



Portland Train Station Relocation Planning Report

Portland, Maine

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Introduction

About NNEPRA

The Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA) is a quasi-government agency established by the Maine State Legislature to oversee the operation of passenger rail service to and within Maine. NNEPRA holds the service agreement with Amtrak for operation of the Downeaster passenger rail service.

As part of its charge, NNEPRA establishes schedules, fares, and marketing programs; manages strategic planning, maintenance and capital projects; and holds the agreements with station community partners to maintain platforms, provide parking, and passenger amenities.

Downeaster Operations

The Amtrak Downeaster currently offers five roundtrips daily between Brunswick, ME and Boston, MA (North Station). The Downeaster serves 12 station communities in 3 states – Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts, and serves approximately 600,000 passengers annually.

Strategic Initiatives

One of NNEPRA's primary purposes is to develop strategic initiatives to improve the passenger experience, reduce travel times, and increase ridership. NNEPRA currently has four strategic initiatives:

- › Relocate the Downeaster station in Portland, ME to a mainline location.
- › Add a passenger platform in West Falmouth, ME near Exit 53 off I-95.
- › Add a sixth daily round trip to support southern Maine commuter service into Portland, ME.
- › Pilot passenger rail service to Bath, Wiscasset, and Rockland, ME.

This report summarizes the site alternatives analysis for the initiative to relocate the Downeaster station in Portland, ME to a mainline location.



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Project Overview

This report summarizes NNEPRA's evaluation of site alternatives for relocating the Downeaster train station in Portland to the CSX mainline.

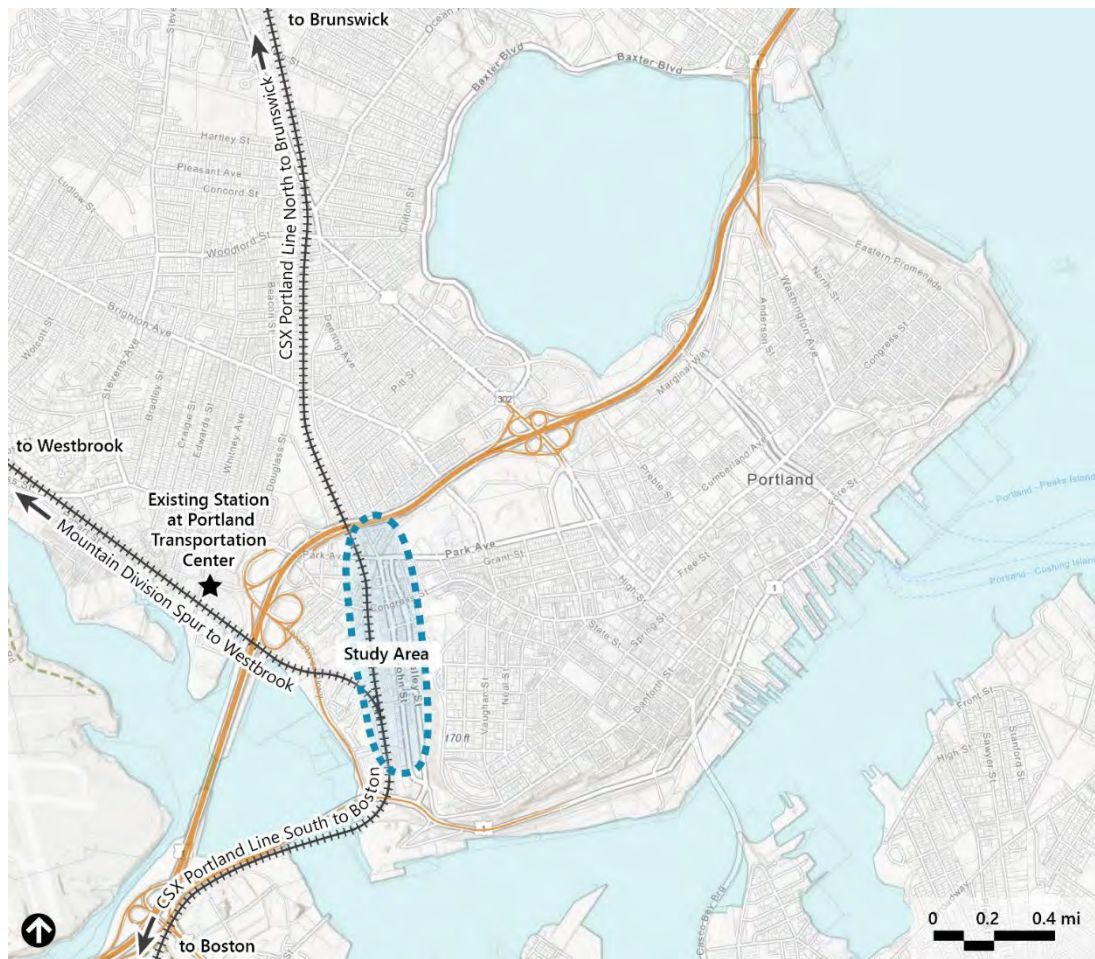
Problem Statement

The current Portland Downeaster station is located on Thompson's Point at the Portland Transportation Center (PTC) which is on a branch line approximately 1 mile from the CSX mainline. Accessing the current station requires trains to make time-consuming reverse moves, creating conflicts between freight and passenger trains. This constrains growth and creates additional travel time for passengers.

Project Purpose

The purpose of this site alternatives analysis is to explore, evaluate, and identify a location in Portland for a new Downeaster train station on the CSX mainline, east of I-295, which would best support Downeaster operations and reduce passenger travel time while improving proximity to major employers and residential areas, as well as access to transit and road connections and active transportation corridors. These enhancements will increase ridership and reduce vehicle trips to and through the greater Portland region. The overall project study area is shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 Project Study Area



Constraints of the Current Station Location on Downeaster Operations

The current station, located about 1 mile from the CSX mainline on the Mountain Division branch line, requires 20 additional train movements daily that would not be necessary with a mainline station. These extra movements add up to 150 minutes of train operations each day. The added travel time makes the Downeaster less competitive than other modes of travel and hinders ridership growth while increasing labor and fuel costs. These movements also delay freight and passenger trains on the mainline, limit schedule flexibility, and prevent additional frequencies or future connecting services.

NNEPRA analyzed the cumulative impacts of these required train moves through calendar year 2023:

- › Of the nearly 550,000 passengers that rode the Downeaster in 2023, approximately 125,000 riders collectively spent more than 31,000 hours on trains backing in and out of the PTC.
- › This maneuver resulted in an additional 3,650 hours of crew time and consumed 8,600 more gallons of fuel than would be required with a mainline station.
- › These impacts resulted in approximately \$973,000 in additional costs to passengers and the Downeaster service.

A mainline station with double platforms would only require a 2-minute station stop, similar to other Downeaster station stops between Maine and Massachusetts.

See Appendices A and B for additional information related to the current operational constraints.

Public Meetings

NNEPRA, in partnership with the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT), hosted three virtual meetings during the site alternatives evaluation process with opportunities for public input:

- › April 24, 2024 – An initial public meeting to gather public input on the project.
- › June 24, 2024 – A presentation on the site analysis and a summary of public input at the NNEPRA Board of Directors meeting, which was open to the public and included public comment.
- › August 13, 2024 – A public meeting to present the summary of this phase of the project.

See Section 5 of this report for additional discussion of these meetings and the public input that was received.

In addition, NNEPRA presented meeting materials at various public meetings in 2024. Presentations were provided at two public meetings held by the Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System (PACTS), which serves as the region's federal metropolitan planning organization that coordinates transportation planning and investment decisions with the state, municipalities, and public transportation partners. NNEPRA also presented the project at a Public Transportation Advisory Council (PTAC) meeting. PTAC advises the Departments of Transportation, Labor, and Health and Human Services on public transportation policies and priorities. The Council is charged with evaluating needs, recommending levels of service, identifying funding requirements and seeking maximum coordination of resources. In addition, NNEPRA provided regular monthly project updates at NNEPRA Board Meetings, which are often attended by members of the public and media.

Previous Related Studies

In 2019 and 2020, MaineDOT studied the intercity bus, rail, and related modes at the PTC from a customer and regional system perspective. A detailed evaluation of a new rail facility on the mainline with appropriate shuttle connections to the PTC was recommended as a result of that study. The summary of that study is available on MaineDOT's website at <https://www.maine.gov/mdot/planning/ptldtransportationstudy/>.

In 2019, VHB studied a rail transit connection from Westbrook to Portland along the Mountain Division branch line, evaluating two station alternatives on Main Street in downtown Westbrook, intermediate stations at Rock Row and PTC, and two options for stations on West Commercial Street. The conceptual level study assessed the feasibility, potential service types, high-level ridership estimates, and planning-level cost estimates.

In 2023, VHB analyzed Downeaster parking demand for a relocated Portland Station. NNEPRA and Amtrak provided data of existing ridership and use at the PTC, including boardings and alightings per train, and zip code data for tickets purchased. VHB also completed passenger surveys at the PTC to understand train usage, access methods, and trip durations. Based on the

information analyzed, VHB determined a current parking demand of 90 parking spaces at the PTC and a future parking demand of 105 parking spaces.

Also in 2023, MaineDOT released the Maine State Rail Plan which included the relocation of the train station in Portland in its short-term (2023-2026) passenger rail program. This systemwide planning process included market forecasting for several passenger rail initiatives. The increase in ridership attributable to travel time reductions through Portland and the relocation of the station to a more walkable location was projected to be 66,000 annually.



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Project Goals & Needs

The project seeks to reduce passenger train travel time, improve connectivity and proximity to employment centers/demand generators and increase ridership. The project aims to align with regional transportation goals, while prioritizing safety, passenger needs, efficiency of freight and passenger rail operations, and stakeholder and community interests. These factors are considered in examining the operational, accessibility, land use, and design impacts of potential station locations.

Project Goals

NNEPRA identified project goals to align with the project purpose and address the problem statement presented in Section 2. The site alternatives analysis determines which of three potential locations best meets these project goals. They include:

- › Identify a Portland station location which does not require time-consuming, inefficient, and costly back up moves.
- › Improve Downeaster ridership by reducing travel time and improving reliability.
- › Maximize benefits of sixth Downeaster round trip (2027) targeted to provide commuter-friendly service into Portland from Maine stations.
- › Reduce conflicts between passenger and freight trains.
- › Improve vehicle, pedestrian/bike, and transit access to the station.
- › Support regional transportation goals to make transit easier, create frequent connections, and create transit-friendly places.
- › Reduce train movement and noise.

- › Support Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) as well as economic development and land use opportunities in and around the station areas.

Project Needs

To achieve the project goals, NNEPRA developed a list of project needs:

- › Location on the freight mainline to eliminate reverse movements and promote safe and efficient train operations.
- › A double-track location with a boarding platform on each side of the tracks so that passenger trains travelling in opposing directions can board and alight riders simultaneously at the station and minimize freight train conflicts. The location should also:
 - Provide efficient access to train servicing and storage facilities at the Portland Layover Facility (PLF), located on the Mountain Division branch line, with minimal freight and passenger train conflicts.
 - Be far enough away from at-grade crossings so that train movements to/from station do not have a negative impact on traffic flow or public safety.
- › Parking for approximately 105 vehicles to support Downeaster riders.
- › Convenient vehicular access along with pedestrian, transit, and bike connectivity/access from various directions.
- › Proximity to demand generators to help drive additional ridership growth.
- › Compatibility with land use and development initiatives.
- › Ability to support potential future connecting rail services to/from locations north and west of Portland.

Potential Platform and Station Configuration

NNEPRA identified specific needs for the potential platform and station configuration of a relocated station in Portland. The proposed configuration will include two boarding platforms, (one on each side of the tracks) within the existing railroad right-of-way to minimize property impacts. The two boarding platforms will be connected by stairs and elevators to an ADA accessible pedestrian bridge over tracks for multi-directional access. The lobby areas for the stairs and elevators will include climate-controlled passenger waiting areas with ticketing, restrooms, and other amenities located within the platform structure. This layout will further reduce impacts to private property while providing passengers with a safe and comfortable area to wait for trains. Finally, the station will require adjacent parking areas with a circulation area for passenger drop off/pick up.

Figure 3.1 shows a rendering of a potential station configuration. This rendering is of the ongoing Wells Area Improvement Project. The proposed Portland station will incorporate similar elements, including platforms on each side of the tracks, an accessible overhead bridge, and an interior waiting area. Future planning and design will be required to incorporate these program elements into the Portland site and determine the final architectural design. It is anticipated that, like the Wells Area Improvement Project, this project would qualify for a Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Categorical Exclusion for environmental clearance purposes.

Figure 3.1 Potentail Station Rendering Example from Wells Station Expansion Project





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Site Alternatives Analysis

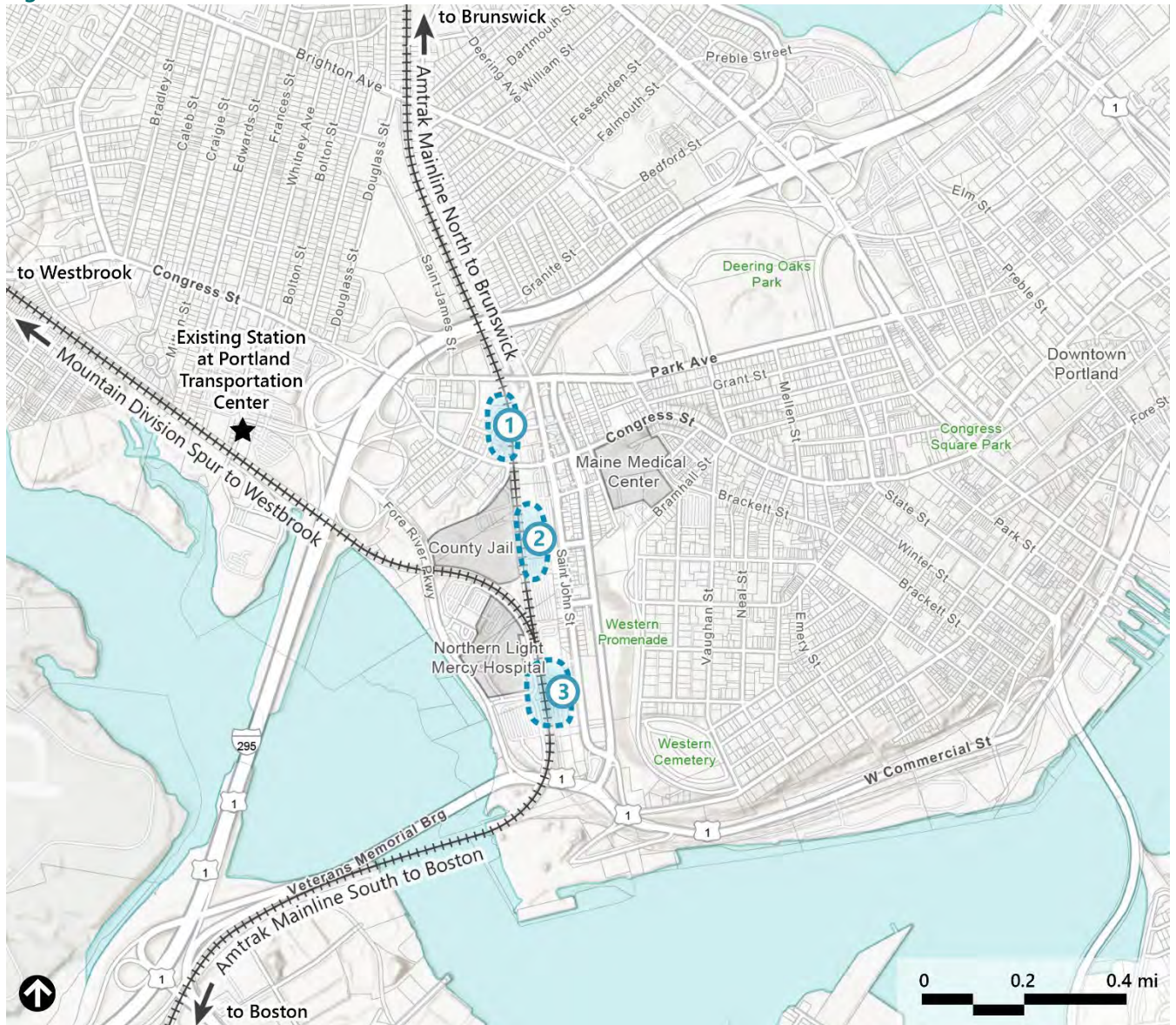
NNEPRA, in partnership with MaineDOT, conducted a site alternatives analysis as part of the due-diligence process in selecting a station location that best aligns with the project's goals and needs. This site alternatives analysis focused on a section of the CSX mainline closest to established transportation networks, such as I-295 and city arterial streets, businesses, and the densest residential areas of Portland and the state of Maine. The study area is an approximately one-half mile corridor of the CSX mainline on Portland's peninsula.

Sites Considered

The station location must be on the CSX mainline with reasonable access to the existing street network. Three sites, shown in Figure 4.1 below, were identified within the study area for further evaluation:

1. Site 1 is located between Congress Street and Park Avenue, behind the existing Amato's and McDonald's on St. John Street. This site would be accessed directly from Congress Street immediately adjacent to the existing Congress Street grade crossing.
2. Site 2 is located south of Congress Street between the Cumberland County Jail and the Maine Medical Center employee parking garage on St. John Street. It would be accessed from St. John Street.
3. Site 3 is located at the southern end of St. John Street, between Northern Light Mercy Hospital and St. John Street. This site would be accessed from St. John Street from the east and could potentially also be accessed from the Northern Light Mercy Hospital campus and Fore River Parkway from the west.

Figure 4.1 Sites Considered



Site Considerations

Each of the sites were analyzed for the following site considerations.

Train Operations



The site analysis considered various aspects of train operability associated with Downeaster passenger trains as well as CSX freight trains. Based on discussions with Amtrak and CSX, it was determined that the station must be located at a mainline location with double track to allow trains in opposing directions to pass without interference and also to allow faster-moving passenger trains to pass slower-moving freight trains without delays. A location south of the Mountain Branch would be necessary to efficiently access Downeaster mechanical facilities at the PLF on Thompson's Point without disruptive reverse moves on the mainline.

The proximity of the station to the grade crossing at Congress Street must also be considered to maintain pedestrian safety and minimize impacts on vehicular, pedestrian, and train traffic. Stations at or near grade crossings pose safety risks, especially in double-track territory where passengers and pedestrians may not anticipate a train approaching from a different direction if a train is already stopped at the station. Station platforms must be located far enough away from grade crossings so that locomotives and passenger cars do not physically block the roadways or activate signals and gate closures while trains are approaching the station, or while passengers are boarding and alighting.

Beyond that, the closer a station is to a grade crossing, the longer it takes to clear the grade crossing due to slower speeds while accelerating or decelerating. This situation is exacerbated when trains are scheduled to pass at the station, as is often expected to be the case in Portland.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Connections

The site analysis considered connectivity with locally established or designated bicycle and pedestrian corridors in addition to vehicular access. The bike and pedestrian connections figure provides a graphical summary of these connections.

-  Bike Routes
-  Pedestrian Routes



Zoning and Land Use

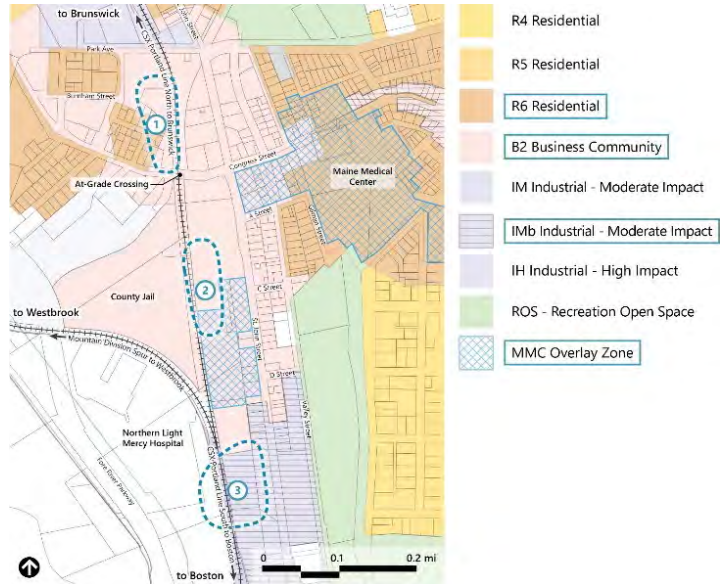
During the planning process, the three site location alternatives for the future Portland Station resided in the following zones:

Site 1: B2 (Business Community) & R6 (Residential)

Site 2: B2 (Business Community) & MMC Overlay

Site 3: I-Mb (Industrial – Moderate Impact)

The City of Portland has recently approved a new zoning code with map changes that take effect in December 2024. Information regarding the City's ReCode process, including the new zoning designations, can be found in Appendix C.



Station Site Comparisons

This section provides a brief overview of the three site alternative locations all located along a one-half mile section of CSX mainline track in Portland, ME. The tables below each alternative detail site-specific considerations related to project needs. Each site alternative was reviewed to assess how its characteristics align with the project goals and needs outlined in Section 3.

Station Site Alternative 1

Site 1 is located north of Congress Street, accessed by a paved driveway just west of the CSX grade crossing. The site is currently a paved parking lot and abuts a mix of densely sited single and multi-family residential houses to the west, a La Quinta Inn & Suites to the north, and St. John Street commercial food businesses (McDonald's and Amato's) across the CSX mainline to the east. Access to Site 1 exists by way of an existing driveway that connects to Congress Street.

Project Needs/Goals	Site-Specific Characteristic
Safe and efficient train operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Railroad converges to single track and would not allow for dual platforms. › Located north of Mountain Division. Back-up moves would be required to access PLF, conflicting with freight and passenger train movements. › Located in close proximity to Congress Street and within the signal activation circuit for the Congress Street grade crossing. These factors will extend gate closure times while train(s) approach, service, and depart the station, impeding traffic and creating safety concerns.
Parking for 105 cars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Awkward parcel layout with significant modifications necessary to accommodate parking.
Connectivity: Vehicular, pedestrian/bike, transit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Vehicular access from Congress Street. Access to Veterans Memorial Bridge. Closest site to I-295. › Pedestrian access to neighborhood, Congress Street, and St. John Street. › Bike access to Congress Street and St. John Street bike network. Potential future access to Union Branch trail. › Over-track bridge does not enhance pedestrian connectivity. › Adjacent to four existing METRO bus routes. › Winding route for potential shuttle to PTC.
Proximity to demand generators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Within ¼ mile of Maine Medical Center complex, plus retail and commercial.
Compatible with land use and development initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Zoned B2 (Business Community) & R6 (Residential) › The Intermodal transportation facility use is proposed to be added as an allowable use to B2.
Supports future rail service expansions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Can only support future connecting service from north with station track added. › Does not support potential future east/west connections.

Station Site Alternative 2

Based on the grade crossing factors outlined above, the platforms for Site 2 must be located at least 1,300 feet south of Congress Street to avoid additional impacts on road closures. Site 2 is then located south of Union Station Plaza and partially behind the Maine Medical Center employee parking garage on the east side of the tracks, with Cumberland County Jail to the west. The site abuts and partially includes areas of surface parking associated with businesses in the area, including the commercial shopping plaza and a large historic office building on St. John Street. Access to Site 2 is via driveway connecting to St. John Street.

Project Needs/Goals	Site-Specific Characteristic
Safe and efficient train operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Doubletrack mainline location. › Located north of Mountain Division. Back-up moves would be required to access PLF, conflicting with freight and passenger train movements. › A station track would be needed to mitigate train conflicts. › Site abuts Congress Street. Platform would be located behind MMC parking garage to clear the signal activation circuit and limit additional gate/road closure time at Congress Street grade crossing. Location would increase gate closure times over existing conditions while train(s) approach, service, and depart the station.
Parking for 105 cars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Parking over-subscribed; structured parking likely needed.
Connectivity: Vehicular, pedestrian/bike, Transit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Vehicular access from St. John Street and Congress Street via Union Station Shopping Plaza parking lot. Access to Veterans Memorial Bridge and I-295. › Pedestrian access to St. John Street and Congress Street via Union Station Shopping Plaza parking lot. › Bike access to St. John and Congress Street bike network. › County Jail and Mountain Division tracks obstruct vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle connectivity to Fore River Parkway, Fore River Parkway Trail, and Northern Light Mercy Hospital and. › Adjacent to four existing METRO bus routes, and BSOOB and Maine Medical Center shuttle bus routes on St. John Street. › Winding route for potential shuttle to PTC. › Would interfere with MMC employee garage and shuttle.
Proximity to demand generators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Within ¼ mile of Maine Medical Center complex with direct access via shuttle, plus retail and commercial.
Compatible with land use and development initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Zoned B2 (Business Community) & MMC Overlay › Intermodal transportation facility use is proposed to be added as an allowable use to the B2 and TOD zones. › Property owned and operated by MaineHealth and is in full use. Property is the location of potential alternate development plans.
Supports additional rail service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Can only support future connecting service from north with station track added. › Does not support potential future east/west connections.

Station Site Alternative 3

Site 3 is located at the southern end of St. John Street across from the METRO offices and garage, and immediately east of the Northern Light Mercy Hospital campus. Current site uses adjacent to Site 3 along St. John Street include commercial and industrial businesses consisting of a plumbing supply warehouse and showroom, a food preparation business, and a series of smaller commercial businesses.

Project Needs/Goals	Site-Specific Characteristic
Safe and efficient train operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Doubletrack mainline location. › Location south of Mountain Division minimizes back-up moves to access PLF, mitigating conflicts with freight and passenger train movements and eliminating need for a station track. › No grade crossing or traffic impacts over existing conditions.
Parking for 105 cars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Possible to accommodate needed spaces adjacent to site location. › Property currently owned by private businesses.
Connectivity: Vehicular, pedestrian/bike, transit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Vehicular access from St. John Street, Fore River Parkway, and I-295 via Fore River Parkway. Closest potential access to Veterans Memorial Bridge and Commercial Street. › Pedestrian access to St. John Street, Northern Light Mercy Hospital campus, and Fore River Parkway Trail. › Bike access to St. John Street bike network and Fore River Parkway Trail. › Over-track bridge provides new pedestrian connectivity between St. John Street, Northern Light Mercy Hospital campus, and Fore River Parkway. › Adjacent to one existing METRO bus route, and BSOOB and Maine Medical Center shuttle bus routes on St. John Street and Fore River Parkway. METRO willing to explore adding additional service to the site. › Direct route for potential shuttle to PTC via Fore River Parkway.
Proximity to demand generators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Within ½ mile of Maine Medical Center complex with direct access via shuttle, plus retail and commercial. › Adjacent to Northern Light Mercy Hospital campus.
Compatible with land use and development initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Zoned I-Mb (Industrial – Moderate Impact and transportation-related uses) › Current mix of commercial and light industrial uses adjacent to commercial/residential mixed-use area.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Intermodal transportation facility use is proposed to continue to be an allowable use in the I-Mb and is proposed to be added as an allowable use to the B2 and TOD zones. › Mix of commercial uses with supporting surface parking and institutional parking (surface and structured).
Supports additional rail service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Can support future connecting service from north. › Supports potential future east/west connections.



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Stakeholder and Public Input

NNEPRA conducted extensive outreach to key stakeholders and the public as part of the site alternatives analysis. Stakeholders include railroad partners, property owners in the analysis area, and the City of Portland. NNEPRA hosted two dedicated public meetings to gather feedback, as well as presented the project at two meetings of the area's federal metropolitan planning organization, Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System (PACTS).

Summary of Stakeholder Input

Stakeholder input is a key factor in determining the location that best meets the project goals. As discussed in previous sections, the primary concern at the current station is the operational impacts and delays caused by its location. In addition to input from railroad operations stakeholders, NNEPRA completed outreach to nearby property owners, including Portland's major medical care facilities, MaineHealth and Northern Light Mercy Hospital. NNEPRA has also coordinated with the City of Portland throughout the site analysis phase.

Amtrak

Amtrak operates the Downeaster service and identified Site 3 as the preferred alternative from a railroad operations standpoint. Amtrak expressed concerns about Sites 1 and 2, citing operational challenges due to their proximity to Congress Street grade crossing and signal circuits. A station at these locations would require additional gate down time at the Congress Street grade crossing, impacting vehicular traffic. Additionally, Amtrak noted Site 1 and Site 2 would limit connections to the PLF, where Downeaster trainsets are serviced. While all

alternatives may require some track and signal improvements to accommodate the new station location, Site 3 is expected to need less extensive modifications than Site 1 or Site 2.

CSX

CSX owns the tracks used by the Downeaster in Maine and New Hampshire and must approve any station relocation. NNEPRA and CSX coordinate weekly on existing operations and proposed future improvements. Through that coordination, CSX has indicated that Site 3 is their preferred location from an operational standpoint because it is the furthest away from the Congress Street grade crossing and preserves access to the Mountain Branch.

MaineHealth

MaineHealth owns Maine Medical Center, the largest hospital in the state of Maine. While the primary campus is on Congress Street, MaineHealth also owns and/or operates Site 2 and much of the property adjacent to Site 2, including an employee parking garage immediately south of Site 2. MaineHealth has indicated concerns with potentially locating a station at Site 2, including that:

- › The proximity of Site 2 to Congress Street and the potential for increased railroad gate closure time on this primary ambulance / emergency vehicle route is concerning.
- › Site 2 parking is already fully subscribed.
- › Use of Site 2 for other long-term purposes would limit Maine Medical Center's ability to expand in the future to accommodate the community's increasing healthcare needs and would jeopardize the potential to rehabilitate the adjacent historic office structure.
- › Site 2 includes a travel corridor for MaineHealth shuttles; increased bike and pedestrian traffic through this area raises safety concerns.

Northern Light Mercy

The Northern Light Mercy Hospital (Mercy) campus is immediately west of the railroad tracks at Site 3. During discussions with NNEPRA, Mercy expressed that while they do not have a preference on the site selection, they would be willing to work collaboratively to explore options that are mutually beneficial if Site 3 is selected, as long as the integrity of their campus and the safety of their employees and patients is preserved.

Greater Portland Metro

NNEPRA has engaged with Greater Portland Metro (Metro), which operates fixed-route bus service in Brunswick, Freeport, Yarmouth, Falmouth, Portland, South Portland, Westbrook, and Gorham, with connections to local and regional transit systems. Metro's primary garage facility is located across from Site 3, between St. John Street and Valley Street. Metro is planning improvements and expansion of their garage and administration facilities at this location and supports a future Portland train station at any of the three alternative site locations. Metro has indicated that they would work with NNEPRA and MaineDOT in the planning process to accommodate a Metro bus service stop at any future station location. Discussions with Metro's leadership suggest that Site 3 could offer added benefits of inter-agency coordination for

administrative space, parking facilities, and on-site security, and could help to develop a transit hub at a location in Portland that is immediately adjacent to Metro's facilities.

City of Portland Planning Staff

NNEPRA and MaineDOT met with city planning staff on several occasions throughout the site analysis process with the important goal of ensuring the future station location aligns with and potentially enhances current and future land uses in the area and other city goals and initiatives, like ReCode. City planning staff have identified Site 2 as their preferred location based on their vision of land use at this location and their view of connectivity to current and future bicycle and pedestrian networks, as well as access to 4 existing bus routes that provide high frequency connections to the peninsula core and points west. City planning staff expressed a desire to be closely involved in advancing the Portland station relocation project at any location.

Other Property Owners

In addition to the stakeholder input discussed above, NNEPRA reached out to many of the private landowners in the vicinity of the site locations. This outreach focused on project status updates and allowed NNEPRA to gather feedback and address concerns from landowners. No discussions were held regarding the value of potential property acquisition.

Summary of Public Input

NNEPRA, MaineDOT, and VHB hosted two formal public meetings for the project. The first meeting in April 2024 presented an analysis of the alternatives under consideration and gathered public input. The second meeting in August 2024 presented input gathered from key stakeholders and the public, and the site that best meets the project's goals. Both meetings were held virtually to maximize attendance, included presentations from NNEPRA and VHB, and were followed by a public comment period where all attendees who wished to speak were given the opportunity. After each of the public meetings, NNEPRA posted a recording and a PDF of the slide deck on their website, along with a form for written feedback available for two weeks following each meeting. In addition to the two formal public meetings, VHB presented the project to the NNEPRA Board of Directors at their June board meeting, which was open to the public and included public comment.

April Public Meeting

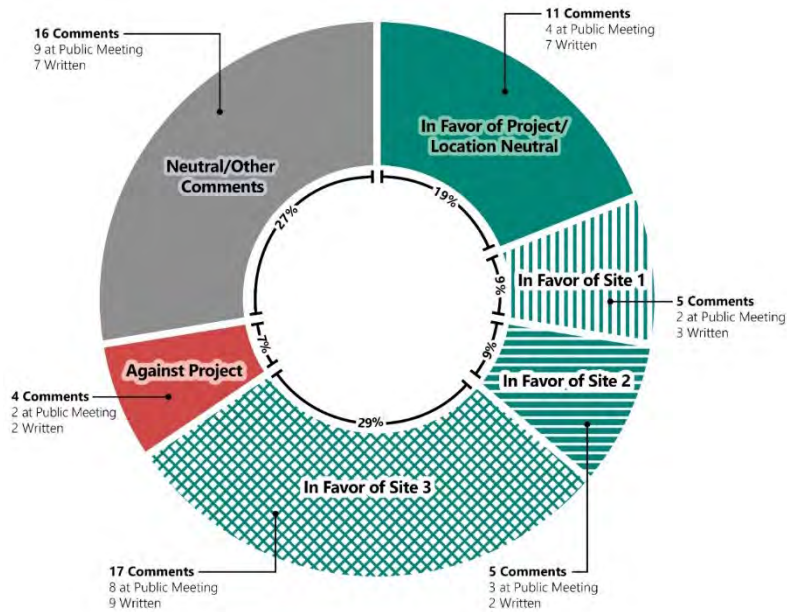
The purpose of the April public meeting was to present the framework of the project, the three sites under consideration, and some of the initial pros and cons identified at each location. No recommendation was made regarding a preferred site and the primary goal of the meeting was to receive public feedback on the site alternatives.

VHB and NNEPRA reviewed all public comment received during the April public meeting, including written comments that were submitted through NNEPRA's website in the two weeks following the meeting. In total, nearly 60 people provided input, with some people providing input multiple times.

Figure 5.1 below provides a graphical summary of the comments received. In general, there was significant support for the project with only 4 comments (approximately 7%) noting opposition

to the project and 38 comments (approximately 66%) expressing support for the project. Of those who expressed support for the project, the site that received the most support was Site 3 (approximately 29% of all comments). The remaining 16 comments provided did not express any support for or opposition to the project, but rather provided miscellaneous input or asked questions.

Figure 5.1 Summary of Public Input – April Public Meeting



In addition to categorizing the input by support or opposition, common themes were identified among the comments received. The public priorities that were most noted included:

- › Maintaining connections to other forms of public transportation.
- › Supporting bicycle and pedestrian connections.
- › Encouraging transit-oriented development/mixed-use development.
- › Allowing for connections to future east/west rail service.
- › Promoting safety at a new station location.

June NNEPRA Board of Directors Meeting

VHB presented a project summary to the NNEPRA Board of Directors at their June meeting. This presentation included a summary of the public input from the April public meeting and a refined analysis of the characteristics of each site. After the presentation, the board discussed the project and voted in favor of Site 3 as the location that best meets the project goals. This meeting was open to the public, and two attendees provided supportive comments.

August Public Meeting

The final public meeting of this phase of the project was held in August 2024. NNEPRA and VHB presented the final summary of the site alternatives analysis, public input from the April meeting, and direction from the Board of Directors in June. Site 3 was identified as the location that best meets the project goals. Following that meeting, NNEPRA and VHB reviewed all public input received during the meeting and via written comment in the two weeks following the meeting. In total, 51 people provided comment. Similar to the April meeting, there was minimal opposition to the project by way of 4 comments (approximately 8%). Of those that noted support for a specific site, the comments received were:

- › 4 comments in support of Site 1 (approximately 8%).

- › 3 comments in support of Site 2 (approximately 6%).
- › 13 comments in support of Site 3 (approximately 25%).
- › 4 comments in support of the project but not specifying one site over another (approximately 8%).

Since the August meeting focused on presenting the preferred site, fewer comments were made about specific locations. Instead, many provided input on the next phase of the project, desired station amenities, and other miscellaneous comments. 21 comments (approximately 41%) were in this category. Most comments were very similar to the recurring themes noted in the comments from the April public meeting.



6

Recommendation and Next Steps

Using the information analyzed and discussed in the sections above, the project team and the NNEPRA Board of Directors determined that Site 3 is the site that best meets the project's needs and goals.

Summary of Recommendation

The characteristics of each site alternative were considered as related to the identified project goals. Additionally, stakeholder and public input were taken into consideration.

All three sites considered could improve pedestrian/bike/transit connectivity and support surrounding TOD economic development. Site 3 has been identified as the site which best meets the project goals and needs based on the following:

- Site 3 is the only site which provides direct access to the Mountain Branch for access to the PLF and mitigates train conflicts most effectively.
- Site 3 would require the least amount of costly railroad infrastructure improvements (e.g., signal modifications, station and/or new mainline track) to support the station.
- Site 3 is the only site which would have no impacts to the Congress Street grade crossing beyond existing conditions.
- Site 3 is the only site which enhances bike and pedestrian connectivity between St. John Street and the Fore River Parkway via the over-track pedestrian bridge.
- Site 3 is the only site which provides direct pedestrian access to the Northern Light Mercy Hospital campus as well as Maine Medical Center via the shuttle.
- Site 3 provides the most opportunity for connectivity to the PTC via the Fore Street Parkway.
- Site 3 is the preferred site for the general public, Amtrak, and CSX.

Next Steps

The next steps for the project will be to advance to the preliminary design and pre-environmental compliance phase, focusing on Site 3. The preliminary engineering phase will analyze the opportunities and constraints at Site 3 in greater detail and develop preliminary plans and project cost estimates to inform the final design and eventual construction of a relocated Portland Station. In conjunction with MaineDOT, NNEPRA intends to seek federal funding and non-federal match for the construction of the station and required associated site improvements.

Figure 6.2 Conceptual Rendering of Station at Site Alternative 3 Location

