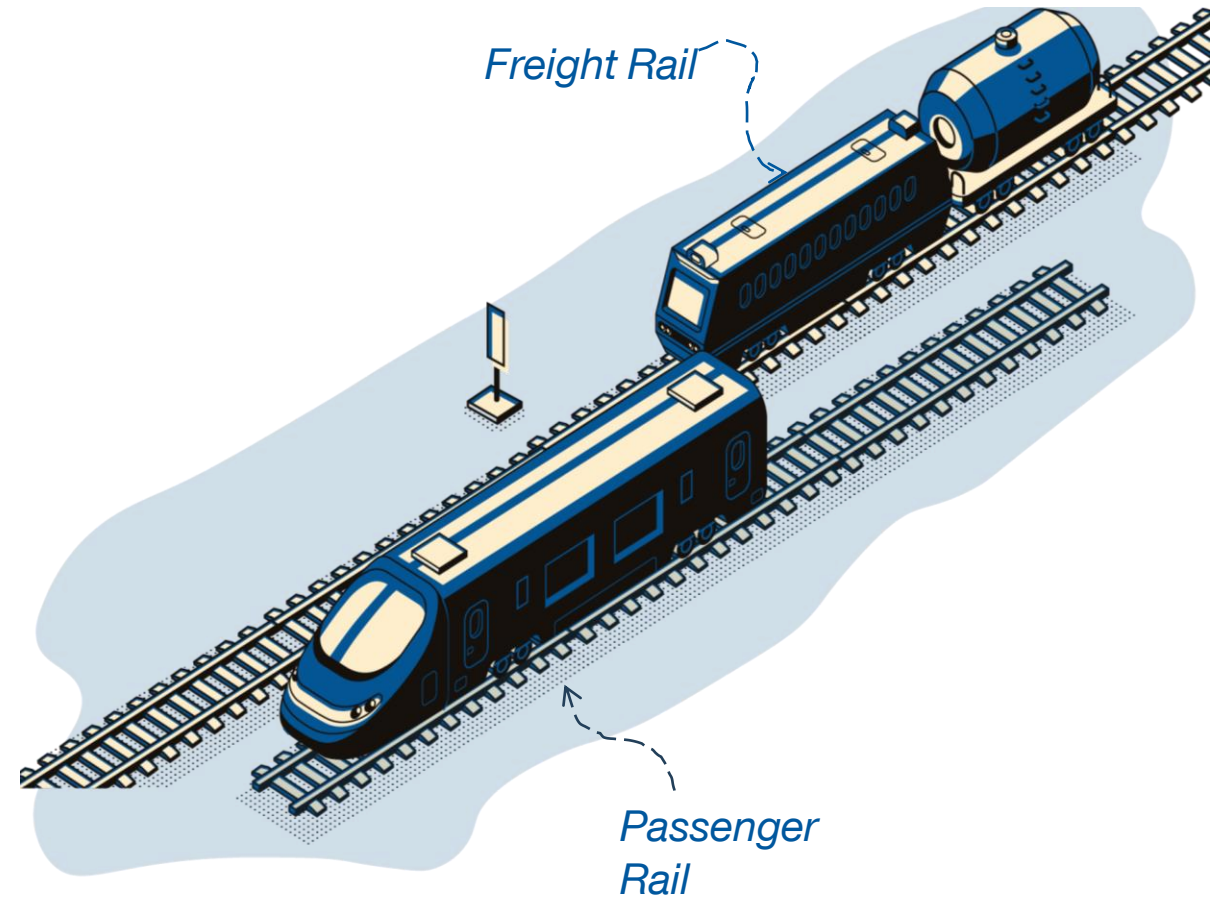


“ Shared – Use ”

Infrastructure shared by Freight and Passenger Rail Service



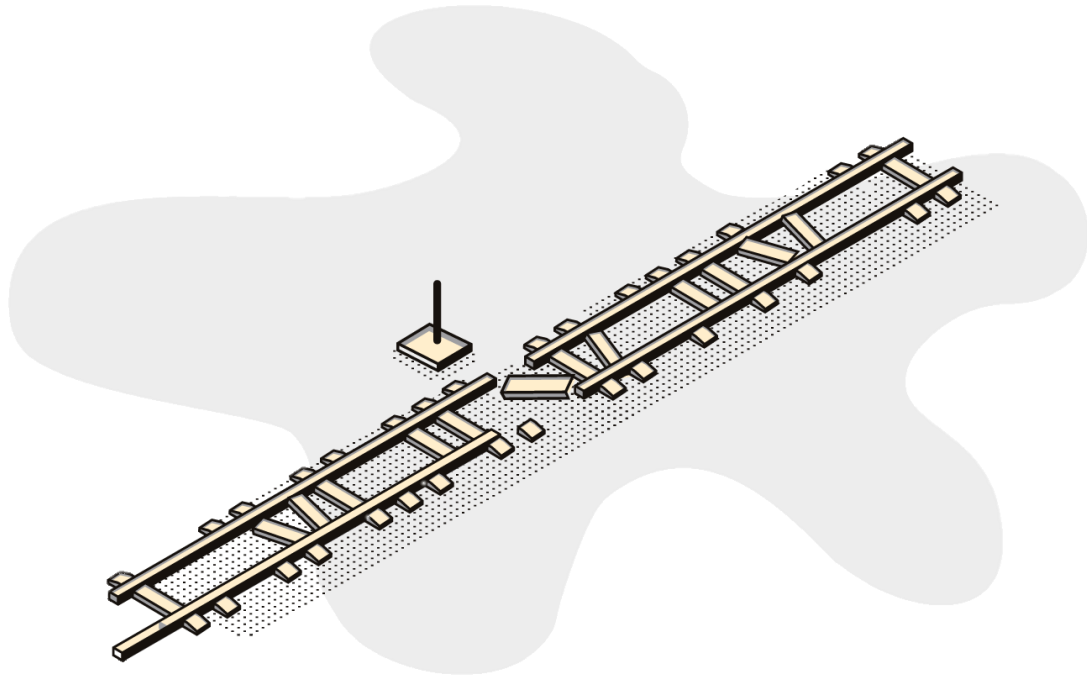
Single track service at different schedule



Double track within the same ROW corridor

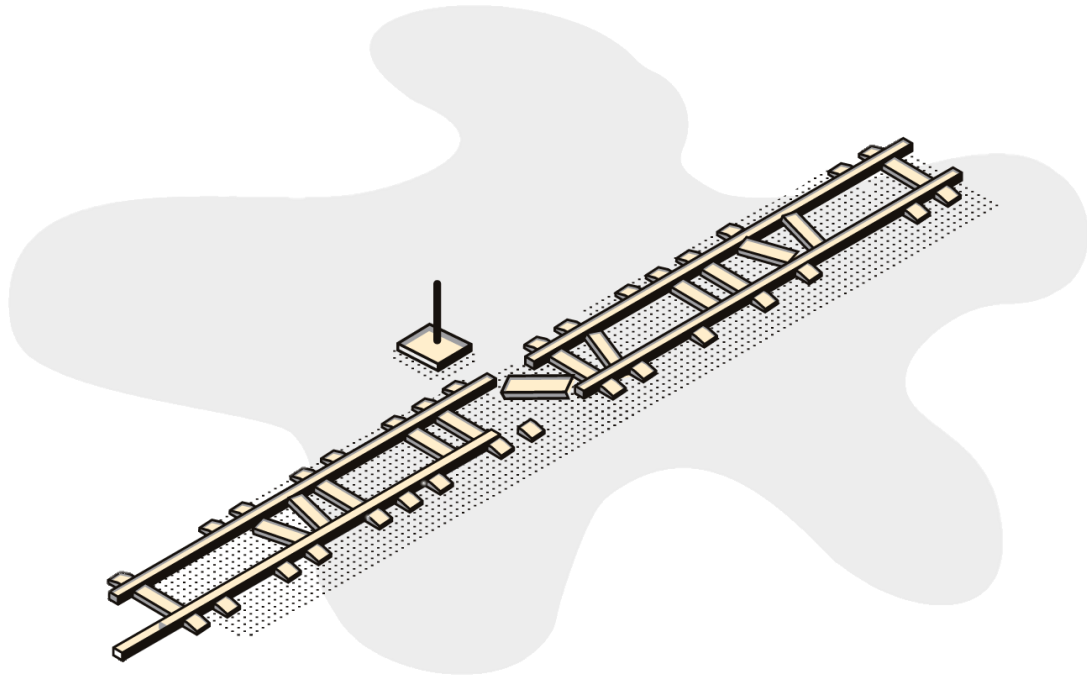
Abandoned Railroads

- *May include existing infrastructure like tracks or bridges*



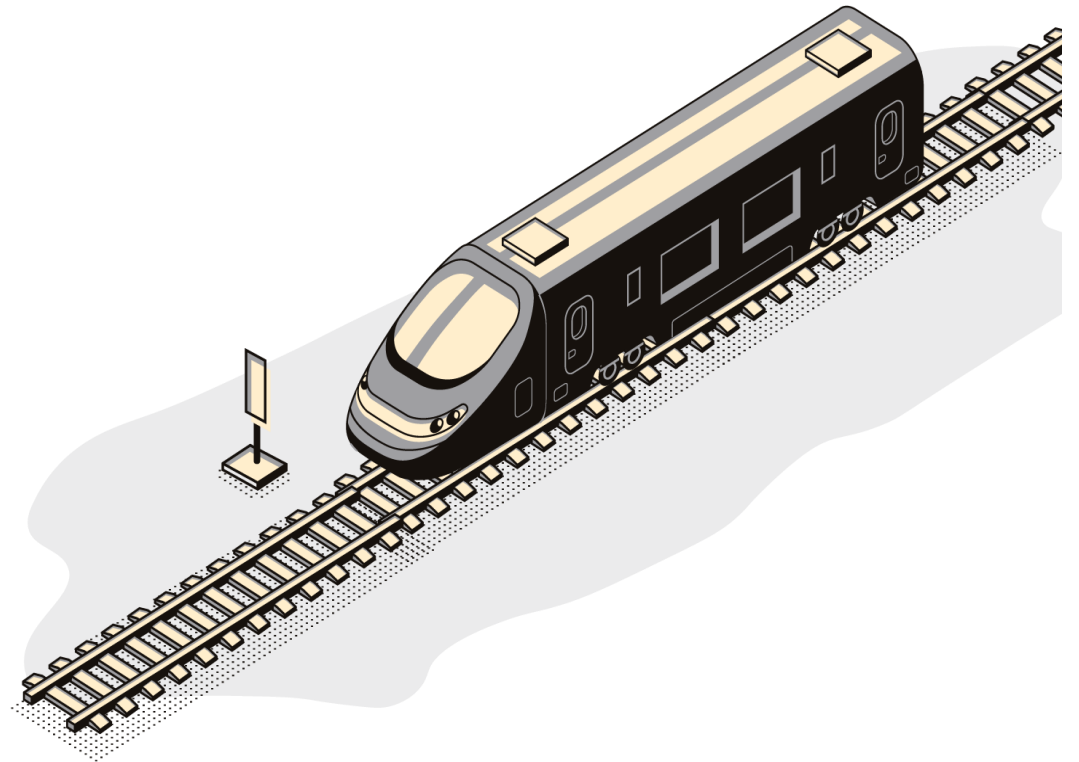
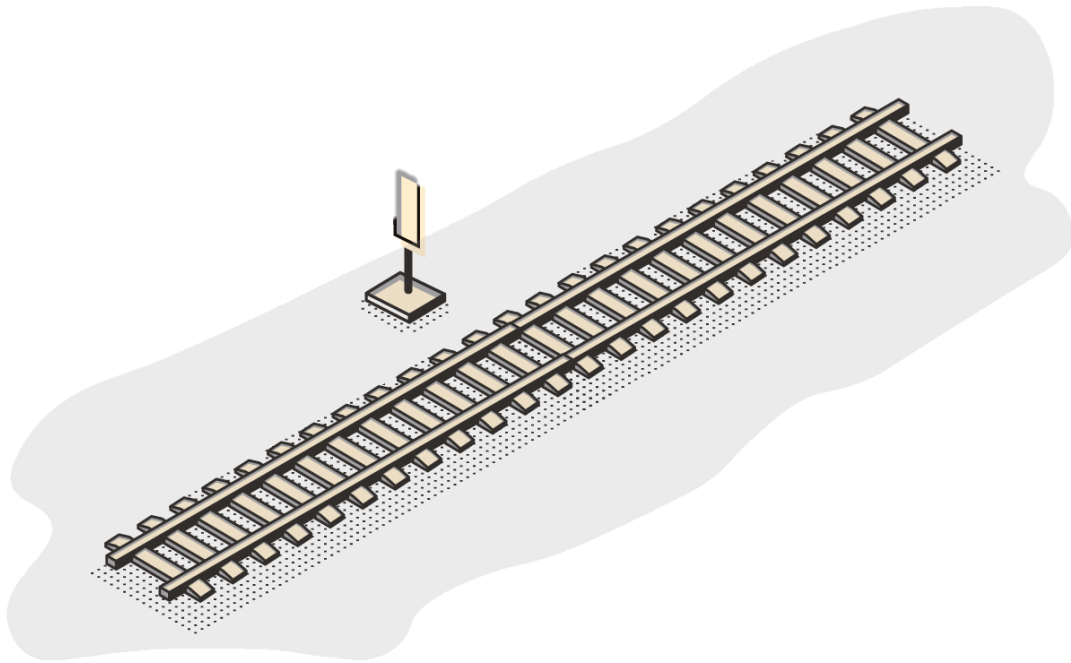
Abandoned Railroads

- *May include existing infrastructure like tracks or bridges*
- *Much of this infrastructure is often damaged, outdated or missing entirely*



Abandoned Railroads

- *May include existing infrastructure like tracks or bridges*
- *Much of this infrastructure is often damaged, outdated or missing entirely*
- *Requires infrastructure assessments and upgrades to establish new service*



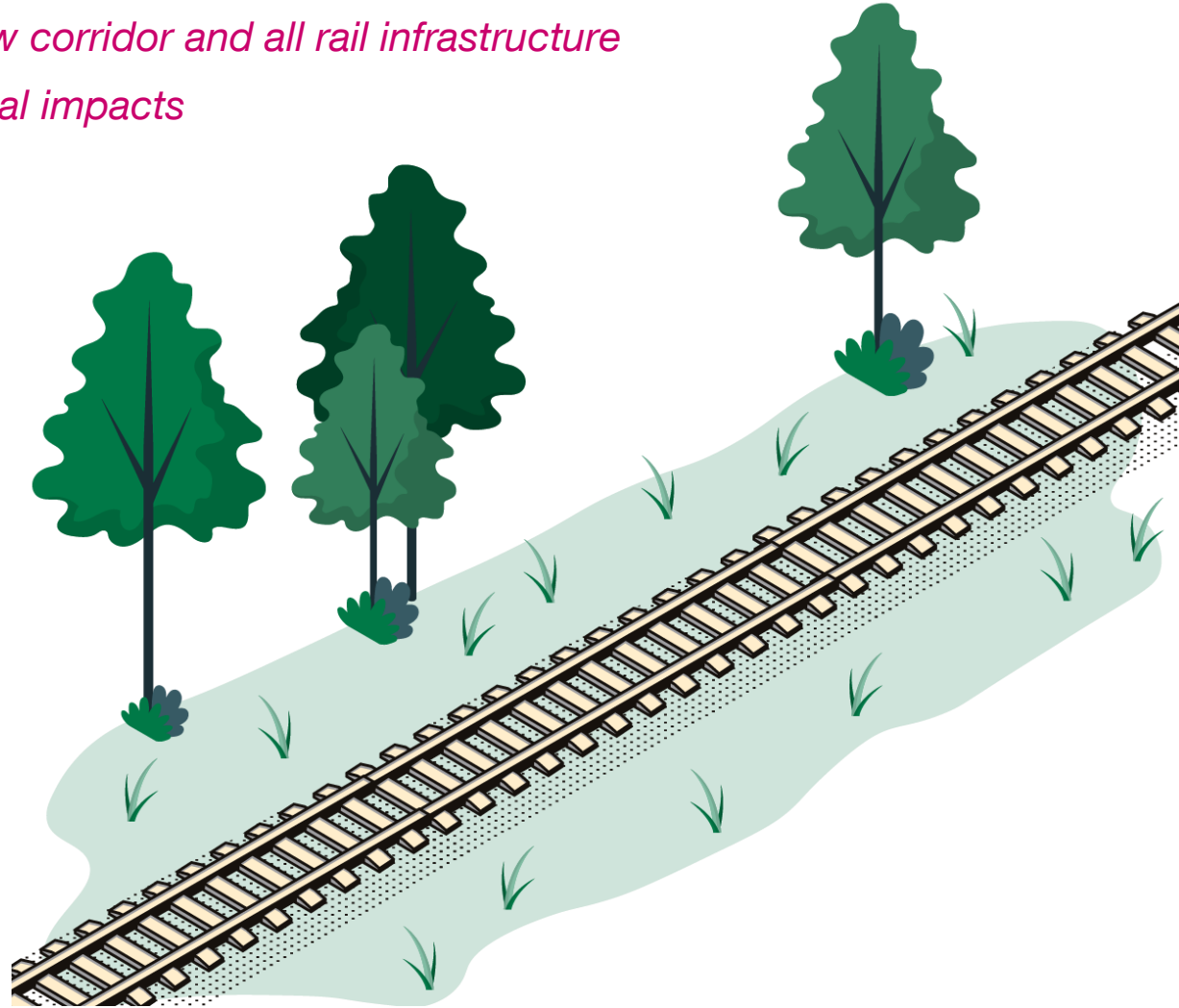
Greenfield Routes

- No Existing Corridor or Infrastructure



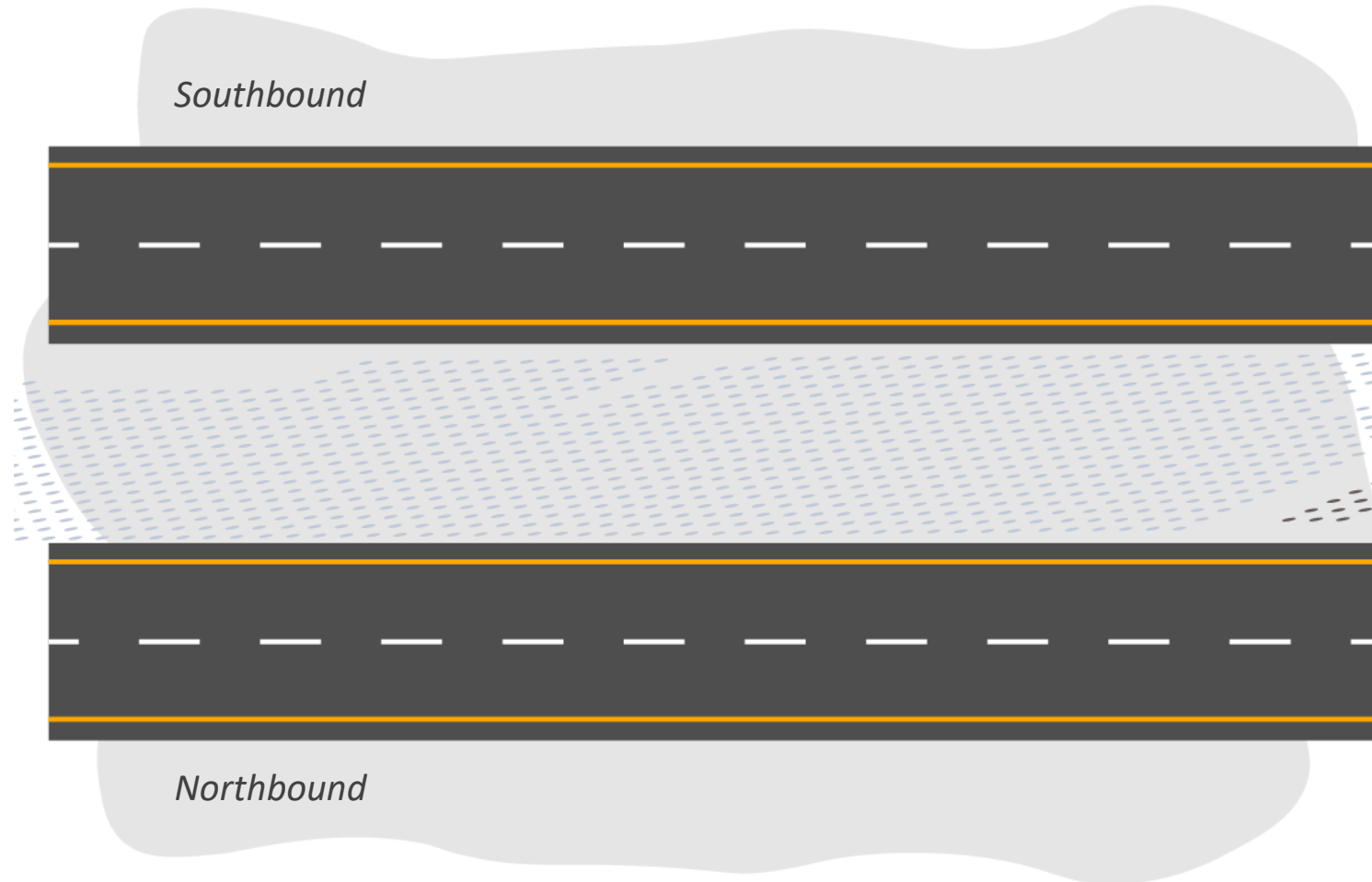
Greenfield Routes

- *No Existing Infrastructure*
- *Requires establishing new corridor and all rail infrastructure*
- *Potential for environmental impacts*



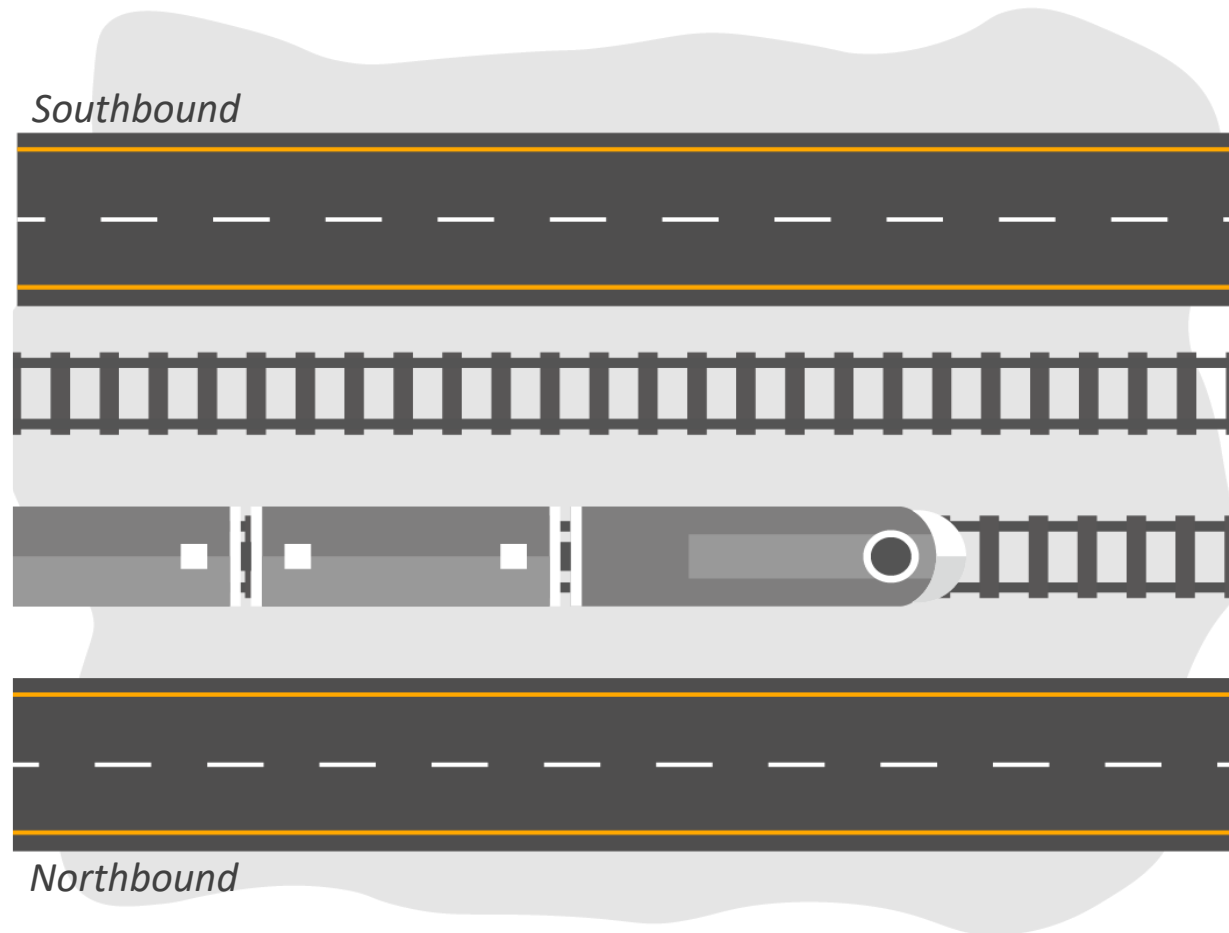
Highway Routes

- *No Existing Rail Infrastructure along the Interstate, right-of-way may be available in some locations*



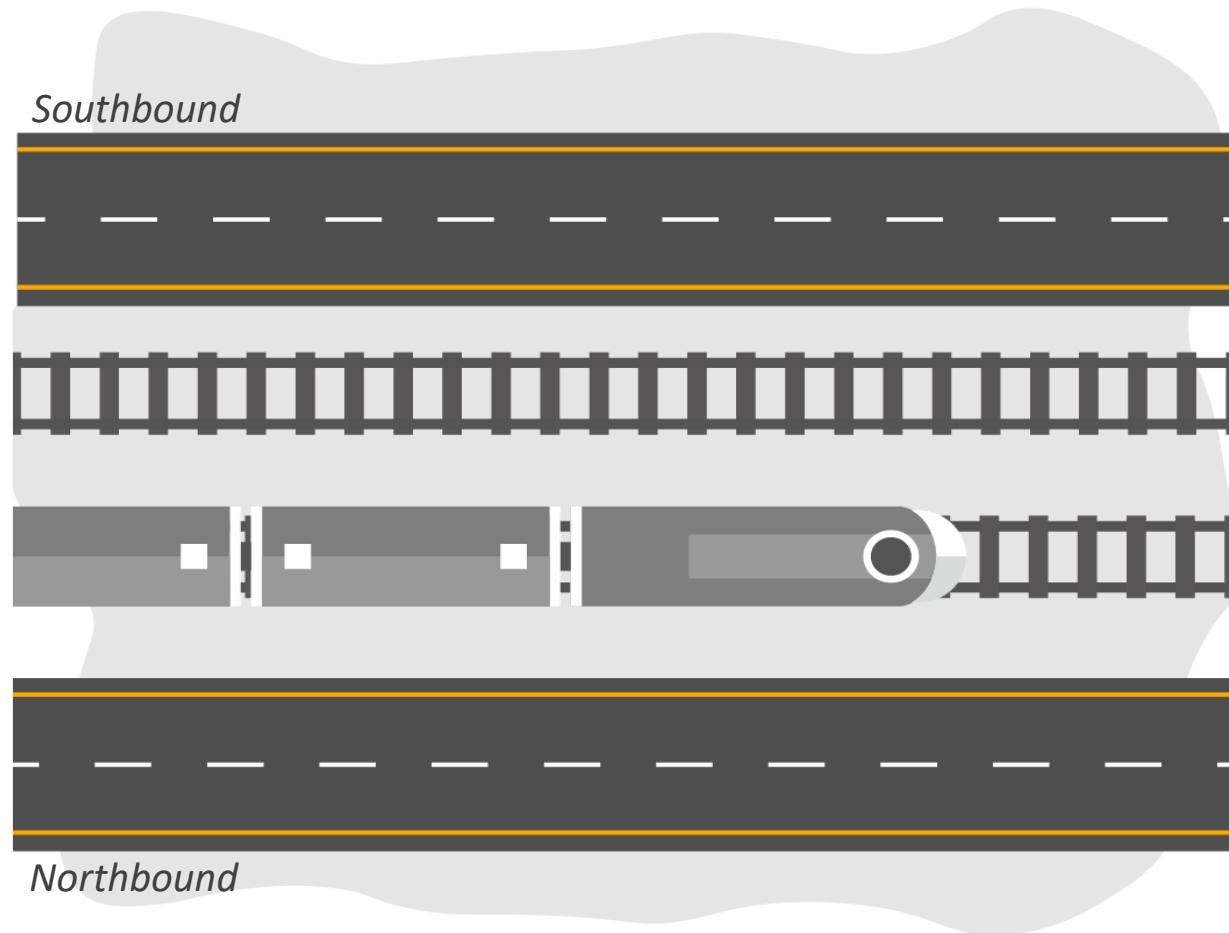
Highway Routes

- *No Existing Rail Infrastructure along the Interstate, right-of-way may be available in some locations*
- *Requires establishing new infrastructure, potential modifications to the interstate*



Highway Routes

- *No Existing Rail Infrastructure along the Interstate, right-of-way may be available in some locations*
- *Requires establishing new infrastructure, potential modifications to the interstate*
- *Can be median-running or side-running*



Multi-Use Trail Opportunities

- Opportunities for using ROW for multi-use trail
- Potential partnerships:
 - Bike-ped Organizations
 - Local Governments
 - Others



WOW Trail, NH



Frisco Trail, AR

Alternatives Evaluation

What considerations will be used to assess the alternatives?



Alternatives Evaluation

Intercity Rail Route & Service Considerations:

Rail Ridership Markets

Are the right combinations of users, destinations, and service present for robust ridership?



Specific Destination Pairs

Aside from Atlanta to Savannah, are other specific intermediate travel markets served?



Existing Land Use / Transportation Corridors

Does the route proposed follow existing rail transportation corridors, and if not, how compatible are the land uses?



Multimodal Connections

Do the routes and stations connect well to other transportation modes like Airports, Urban and Rural Transit, and other rail services?



Environmental Considerations

Are there major known environmental concerns, or does the route pass through probable areas of concern?



Prior Planning Efforts

Do the routes align with previous planning for the larger region and/or do they align with local planning efforts?



Travel Times / Competitiveness

Do the routes offer competitive travel times to other modes of travel?



Ease of Implementation

Are there known issues that would preclude starting rail service over the route, and what is the magnitude of mitigating those issues?



Alternatives Evaluation

Considerations for Analysis:

- **Are all Considerations created equally?**
- **If not, how do we score the Considerations?**

Rail Ridership Markets

Specific Destination Pairs

Multimodal Connections

Existing Land Use / Transportation Corridors

Environmental Considerations

Prior Planning Efforts

Travel Times / Competitiveness

Ease of Implementation

Alternatives Evaluation

Weighting the Considerations for Analysis:

Highest Weight,
Greatest Impact

Average weight,
average impact

Lower weight, lower
impact

Please tell us
what you think in
the poll!

Rail Ridership Markets

Specific Destination Pairs

Multimodal Connections

Existing Land Use / Transportation Corridors

Environmental Considerations

Prior Planning Efforts

Travel Times / Competitiveness

Ease of Implementation

Opportunities and Challenges

How have other states implemented passenger rail?

What unique opportunities and challenges exist in Georgia?



NC by Train Piedmont

NC by Train Piedmont Service

Extents	Charlotte to Raleigh
First Service	May 26, 1995
Ridership	641,000 (2023)
Current Operator	NCDOT / Amtrak
Service frequency	Every 3 to 4 Hours
Distance Traveled	173 miles
Average Journey Time	3 Hours
Stops	9
Max Speed	79 mph
Ownership	NCRR



Ten Daily Trips Between Raleigh & Charlotte

EFFECTIVE JAN. 13, 2025

SOUTH-BOUND	TRAIN 71 Piedmont	TRAIN 73 Piedmont	TRAIN 75 Piedmont	TRAIN 77 Piedmont	TRAIN 79 Carolinian	NORTH-BOUND	TRAIN 80 Carolinian	TRAIN 72 Piedmont	TRAIN 74 Piedmont	TRAIN 76 Piedmont	TRAIN 78 Piedmont
■ Raleigh	6:30 AM	10:00 AM	12:45 PM	3:15 PM	5:30 PM	■ Charlotte	6:45 AM	10:25 AM	2:20 PM	5:00 PM	7:45 PM
■ Cary	6:42 AM	10:12 AM	12:57 PM	3:27 PM	5:43 PM	■ Kannapolis	7:10 AM	10:50 AM	2:45 PM	5:25 PM	—
■ Durham	7:02 AM	10:32 AM	1:17 PM	3:47 PM	6:04 PM	■ Salisbury	7:28 AM	11:06 AM	3:01 PM	—	8:22 PM
■ Burlington	—	11:08 AM	1:55 PM	4:26 PM	6:48 PM	■ High Point	8:02 AM	11:40 AM	3:35 PM	—	8:56 PM
■ Greensboro	8:01 AM	11:35 AM	2:20 PM	4:51 PM	7:16 PM	■ Greensboro	8:24 AM	11:59 AM	3:54 PM	6:25 PM	9:15 PM
■ High Point	—	11:52 AM	2:37 PM	5:08 PM	7:32 PM	■ Burlington	8:46 AM	12:21 PM	4:15 PM	—	9:37 PM
■ Salisbury	—	12:25 PM	3:11 PM	5:41 PM	8:06 PM	■ Durham	9:27 AM	1:02 PM	5:01 PM	7:23 PM	10:17 PM
■ Kannapolis	8:59 AM	12:42 PM	3:27 PM	—	8:23 PM	■ Cary	9:47 AM	1:28 PM	5:22 PM	7:45 PM	10:38 PM
■ Charlotte	9:28 AM ^{ar}	1:10 PM ^{ar}	3:55 PM ^{ar}	6:21 PM ^{ar}	8:56 PM ^{ar}	■ Raleigh	10:13 AM	1:41 PM ^{ar}	5:36 PM ^{ar}	7:59 PM ^{ar}	10:52 PM ^{ar}

- Schedules are subject to change.
- Times are departure times unless indicated by (ar) for arrival times.
- Carolinian Trains 79 and 80 continue service to DC and NY.

- Checked Baggage
- Connecting bus service to and from Winston-Salem

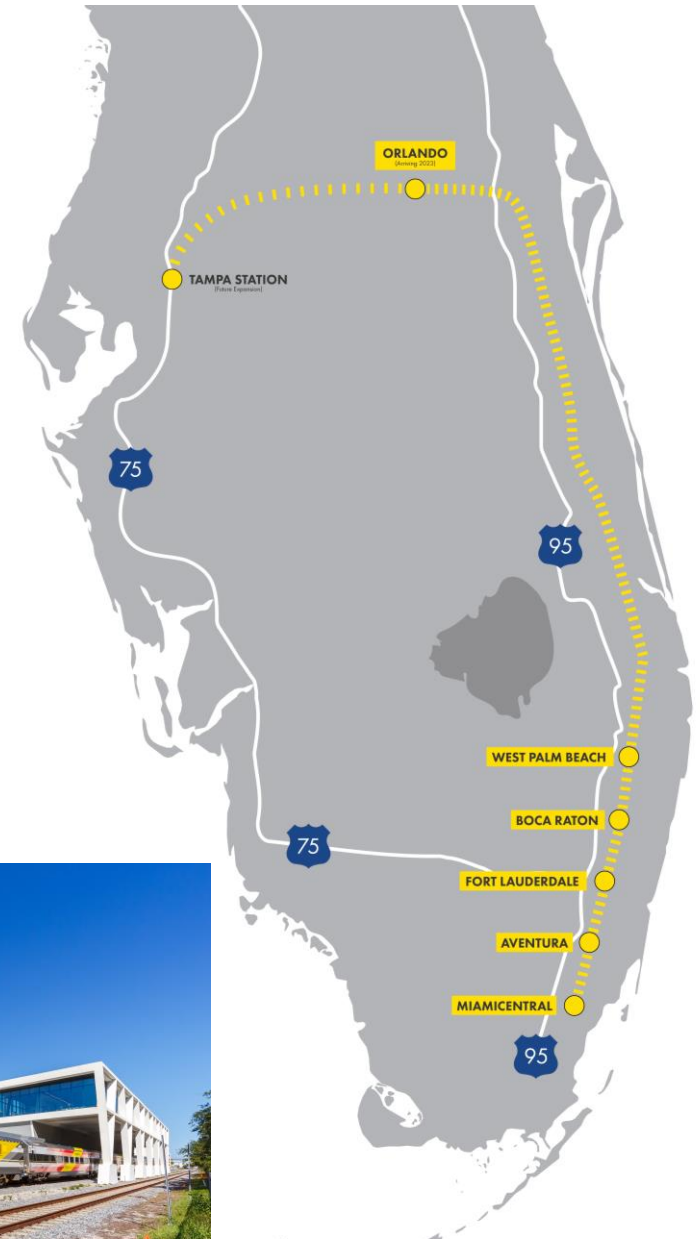
2,000 copies of this public document were printed at a cost of \$976.20, or \$0.1632 per copy. (02/25) Visit NCByTrain.org or call 1-800-By-Train for more information

North Carolina Passenger Rail Train and Schedule of Trips

Brightline Florida

Brightline Florida Service

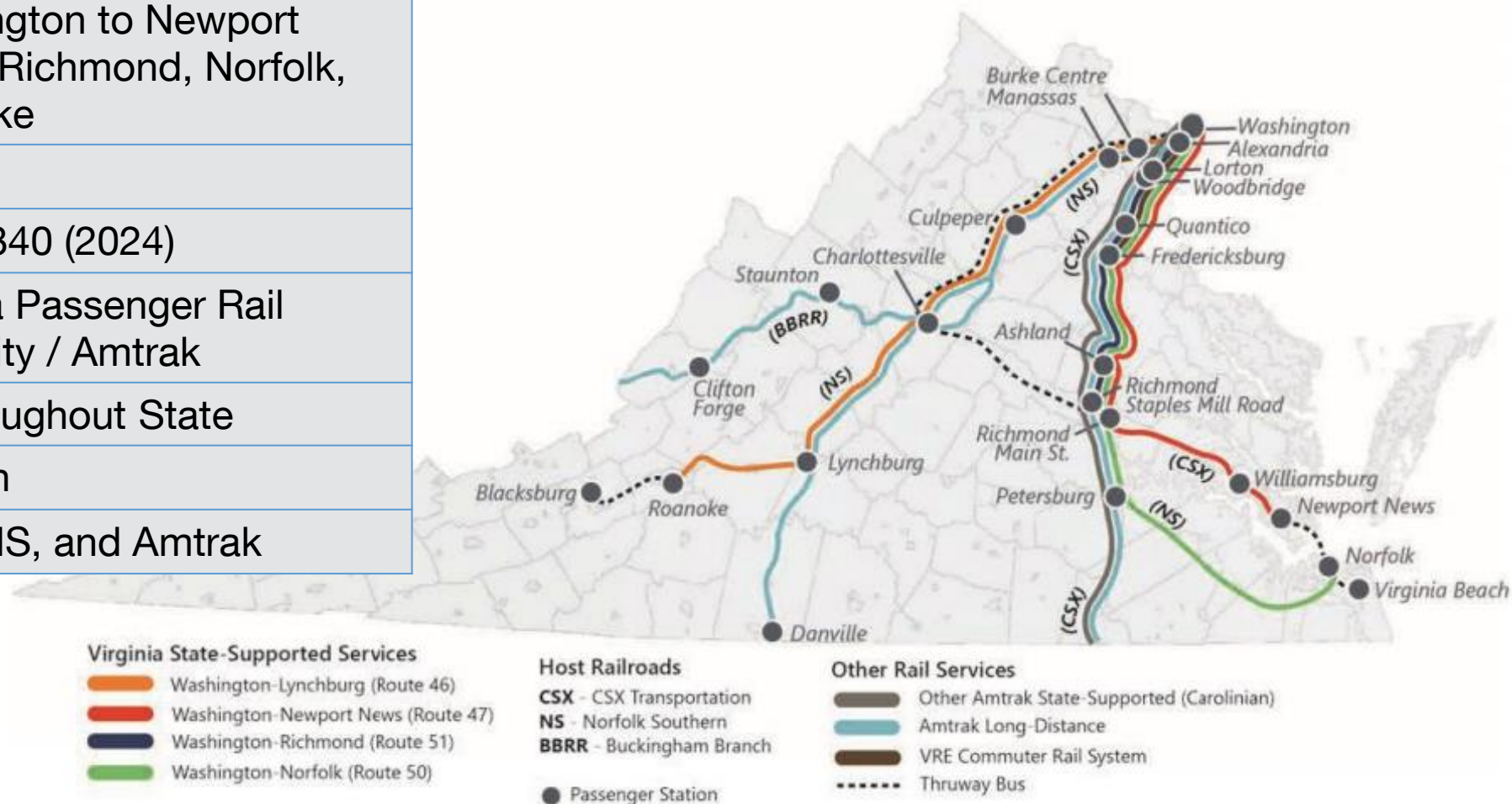
Extents	Orlando to Miami
First Service	January 13, 2018
Ridership	2,053,893 (2023)
Current Operator	Florida East Coast Industries
Service frequency	Hourly
Distance Traveled	235 miles
Average Journey Time	3 ½ Hours
Stops	6
Max Speed	125 mph
Ownership	Fortress Investment Group



Brightline Train and Station Stops

Amtrak Virginia

Amtrak Virginia	
Extents	Washington to Newport News, Richmond, Norfolk, Roanoke
First Service	2009
Ridership	1,389,840 (2024)
Current Operator	Virginia Passenger Rail Authority / Amtrak
Stops	18 throughout State
Max Speed	79 mph
Ownership	CSX, NS, and Amtrak





Group Discussion

Thinking about the case studies:

- What do you see as opportunities for Atlanta to Savannah passenger rail?
- What do you see as challenges for Atlanta to Savannah passenger rail?

Thank you!

Contact:

atl-savrail@dot.ga.gov

Project Website:

<https://atlsavpassrail-gdot.hub.arcgis.com/>

Share the survey
with your
networks!

