

**CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION**

Update on Eastrail Projects, Timing and Fundraising

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**DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL****INFORMATION  
ONLY**

Work is progressing on the Eastrail. This is the former Eastside Rail Corridor, a 42-mile regional trail that will connect the cities of Renton, Bellevue, Kirkland, Woodinville and Redmond, offering multi-modal transportation and non-motorized recreation opportunities. Tonight, King County Parks Division Director Warren Jimenez, will provide an update on Eastrail activities and opportunities.

Additionally, private sector stakeholders have formed Eastrail Partners, a new trail advocacy nonprofit organization. Executive Director Katherine Hollis will brief Council on the Eastrail Partners' advocacy activities.

No Council action is required as tonight's briefing and update are informational and an opportunity to learn more about key Eastrail projects and the Eastrail Partners and provide feedback.

**RECOMMENDATION**

N/A

**BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS**

The Eastrail, formerly called the Eastside Rail Corridor, is a 42-mile rail line that was previously owned by the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway Company. The Eastrail extends from Renton north to Snohomish County, passing through Bellevue, Kirkland, Woodinville and portions of unincorporated King County. It also includes a spur – called the Redmond Spur – that extends about seven miles from Woodinville south to Redmond. A map of the Eastrail is included as Attachment A. King County owns segments of the corridor and holds a continuous trail easement along segments that are owned by others. Redmond, Kirkland, Woodinville and Snohomish County also own segments of the corridor. Sound Transit owns a 1.1-mile segment of the corridor in Bellevue and holds an easement for transit along other portions. Puget Sound Energy holds an easement for utility use along the corridor. A map of the Bellevue segment is included as Attachment B.

Council has long expressed support for the development of a high-quality, multi-use trail for broad public use along the corridor. Council adopted an Eastside Rail Corridor Interest Statement in 2013 and updated it in 2016. The interest statements recognize the multiple uses of the corridor, identify implementation considerations, support a regional approach to planning and governance of the corridor, and recognize the need for a comprehensive and sustainable financial approach for investing in the corridor. The 2013 and 2016 interest statements are included as Attachments C and D.

Development of the trail is also supported in the 2018-2020 Bellevue City Council Vision and Priorities, which call for the City to:

- Work with King County and Sound Transit to ensure that the Eastside Rail Corridor from Renton to the Wilburton Trestle is completed;
- Complete the section of the trail from Kirkland to Sound Transit's Operations and Maintenance Facility East;
- Complete the interim connection through the Spring District; and,
- Begin to establish community connection points to the Eastside Rail Corridor.

Since 2016, planning and design work for a multi-use trail along the Eastrail has continued, and King County completed segments of an interim gravel surface trail from 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, near the South Kirkland Park and Ride, to SR 520. King County also completed a gravel surface segment from Newcastle Beach Park to the south Bellevue limit.

### **Eastrail Projects in Bellevue**

Planning, design, and early implementation efforts underway along the trail and within Bellevue include:

- NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street Overcrossing. The County is in the permitting phase for the Eastrail overcrossing at NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street. The overcrossing will provide a safe and comfortable connection over a major arterial and allow pedestrians and bicyclists access to Sound Transit's Wilburton Station. The crossing will be a key junction for frequent transit service, vibrant neighborhoods, thriving businesses, and recreational opportunities. The bridge design team is collaborating with the Japanese American Commemoration Project to memorialize the contributions of the Japanese American community in Bellevue by incorporating features of the historical site of the Bellevue Growers Association packing and shipping warehouse which is nearby into the design of the project. This project is fully funded and construction is expected to begin this fall and must be completed in 2022, before the East Link light rail is electrified.
- I-405 Renton to Bellevue Widening and Express Toll Lanes (ETLs) Project. This Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) project will add new I-405 capacity and create a dual ETL system between SR 167 in Renton and NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street in Bellevue. This project will pave the Eastrail from Coal Creek Parkway to Renton. This segment is expected to be completed and open to the public in May. WSDOT's project will also construct a crossing

between SE 8<sup>th</sup> Street and I-90 to carry the trail over the southbound lanes of I-405. The bridge will be open to the public when the Wilburton Trestle project is completed.

Wilburton Trestle. This project will rehabilitate the historic structure and connect the trail to SE 5<sup>th</sup> Street. This project is fully funded. The 2020-2025 King County parks, trails, and open space replacement levy provides about \$25 million for the trestle, which is owned by King County. The Bellevue Capital Improvement Program includes \$2.5 million to support Eastrail projects, such as the Wilburton Trestle. Kaiser Permanente is contributing \$500,000 and the State Legislature provided \$3 million for the trestle project in the 2019-2021 biennium. King County plans to advertise for construction this fall and open the structure to the public in 2023. While this project is fully funded, stakeholders are seeking \$5.5 million which would allow King County Parks levy funds to be used for other projects on the Eastrail.

- Spring Boulevard Connector. Last year, the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) awarded Bellevue \$1.3 million in Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funds for final project design for a connection between downtown Bellevue and the Spring District. The final design work is scheduled for 2023. An 850-foot-long trail will link the Eastrail with the new Spring Boulevard bicycle and pedestrian path. An estimated \$4.7 million is needed for construction.
- Northup Way Connector. REI and Facebook are each contributing \$1 million for the Northup Way Connector in Bellevue, and King County is contributing \$500,000. This King County project will link the Eastrail and the SR 520 Trail, serving as a gateway into Bellevue and the Spring District neighborhood. This project is scheduled to open next year.
- Connections to Bellevue neighborhoods and corridors. Bellevue Parks and Transportation staff are scoping and completing preliminary design for connections to the Eastrail at Main Street, SE 32<sup>nd</sup> Street, and the I-90 Trail. This work is supported by \$500,000 from Bellevue's Capital Improvement Program.

## **Regional Governance**

Since 2013, the Eastrail owners have worked together through the Eastrail Regional Advisory Council (ERAC) to maintain a collaborative, regional planning process for the Eastrail. In 2017, the ERAC structure was revised to include adjacent non-owner jurisdictions (Bellevue and Renton) and the Eastside Greenway Alliance (a coalition of eight community non-profit organizations interested in supporting development of the corridor). Bellevue Councilmember John Stokes represents the City on the ERAC.

## **Eastrail Partners**

In 2018, the ERAC convened a Funding Commission to make recommendations for the development of the Eastrail. The Commission was made up of 17 representatives from the private and non-profit sectors. In 2019, the Commission recommended creation of an independent organization – “Eastrail Partners” -- to lead private-sector fundraising efforts and provide a full-corridor perspective on funding

decisions and priorities for trail construction and enhancement.

The Eastrail Partners Board of Directors includes representatives from Amazon, REI, Seattle Children's, and other Bellevue businesses and property owners.

Last year, Eastrail Partners worked with REI and Facebook to secure \$2 million for the Northup Way Connector in Bellevue. This project will link the Eastrail and the SR 520 Trail, creating a connection between these key north-south and east-west facilities.

The Eastrail Partners coordinated with the ERAC to identify priority projects for federal and state advocacy. The Eastrail Partners' federal priorities are:

- Wilburton Trestle in Bellevue, which is described above.
- NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street Overcrossing in Bellevue
- I-90 Steel Bridge in Bellevue – this project will renovate the existing steel railroad bridge and install a compacted gravel trail to close the gap over I-90 between Coal Creek Parkway and SE 32<sup>nd</sup> Street. The estimated cost of this project is \$10 million. It is unfunded.
- Totem Lake Connector Bridge in Kirkland

The Eastrail Partners' state funding priorities are:

- I-90 Steel Bridge in Bellevue
- Central Wilburton Trail Segment in Bellevue. This project will remove existing rails and install an interim trail along the Eastrail from the south end of the NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street Overcrossing improvements to the north end of the Wilburton Trestle at SE 5<sup>th</sup> Street. The project will fill a significant gap in the trail through the heart of Bellevue and includes a crossing at SE 1<sup>st</sup> Street. The estimated cost of the project is \$2.5 million. It is unfunded.
- Southern terminus extension in Renton at Gene Coulon Park
- SR 202 Trestle Widening project in Woodinville

Last year, the ERAC contributed \$100,000 total to the Eastrail Partners for communication services. Bellevue's share of the ERAC contribution was approximately \$11,000. Eastrail Partners has sufficient operating funds for 2021. ERAC members may consider additional partnership with the Eastrail Partners in 2022.

### **Wilburton Eastrail Framework Plan**

Between the Wilburton Trestle and NE 12<sup>th</sup> Street (approximately one mile), the Eastrail corridor is generally about 100 feet wide. Trail improvements are expected to involve about 24 feet of the corridor width. City and County staff are coordinating to develop a framework plan that will identify desired uses and improvements for the balance of the area within this segment of the corridor. The plan is expected to include examples of integration between trails and adjacent land uses and identify elements that mutually support activity along the trail and the adjacent development. Work on the Wilburton Eastrail Framework Plan, including engagement with stakeholders, is anticipated to start later this year. The

City will manage the outreach component and the County will manage the plan development.

### **Fiber Communications**

The County, Bellevue, Kirkland, Redmond, Renton and other Eastrail stakeholders completed two studies to explore fiber installation along a 28-mile segment of the Eastrail. This segment spans from milepost five in Renton to the Snohomish County border and includes the Redmond spur. Bellevue contributed \$10,000 to the Fiber Feasibility Study in 2018. Last year, the ERAC adopted a resolution to form a stakeholder group to discuss installing fiber communications within the Eastrail. Bellevue staff is participating in this group. The County will issue a request for proposals (RFP) this year for a private vendor to install fiber infrastructure. Stakeholders are developing a standard contract template for fiber installation across all the corridor owners. As you are aware, Bellevue is not a corridor owner. Terms for nonowner participation in the fiber project will be developed later this year, after proposals for the fiber installation are received.

Fiber communications networks are the underlying infrastructure relied on by many businesses and residents. Fiber optic networks provide high speed and capacity. Resiliency, the ability to withstand disruptions from fiber cuts or technology failure, is critical to all who rely on internet connectivity for economic, personal and community interests. Resiliency is achieved by building more diverse fiber pathways, such as on Eastrail, to avoid communications interruptions.

## **POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS**

In November 2016, Council adopted an Interest Statement for the Eastside Rail Corridor that recognizes the unique quality of this corridor and its potential to serve multiple uses. The Interest Statement and the 2018-2020 City Council Vision and Priorities identify key interests and call for projects addressed in the Background section of this agenda memo.

The following is a summary of Bellevue's funding contributions and commitments to the Eastrail development:

- Bellevue budgeted \$2.5 million to support the Eastside Rail Corridor project (G-103) in the 2021-2027 Capital Investment Program (CIP). Council directed that \$500,000 be used to advance key crossings and connections. The remaining \$2 million is intended for improvements to the Wilburton Trestle.
- In 2015, Bellevue completed a new crosswalk for the Eastside Rail Corridor at 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE (near the South Kirkland Park and Ride). Bellevue's cost for this improvement was approximately \$55,000.
- In 2017, Bellevue contributed \$45,000 to the design of the NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street overcrossing.
- In 2018, Bellevue contributed \$10,000 to the Fiber Feasibility Study.
- In 2019, Bellevue contributed \$11,000 to the Eastrail branding effort.
- In 2020, Bellevue contributed \$11,000 to the Eastrail Partners.

## **OPTIONS**

N/A

## **ATTACHMENTS & AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS**

- A. Eastrail Map
- B. Eastrail Map – Bellevue Segment
- C. July 2013 Eastside Rail Corridor Interest Statement
- D. November 2016 Updated Eastside Rail Corridor Interest Statement

## **AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY**

N/A