

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ITEM

SUBJECT

Update on the Eastside Rail Corridor implementation activities, and consideration of a revised Council interest statement.

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POLICY ISSUES

The Council adopted an Interest Statement on the Eastside Rail Corridor (ERC) on July 22, 2013 that recognizes the unique quality of this corridor and its potential to serve multiple uses. Completion of the first mile of the Eastside Rail Corridor from the Kirkland border to the SR 520 Trail is also a 2016-2017 Council priority.

The Comprehensive Plan includes the following policies concerning the Eastside Rail Corridor:

- TR-112: Recognize the potential transportation and recreation uses under consideration for the Eastside Rail Corridor when considering public and private improvements adjacent to and across the corridor and preserve the opportunity for future multi-modal transportation use and access.
- TR-113: Promote and support the design, development and use of the Eastside Rail Corridor as a regional multimodal facility.
- TR-114: Provide for multi-modal transportation use and access when considering public and private projects adjacent to and across the Eastside Rail Corridor.
- PA-4: Connect Bellevue's parks and trails to the regional system of nearby state, King County and neighboring city parks, greenways, trails and facilities.
- PA-13: Collaborate with King County, Sound Transit and neighboring jurisdictions in the planning and development of the regional Eastside Rail Corridor trail system.

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL

ACTION

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DIRECTION

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INFORMATION ONLY

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Consistent with City policy and past Council direction, staff have been working with King County and other owners of the corridor to advance planning and implementation of a multi-use pedestrian and bicycle trail along the ERC. Tonight, staff will update Council on these efforts and ask for

direction to amend the July 2013 ERC Interest Statement to reflect current conditions and City interests. Staff will bring a revised interest statement back to Council for approval at a future meeting.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

The Eastside Rail Corridor (ERC) is part of a 42-mile rail line that was previously owned by Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Company. The ERC 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 7-plus miles from Woodinville south to Redmond. King County owns segments of the corridor and holds a trail easement along segments that are owned by others. Redmond, Kirkland and Woodinville 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 segments; and Puget Sound Energy also holds an easement for utility use along the corridor.

Although the City of Bellevue is not an ERC owner, it is the permitting authority for the segment that passes within the City limits, and it has a keen interest in the development of a high quality, multi-use trail for broad public use along the corridor. The Council adopted an ERC Interest Statement in July 2013 (Attachment 1). Since that time, the planning for a multi-use trail along the ERC has advanced significantly, with completion of a King County ERC Trail Master Plan in July 2016 and development of trail segments in Redmond and Kirkland. As the trail project moves from the planning phase into the implementation phase, the timing is opportune to revisit Bellevue's interests in the corridor to ensure the City continues to remain highly engaged in the development of the ERC. Staff have provided a draft amended interest statement for Council review (Attachment 2) and are seeking Council feedback on the proposed revisions.

Regional Governance:

Since 2013, the ERC owners have worked together through the Eastside Rail Corridor Regional Advisory Council (RAC) to maintain a collaborative, regional planning process for the ERC. As the project moves into the next phase of development, the owners have identified the need to coordinate funding and implementation actions throughout all segments of the corridor, regardless of ownership. At its September meeting, the RAC agreed to reconstitute and expand its membership to include not only owners, but also adjacent non-owner jurisdictions (such as Bellevue) and the Eastside Greenway Alliance (a coalition of seven community non-profit organizations interested in supporting development of the corridor). The RAC will continue to discuss changes to the governance structure at its next meeting, which is scheduled to occur at Bellevue City Hall on November 30. As they have for most RAC meetings in 2016, Bellevue elected officials will be invited to fully participate in the RAC meetings until such time as an official position on the RAC is created for a Bellevue official in 2017.

ERC Trail Project Progress:

1. *Rail Removal and First mile Interim Trail:* In early 2017, King County will remove the rails from the ERC segments it owns between 108th Avenue NE (in north Bellevue, near the South Kirkland Park & Ride) and Coulon Park in Renton. The work will involve removing steel rails and wooden ties and grading the ballast rock. These improvements will prepare the corridor for future improvements and allow for easier passage by people walking. The scope of this project will not include work on the Wilburton Trestle, nor is it expected to include work in the segment owned by Sound Transit (from SR 520 to NE 6th Street).

Following rail removal, King County will make further enhancements to the first mile of the ERC in Bellevue. Between 108th Avenue NE and SR 520, the County will develop an “interim” crushed-rock trail essentially similar to the improvements on the Cross-Kirkland Corridor trail, just to the north. Included in this project will be a ramp connection from the ERC to the north side of Northup Way, where the City’s Northup Way project (CIP PW-R-146) is currently constructing improvements to support an east-west pedestrian and bicycle route (SR 520 Trail). It is anticipated this first mile interim trail segment will be completed and open to the public in May 2017.

2. *Wilburton segment:* Under terms of the amended and restated MOU between the City and Sound Transit, Sound Transit will implement trail improvements on the ERC between SR 520 and the Wilburton station. Like the segment to the north, these trail improvements will be interim, with a crushed-rock surface and modeled after the improvements to the Cross-Kirkland Corridor trail. The trail improvements will be completed in conjunction with construction of the East Link light rail and the OMF-East facilities. City staff are working with Sound Transit to accelerate implementation of trail improvements at the north end, from SR 520 to the OMF-East site, as well as a spur trail connection to 120th Avenue NE, to provide a link to the Spring District as soon as feasible. Further south, the ERC passes through the heart of the Wilburton Commercial Area, providing key connections from the north and south and a significant opportunity to implement trail and transit-oriented development in the area. The Grand Connection provides the opportunity to create a strong non-motorized link between Meydenbauer Bay, Downtown Bellevue and the ERC, increasing multi-modal transportation options for residents and workers within the City’s job center. Bellevue staff are working to ensure these opportunities are leveraged to their fullest potential.
3. *NE 8th Street overcrossing:* The County is currently leading an effort to develop a 30 percent design concept for the ERC trail crossing at NE 8th Street. The process kicked off in June with a charrette at City Hall that included opening remarks by Mayor Stokes and involvement by City staff from Parks and Community Services, Planning and Community Development, Development Services and Transportation. The crossing at this location is significant in functional terms because it will not only support through movement on the ERC trail but also will be a key link between the Wilburton activity area on the south side of NE 8th Street and the Wilburton East Link station on the north side. The City and Sound Transit are working with the County on this design project. Staff will share the current status of the design concepts in the presentation.
4. *NE 4th Street crossing:* The City is working with the developer of the new Bellevue North building (location of REI, Trader Joes, Home Goods) to install a signal on NE 4th Street at the ERC. The developer is interested in funding and constructing a signal that would provide eastbound vehicles on NE 4th Street access to the Bellevue North property via a U turn. The proposed signal would be located at the ERC and would include a pedestrian and bicycle crosswalk on NE 4th Street that would serve people moving north-south along the ERC. Signal installation could occur next year. It is anticipated the ERC trail will eventually cross NE 4th Street on an elevated structure.
5. *Wilburton Trestle:* King County’s Trail Master Plan (July 2016) recognizes that the Wilburton Trestle will be “one of the most popular destinations along the trail.” The trestle is almost 1,000 feet in length and over 100 feet in elevation at its highest point. King County intends to retrofit the trestle for trail use. A design report commissioned by the County in December 2015 led to a cost estimate of \$13.2 million to retrofit the trestle for trail use and conduct safety and longevity improvements to the trestle structure. The City of Bellevue has been asked to partner in supporting the cost of the trestle rehabilitation with an investment of \$2 million. This will be considered as part of the 2017-2018 budget process. On October 18, the County announced several proposed funding commitments for the

trestle in addition to the City's proposed contribution, including \$5 million from Washington State, \$2 million from King County, \$500,000 from the PSRC, and \$500,000 from GroupHealth. Should these funding commitments be approved, and an additional \$3.2 million be identified, the County will implement work on the trestle to coincide with WSDOT's replacement of the ERC connection over I-405.

6. *Wilburton Gap*: King County hosted design workshops in June and September 2016 to identify and agree upon the type of structure that will reconnect the section of the ERC over southbound I-405 that was severed in 2008 by the WSDOT removal of the Wilburton Tunnel as part of the widening of I-405. WSDOT, City staff and representatives of the Eastside Greenway Alliance participated in these workshops. The reconnection is funded by the WSDOT and will be constructed as part of the I-405 Renton to Bellevue project as early as 2019. The product of these workshops is an alignment and cross-section for the bridge, which will be shared during the presentation.
7. *I-90 to Renton segment*: The WSDOT I-405 Renton to Bellevue project will impact segments of the existing Lake Washington Bike Path located adjacent to southbound I-405 between Coal Creek Parkway in Bellevue and Ripley Lane in Renton. The WSDOT and the County are evaluating options for implementing paved trail improvements along segments of the ERC as a replacement for the Lake Washington Bike Path. The scope of these improvements is not yet determined, but a goal is to maintain at least the current paved route for bicycle travel through this area. It is anticipated that any work would occur in the early part of 2019-2023 construction phase of the Renton to Bellevue project.

ALTERNATIVES

NA

RECOMMENDATIONS

NA

ATTACHMENT(S)

- (1) July 2013 ERC Council Interest Statement
- (2) Draft revised October 24 ERC Council Interest Statement in tracked changes
- (3) Draft revised October 24 ERC Council Interest Statement with tracked changes accepted.
- (4) ERC Trail South Wilburton Projects map