

Massachusetts Spirits Trail

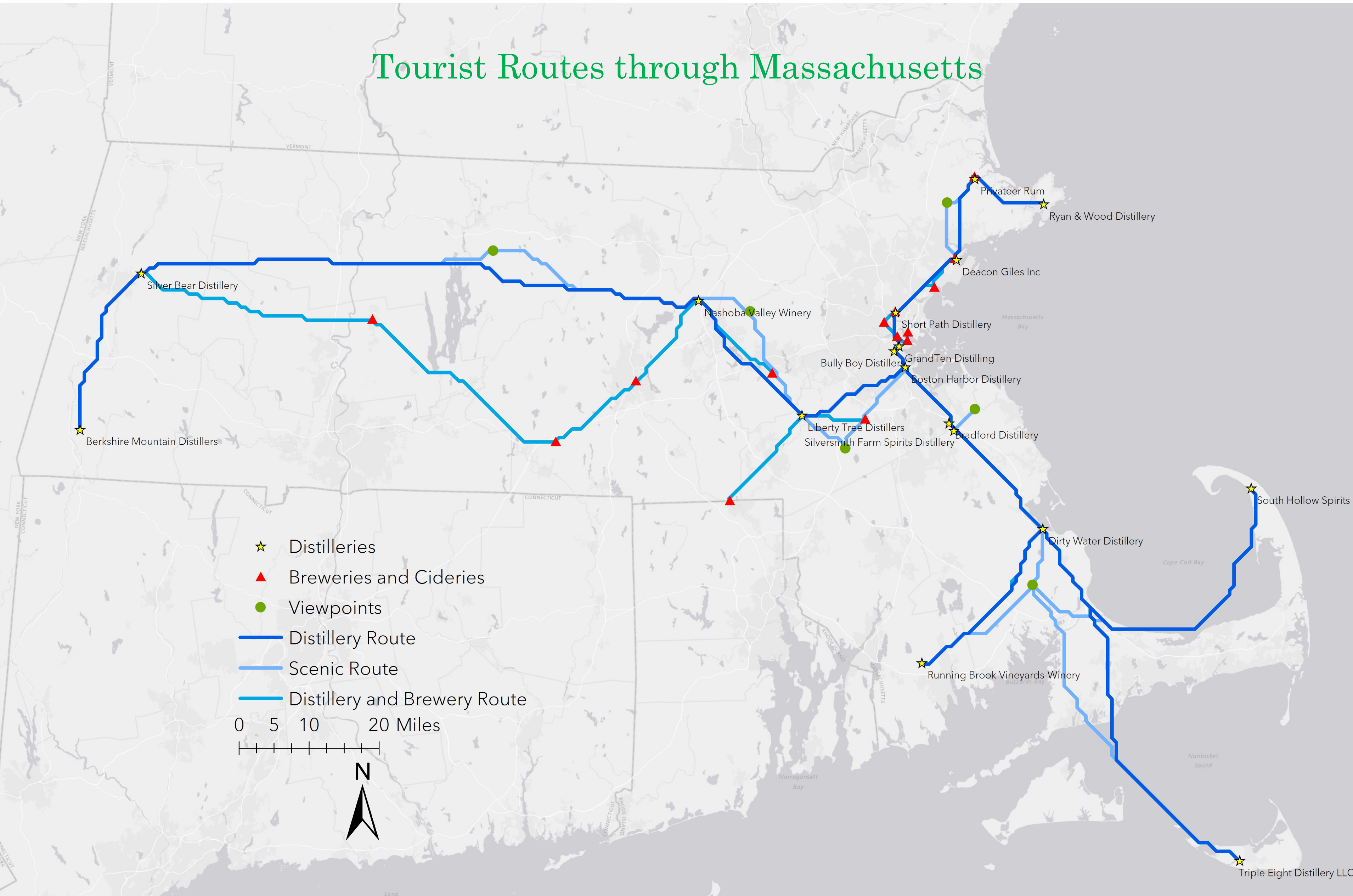
Visualizing Craft Distillery Tourism Routes

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Introduction

Craft-level alcohol production is big business, both for direct consumption and for tourism. The Bourbon Trail in Kentucky brought in more than 1.4 million visitors in 2018 (Kornstein and Coomes 2019). Considering the massive impacts of spirits tourism in Kentucky, the benefits for Massachusetts in fostering spirits tourism are apparent, with more than a dozen small distilleries and dozens of craft-level breweries in the Commonwealth. The Farm Distiller’s license makes it easier for micro-level producers to begin their work, but the real benefits are in crafting a unique and memorable experience: telling a story with a bottle. This is not only the story of a distillery, it is also the story of a community, a collection of producers all making products worth celebrating. This project unifies the distilleries of Massachusetts along with select breweries and some of the most scenic locations in the Commonwealth to demonstrate the possibilities of structured tour routes and linked experiences, inspired by the model of the Bourbon Trail. From the Berkshires to Cape Cod and Ipswich to Plymouth, Massachusetts is full of excellent alcohol producers waiting to be discovered by locals and tourists alike.



Methodology

Euclidean distances in a 20 km radius were measured from every distillery in Massachusetts that offers a formal tour of their facilities, as well as selected breweries and local viewpoints, in order to cater to a variety of tourist needs and interests. Proximity to major roads was also determined to be a valuable factor in the cost analysis. The distances were reclassified and added in order to generate a cost raster (Fig 1). This raster weights the breweries and distilleries as lesser costs, as they are the primary tourism draws. The resulting raster was clipped to the extent of the commonwealth and a cost connectivity analysis was performed using the cost raster and a sampling of the desired tourist sites. The resulting line rasters were plotted in order to visualize

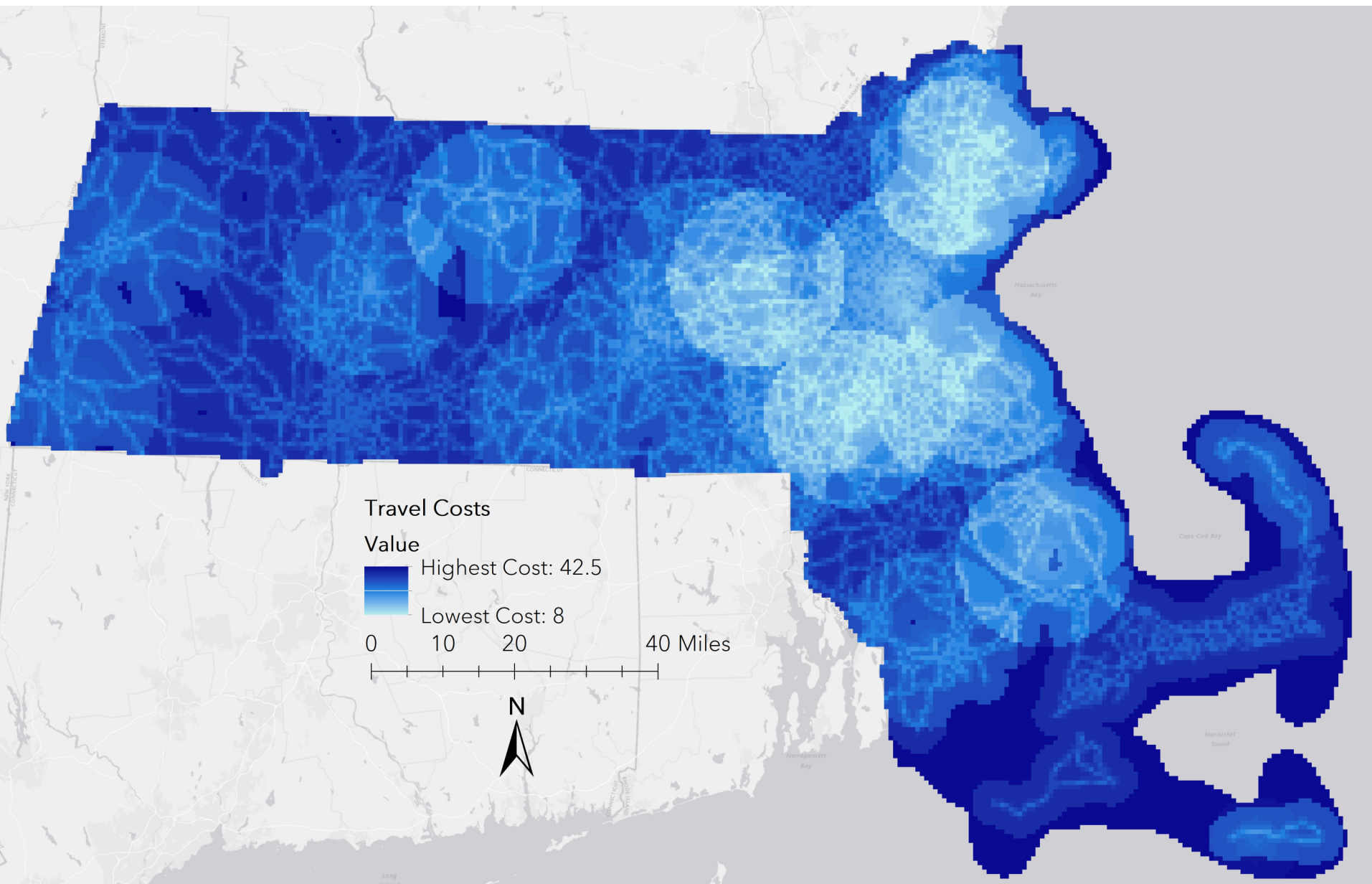


Figure 1: Cost of tourism travel across Massachusetts.

least cost networks between the various tourist draws of the commonwealth. In addition to state-wide routes, a smaller route through the Boston metropolitan area was also mapped in order to demonstrate the versatility available when determining travel plans. The analyses were documented with ModelBuilder and all analyses were performed using ArcMap 10.7.1.

Results and Conclusions

With the greatest concentration of distilleries and breweries in the eastern part of the Commonwealth, there is a concentration of low cost routes between Ipswich and Plymouth, extending beyond the Boston metropolitan area as far east as Worcester. The routes provided by the Cost Connectivity analysis thus show the densest profusion in that region, with a simplification as they extend west and south. The Distillery and Brewery Route extends further south than either the Distillery or Scenic routes, reflecting the greater concentration of sites in the southern part of the state, rather than the efficiency of the other routes passing through the middle of the Commonwealth parallel to the two connected distilleries: Short Bear and Nashoba Valley. Unsurprisingly, the Boston metro area is a hub in all the routes, with arms extending from the city to outlying regions. Recognizing that Boston is a hub for many of the statewide routes, a local tour was made for those tourists who don’t have the options of travelling through the entire state. The Boston tour represents every distillery in the metro area, but the breweries have been chosen selectively.

The best recommendation for spirits tourists coming to Massachusetts is to begin in Boston and expand their travels from there: first along the core areas between Ipswich and Plymouth and then into the less densely-concentrated parts of the commonwealth: Western MA, Nantucket and Cape Cod. Berkshire Mountain Distillers and Treehouse Brewing in Western Massachusetts are well-worth the extra effort required to visit their facilities. The presence of other non-alcohol tourism draws in the outlying parts of the state do reduce costs in a way not currently represented in the analysis.

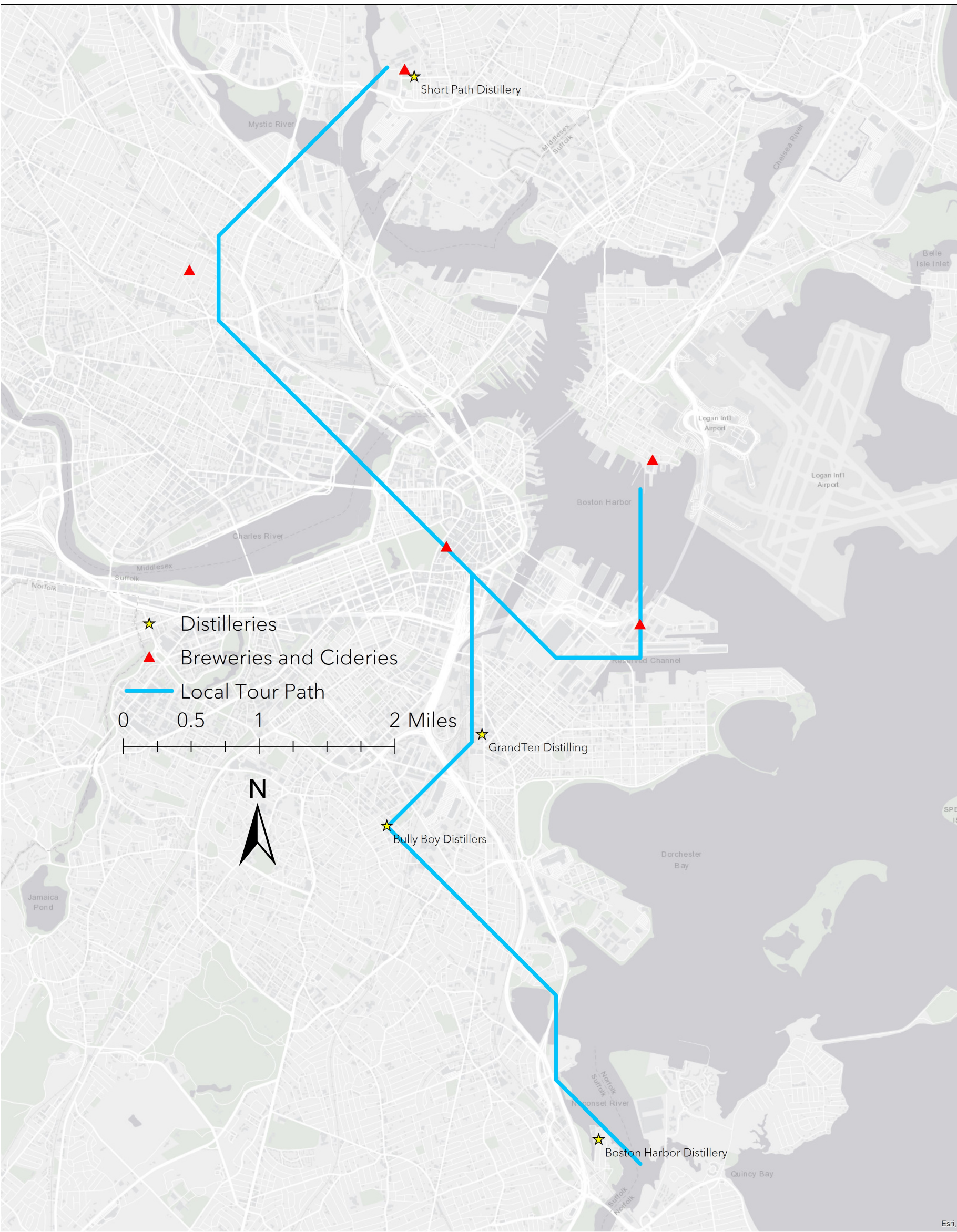


Figure 2: A tour path highlighting the potential for localized routes.

Benefits of Future Analyses

This analysis takes a limited view of other aspects of tourism, including historic sites and attractions. Some sites of that nature are taken into account (Viewpoints), but the focus is on the craft spirits tourist options. Traffic data would generate more refined costs and recognize the lived experience of travel through Massachusetts, particularly on weekends when it may prove more difficult to visit multiple sites in a single day. Further analysis will produce even more useful routes for future tourists.

Data Sources: ReferenceUSA, MassGIS
Projection: NAD 1983 StatePlane Massachusetts Mainland FIPS 2001 Meters
References:
Kornstein, Barry, and Paul Coomes. "The economic and fiscal impacts of the distilling industry in Kentucky." Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund. http://kybourbon.com/wpcontent/uploads/2019/02/2019-Economic-Impact-Report_FINAL.pdf (2019).
Special thanks to the Massachusetts Distillers Alliance and Short Path Distillery for the use of their imagery.