

December 2024

Connecting Communities:

A Comprehensive Public Transportation
Vision for Shrewsbury, Northborough, and
Westborough

Public Presentation



Agenda

- 1 Introductions
- 2 About the Project & Today's Meeting
- 3 What We Have Learned
- 4 Proposed Recommendations
- 5 Discussion
- 6 Next Steps



Introductions



1

We're a team of transit and engagement experts – and your points of contact for this project



Greg Nordin
Project Manager
Nelson\Nygaard



Adija Manley
Deputy Project Manager
Nelson\Nygaard



Daphne Politis
Engagement Lead
Community Circle

About The Project & Today's Meeting



2

What is this project?

- Comprehensive operational analysis of current transit services in Shrewsbury, Northborough, and Westborough:
 - Review all services
 - Better understand and align resources with need for public transportation
- Develop a service plan for transit service that:
 - Reflects community needs
 - Incorporates robust community feedback
 - Is approximately revenue-hour and peak-vehicle neutral



**Worcester
Regional
Transit
Authority**

Why are we here today?

- **Share Proposed Recommendations & Hear what you have to say about them**

- **Share what we have learned about:**
 - Transit in your communities
 - Shrewsbury, Westborough, and Northborough
 - Where people want to go



If you have questions about specific trip or ride:

WRTA Customer Service

- www.therta.com/customer-service/cs-feedback-form
- 508-791-9782
- csfeedback@therta.com



**Worcester
Regional
Transit
Authority**

Where Have We Been?

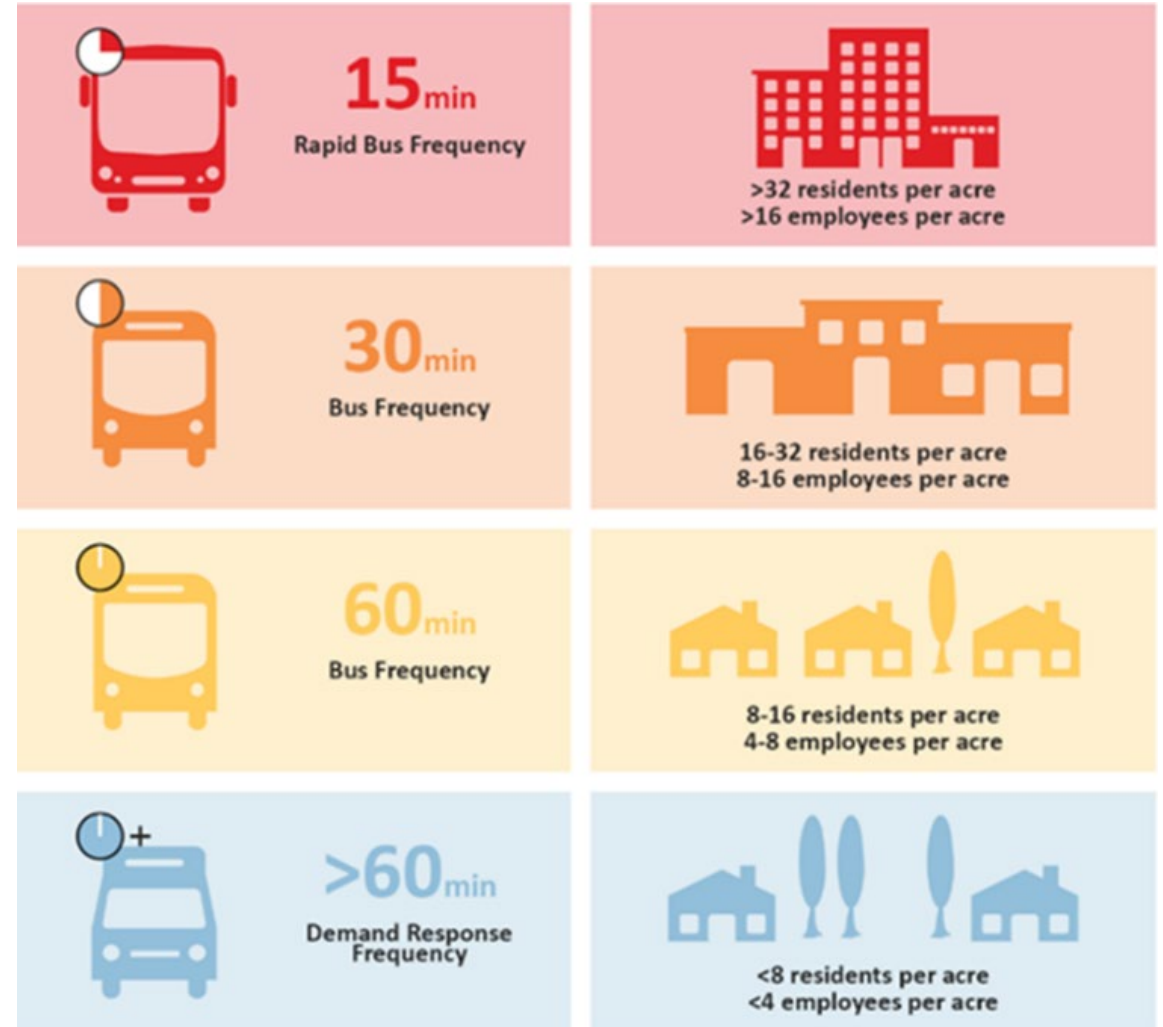
3

Market Analysis

Market Analysis

The market analysis provides an analysis of the underlying demand for transit service in a community. It includes:

- **Population and employment density**
 - Where do people live and work?
- **Key socioeconomic characteristics**
 - Who would benefit most from transit service?
 - Where are those populations concentrated?
- **Travel flow analysis**
 - Where are people trying to go?

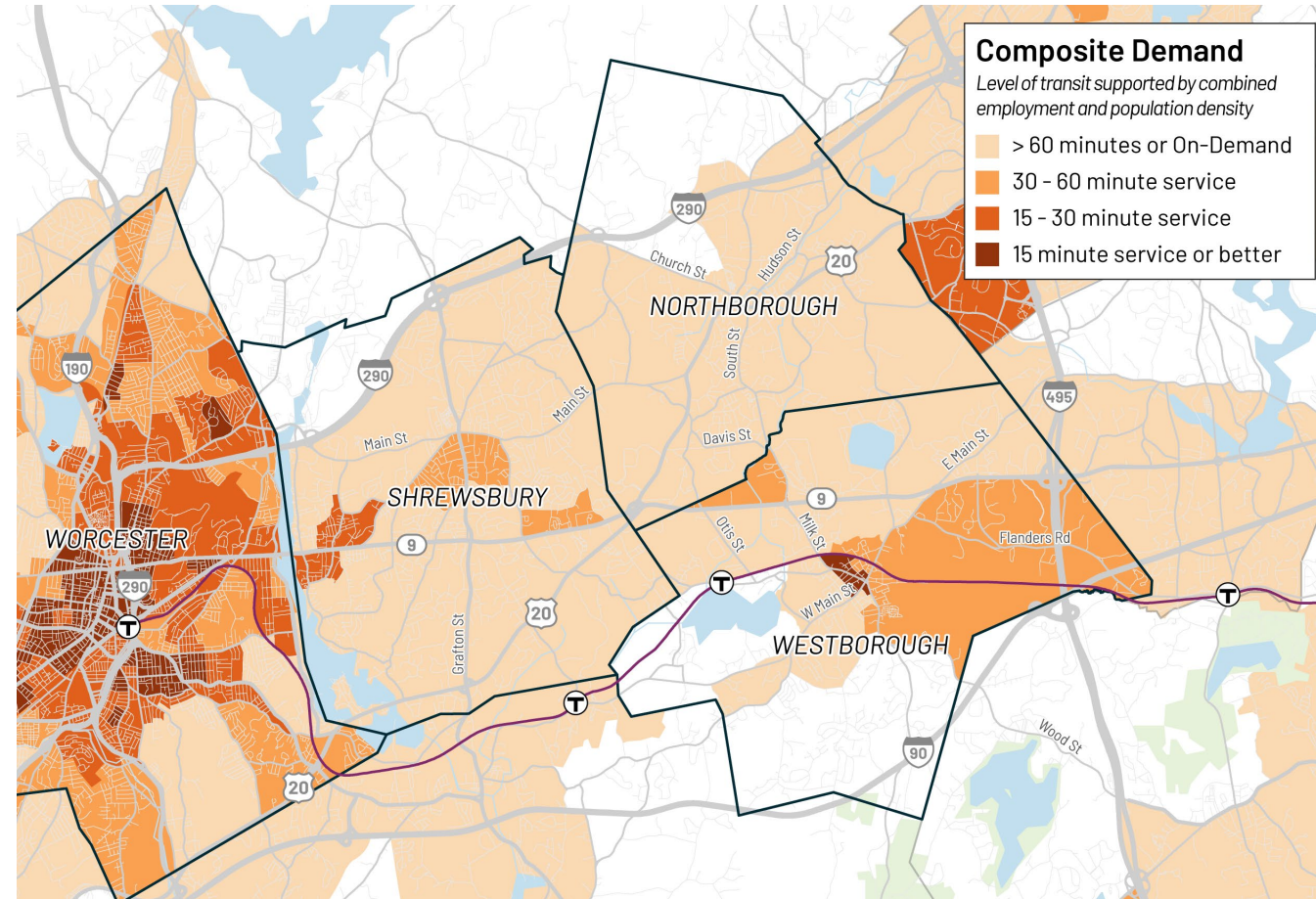


Density is a key determinant for transit: higher levels of population and employment density can support more frequent and higher capacity transit services

Transit Demand

Composite Density

- Residential & Employment Density
- Demand response service may be a more appropriate transit service in these communities
 - There are pockets that could support more intensive transportation
- Key areas of higher composite demand include:
 - Central and southwest Westborough
 - A pocket of density on the Westborough/Northborough border
 - The Route 9-Maple Avenue-Main Street corridor in Shrewsbury

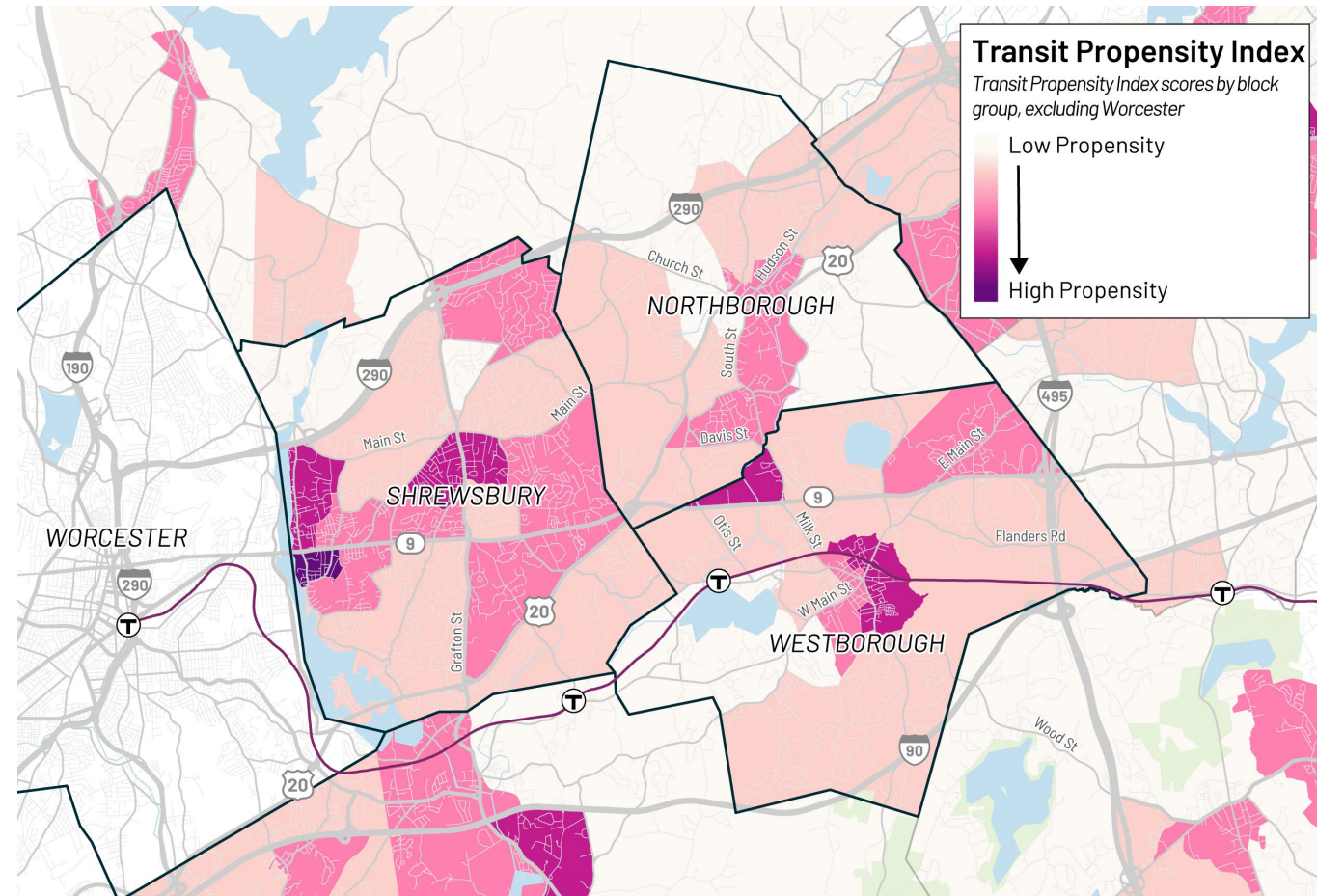


Transit Propensity Index

Transit propensity looks at the populations most likely to ride transit and compares the densities of those groups across a study area:

- Below 150% of the federal poverty level
- 0-vehicle households
- People of color (Hispanic and/or non-white)
- People with a disability

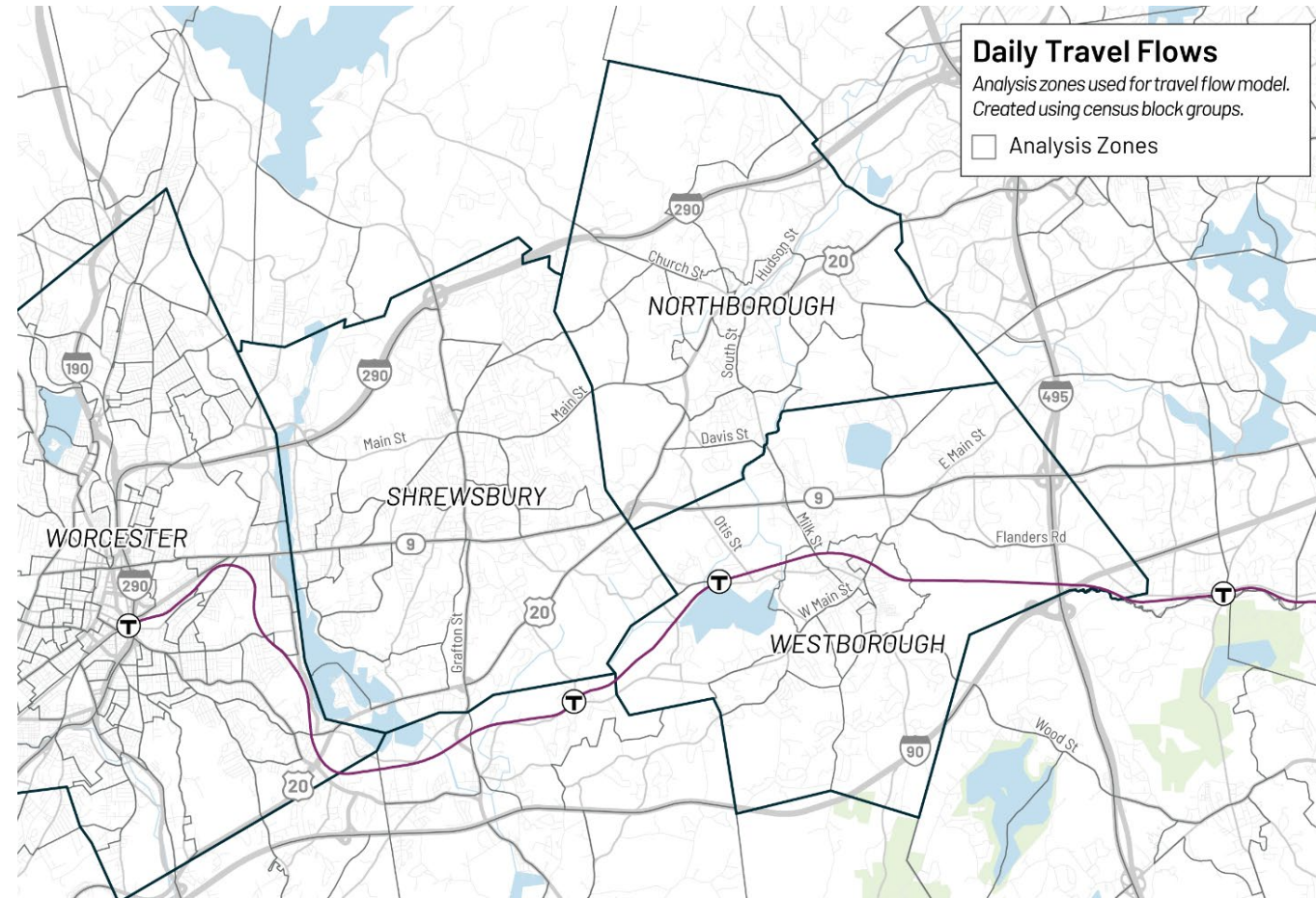
The TPI map shows areas of higher potential transit need with darker colors. These areas have greater densities of people more likely to use transit.



**While Worcester was included in the calculations, the focus for the map is on the study area to better see internal variances. This is why data for Worcester is not showing.*

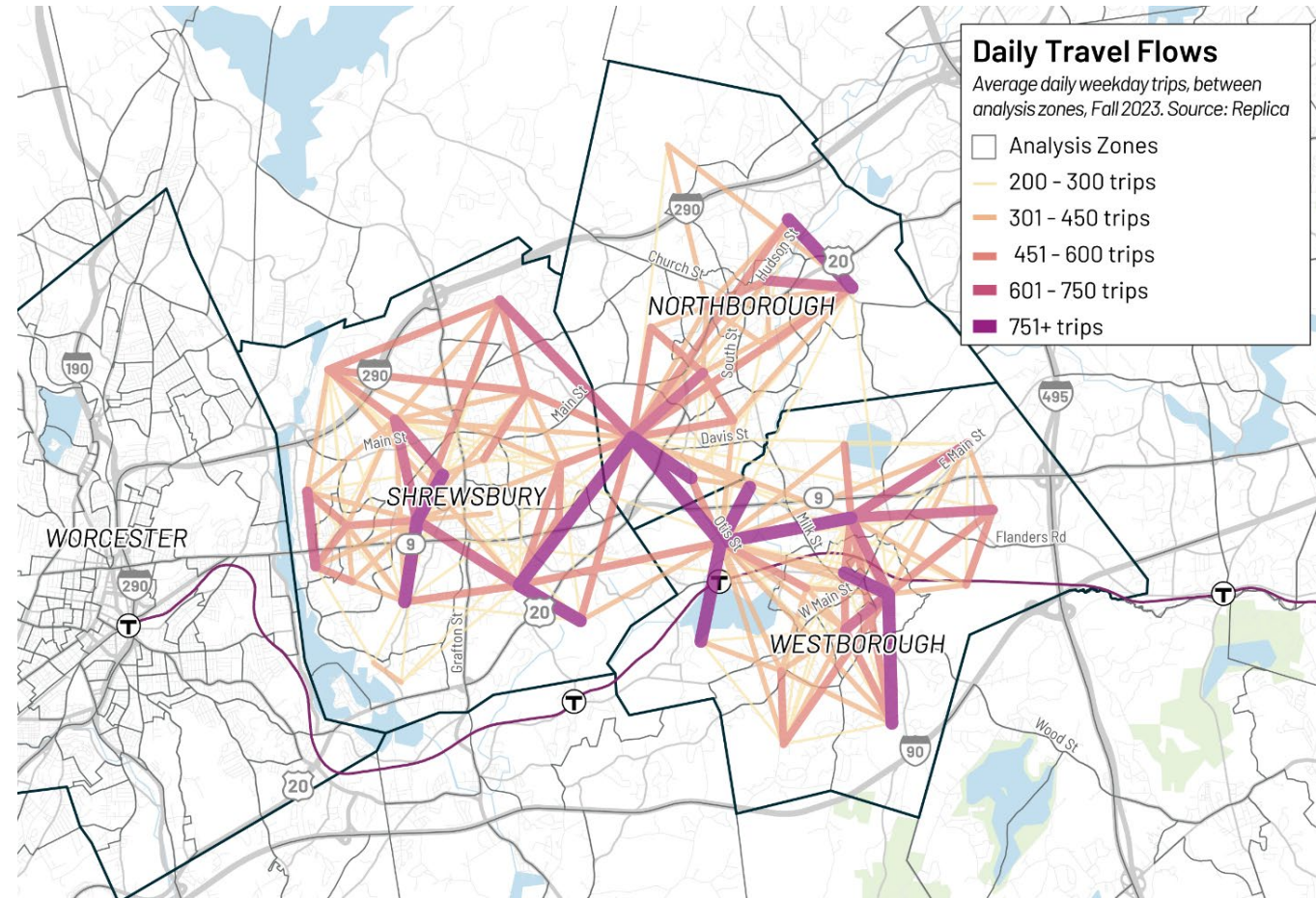
Travel Flow Analysis

- Travel flows of all trips that begin or end in the study area in Fall 2023.
 - Using data that models average daily traffic patterns.



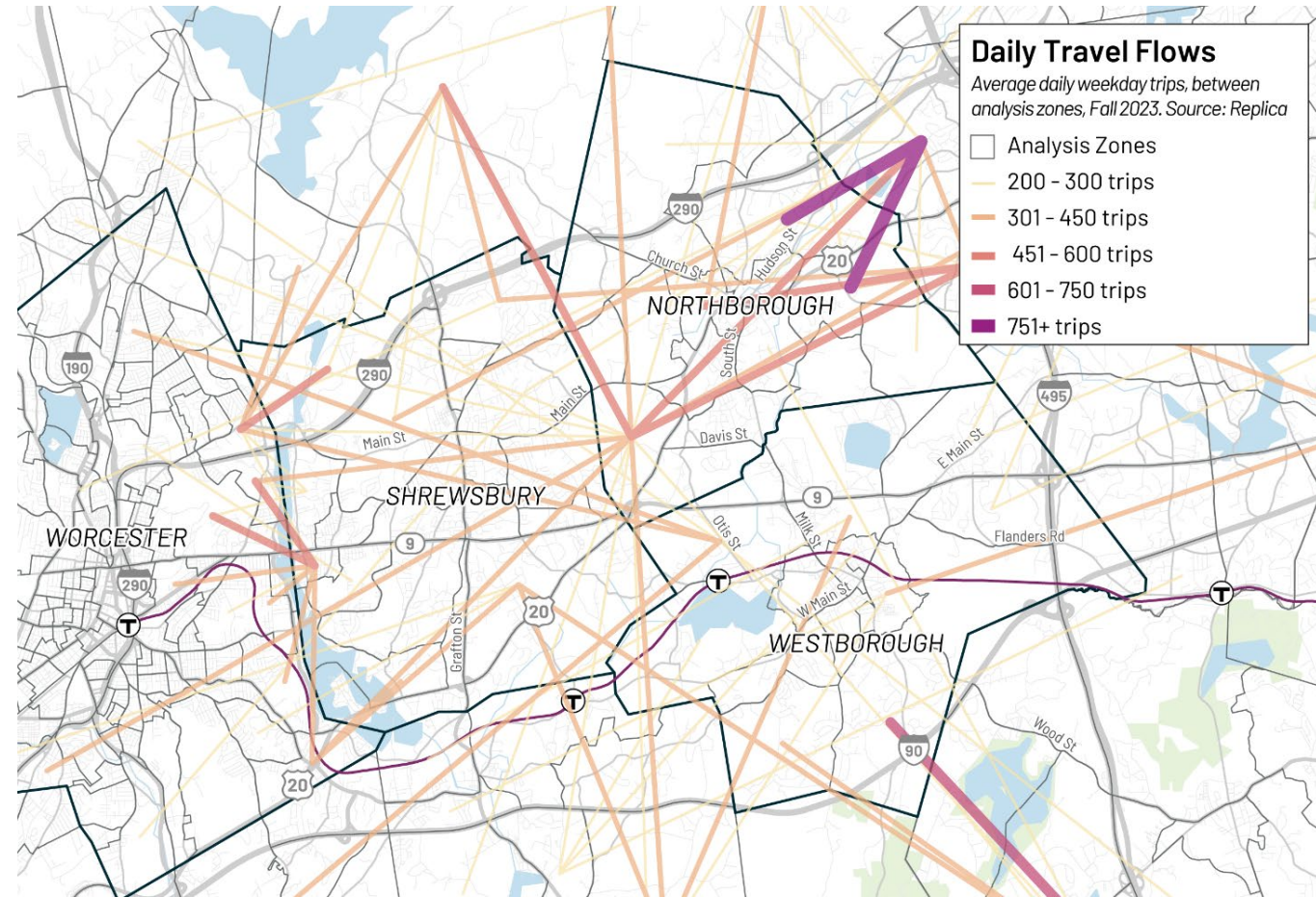
Travel Flow Analysis

- Many trips occur over short distances within municipalities, and the strongest origin-destination pairs are neighboring zones.
- Southern Northborough generates a relatively significant number of local trips
 - Likely due to the major activity centers located in that area, such as Northborough Crossing.



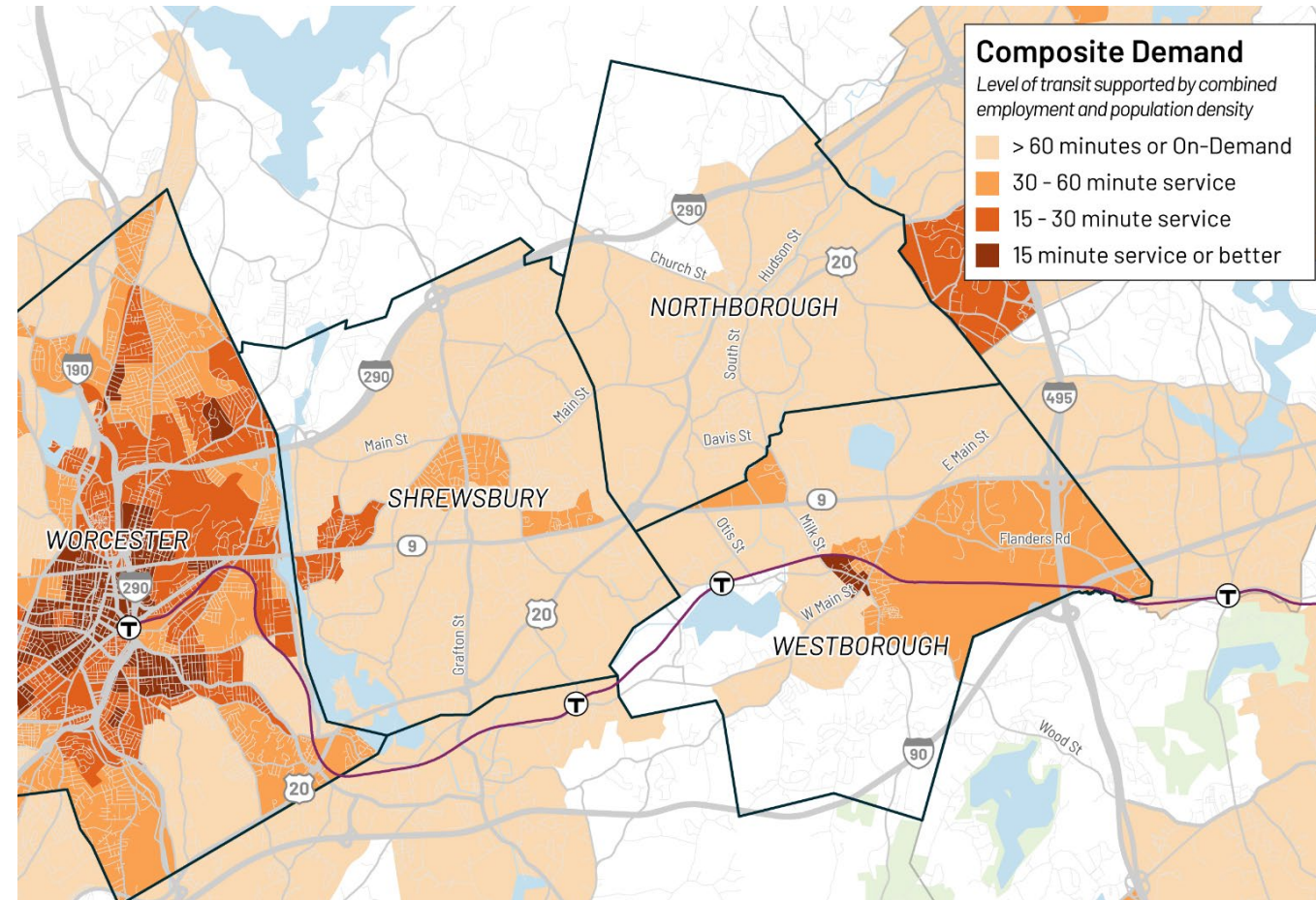
Travel Flow Analysis

- Stronger flows over short distances to neighboring municipalities (Northborough to Marlborough, Shrewsbury to Worcester)
- Major regional flows inclusive of all trips from all entire study area include:
 - Worcester: 40,000 trips
 - Marlborough: 12,000 trips
 - Hudson: 3,200 trips
 - Framingham: 3,100 trips
 - Boston: 2,600 trips



Summary Findings

- Density is light throughout all three communities
- Pockets of density occur in several locations:
 - Route 9 corridor
 - Downtown Shrewsbury
 - Downtown Westborough
 - Downtown Northborough
- Route 9 corridor has many of the employment and trip generation opportunities within the study area
- Travel flows are focused on shorter, local trips.



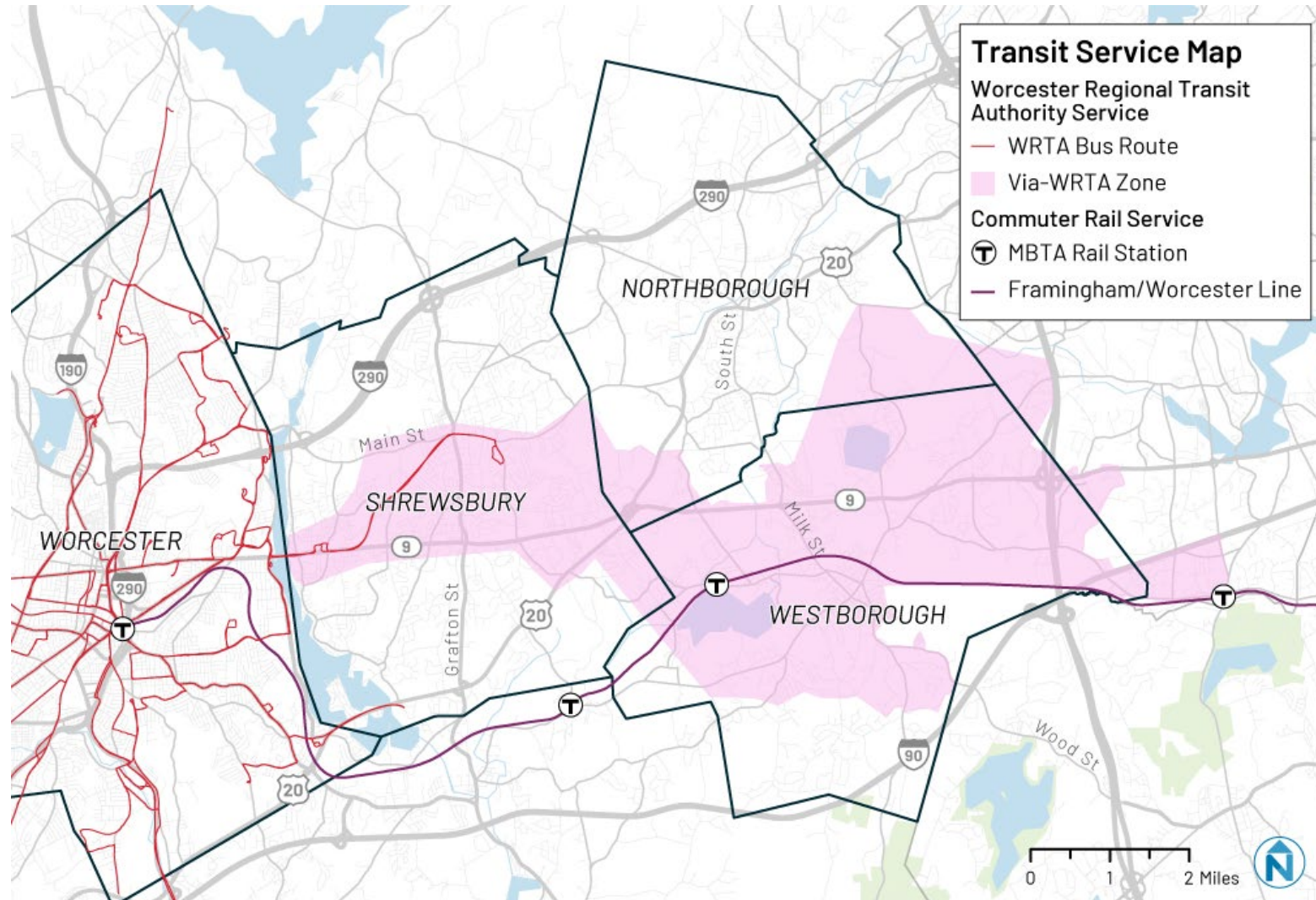
Route Profiles

Transit Services

- 2 Bus Routes:
 - Route 12: Southwest Commons via Grafton Street
 - Route 15: Shrewsbury Center via Shrewsbury Street and Route 9

- VIA WRTA
 - On-demand rideshare service in Shrewsbury and Westborough

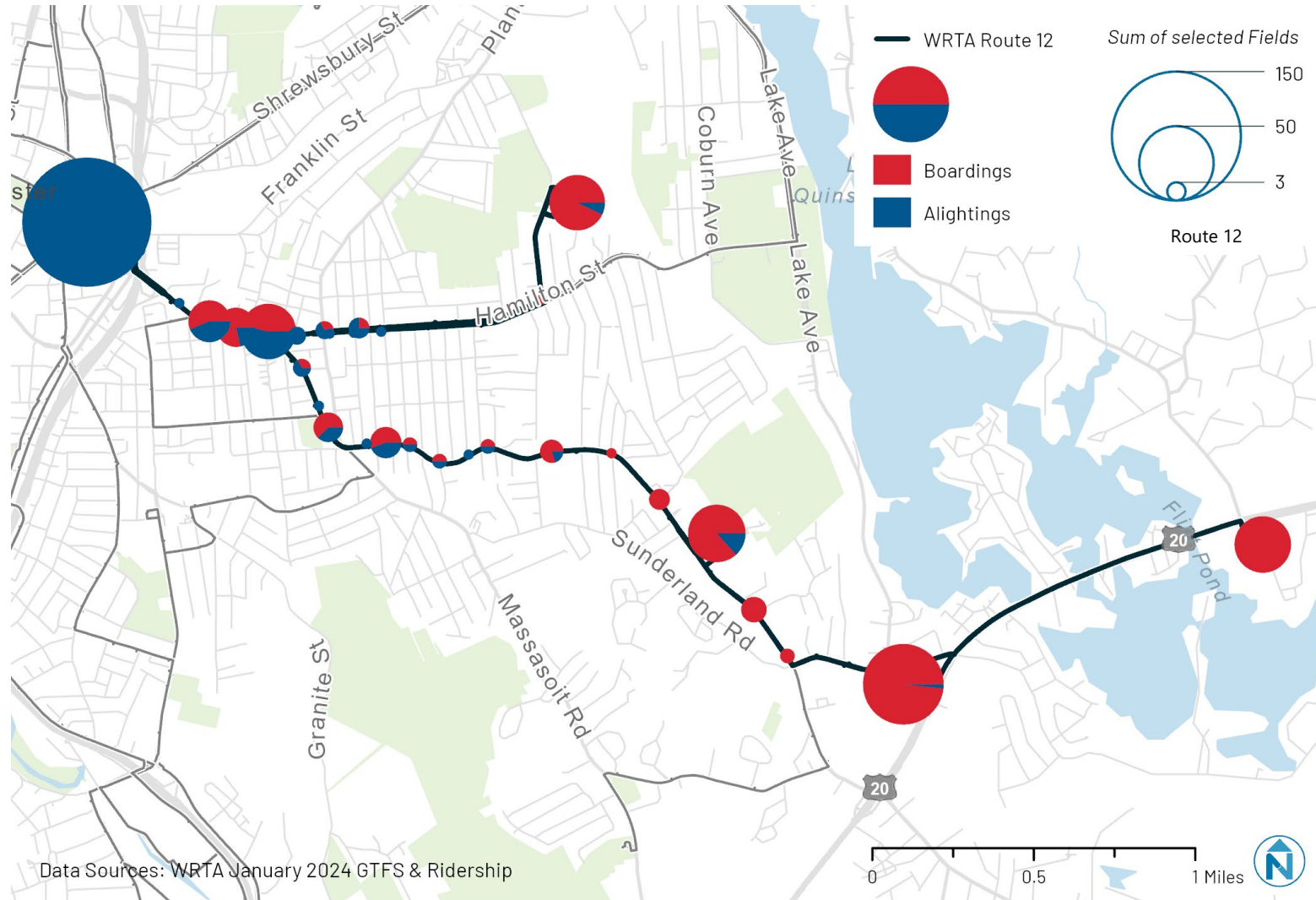
- Demand Response
 - Shrewsbury Council on Aging
 - Northborough Council on Aging



Route 12

- Connects the Hub and Southwest Commons via Grafton Street
 - Select Service to North High School
- Operates weekdays, 6:10 AM to 9:25 PM
- Buses every 50 to 70 minutes
- Weekday Riders: 448
- Ridership per Trip: 13
- The route has on-time performance challenges, with service often operating late.

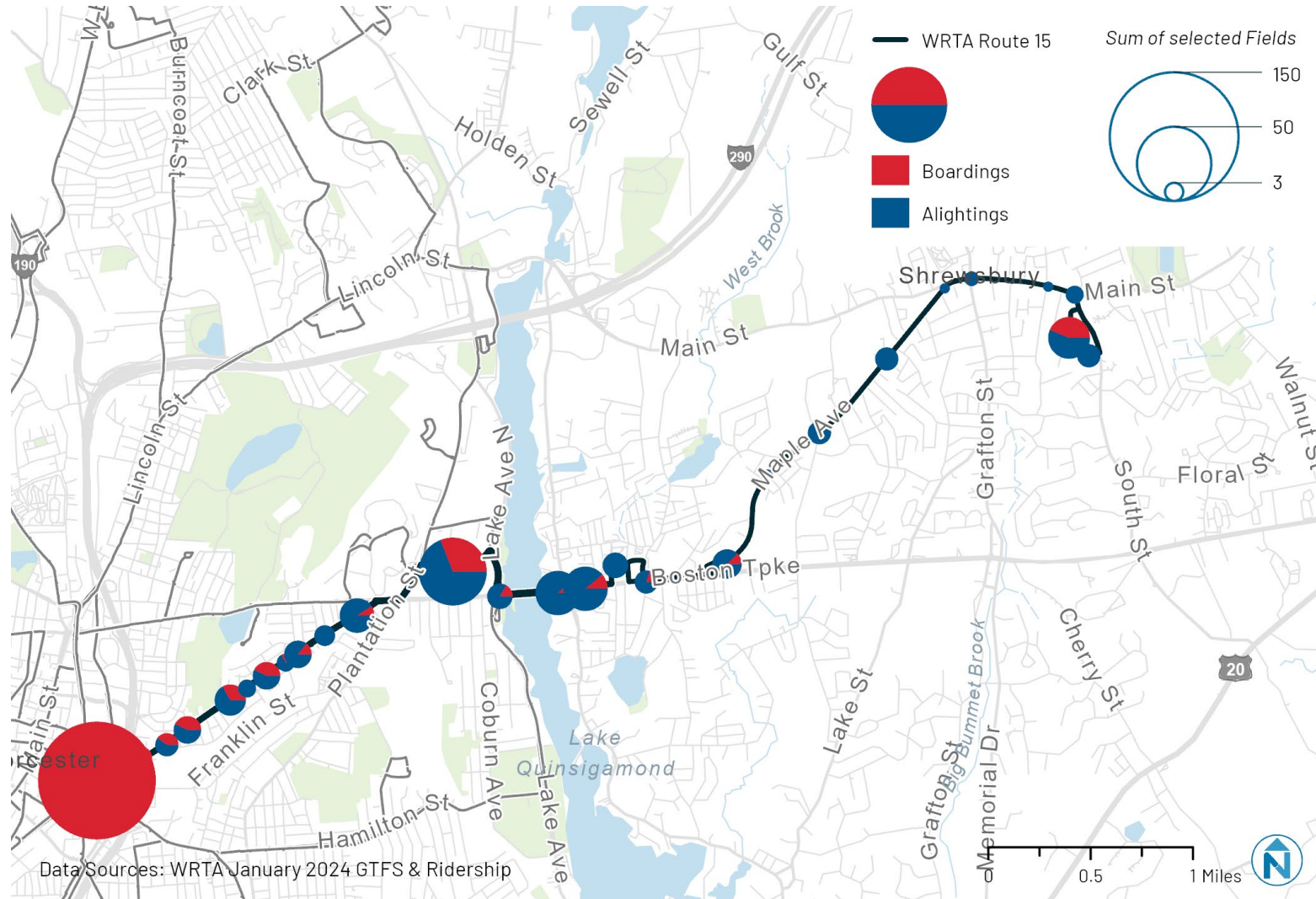
January 2024: Weekday Inbound Ridership to Hub Center



Route 15

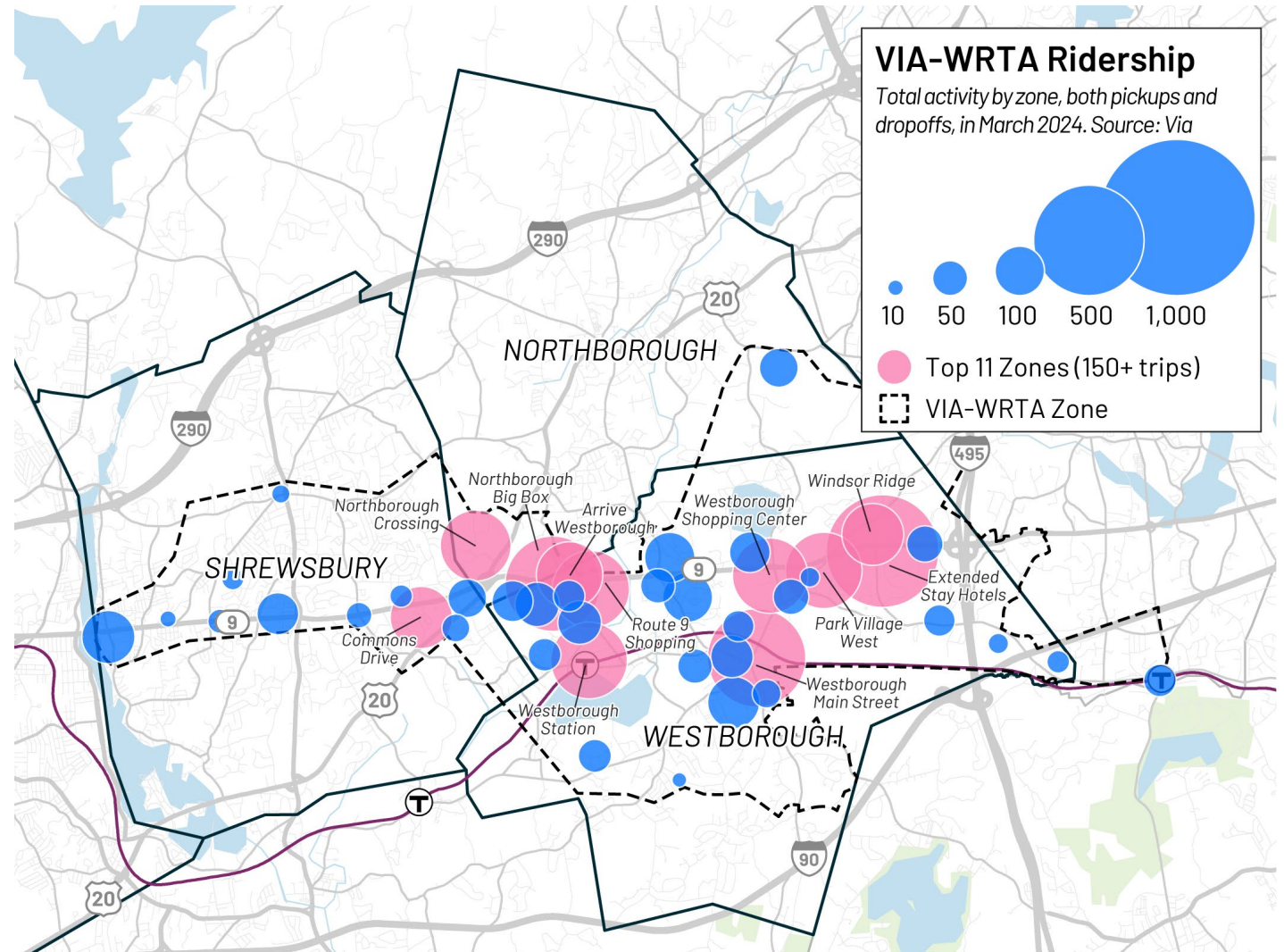
- Connects the Hub and Shrewsbury Center via Shrewsbury St & Route 9
- Operates
 - Weekdays, 5:50 AM to 9:10 PM
 - Saturday, 9:50 AM to 5:50 PM
- Buses every hour
- Weekday Riders: 303
- Ridership per Trip: 11 (weekdays)
- The route has on-time performance challenges, with service often operating late.
- 8% of boardings occur east of the lake

January 2024: Weekday Outbound Ridership to Hub Center



VIA

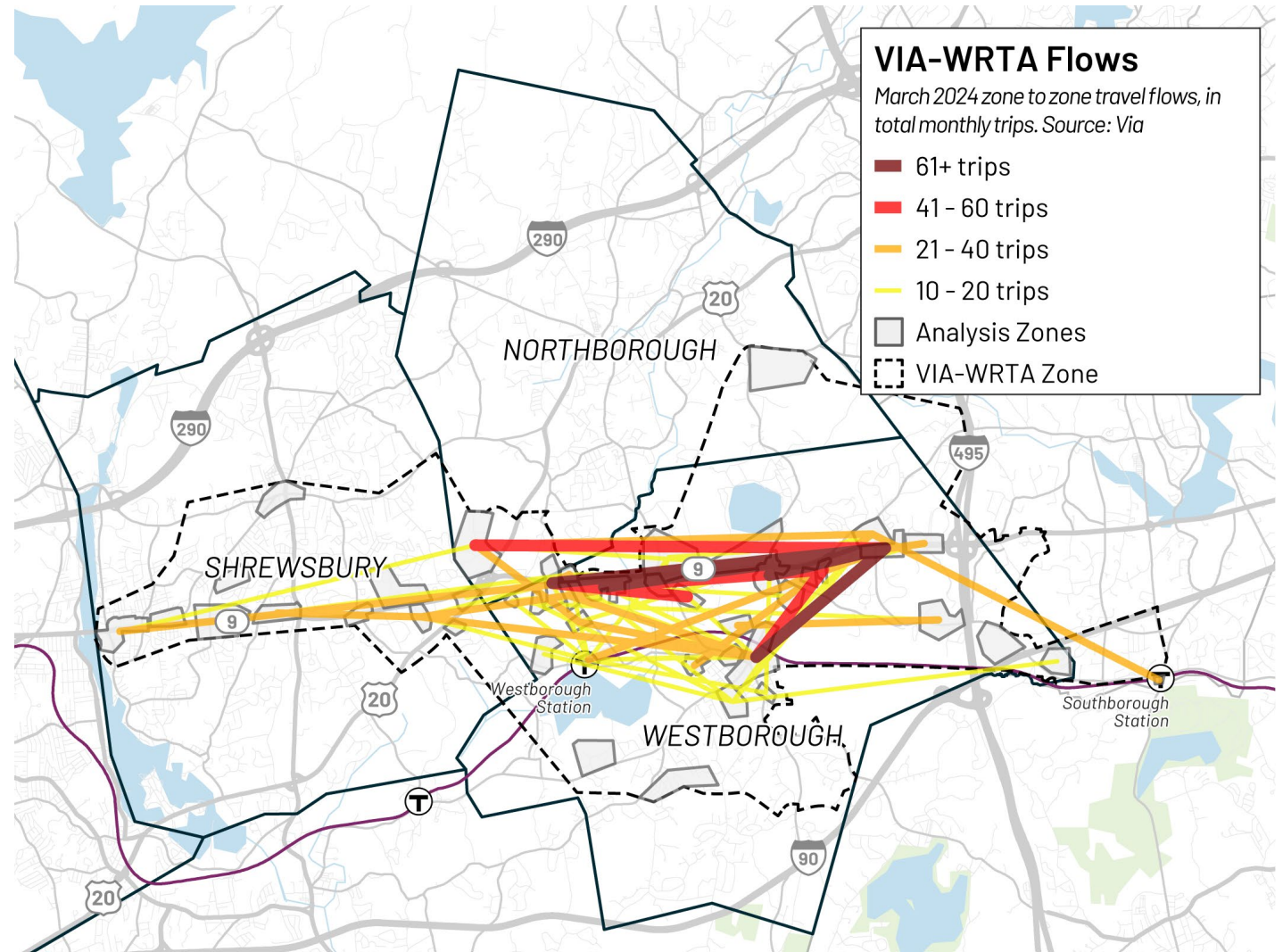
- On-demand, shared-ride service
- Weekdays, 7 AM to 7 PM
- 121 average daily trips & 145 average daily passengers
 - 37% of trips were shared*
 - Nearly 100 users made 10 or more trips over a month
- Average trip time: 13 minutes
- Average Wait Time: 18 minutes
- 62% of requested trips were completed



*shared defined as two or more passengers picked up from different origins on the same trip

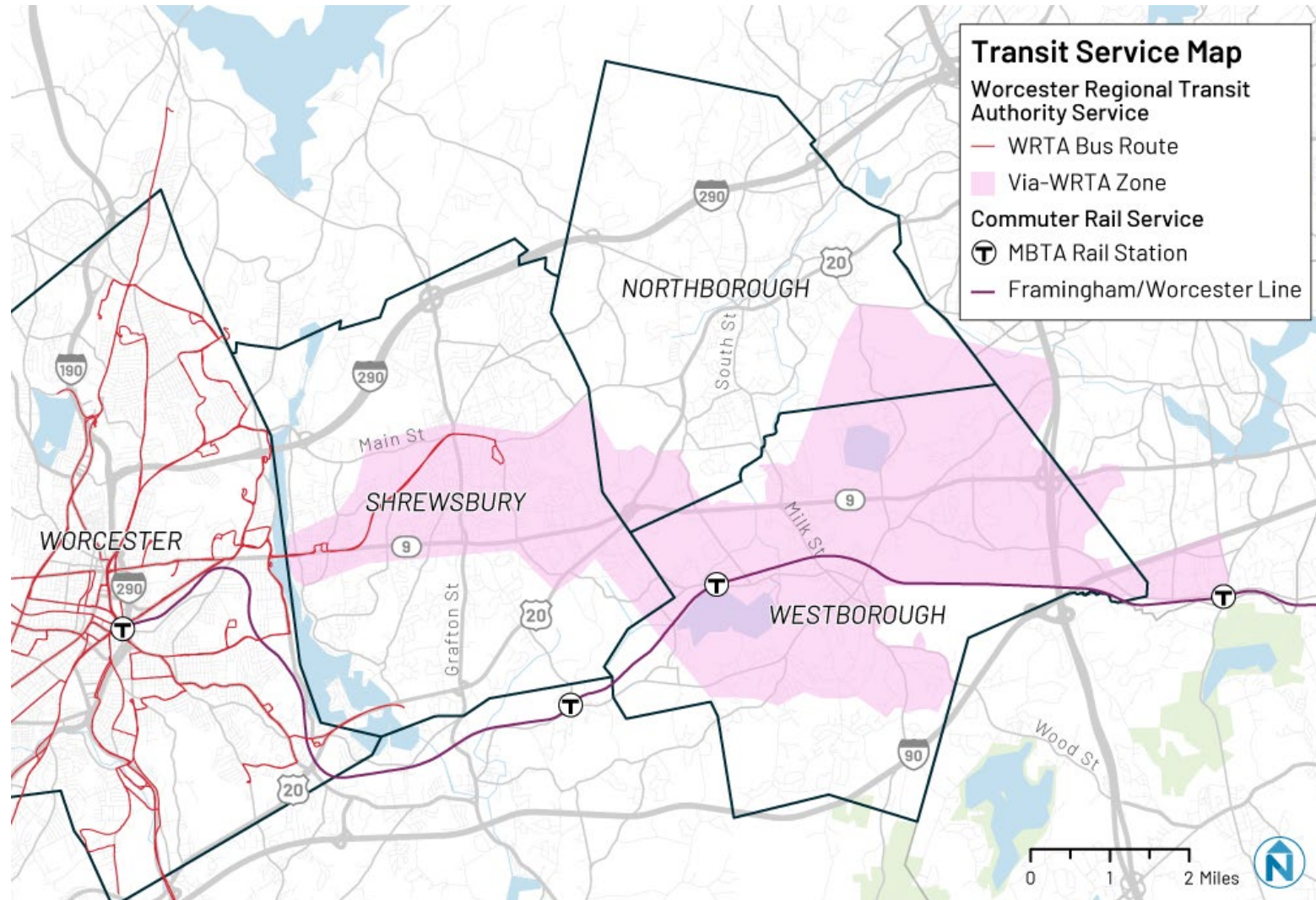
VIA

- Where People Are Going:
 - Hotels such as the Extended Stay Hotel on Route 9
 - Route Shopping
 - Northborough Crossing
 - Westborough Station
 - Westborough Main Street
- Many people are traveling along Route 9



Summary Findings

- VIA ridership is centered in Westborough, with significant activity along Route 9 and into downtown Westborough
- Route 15 is competing with VIA service



Public Engagement To-Date

Public Engagement: Forums

- **Community Pop-Ups!**
 - Shrewsbury, Westborough, Northborough
- **Community Workshops:**
 - Northborough Community Workshop
 - Westborough Community Workshop
 - Shrewsbury Community Workshop
- **Regional Topic Meetings:**
 - Disability Commissions and Advocates
 - Councils on Aging and Senior Centers
 - Economic Development Groups
 - Planning and Public Health
 - MBTA Commuters
- **Rider Survey** of WRTA Users
- **TODAY's Public Meeting**



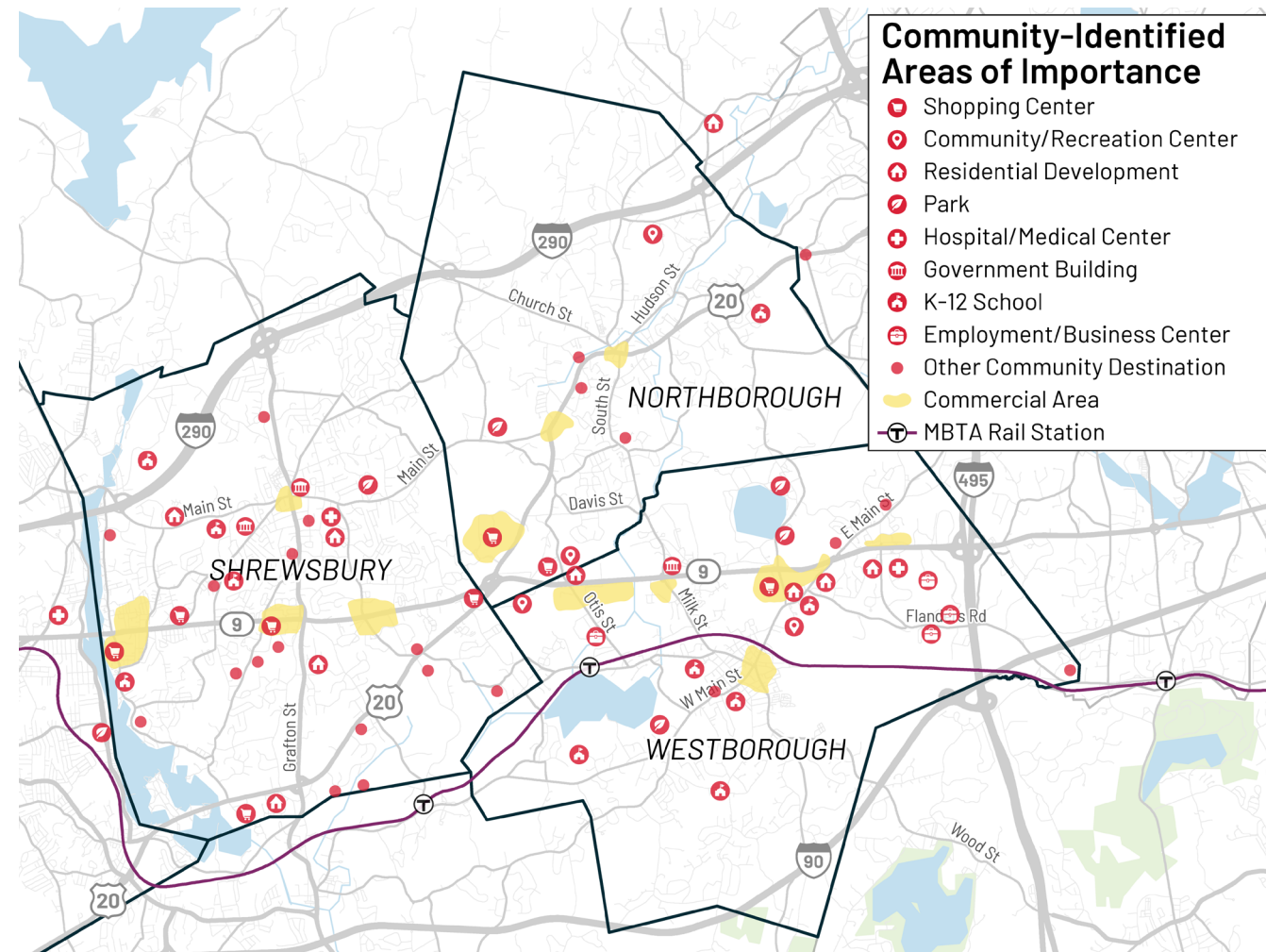
Public Engagement: Underlying Themes

- **Master Plan/Strategic Plan goals** in all three communities (goals that *can be partially achieved through provision of public transit*):
 - Connectivity to resources for all ages
 - Support to aging and disabled populations
 - Support economic development
 - Reducing traffic congestion and carbon footprint
 - Promoting public health
- Need for **increased awareness** of and better access to information re: WRTA service
- Desire to **increase collaboration** by partnering between municipalities, private sector and WRTA
- **Population** in all three towns in **aging** as well as becoming more **diverse** (racially, linguistically, etc.)



Public Engagement: Key Findings

- **Expand geographic reach of service** (*key desired locations include*):
 - Shopping centers, especially those with grocery stores
 - Downtowns
 - Community centers (i.e., Northborough Senior Center, YMCA)
 - Employment centers & business parks
 - Medical facilities
 - MBTA stations
 - Multi-family housing
 - Key municipal destinations (town hall, library, schools, etc.)



Public Engagement: Key Findings

- Expand to evening **hours** and **weekend** service
- Expand service for various **demographics**:
 - Shift workers
 - Housing Authority residents
 - Employees who work, but don't live in 3-town region
 - Older adults
 - Students
 - Refugees
- Increase **access** by:
 - Providing multi-lingual information
 - Improving pedestrian/bike connections
 - Providing alternatives to smart phone app & credit card payment
 - Increasing visibility
 - Promoting the idea of sharing rides and making it "cool" to take public transit



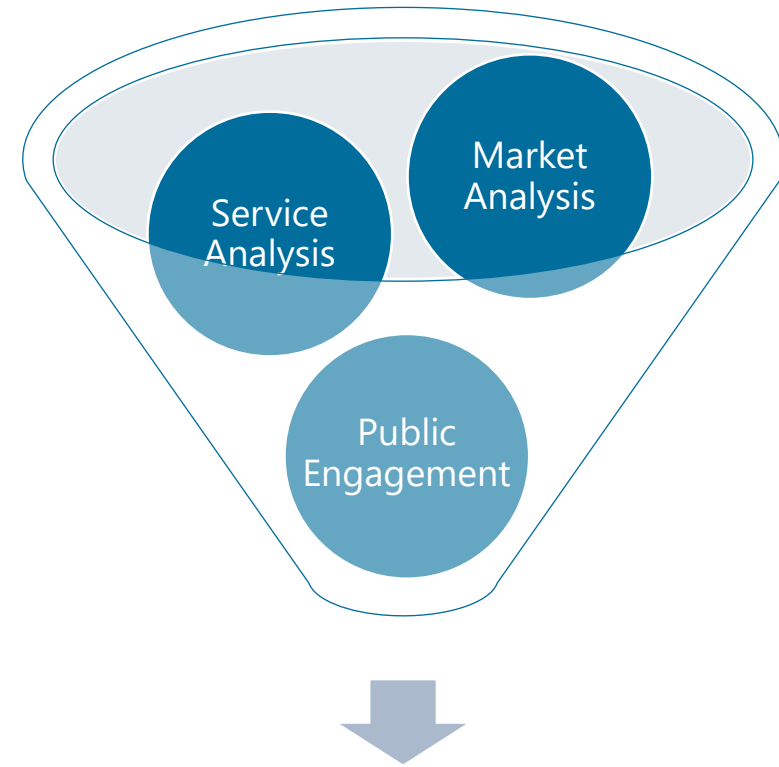
Key Issues:

- Affordability
- Reliability
- Lack of coverage
- Lack of awareness / information

Bringing It All Together

Improvement Opportunities

- Key findings from the existing conditions and public engagement informed recommended improvements to the public transit network:
 - Northborough Crossing is a key employment and shopping destination for the region
 - Many residents and key community destinations are not served by transit
 - Minimizing wait time for all services is important
 - VIA service is popular, and there may be opportunities to serve more people.
- Other considerations include:
 - Cost
 - Vehicle needs



Recommended Public Transportation Network

Recommendations

4

Framework & Goals

**Realign
Service**

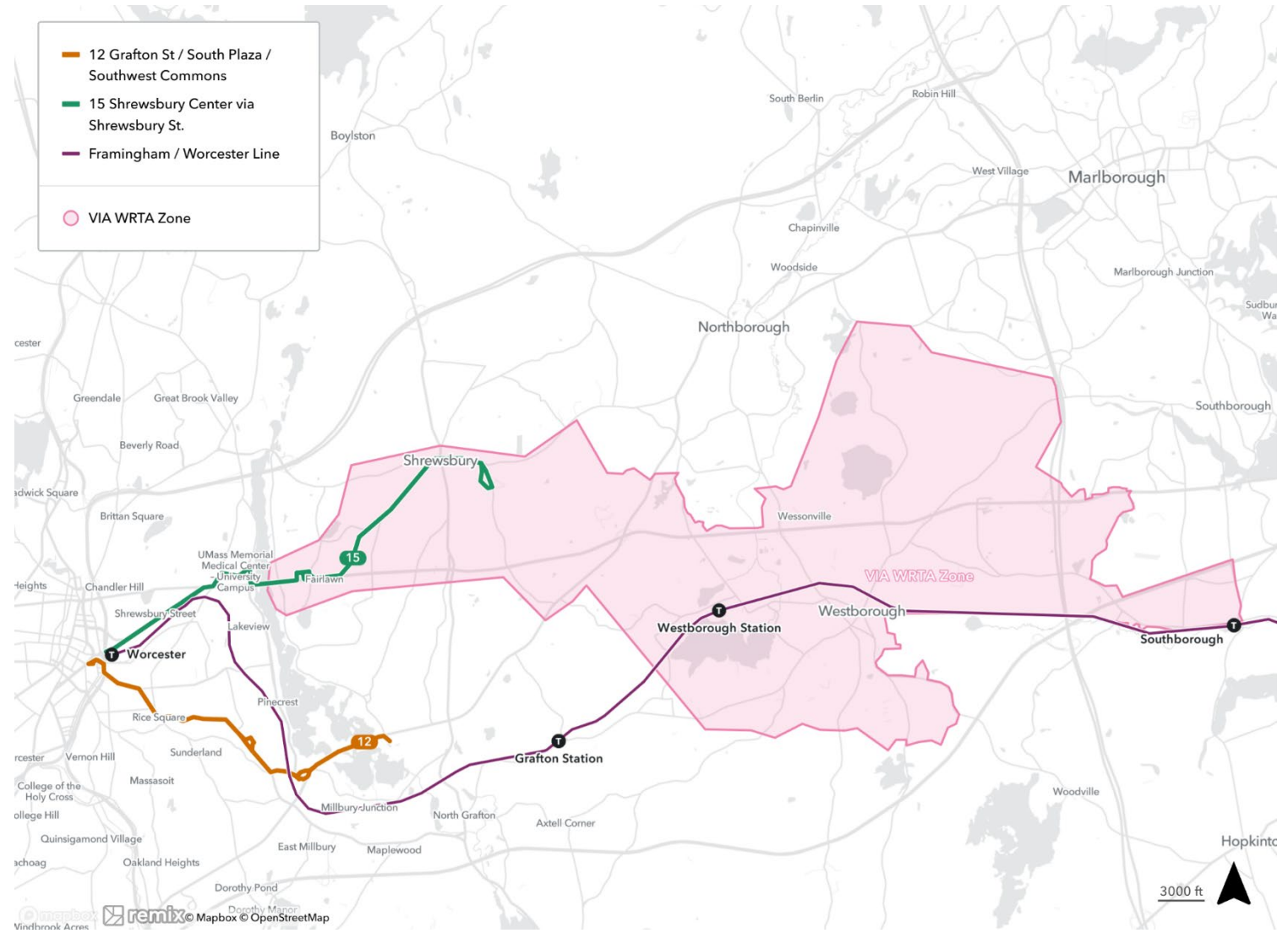
**Gaps &
Opportunities**

**Growth
Opportunities**

**Operating
Cost**

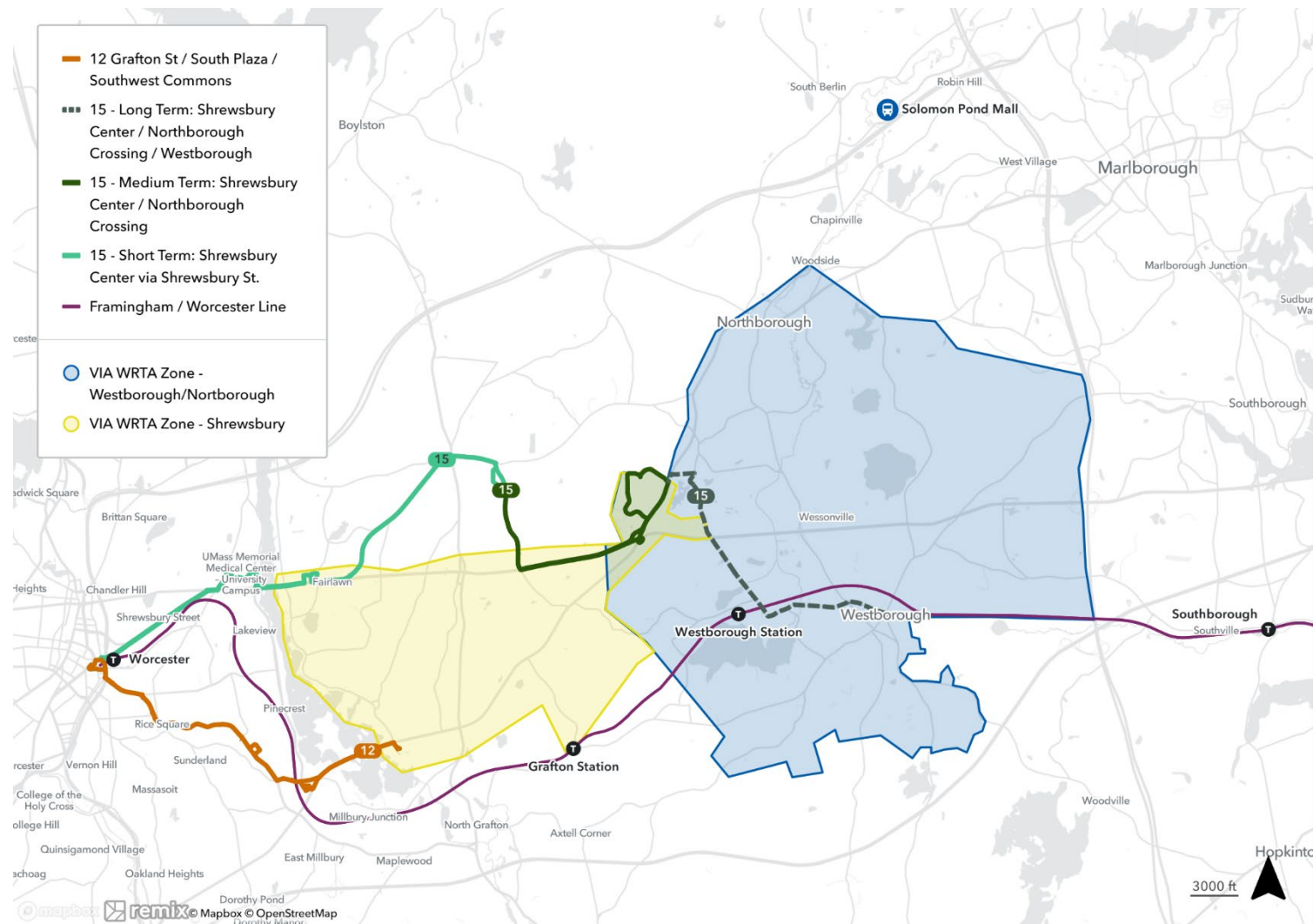
Existing Network

- Map shows existing services for study area communities
- Purpose of changes:
 - Serve additional destinations
 - Bring public transit to more community residents
 - Improve quality of service



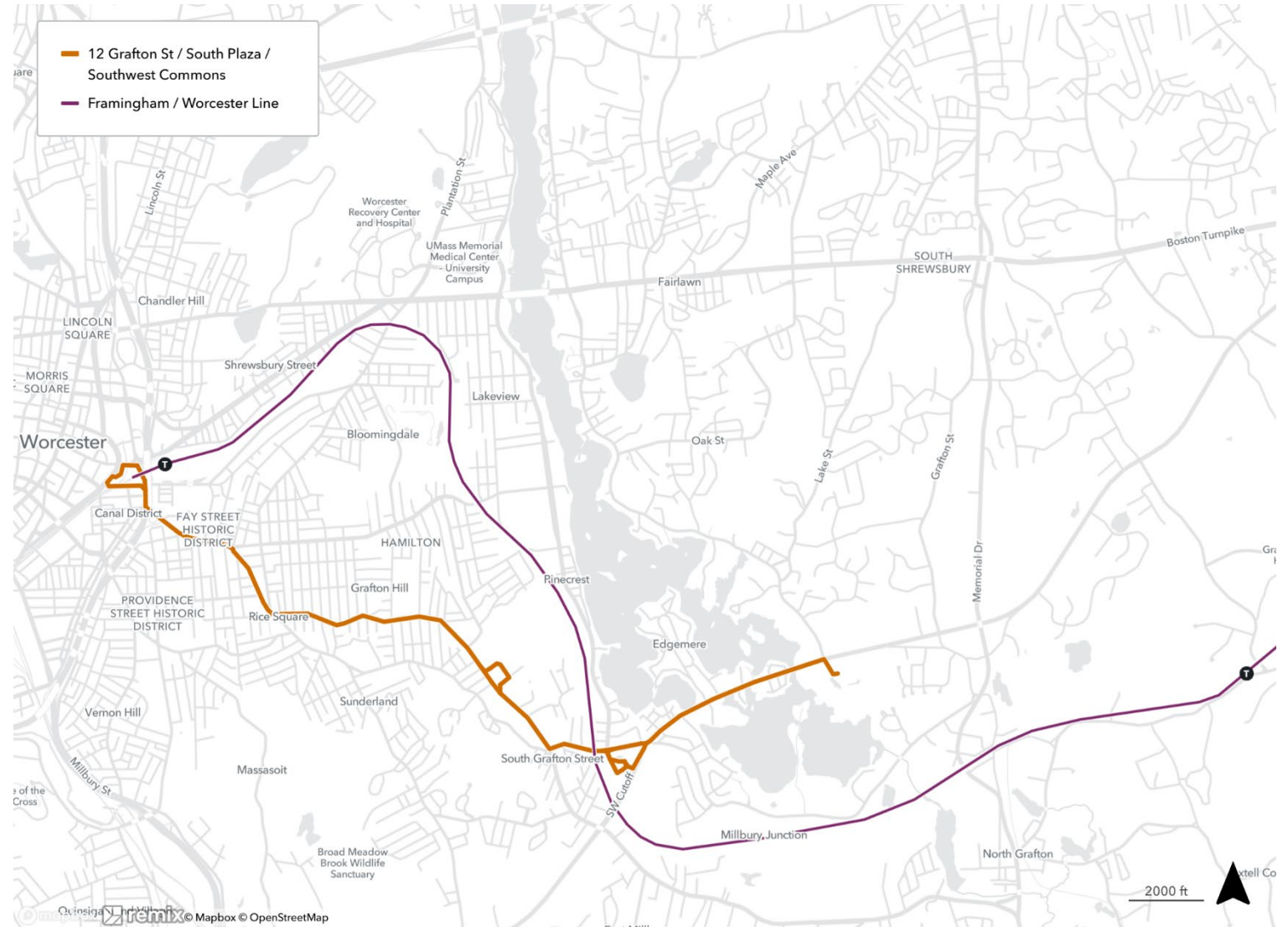
Recommended Network

- Map shows long-term recommendations for the study area
- Key changes:
 - Route 15
 - Extend route in phases to Northborough and Westborough
 - VIA
 - Split and reshape zone to cover more destinations and improve service delivery



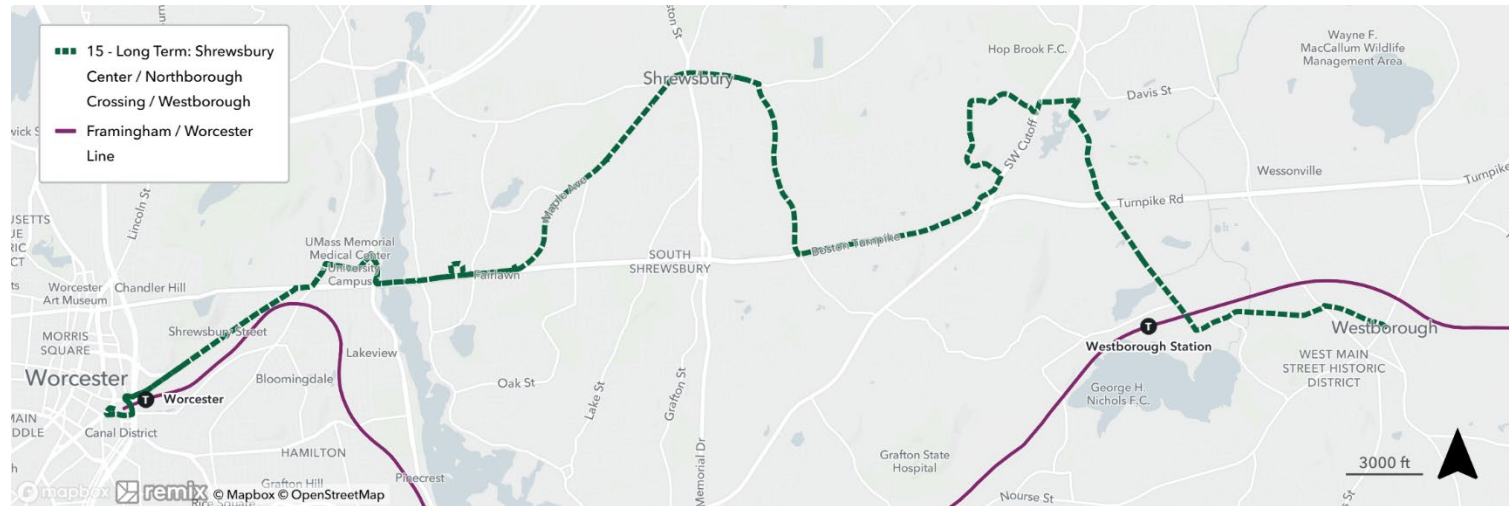
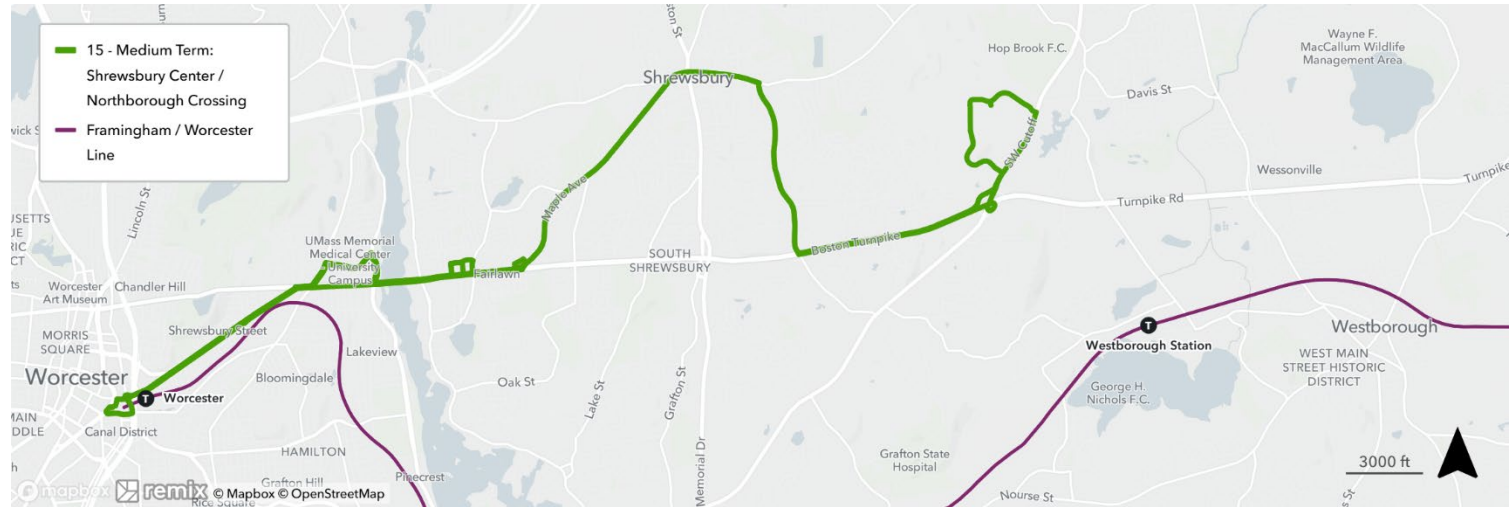
Route 12 Recommendations

- No change to route alignment
- Consistent “clockface” frequency at every 60 minutes to make the route easier to understand and ride
- This will also better align actual performance with the posted schedule



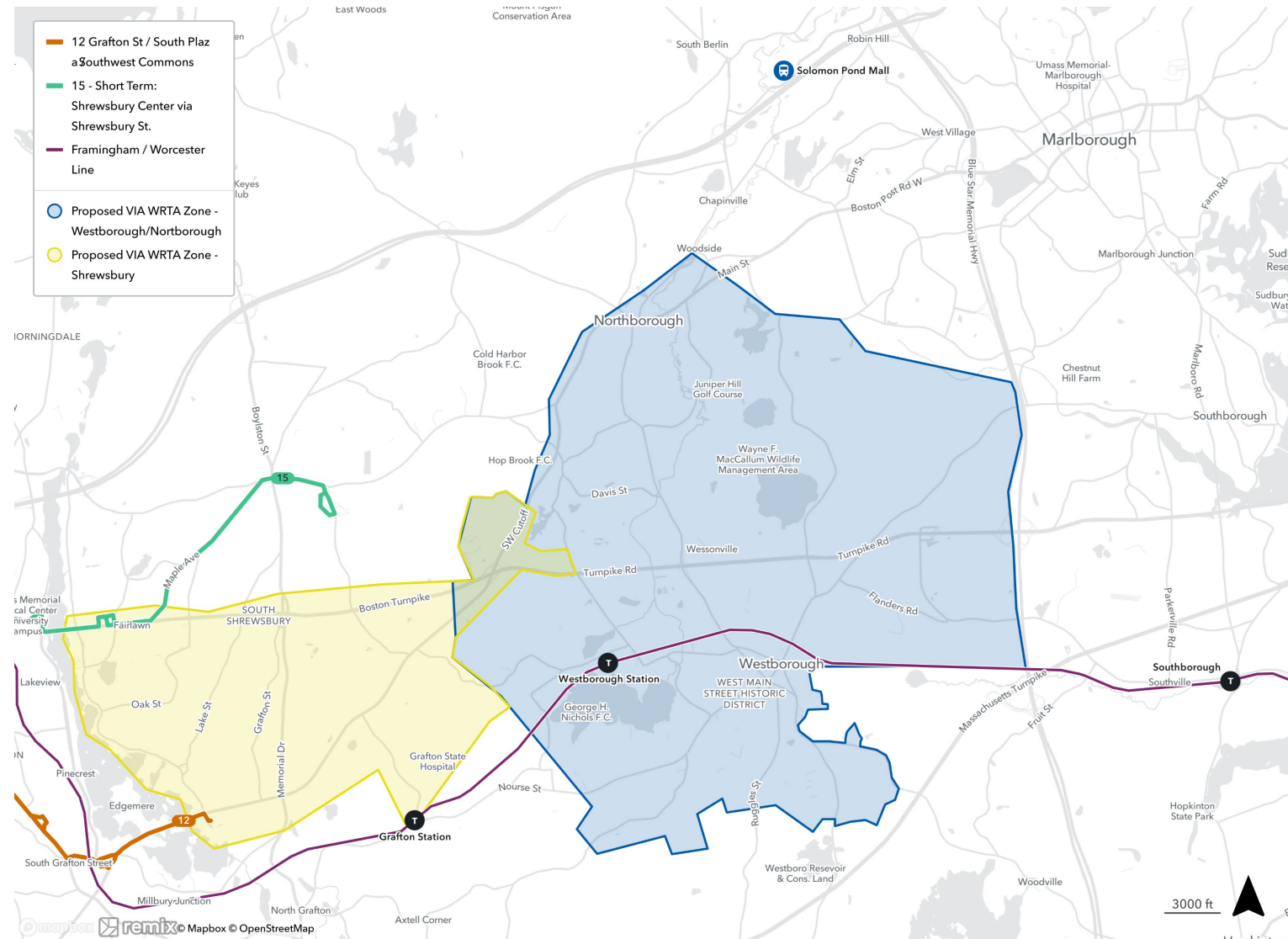
Route 15 Recommendations

- Short-term
 - No changes
- Medium-term
 - Extend to Northborough Crossing
 - Adds 1 vehicle
- Long-term
 - Further extension down Otis St to downtown Westborough
 - Adds 1 more vehicle



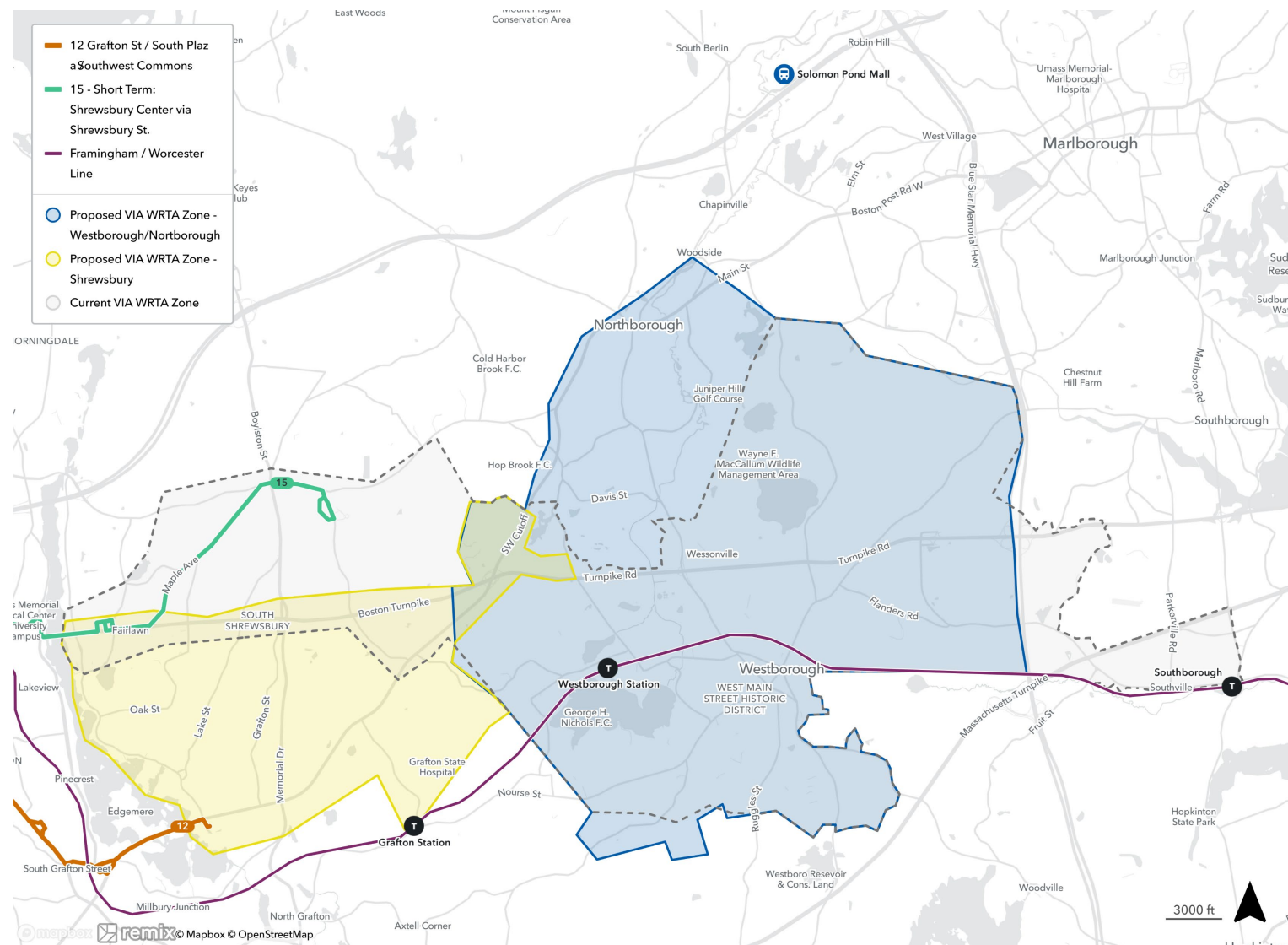
VIA Recommendations

- **Westborough/Northborough Zone**
 - Add coverage to downtown Northborough and more residential neighborhoods
 - Connection to Solomon Pond Mall
 - Discontinue service to Southborough MBTA station
- **Shrewsbury Zone**
 - More coverage in southern Shrewsbury, less duplication of Route 15
- **In medium-term, expand both zones to include evenings (7:00 AM – 11:00 PM) and Saturdays (7:00 AM – 7:00 PM)**



VIA Recommendations

- **Westborough/Northborough Zone**
 - Add coverage to downtown Northborough and more residential neighborhoods
 - Connection to Solomon Pond Mall
 - Discontinue service to Southborough MBTA station
- **Shrewsbury Zone**
 - More coverage in southern Shrewsbury, less duplication of Route 15
- **In medium-term, expand both zones to include evenings (7:00 AM – 11:00 PM) and Saturdays (7:00 AM – 7:00 PM)**



What Do You Think?

4

Feedback

- Share your thoughts now ...
or later:
- Collecting feedback at:
therta.com/the-extra-mile/
(through December 13)



Feedback

We would love to hear from you! Do you have feedback you'd like to provide regarding what you learned from the Virtual Public Meeting? Please fill out the form below:

Where are you from? *(Required)*

Northborough

Does this network meet your needs? *(Required)*

- Yes
 No
 Some of them

Please provide your thoughts on the recommendations below. If the network does not meet your needs, or meets some of them, please explain. *(Required)*

SUBMIT

Next Steps

5

What's Next for Connecting Communities



**Public
Meeting
12/5**

(Today)

**Final
Report**

