

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

Update on the Eastrail Projects and Timing

Joyce Nichols, Intergovernmental Relations Director, 452-4225
City Manager's Office

Mike Ingram, Senior Planner, 452-4166
Transportation

Betsy Anderson, Senior Planner, 452-4280
Parks and Community Services

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL**DIRECTION**

Work is progressing on the Eastrail. This is the former East 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 Natural Resources and Parks Director, Christie True, will provide an update on Eastrail activities and opportunities, including the start of construction/paving on the trail south of I-90 this summer and construction start of the NE 8th Overcrossing project.

Formal Council action is not required at this time. Tonight's briefing is an opportunity to learn more about key Eastrail projects, their timing and potential opportunities in Bellevue, and to provide direction to staff regarding potential funding and fiber investments and opportunities.

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 (see 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.

The Bellevue City 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 investments 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 the 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 108th Avenue NE, near the South Kirkland Park and Ride, to SR 520. King County also completed a segment from Newcastle Beach Park to the south City limit. In August, voters approved the 2020-2025 King County parks, trails and open space replacement levy, which included over \$50 million for Eastrail projects, including the following in Bellevue:

- The 32nd Street Trestle project will rehabilitate the short wooden trestle and construct a ramp from the Eastrail to SE 32nd Street. Also included is funding for a rectangular rapid flash beacon RRFB at the crossing of 118th Avenue SE at SE 32nd Street. The replacement levy allocates \$2,000,000 for this project.
- The Wilburton Trestle and North Trestle Gateway project will rehabilitate the Wilburton Trestle and connect the trail to SE 5th Street in Bellevue. The replacement levy allocates \$10,700,000 for this project. An estimated \$14 million more is needed to complete the trestle rehabilitation.
- The NE 8th Street Bridge Overcrossing project will construct a pedestrian bridge over NE 8th Street and connect to the Wilburton Light Rail station. The replacement levy allocates \$18,100,000 for this project.
- The SR 520 Trail Connector project will connect the Eastrail to the SR 520 Trail at Northup Way. The replacement levy allocates \$1,550,000 for this project.

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 of Bellevue and Renton, and the

Eastside Greenway Alliance (a coalition of eight community non-profit organizations interested in supporting development of the corridor). Councilmember John Stokes serves as Bellevue's representative 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. Last year, 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 King County Parks Foundation has contributed \$50,000, and private sector partners have contributed \$55,000 to Eastrail Partners to date. The ERAC agreed to contribute \$100,000 total to the Eastrail Partners for communications services. Bellevue's share of the ERAC contribution is approximately \$11,000.

Eastrail Projects in Bellevue

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

- NE 8th Street Overcrossing. The County is in the final design phase for the Eastrail overcrossing at NE 8th 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 between frequent transit service, vibrant neighborhoods, thriving businesses, and recreational opportunities. The bridge design team is collaborating with the Japanese American Commemoration Project to identify opportunities to interpret the former site of the Bellevue Growers Association Packing and Shipping Warehouse and the contributions of the Japanese American community in Bellevue. Construction of the NE 8th Street Crossing is expected to begin in 2020 and must be completed in 2022, in advance of completion of the East Link light rail construction.
- 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 6th Street in Bellevue. This project will also pave the Eastrail from Coal Creek Parkway to Renton by the end of this year. This project will also construct a crossing between SE 8th Street and I-90 to carry the trail over the southbound lanes of I-405. The WSDOT scheduled a groundbreaking event for this project for March 31 in Renton.
- Wilburton Trestle. This project is estimated to cost \$30 million and about \$14 million is still needed. The 2020-2025 King County parks, trails, and open space replacement levy allocated \$10.7 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.

- Connections to Bellevue neighborhoods and corridors. Bellevue Parks and Transportation staff are scoping and completing preliminary design for connections to the Eastrail at Spring Boulevard, Main Street, SE 32nd Street, and the I-90 Trail. This work is supported by \$500,000 from the Bellevue Capital Improvement Program.

An open house is planned for this spring to provide the community with information about forthcoming trail development along the corridor in Bellevue and Renton. This open house will highlight upcoming project construction.

Wilburton Eastrail Framework Plan

Between the Wilburton Trestle and NE 12th 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 lead the outreach component and the County will lead 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, where the stakeholders have shared ownership agreements. 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 January, the ERAC adopted a resolution to form a stakeholder group to discuss installing fiber communications within the Eastrail. All ERAC member entities are invited to participate. The stakeholder group will identify a project lead entity and begin developing a project implementation plan.

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, that helps avoid communications interruptions.

Although Bellevue is not an Eastrail owner, Bellevue could choose to participate in the installation and governance of the Eastrail fiber installation. This would likely require Bellevue to contribute funds to the construction and operation of the fiber network and could secure Bellevue's access to the fiber in the future at lower rates than as a latecomer. Bellevue would also have greater influence over the development of the fiber project as an "owner." Bellevue already leases its fiber infrastructure to private sector companies where the City's infrastructure has capacity and adding capacity supports Bellevue's

economic development interests that can improve consumer services.

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 identifies key interests and calls 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 2019-2025 Capital Investment Program (CIP). Council directed that \$500,000 be used to advance the design of key crossings and connections in the Wilburton segment in partnership with other regional agencies. The remaining \$2 million is intended for improvements to the Wilburton Trestle.
- In 2014, Bellevue competed for federal Surface Transportation Program funding in the Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC) countywide program and \$350,000 was allocated in 2016 to design pedestrian access improvements to the Wilburton station. The City subsequently turned these funds over to King County to support the design of a grade-separated, non-motorized overcrossing of NE 8th Street for the Eastrail.
- In 2015, Bellevue completed a new crosswalk for the Eastside Rail Corridor at 108th 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 8th Street overcrossing.
- In 2018, Bellevue contributed \$10,000 to the Fiber Feasibility Study.
- In 2019, Bellevue contributed \$11,000 to the Eastrail branding effort.
- Bellevue is processing a contribution of \$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