



Charting a Path for Atlanta's Rail Hub

Team

Speaker



Tejas Kotak
ARC Project Manager
Principal Transportation Planner



Will Tucker
Director, Housing Innovation
City of Atlanta, Office of Mayor



Speaker



Anuka Reddy
Transportation Planner



Kaycee Mertz
WSP Project Manager
Georgia Planning Lead



Luke Derochers
Rail Operations Lead

Agenda

Project Overview

Alternatives Evaluation

Engagement and Coordination

Next Steps



Project Overview



Why Atlanta Needs a Rail Hub?

Existing Peachtree Station



Existing Peachtree Station



Located at Peachtree Rd NW, Atlanta, built in 1918, is the only Passenger Rail Station in the City.

Serves the Crescent Line (New York – Atlanta – New Orleans)

78k Riders Annually

Existing Peachtree Station



Current Conditions / Limitation

Size & Capacity: Facility is undersized for current ridership

Accessibility: Limited ADA access, constrained passenger flow areas

Connectivity: Poor multimodal connections, limited parking, no direct MARTA rail access

Amenities: Minimal waiting space and traveler services

Operational Constraints: Single platform, limited track access, location restricts expansion

Freight Impacts: NS stops traffic when Amtrak is at the station

Existing Peachtree Station Conditions

Traffic due to inadequate drop-off and parking



Passengers crossing Freight Tracks



Insufficient Stairwell especially with passenger luggage



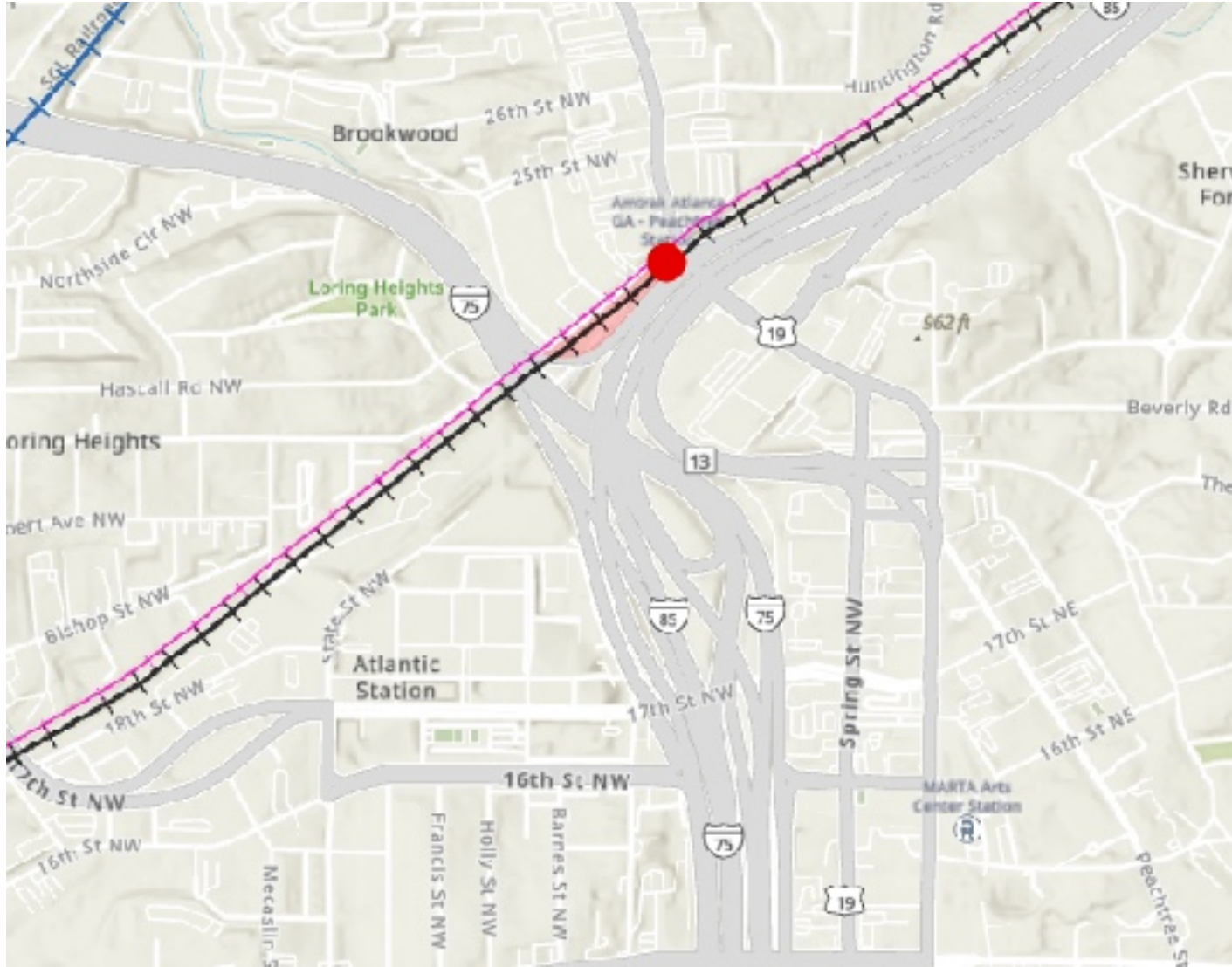
Congested Station Boarding Area



Lack of "Gateway" to the City



Existing Peachtree Station Conditions



Norfolk Southern stops all traffic when Amtrak is in the station

Station expansion is constrained by I-75/85 and Deering Road

About 1 mile from MARTA Arts Center Station

MARTA Route 110 bus stop

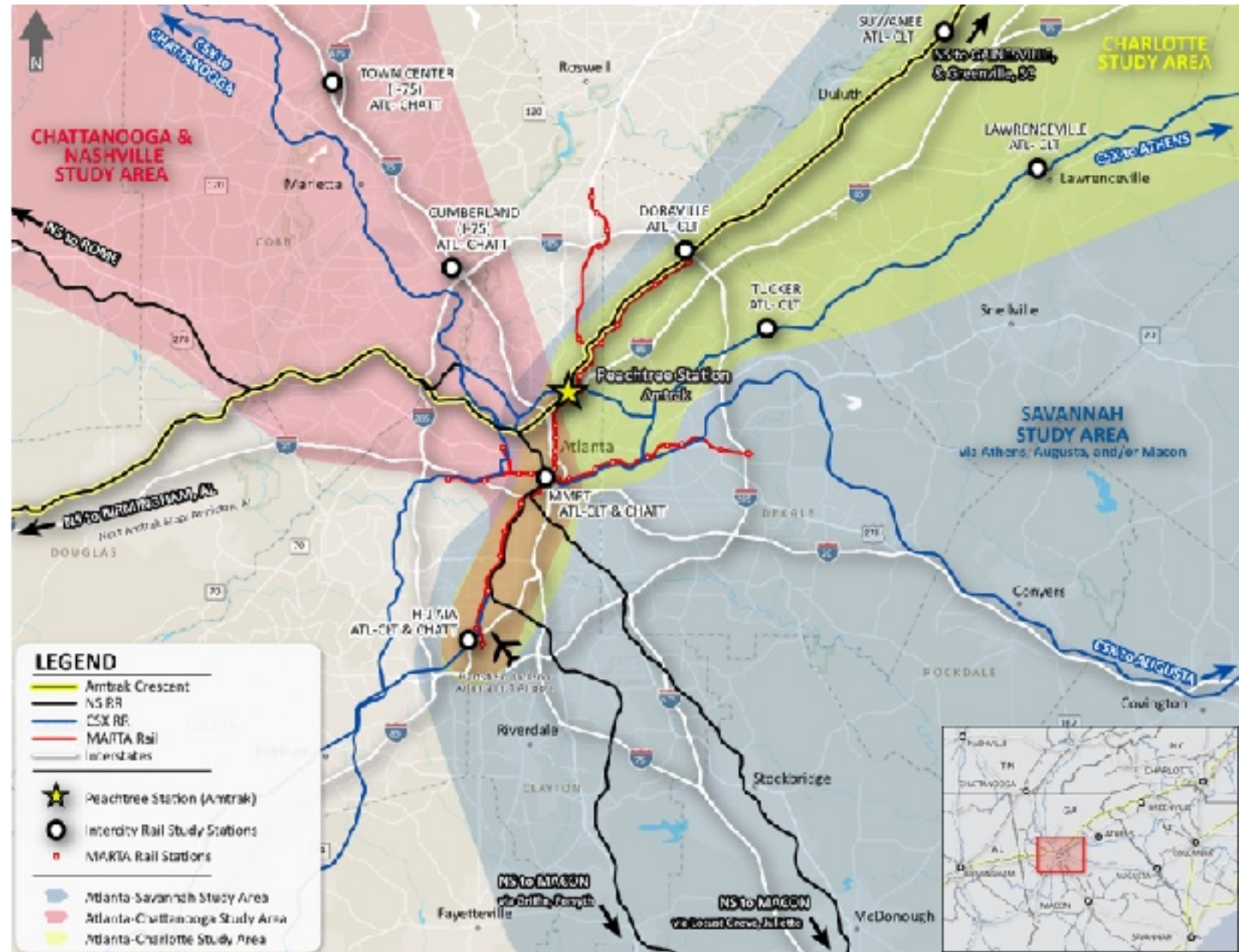
Why Today?

Atlanta's Opportunity to Lead the Way

Three new corridor studies are centered on Atlanta Hub

Catalytic regional development

Leverage rail ridership success and energy from around the county

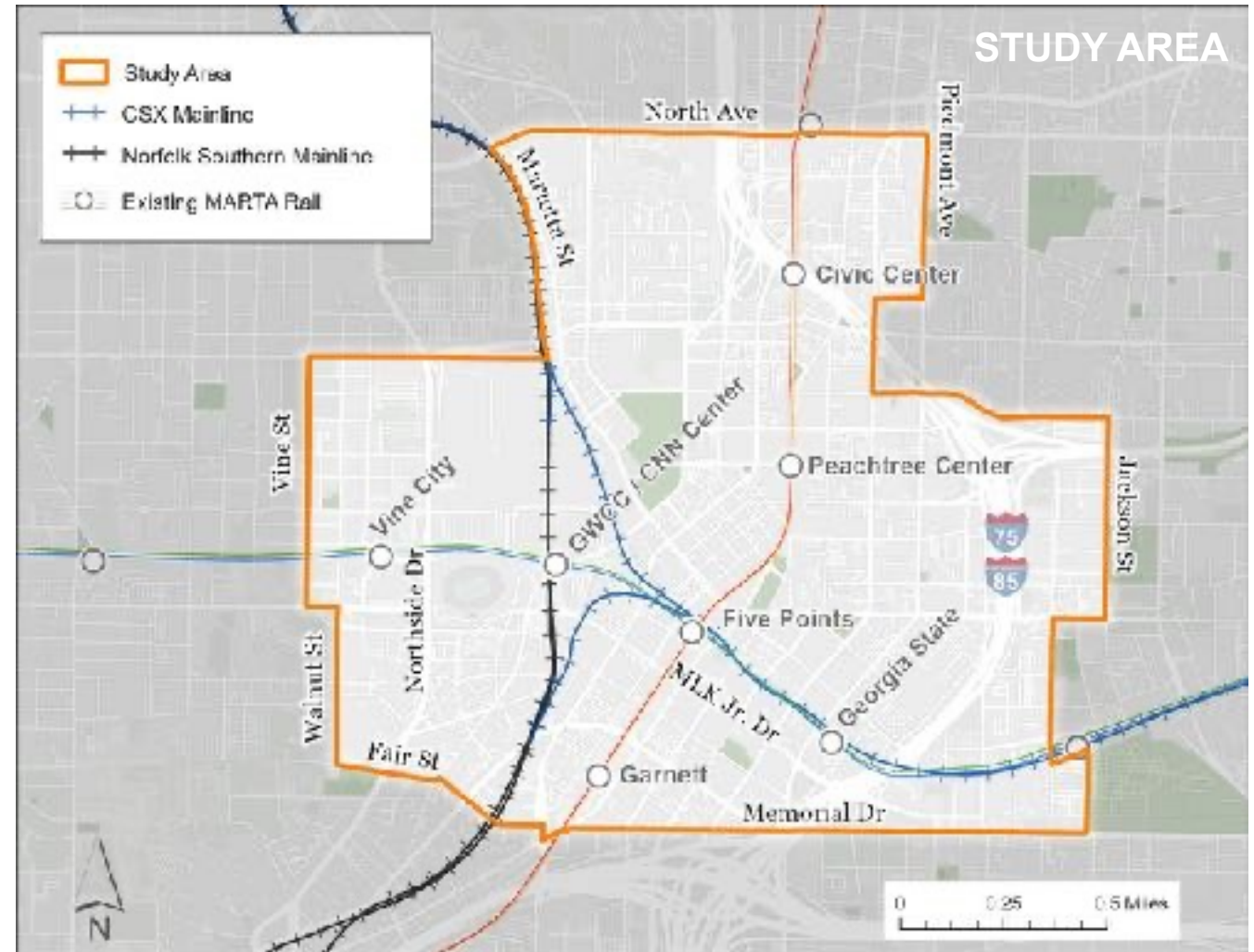


Why Atlanta Needs a Rail Hub ?

Need for improved customer service and accessibility for rail travelers, better accommodate multimodal connections

Scalability for longer term intercity service improvements

Provide a gateway for visitors to the city and signature destination for the region



Study Purpose

Plan for Atlanta Rail Hub

- Atlanta as a hub for rail in the southeast serving existing and future corridors in the federal pipeline
- Identify feasible alternatives
- Document the steps, partnerships, and funding required



Vision for the Atlanta Hub

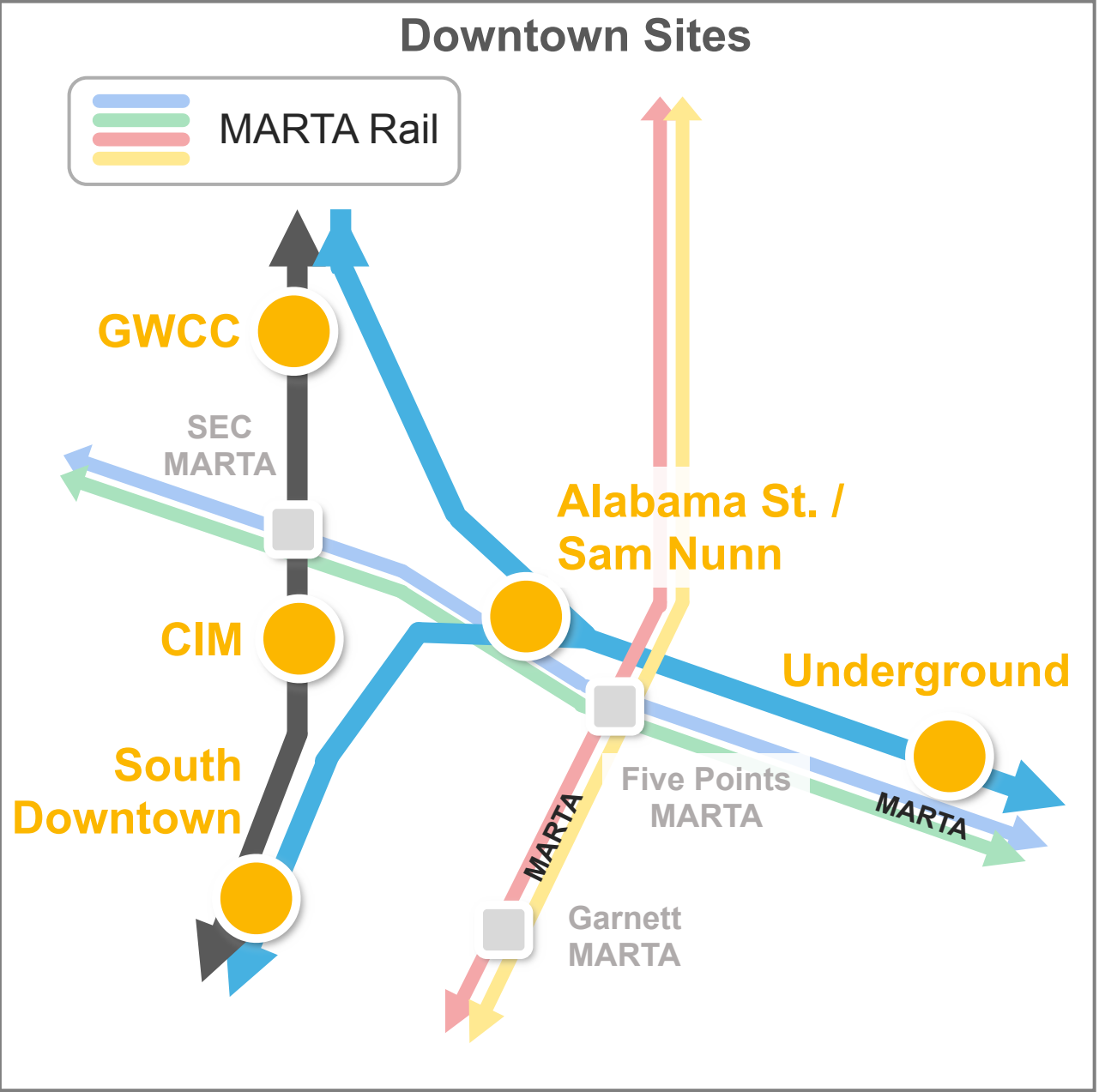
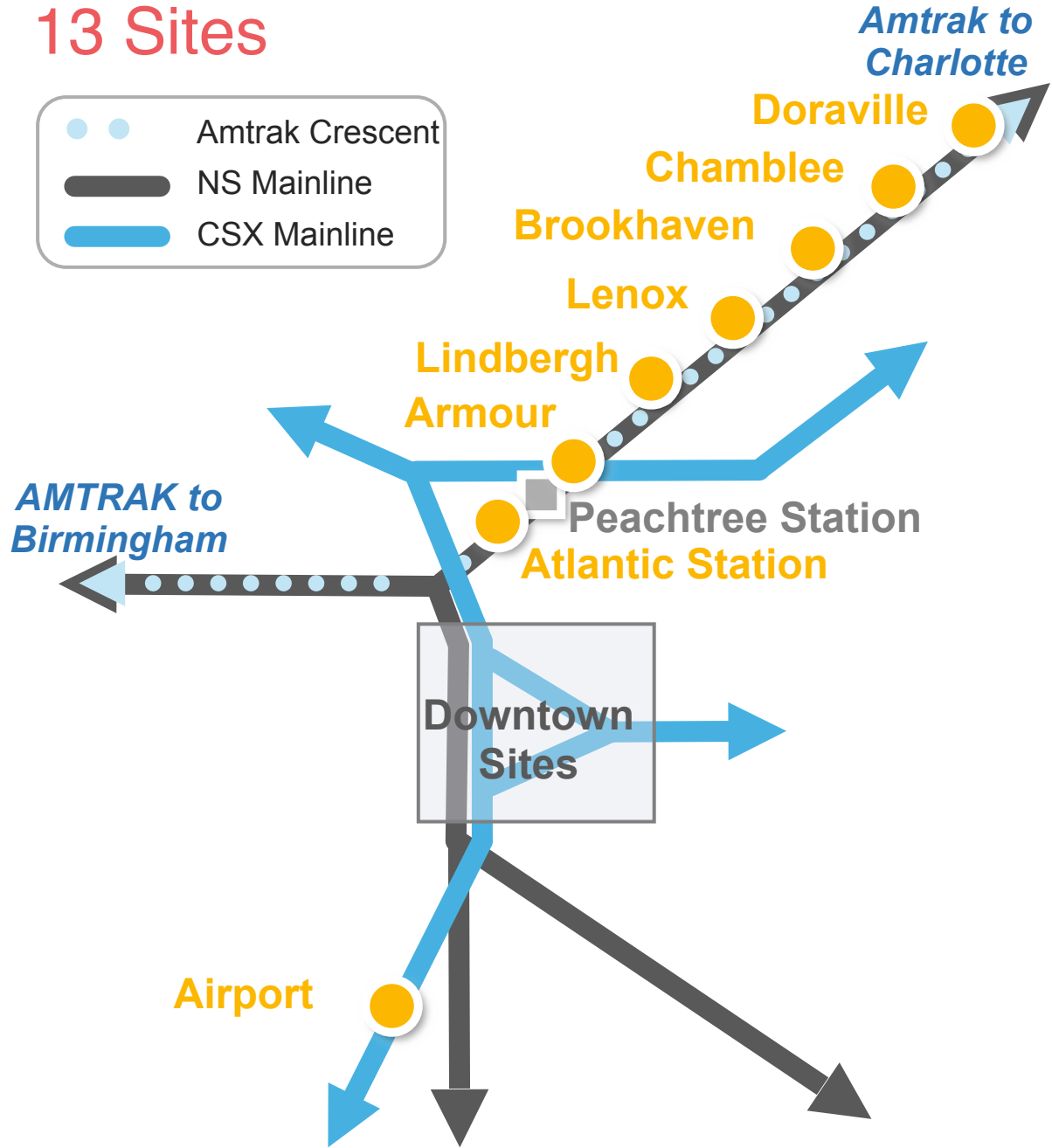
- Gateway to Atlanta
- Destination for travelers and Atlantans
- Direct access to MARTA for seamless connections
- Leverage strategic partnerships and catalytic private development
- Scalable site that can accommodate long distance and new intercity routes:
 - Atlanta-Savannah
 - Atlanta-Chattanooga-Nashville
 - Atlanta-Charlotte
 - Existing Amtrak Crescent from NY to NOLA



Alternatives Evaluation

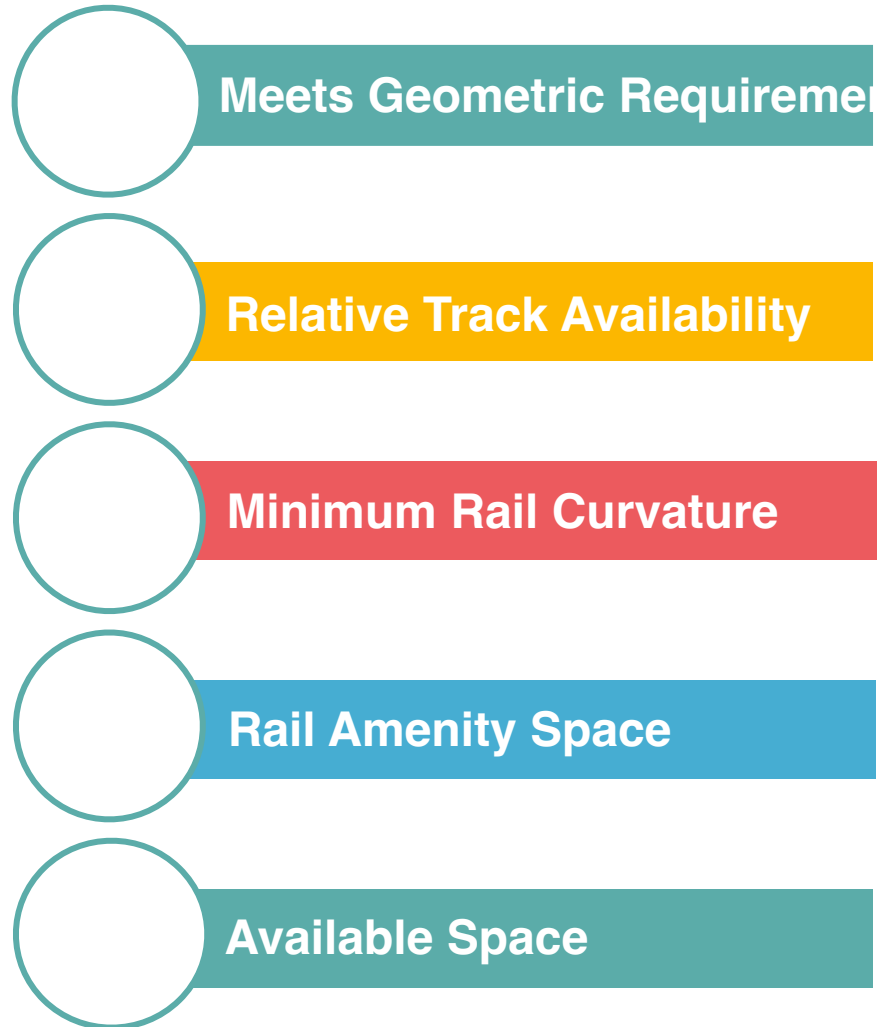


13 Sites



Evaluation Framework

Technical Principles



Planning Principles



Evaluation Framework

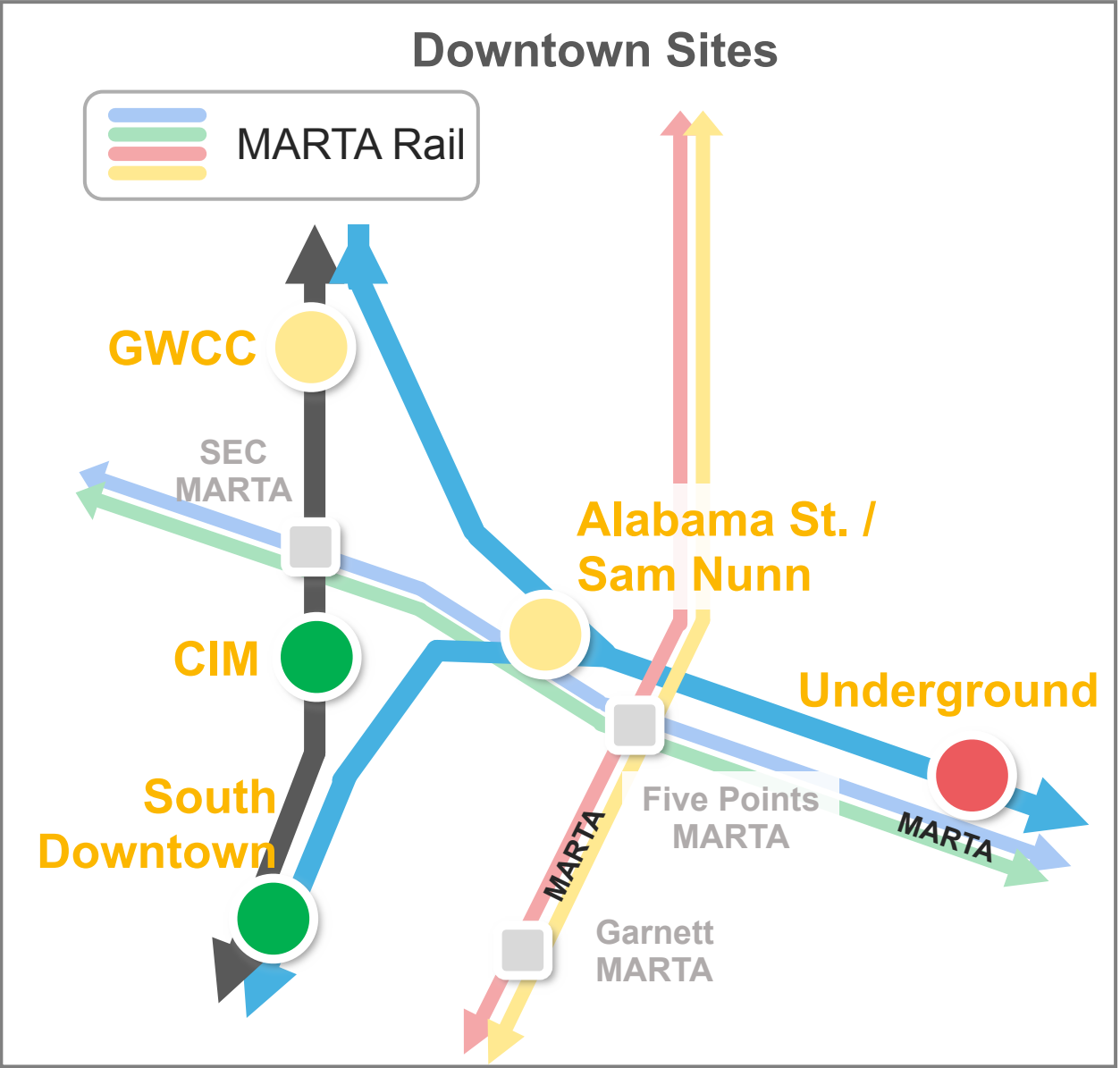
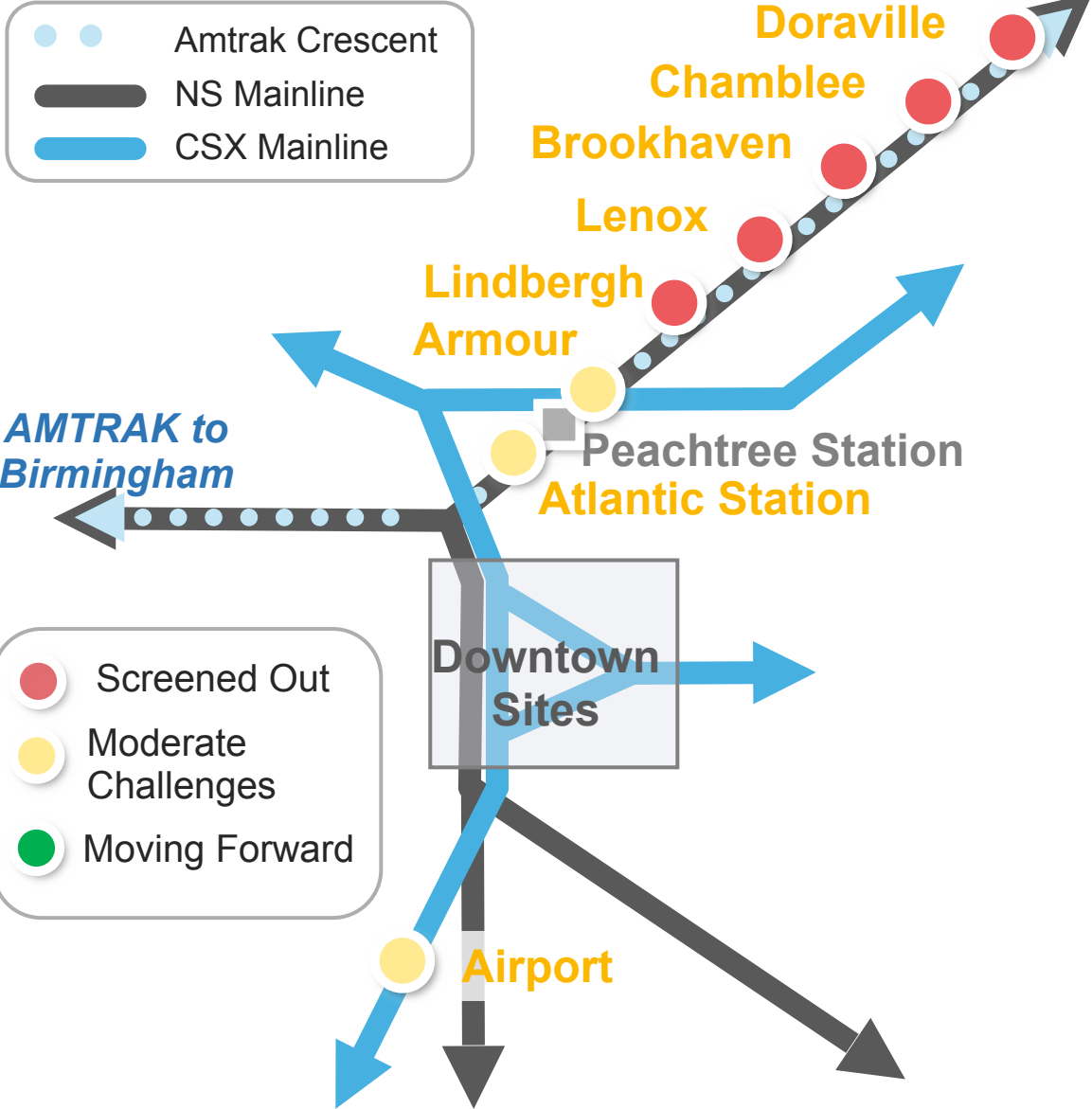
Technical Principles were used as a first screen to **remove sites** that would result in significant technical challenges

Planning Principles were used to score the remaining sites, helping us choose one **preferred site**



Evaluation Step 1

Technical Screening

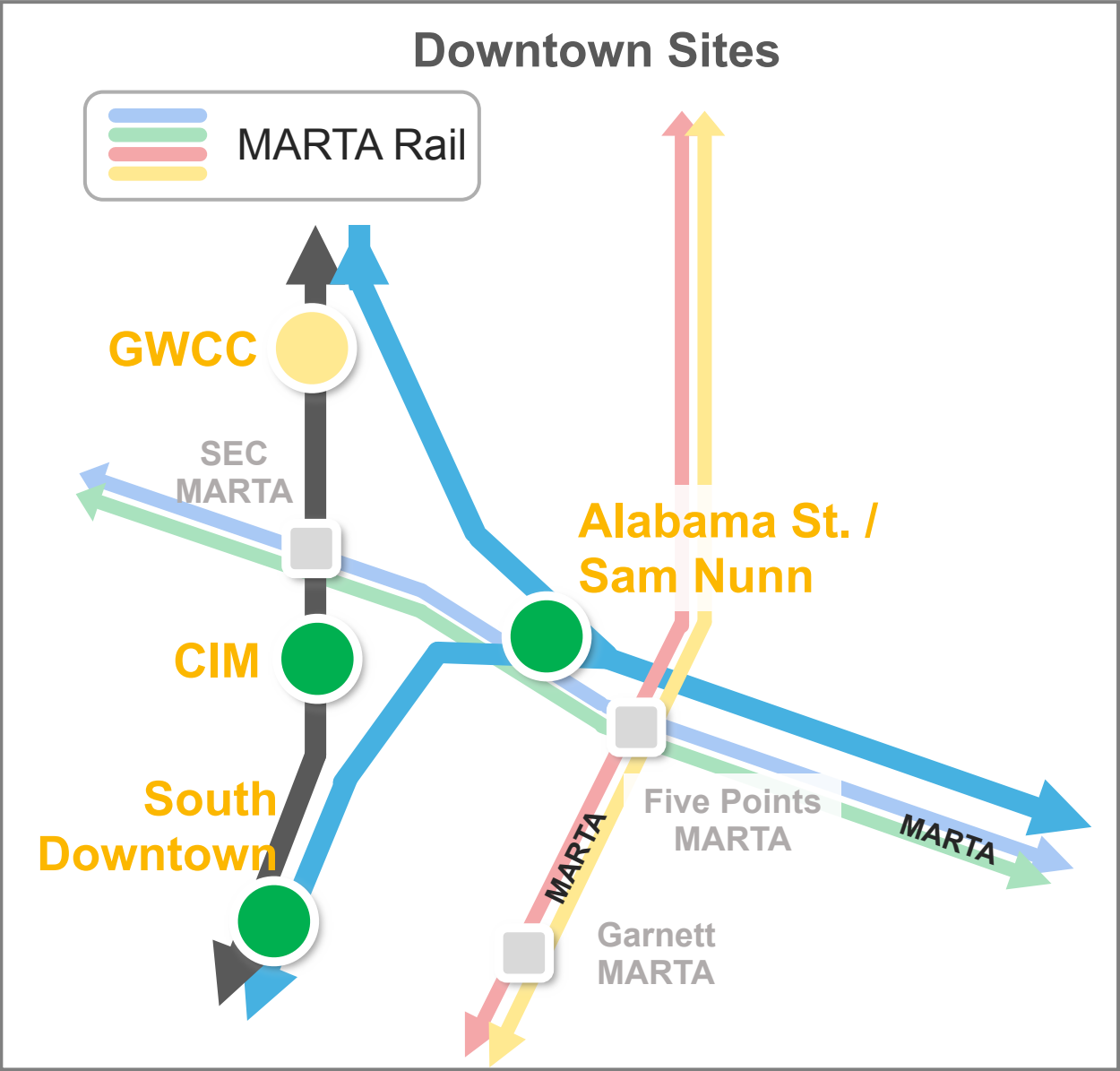
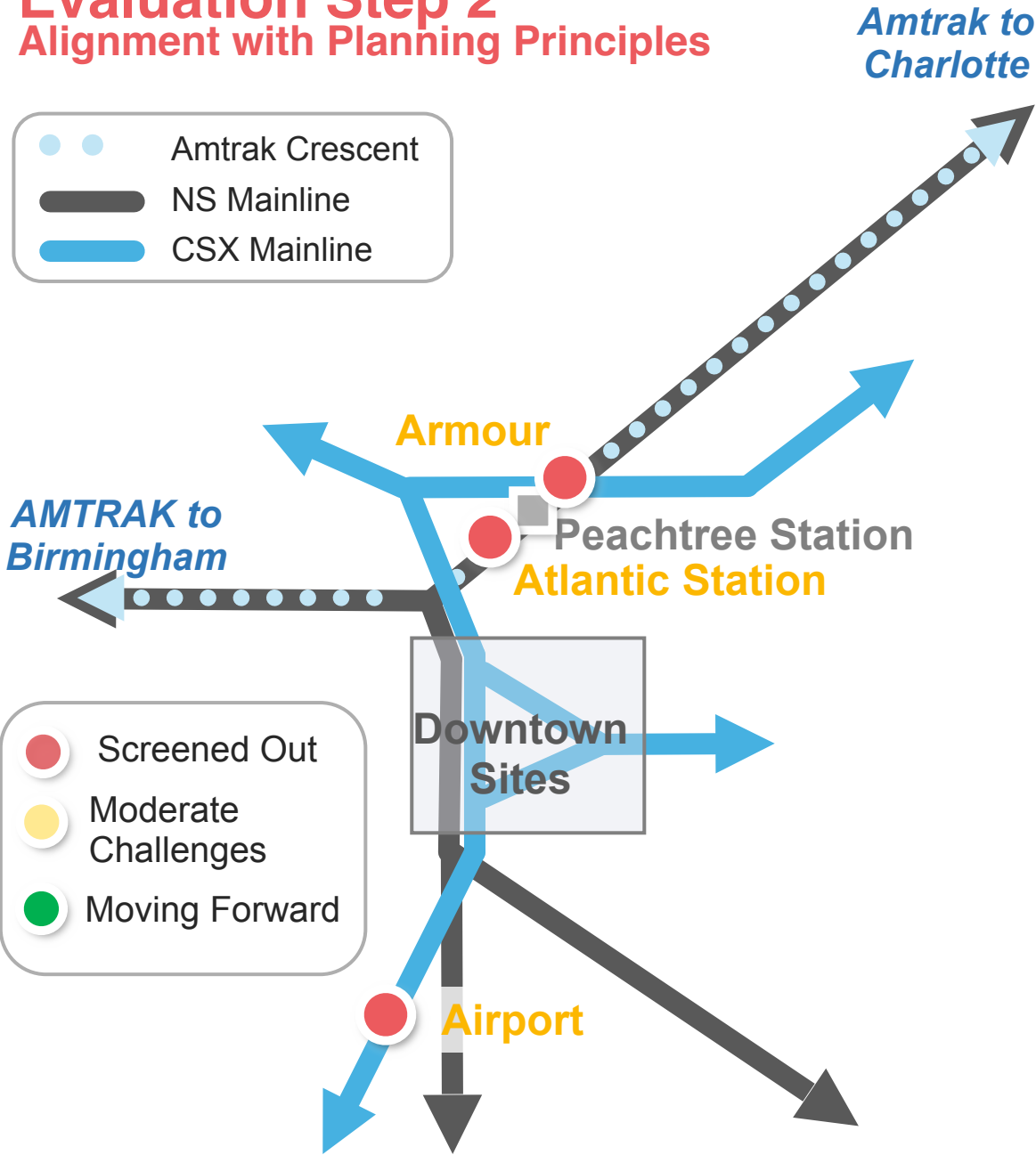


Evaluation Step 2

Alignment with Planning Principles

- Amtrak Crescent
- NS Mainline
- CSX Mainline

- Screened Out
- Moderate Challenges
- Moving Forward



2 Hub sites moving forward for consideration

- Amtrak Crescent
- NS Mainline
- CSX Mainline

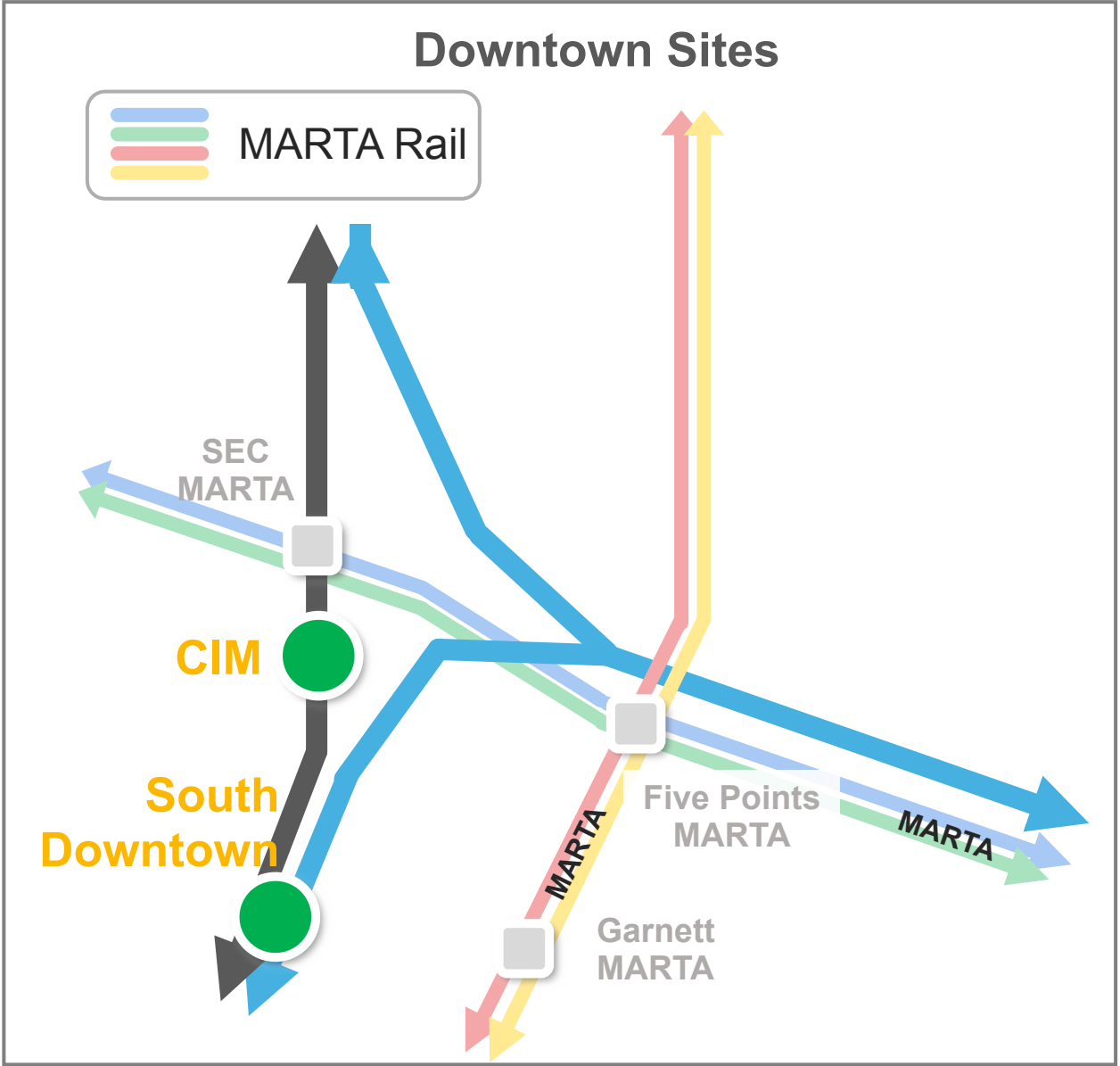
AMTRAK to Birmingham

Amtrak to Charlotte

Peachtree Station

Downtown Sites

Moving Forward



Engagement & Coordination



Engagement & Coordination

Online Survey



Interactive Map



Community Pop-Up



Intercept Survey



Stakeholder Meetings



Public Engagement

Online Survey



363

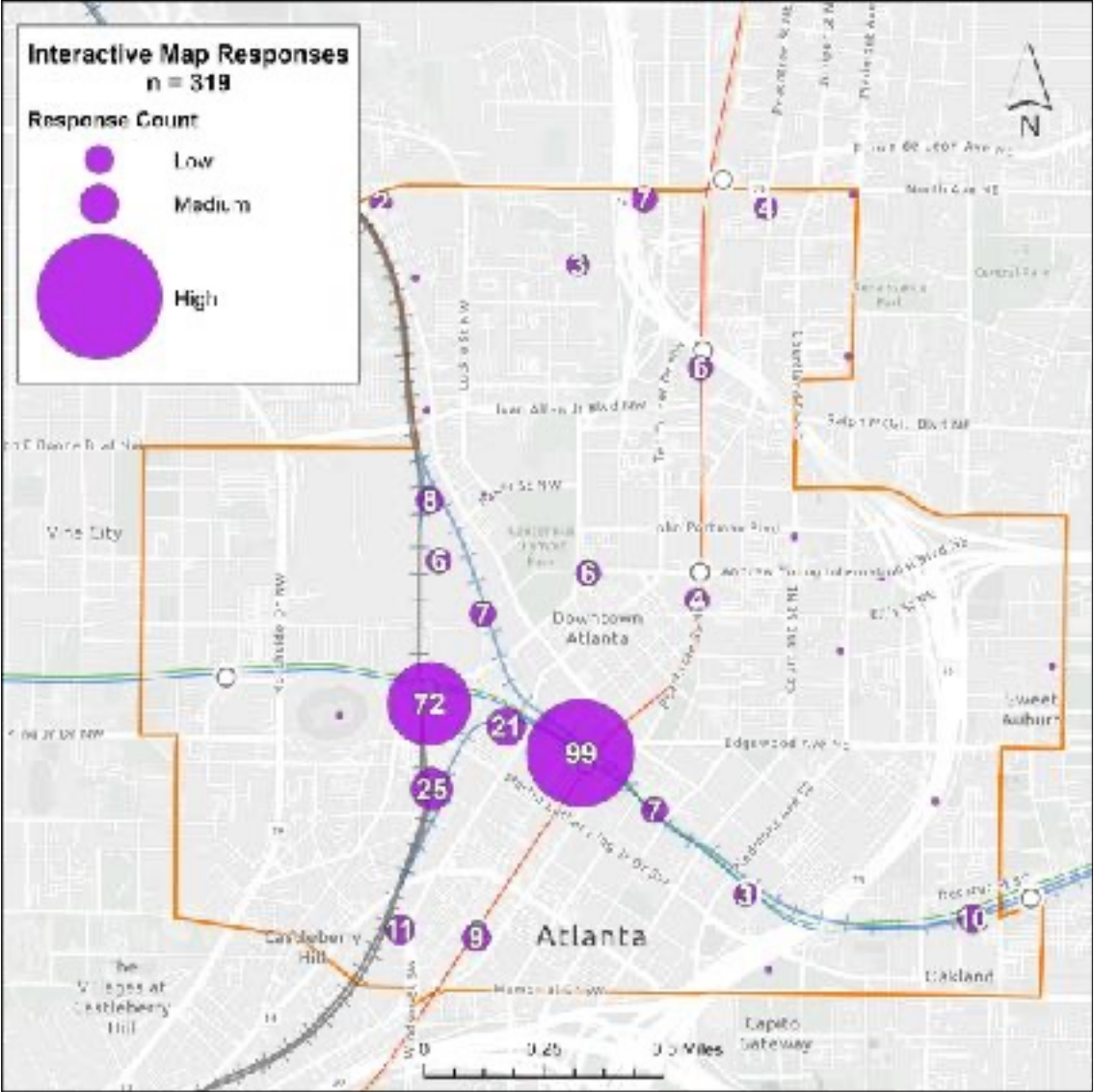
Surveys Completed

Interactive Map



319

Comments Received



What we heard?

Top challenges with the current station:



Getting to the station



Limited food & retail options



Limited waiting areas

Top challenges getting to the current station:



Limited connections to public transit



Finding vehicular parking



Inadequate drop-off area

What we need to prioritize in a rail station:



Connections to MARTA and other regional transit



Better pedestrian access



Modern amenities like wi-fi and charging outlets

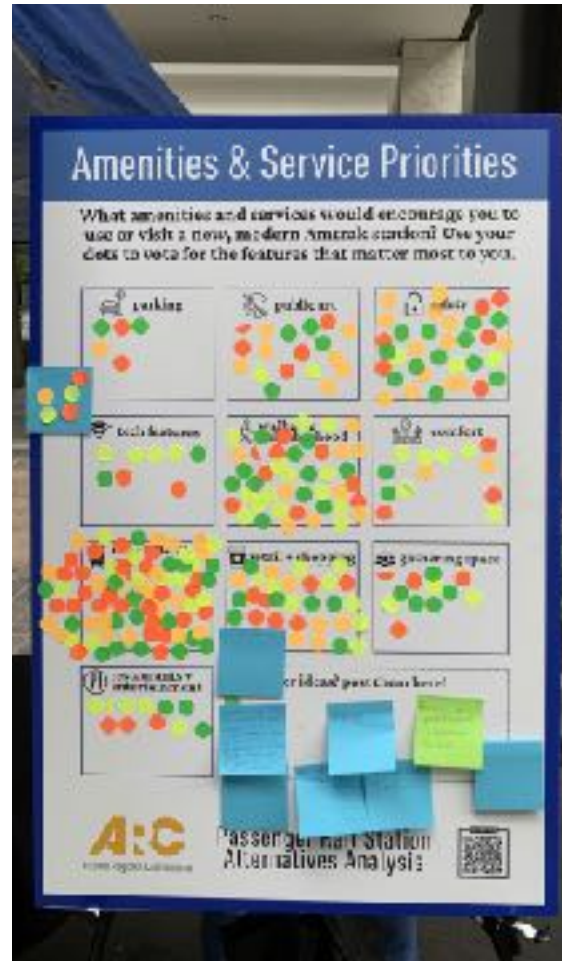
Public Engagement

Community Pop-Up



246

Inputs Received



Streets Alive Event Pop-Up

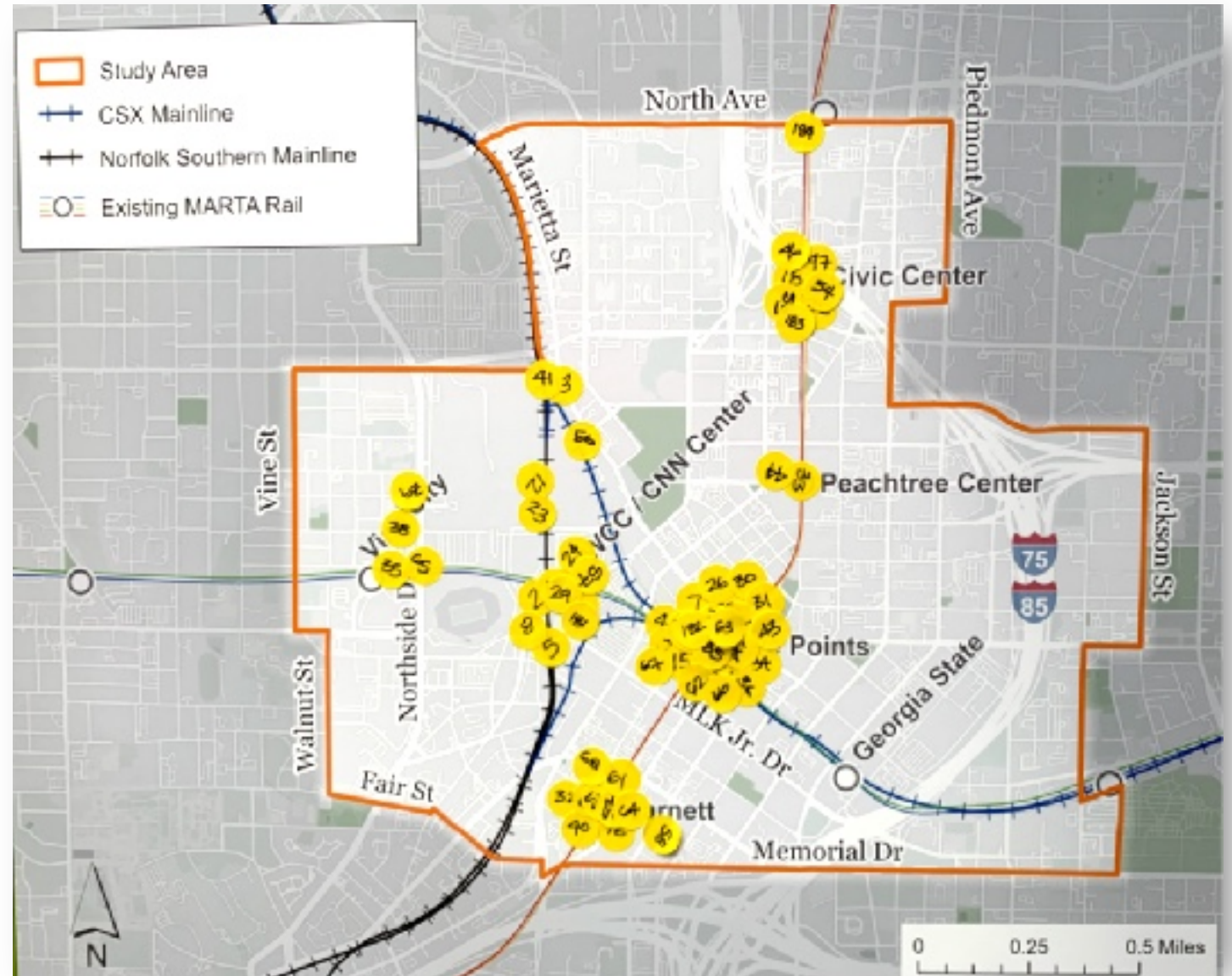
What we heard?

Top sites based on public feedback:

Five Points

CIM / GWCC

South Downtown - Garnett



What we heard?

Support



Major support for a downtown station and centralizing intercity rail access



Overwhelming consensus on MARTA connectivity, multimodal access, and consideration of future intercity routes



Support for including **parking, food services, and retail** that can serve **tourists, locals, and event-goers** efficiently

Critiques



Negative perceptions and safety concerns with downtown (particularly Five Points and surrounding areas)



Disruptive construction and additional congestion



Site design constraints



Project cost versus benefits

Public Engagement

Intercept Survey



558

Surveys Completed



Intercept Survey at Existing Peachtree Amtrak Station

Passenger Personas & Characteristics



Current Atlanta Amtrak Riders

Personas are informed by personal interactions and survey data of current riders.

Behavior, needs, and user experience of these personas are informed through the direct interactions with current riders.

Online survey data gave us a better understanding of the demographics.

Family Visiting Grandparents

The Mathews family lives in Atlanta and frequently visits their extended family in New Orleans. Dad is taking the kids, a 6-year-old daughter and a 3-year-old son, to visit their grandparents over Fall Break while Mom stays home for work. Mom drops them off at the Atlanta Peachtree station to take the Amtrak Crescent, to avoid the stress of interstate driving and make the trip easier for the kids.



O: Atlanta, GA
D: New Orleans, LA

68.75% traveled to visit family/friends

13.50% annual users

35.76% indicated limited waiting areas and
ADA features

58.61% driven by family/friend

What they wish for is a **spacious, modern station** which is **accessible** with dedicated **family waiting area** and **cafe** to grab snacks.

First Time Traveler

O: Atlanta, GA
D: Washington, DC

Emma is a freshman at Oglethorpe University travelling to Washinton DC from Atlanta for a summer research project.

This is **her first long-distance rail trip**, and she also wishes to vlog her experience and record the full journey from arriving at the station to boarding the train and the ride.

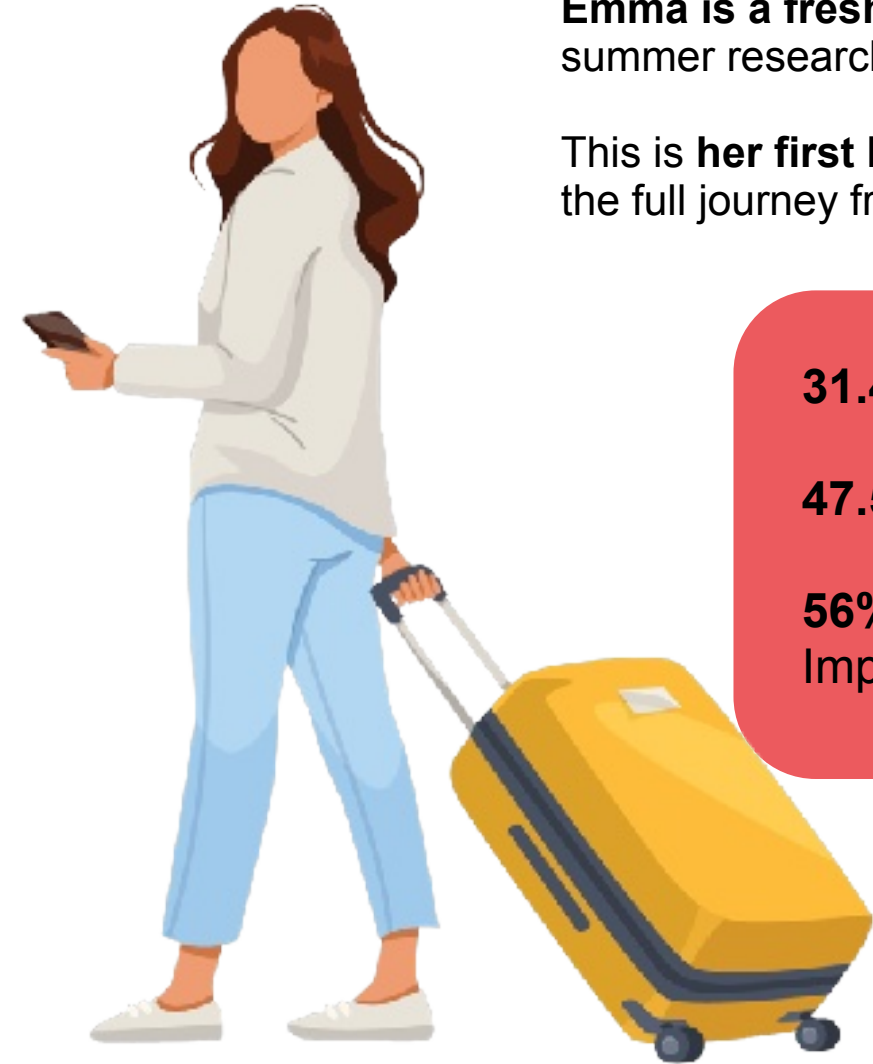
31.40% first-time users

47.55% cited cost effectiveness

56% of riders are not frequent users.

Improving the first-time experience is critical for long-term ridership growth.

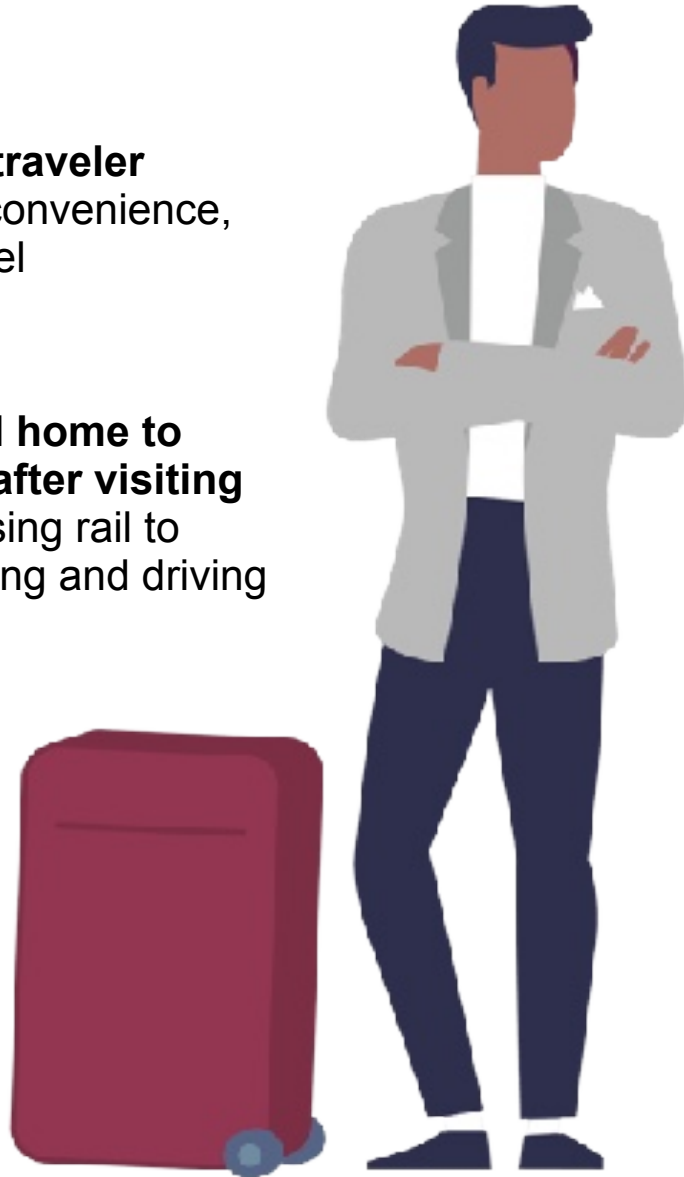
She recorded her experience at the Atlanta Peachtree station and wished that it had **direct last-mile transit connectivity** and also a **place to charge her devices and get an iced coffee** after her walk from MARTA.



Comfort Seeking Leisure Traveler

Michael is a leisure traveler who values comfort, convenience, and a stress-free travel experience.

He recently returned home to Atlanta on the train after visiting New York City, choosing rail to avoid the stress of flying and driving long distances.



O: New York City, NY

D: Atlanta, GA

30.59% had a friend/family home as their Atlanta destination

23.10% reported tourism/leisure trips

31.79% cited comfort on board

40.37% Experienced Parking Issues

47.73% picked up by family/friend

Future Atlanta Riders Using the Hub

These new future riders using the hub would be

Shifting from driving

Shifting from flying

Taking new trips that rail would unlock which otherwise would not happen

Personas are informed by personal interactions and survey data of current riders.

Behavior, needs, and user experience of these personas are informed through the direct interactions with current riders, the online survey data gave us a better understanding of the demographics.

The College Couple

Carrie and Peter are both in graduate school. Carrie is working toward her MS in Digital Media at UGA, while Peter is working toward his MS in Urban Planning at Georgia Tech.

They live together in Athens and commute to Atlanta. This allows them to be closer to family and enjoy a lower cost of living while in school.



O: Athens, GA

D: Atlanta, GA

The Train Ride and Station Experience ...

Peter takes the train to Atlanta from Athens, 3 - 4 days a week, to avoid driving on SR 316/I-85. Instead of wasting 3 hours in traffic, he makes this time productive and catches up on studying.

Once Peter arrives at the Atlanta Peachtree station, he grabs a coffee at the station before taking MARTA to Midtown and riding his bike (that he brings along in the train) to get to the GA Tech Campus.

Occasionally, Carrie joins Peter on the train to Atlanta so she can attend grad school networking events and enjoy shopping at the Atlanta Peachtree station retail stores.

Peter and Carrie rely on Wi-Fi availability, charging stations, last-mile MARTA connectivity, accessible station design, reliable train schedule during peak hours, cafes and retail stores inside the train station .

Legislative Staffer

O: Dalton, GA

D: Atlanta, GA

Harrison, is a Legislative Staffer, who lives in Dalton, GA and commutes frequently to the State Capitol in Atlanta. During the active legislative session, Harrison travels 4-5 days a week, and during the off season, travels 1-2 days a week for meetings.

The Train Ride and Station Experience ...

Harrison considers his train ride as a rolling legislative office, and uses the time to catch up on headlines, and brief himself for the day at the Capitol. He often holds informal meetings with other staffers while on the move, which is easy with onboard Wi-Fi and comfortable seating.

At the Atlanta Hub station, he grabs a dozen bagels for his team before he is picked up by a colleague for his ride to the Gold Dome.



Comfortable waiting areas, retail, and dedicated curb-side pick up/drop off at the station are what's most important to him.

O: Washington, DC

D: Atlanta, GA

The Future ATLien

Daniel is a young professional considering a move to Atlanta, drawn by its vibrant culture, walkable neighborhoods, and growing transportation options.

He currently lives in Washington, D.C. and chose to visit Atlanta by train instead of flying, valuing the convenience of arriving directly in the city without the stress of airport travel.



The Station Experience ...

When Daniel arrives at Atlanta's modern rail station, he immediately notices how well it connects to nearby destinations. He walks to a cafe for breakfast, explores local shops, checks out several nearby housing options, and attends a concert, all without needing a car.

Throughout his visit, Daniel uses the station as a central hub. Comfortable seating, reliable Wi-Fi, and live performances in public spaces make it feel like not only a transportation facility, but a gateway to Atlanta, and a home away from home.

By the end of his trip, Daniel is confident in his decision to relocate. The **ease of travel** and **strong connections between rail**, neighborhoods, and cultural destinations reinforce his belief that passenger rail will be an important part of his lifestyle.

A group of people are seated around a large, light-colored conference table in a modern meeting room. They are facing a large presentation screen at the front of the room, which displays a slide with a yellow header and blue text. An American flag is visible on the left side of the room. The room has large windows and a patterned carpet.



ing Activity

Why is this a good location for a

- **plenty of space** for a large building
- **near to the river** and the city center
- **near to the river** and the city center
- **near to the river** and the city center

What challenges or constraints exist?

- **Coordinating with other agencies** (e.g., police, fire, etc.)
- **Not a direct connection to the city center**
- **Not a direct connection to the city center**

Amtrak

MARTA TOD

CIM

Stakeholder Engagement

Committee Meeting Takeaways

Consider sites that are **expandable and easy to access** from multiple directions, rather than a station that acts as a “dead end”.

Atlanta has been planning for a new passenger rail station for a while – consider a station that is **the most feasible and easily implemented**.

Some of the best examples of intermodal connectivity in the U.S. have **one main multimodal transportation hub for the entire city**. Examples include Boston, DC Union Station, and Denver Union Station.

Consider **collocating with the Downtown Atlanta Greyhound Station** (at Garnett) – this is the busiest hub in the country for Greyhound transfers.



Sen. Ossoff's Office Coordination

Direct engagement with Sen. Ossoff's Office

Actively monitoring the status of the Atlanta Rail Hub, the corridor ID Program and the Federal-State partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail.

Co-secured Corridor ID grants (with Sen. Warnock) for service planning in the southeast.

"Rail funding across Georgia is transformational for transportation in Georgia" – Sen. Jon Ossoff

Next Steps



Program of Recommendation Summary

The following are the program of recommendations

1. Site Preservation for Regional Rail Hub
2. Preserve Historic Asset
3. Downtown Station Site Master Planning
4. Comprehensive Freight Rail Planning
5. **Coordination** with Corridor ID Projects and Additional Service Planning

Coordination

What this is the hard part ?

No Single Owner

Track, land, and Operations span across multiple owners, each with its own priorities and approval process

Fragmented Funding

Federal, State, Regional and Private capital each operate at different timelines and requirements

Competing Priorities

Freight railroads optimize for capacity and time; passenger railroads optimize for reliability and access that can conflict.

No Standing Forum

Today, coordination happens project by project as and when required. There is no single body to engage in coordination between public and private agencies.

An Important Next Step



Regional Freight Rail Governance and Infrastructure Framework

Initiate Coordination: Engage the regional Chamber of Commerce to initiate conversations with the freight railroad representatives, leading to the following activity.

Regional Freight Rail Governance and Infrastructure Study: Establish a regional Freight Railroad Coordination Committee to formalize a coordinated planning process among public agencies and private railroads, working together to achieve goals of safety and efficient movement of goods through the Atlanta region. The structure can be inspired by the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program.

Program of Recommendation Summary

The following are the program of recommendations

1. Site Preservation for Regional Rail Hub
2. Preserve Historic Asset
3. Downtown Station Site Master Planning
4. Comprehensive Freight Rail Planning
5. **Coordination** with Corridor ID Projects and Additional Service Planning

Thank you!

Questions ?

Contact

ARC Project Manager

Tejas Kotak

Principal Transportation Planner

Atlanta Regional Commission

tkotak@atlantaregional.org

Scan Me



Or Visit

atlantaregional.org/passenger-rail-station-study