

**COUNCIL SUMMARY BACKGROUND BRIEFING:
KING COUNTY REGIONAL COMMITTEES AND OTHER ISSUES
*September 2020***

This briefing summarizes recent actions taken by the three regional committees formed as a result of the merger of King County and Metro. The three regional committees are the Regional Policy Committee, the Regional Water Quality Committee, and the Regional Transit Committee. Staff will also include updates on other regional issues as appropriate (e.g., King County Flood Control District, King Conservation District, Affordable Housing Committee, King County Board of Health, King County Regional Homelessness Authority). Summaries also include the work of the Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC). Formed in the early 1990s to comply with the Growth Management Act requirements for collaboration of counties and their cities on Countywide Planning Policies, the GMPC meets three to four times per year to consider amendments to the Countywide Planning Policies and to monitor progress on implementation. These updates are intended to be summary briefings; staff can provide more details on any of the items below.

REGIONAL POLICY COMMITTEE (RPC)

September 8 meeting summary:

- **King County Regional Homelessness Authority Governance Update:** This briefing reviewed the implementation of the King County Regional Homelessness Authority (KCHRA) over last several months. The KCRHA was established in late 2019 as a separate governmental agency by an interlocal agreement (ILA) between King County and the City of Seattle. Its mission is to “significantly decrease the incidence of homelessness throughout King County, using equity and social justice principles”.

The ILA established a Governing Committee (Committee) composed of elected officials appointed by each of the participating entities including: the King County Executive, King County Council, Seattle Mayor, Seattle City Council, and Sound Cities Association (SCA). The Committee also includes three members with lived experience with homelessness. The SCA is represented by Auburn Mayor Nancy Backus, Redmond Mayor Angela Birney and Renton City Councilmember Ed Prince.

The ILA also established an Implementation Board (Board) that will largely manage the activities of the KCRHA. It is composed of representatives of various stakeholder groups with specific expertise in aspects of homelessness. Former Bellevue Mayor John Chelminiak was appointed to serve on the Board. The Board is recruiting for a CEO to lead the organization and will recommend a candidate to the Committee later this year. Additionally, King County’s Department of Community and Human Services and the City of Seattle are working on the structure and staffing for the Authority.

The Board will appoint an Advisory Board to provide specific stakeholder input. In addition, the Board is responsible for creating a Five-Year Regional Homelessness Plan with specific, measurable actions, outcomes and goals that track progress, including sub-regional planning activities to be developed in concert with cities.

- **Review of the King County Eviction Prevention and Rent Assistance Program.** In June, the King County Council passed an ordinance, which provided residential and commercial tenant protections during the COVID-19 pandemic. For tenants facing eviction, the ordinance provides a defense in an unlawful detainer action based on the tenant's failure to pay rent between March 1, 2020 and March 1, 2021 if the failure to pay is the result of the COVID-19 pandemic impacts. The ordinance urged the courts to balance landlord and tenant equity issues and consider the material impacts to both.

In August, the County Executive announced formation of the King County Eviction Prevention and Rent Assistant Program. The program's mission is to avert a housing crisis and keep people housed despite job losses and the economic downturn as a result of public health measures taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The program will provide over \$41 million from various sources to aid in eviction relief and/or housing stability when temporary measures expire. King County estimates that this funding will keep approximately 10,000 households experiencing COVID-19-related economic challenges in their homes. Unfortunately, an estimated 58,000 households are in this situation and could benefit if additional funding was available.

Funding from this program will reimburse landlords in part for missed rent payments as follows:

- Large Residential Landlord Fund--\$17.9 million
- Manufactured Housing Fund--\$2 million
- Small Landlord/Tenant Support Fund--\$10 million
- Outreach and Engagement--\$2.5 million
- Eviction Prevention, post-pandemic--\$5 million
- Administrative costs for County and Nonprofits--\$3.1 million
- Reserves--\$900,000

General access to the programs has been advertised through print media, social media, and a wide variety of organizations. Materials are translated into other languages and priority is given to organizations with the ability to offer translators and overcome technical challenges when assisting tenants. To be eligible, participants must have an income at or below 50 percent of the area median income for the last 60 days.

Over 200 landlords with 10 or more units have indicated interest in receiving the funds including five manufactured housing communities/landlords and over 100 landlords with nine or fewer units. More than 4,000 tenants have indicated interest in participating. Selection is based on a countywide lottery that began September 14 and will be conducted on a weekly basis until

funding runs out. A grievance process will be established for tenants denied assistance to catch mistaken denials based on qualifications submitted.

If a landlord refuses to participate in the process, the household cannot be served an eviction notice until March 2021. Participating landlords will receive partial reimbursement for a tenant or multiple tenants who are behind on their rental payments.

- **King County's Mental Illness and Drug Dependency (MIDD) Sales Tax Levy Update.** The MIDD is funded through a countywide 0.1 percent sales tax that was expected to generate \$145.7 million in 2019 and 2020. The revenue funds programs that support services for people living with or at risk of behavioral health conditions.

The COVID-19 pandemic response has had a significant impact on the economy resulting in a decrease in sales tax revenue that supports MIDD programs. A March revenue forecast predicted \$21 million less than was anticipated for 2020. A more recent forecast of sales tax revenue based on actual revenues, is less dire, but still below estimates. MIDD program administrators have worked with King County budget staff to revise the 2021-2022 budget proposal to reflect anticipated revenue for MIDD programs in next biennium.

In response to the 2020 revenue shortfall, the County allocated approximately \$7 million in reserve funds, re-directed under-expended funds and implemented service reductions totaling just over \$12 million for the year to balance expenditures with revenue.

Service areas with most significant budget reductions included:

- \$3.5 million, a 57 percent reduction to the system improvement incentive pool, which supports transformation within the integrated (health and mental health) care network;
- Elimination of \$2 million in funding to support a new Peer Respite program focused on peer-to-peer delivered wellness/resiliency support;
- \$2 million, a 17 percent reduction to therapeutic court services provided through the Adult Drug Court, Community Court, Juvenile Drug Court, and Regional Mental Health Court;
- \$1 million, a 30 percent reduction to wraparound (housing, counseling, etc.) services for youth;
- \$900,000, a 22 percent reduction to the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program for diversion to treatment rather than jail;
- Elimination of \$800,000, a 100 percent reduction to support behavioral health workforce/training development;
- \$450,000, a 49 percent reduction, in crisis intervention training for first responders;
- Elimination of \$400,000, a 100 percent reduction in the Risk Awareness, De-escalation and Referral (RADAR) program, which seeks to decrease use of force incidents between police and individuals with behavioral health issues;
- \$392,467, a 74 percent reduction in the Youth Respite Alternatives program, which

provides alternatives to detention.

County staff indicated that the future sale of the sobering center site in Georgetown will generate approximately \$5 million in one-time revenue for the Housing and Community Development (HCD) Fund that will pay for housing programs traditionally funded from MIDD revenue.

MIDD funding reductions have affected programs that serve Eastside and Bellevue residents including HERO House which receives funds from the Work Force Development strategy program, and MIDD funding for Youth Eastside Services (YES) was eliminated for the balance of the year.

The next meeting of the RPC is scheduled for October 14. Bellevue Councilmember John Stokes serves on the RPC.

REGIONAL TRANSIT COMMITTEE (RTC)

July 15 meeting summary:

This was a joint meeting of the RTC and the King County Council's Mobility and Environment (ME) Committee. Neither committee had met for several months due to the pandemic response and meeting restrictions. The joint meeting allowed both committees to hear and jointly discuss the status of planned Metro transit policy updates. The ME Committee is made up of County Councilmembers: Councilmember Rod Dembowski serves as chair and Councilmember Pete von Reichbauer is vice chair. Members include: County Councilmembers Claudia Balducci, Kathy Lambert, Jeanne Kohl-Welles, Joe McDermott, Dave Upthegrove, and Girmay Zahilay. Bellevue City Councilmember Jennifer Robertson serves on the RTC.

- **Policy Updates.** County staff provided an overview of the Strategic Plan, Service Guidelines, and METRO CONNECTS, which is the agency's long range plan for service expansion. The RTC will review potential updates to these policies later this year.

Key drivers for the policy updates include:

- The METRO CONNECTS long range plan was adopted in 2017. It directed expansion of service to meet anticipated demand and encouraged new forms of partnership between cities and King County but has not been integrated into the Strategic Plan and Service Guidelines.
- The King County Marine Division was incorporated in the Metro Transit Department last year but is not addressed in the Strategic Plan and Service Guidelines.
- In December, the RTC adopted the Mobility Framework Summary, a set of recommendations intended to build on and strengthen Metro's existing network of transit services. Metro staff will make recommendations and the RTC and the County Council

will determine how the recommendations are integrated into Metro's plans and policies.

- **Updating Metro's Strategic Plan.** Metro staff led a discussion of potential changes to the Strategic Plan for Public Transportation. The Plan provides near-term policy direction for Metro. It was last updated in 2016 and sets goals and performance measures in eight areas, such as safety, environmental sustainability, and service excellence. The Plan requires Metro to report every two years on 68 performance measures, which are aligned with the goals. The next Strategic Plan Progress Report is due later this year.

The same drivers, noted above, are prompting the update to Metro's Strategic Plan. Goals and performance measures may be revised to address:

- Incorporating METRO CONNECTS as service expansion is planned and implemented;
- Integrating passenger ferry service operations into the Transit Department; and
- Incorporating Mobility Framework Summary recommendations into policies, goals and strategies.

RTC and ME Committee members reviewed potential changes to the Plan. Bellevue Councilmember Jennifer Robertson advocated for transit to be allocated to support anticipated growth in King County. The Puget Sound Regional Council's draft regional growth plan, VISION 2050, forecasts an additional 1.8 million people and 1.2 million jobs in the four-county region by 2050. The centerpiece of VISION 2050 is its transit-focused Regional Growth Strategy that concentrated employment and housing growth in designated regional growth centers with high capacity transit hubs and corridors. Transit is a vital part of making the Regional Growth Strategy work.

September 16 meeting summary:

- **Updating Metro's Service Guidelines.** Metro staff led a discussion of potential changes to the Service Guidelines that includes policies for adding and reducing transit service. The Service Guidelines were adopted in 2011 and were updated in 2016.

The existing service guidelines balance transit needs using the following criteria:

- Corridor productivity – serving housing, jobs, schools, and other key destinations.
- Social equity – serving minority and low-income populations.
- Geographic value – serving transit activity centers, regional growth centers, and manufacturing/industrial centers.

Each transit corridor's "identified need" is based on these criteria. Corridor productivity accounts for 50 percent of a transit corridor's "score" and social equity and geographic value each account for 25 percent.

A major driver of the update to the Service Guidelines is the Mobility Framework described above. Based on the Mobility Framework, Metro staff has recommended that equity be given a higher priority in service decision making, but has not proposed revised scoring percentages.

RTC members expressed concerns with Metro's proposal. The Mobility Framework's "areas of unmet need" analysis shows historically underserved areas. However, the analysis does not reflect unmet transit demand in north King County and the Eastside as a result of high residential and employment growth in these areas. Bellevue Councilmember Jennifer Robertson asked Metro staff whether the proposal would lead to greater service cuts in these areas. Metro staff said it will respond to this question at the October and November meetings.

The next meeting of the RTC is scheduled for October 21.

REGIONAL WATER QUALITY COMMITTEE (RWQC)

July 1 meeting summary:

The RWQC had its second meeting of the year in July due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Metropolitan Water Pollution Abatement Advisory Committee (MWPAAC) report.** . This update is a standing item on the RWQC meeting agendas. The MWPAAC is a state-mandated committee that is advisory to the County Executive and Council. It includes representatives of cities and sewer agencies that contract with King County for wastewater treatment services. The MWPAAC continued to meet in a virtual format during the pandemic stay home orders issued by the Governor. The Chair's update included a summary of the group's activities during the past several months.

A significant work item for the committee is participating in the development and review of the Wastewater Treatment Division's (WTD) Clean Water Plan which will guide the work and investments in the regional wastewater system. Another critical issue for the MWPAAC is reviewing and making recommendations regarding the 2021-2022 wastewater rate. Additional details on these items is included below.

The 2021 Sewer Rate Increase and Capacity Charge Increase. The MWPAAC was first briefed on a preliminary rate increase of nearly 10 percent for 2021-2022. The proposed increase caught MWPAAC members by surprise and the group strenuously objected to the proposed rate increase. There had been no indication that this magnitude of rate increase was anticipated because the 2021 rate forecast that was approved when the 2020 rate was adopted only indicated a minimal rate increase.

The WTD staff reported the increase was based on needed investments in asset management projects totaling \$700 million to repair and/or replace aging infrastructure and equipment

between 2021 and 2031. WTD staff cited other factors driving the rate increase including: unknown costs of the future Clean Water Plan; anticipated regulatory changes to address nutrient (nitrogen) discharges from King County wastewater treatment facilities into Puget Sound and updated cost estimates to construct the remaining combined sewer overflow (CSO) projects to meet the terms of the federal consent decree.

MWPAAC sent a letter to the County Executive and the County Council expressing strong opposition to the proposed rate increase and requested that WTD staff analyze and propose lower rate scenarios. WTD staff responded with alternative rate proposals that were nearly the same as the original.

As a result of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy, the WTD, cities and sewer districts are experiencing significant revenue losses. The Governor's stay home orders resulted in significant reductions in commercial water use as employees have been working from home. Additional losses can be attributed to the closure of most retail, restaurant and travel-related businesses/services. Residential usage has increased as more people are working remotely, and schools have been closed.

In May, the Executive proposed and the King County Council approved a 4.5 percent increase in the 2021 sewer rate. The rate for 2022 is shown as zero percent as a placeholder pending the outcome of work with stakeholders and consideration of the state of the economy as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

- **Adopted a RWQC work plan for 2020.** The pandemic restrictions delayed the work of the committee to adopt a 2020 work plan. As a result of the delay, the work plan focuses on development of the Clean Water Plan, proposed asset management investments, potential new regulatory requirements and additional conveyance and treatment capacity. The cumulative impact of these issues could result in significant rate increases beginning in 2022 and it is essential that RWQC members are fully informed about risks and impacts to ratepayers.
- **Adopted an ordinance modifying the capacity charge.** The capacity charge rate structure has been in place since 1990. The capacity charge is based on the premise that "growth pays for growth" and the fee is charged on new commercial and housing development that require new capacity to be added to the regional system. The assessment of the capacity charge is based on one rate for all single-family homes regardless of size as a single "residential customer equivalent" (RCE). All other units are indexed and receive a reduced rate per unit for multi-unit buildings, senior-resident, low-income and special purpose housing.

As the region has developed, the type and size of single-family and multi-family housing units has grown more varied. Also, alternative housing types, including accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and micro-housing units, have become more popular. Over the years, some elected officials and housing developers have expressed interest in a more balanced or equitable cost allocation for the capacity charge among the various housing types and sizes based on the

impact to the wastewater system.

The WTD worked with the MWPAAC and a consultant to review the rate structure and potential options to rebalance the capacity charge. The recommended changes were approved by amending the adopted policy to use estimated persons-per-household for different residential unit types to set the capacity charge.

The policy amendment approved by the RWQC preceded and allowed adoption of code amendments to restructure the capacity charges for residential uses. The only changes of consequence affecting the region and Bellevue divided single family structures into three classes with charges now assessed for small houses at .81 RCE, medium at 1.0 RCE and large at 1.16 RCE instead of all being assessed at 1.0 RCE. In addition, a micro-housing category was established at .35 RCE.

- **Clean Water Plan Update.** The WTD is developing a Clean Water Plan that will replace the Regional Wastewater Services Plan (RWSP) that was adopted in 1999. The new plan will have a 20-to-30 year implementation horizon.

To develop the recommended plan, the WTD is analyzing existing conditions, projected population growth rates and other factors driving major capital and operational investments needed to maintain and provide wastewater treatment services for future generations of residents and businesses in the region. The WTD is consulting a stakeholder group, the public, MWPAAC and the RWQC.

The effort kicked off in 2019, and RWQC was updated on 2020 activities consulting its stakeholder group representing a variety of environmental, governmental, private sector, tribal and other interests to outline the priorities for the future. A major concern for cities and sewer districts is that the stakeholder committee formed by the WTD does not include significant representation from the 34 agencies that have contracts with King County as part of the regional wastewater system. This lack of representation is one of the reasons the MWPAAC formed a technical committee to review the plan and ensure its members are aware of potential cost impacts as a result of the plan that could significantly increase wastewater rates.

The WTD has identified eight Decision Areas, and key questions associated with each, including:

- Treatment Plants: What treatment plant and wet weather facility investments should be made?
- Pollution Source Control/Product Stewardship: Are there more efficient or effective methods to address pollutants of concern than wastewater treatment?
- Stormwater and Combined Sewer Overflows (CSO): What approach should be taken to address stormwater and combined sewer overflows in King County's system?
- Wastewater Conveyance System: What are the best investments in local and regional wastewater collection systems to ensure enough capacity and improve system

condition?

- Asset Management, Resiliency, and Redundancy: What investments should be made to care for an aging regional wastewater system and protect the investments that have been made?
- Legacy Pollution: What are the opportunities to address legacy pollution, including hazardous materials deposits at CSO outfalls to the Duwamish River?
- Resource Recovery: How should King County recover resources in wastewater?
- Finance: How will regional water quality investments be financed?

These decision areas will serve as a framework for developing specific actions, or concepts for future water quality investments that will be analyzed and recommended in the Clean Water Plan.

September 2 meeting summary:

- **Accepted a report on options for Management of Biosolids.** Biosolids are one the byproducts of the sewage treatment process at the wastewater treatment plants. The other byproducts include the effluent or water post-treatment and generation of biogas. Biosolids are the remains of the solids that are processed via centrifuge and heating to remove pathogens and partially dry the solids before they are trucked away from the treatment plants.

A proviso was included in the 2019-2020 County budget that required the WTD to evaluate and report on alternative options for the use of biosolids. The proviso analysis was requested because of concerns regarding market demand for biosolids west of the Cascades. The company, GroCo Inc., that was using biosolids in a fertilizer sold to gardeners closed its business this year. There have also been fluctuations in demand for forestry application.

There are two types of biosolids:

- Class A biosolids have virtually no detectable pathogens and can be used by the public for activities such as landscaping and gardening.
- Class B biosolids are treated but have detectable levels of pathogens and require a permit for use in activities such as agriculture and forestry.

King County beneficially uses 100 percent of its Class B product, marketed as Loop biosolids, a fertilizer replacement and soil amendment used primarily in forestry and agriculture. In recent years, 75-80 percent of Loop biosolids have gone to agricultural uses in eastern Washington which require transport over Snoqualmie Pass; 20-25 percent have been used in forestry applications and the remaining 1 percent has been used by the program's compost partner, GroCo Inc., for the creation of a Class A compost product.

The analysis and report describe alternative management strategies for biosolids, including 1) continuing use of Class B biosolids for agriculture and forestry applications, 2) expanding Class

A biosolids as a soil amendment for local use, like the GroCo product, and/or 3) potential development of Class A biosolids through a very-high temperature heating process to create a product called biochar that could have a variety of uses. These options are expected to be further analyzed and recommendations for future use and management made in the Clean Water Plan.

- **Accepted a report on the Kenmore Interceptor.** King County's 2019-2020 Biennial Budget included a proviso requiring an evaluation of the impacts of a section of the Kenmore Interceptor and whether it affects silt accumulation at the north end of Lake Washington. King County Councilmember Rod Dembowski sponsored the evaluation at the request of elected officials and constituents in Lake Forest Park concerned with an accumulation of silt that could impact fish and fish passage.

The study was conducted in an area where Lyon Creek and McAleer Creek discharge to the north shore of Lake Washington. The interceptor, also known as the 'lake line' conveys wastewater from Kenmore to the Matthews Beach pump station. The report concluded that the interceptor has a negligible impact on silting in this area. Instead, it appears that material from the creeks and a combination of other factors lead to silt deposits in this area.

No action by WTD regarding the interceptor was recommended since the study concluded it is not the interceptor that is causing silting. Lake Forest Park may choose to take other actions regarding the silting to address the other conditions and streams that appear to be responsible for silting in this part of the lake.

- **Update on Nutrient Discharges into Puget Sound and Strategies for Responding to Anticipated State Department of Ecology (DOE) Regulatory Action.** The DOE announced a decision in January to develop a General Permit for nutrient discharges to Puget Sound. The General Permit is different than the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits issued by DOE. Potential changes in the General Permit would impact about 70 discharge locations and/or facilities including two King County treatment plants that discharge into Puget Sound. Changes in the General Permit could also affect the requirements or standards contained in NPDES permits for King County and other dischargers.

King County operates the West Point Treatment Plant and the Brightwater Treatment Plant. These are two of the largest wastewater treatment plants that discharge into Puget Sound. The effluent contains nutrients, particularly nitrogen, that impact water quality. Low levels of dissolved oxygen combined with high levels of nitrogen can stress and even suffocate marine life by fueling excessive algae growth. When these algae die and decompose they consume oxygen needed by marine life. While some natural influences can lower oxygen levels, many human-generated sources of nitrogen contribute to the problem. Some of these include heavy use of fertilizer, livestock manure, septic systems, and wastewater treatment plants.

The potential for the DOE to issue new General Permit standards with unknown impacts on the

continued operation of the treatment plants and/or the potential significant new capital investments are major concerns to the WTD and RWQC. This is driving a need for analysis and strategies to address the potential permit changes and consider how these new, unknown requirements could be addressed in WTD's Clean Water Plan that is under development.

The concerns are significant because the imposition of caps on nutrient discharges could create the need for very significant upgrades to the County's treatment plants. The impact of these upgrades on wastewater rates could be upwards of a billion dollars. If the County is unable to meet the new permit conditions there is a possibility that jurisdictions in King County might have to limit future growth and development.

The nutrient limits issue began in 2017 when the Northwest Environmental Advocates petitioned the DOE to launch a total maximum daily load (TMDL) study immediately and asserted that the agency should limit releases of nitrogen from sewage treatment plants that discharge into Puget Sound. The DOE denied the petition indicating that it did not have enough information to begin the process or set a limit.

In January, the DOE made a determination to limit nutrient discharges into Puget Sound from wastewater treatment plants following an analysis of the sources and impacts of nutrient discharges. King County WTD staff are working with several other agencies, including cities such as Tacoma, on strategies to resolve the issues, including:

- Seeking more permit flexibility and alternatives, including pursuing a system- wide permit for multiple facilities
- Studying the best technology for sites and phased approaches to technology updates when treatment capacity is expanded
- Water Quality Trading in partnership with The Freshwater Trust that proposes a regional approach to water quality improvement by allowing permits to acknowledge the following:
 - benefits that affect an entire watershed such as riparian improvements and fish and wildlife habitat
 - addressing non-point water pollution sources as well as point sources
 - using economic incentives for nonpoint source dischargers to reduce nitrogen loading
- Continuing to participate in the DOE organized advisory groups, the Puget Sound Nutrients General Permit Advisory Committee and Nutrient Management Forum
- Working with universities and regional partners to enhance scientific understanding.

The RWQC members also suggested broadening the stakeholder groups to include more cities, the private sector and public and nonprofit developers that may be impacted by permit restrictions.

- **Asset Management Needs and Costs.** Staff provided an overview of the WTD's asset

management program recommendations which included estimates for substantial investments that would require significant rate increases. RWQC members expressed serious concerns with the significant cost of the proposed investments. Bellevue Councilmember Conrad Lee requested additional briefings on the potential risks and benefits of proposed investments and whether some of the upgrades could be deferred. A commitment was made to provide additional briefings and more detailed information for the RWQC.

The next meeting of the RWQC is scheduled for October 7.

EASTRAIL REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL (ERAC)

July 17 meeting summary:

- **Equity and the Eastrail.** Since the last ERAC meeting in April, various advocacy groups have called for a national discussion of racism and social justice. Many ERAC members reported that their governing bodies had adopted statements of support for the Black Lives Matter movement. Bellevue City Councilmember John Stokes serves on the ERAC. He noted the Council's pledge regarding issues of police use of force. The ERAC will continue to engage underrepresented communities in Eastrail planning.
- **Fiber Communications.** The ERAC discussed the potential addition of new communications infrastructure along the Eastrail. Fiber would be installed underground along the 28-mile Eastrail corridor, from Renton to Woodinville and along the Redmond spur. The installation would cost an estimated \$6-12 million and could be recouped in 20 years if 17 percent of the fiber capacity was leased to the private sector. Once installed, operations and maintenance would cost approximately \$75,000 per year.

Fiber provides a pathway for electronic communications. Almost all high-speed internet (also called "broadband") and wireless services are either directly or indirectly dependent on fiber-optic cables to carry signals. Increasing fiber infrastructure can allow more information to be relayed. It can also increase resiliency by adding additional fiber pathways in case other pathways are disrupted.

King County will schedule of conversations with Eastrail owners and stakeholders over the next three months to gather feedback for a fiber optic construction RFP. Eastrail stakeholders like Bellevue will play a significant role in this process as potential future investors and clients. The RFP will provide greater clarity around the installation cost estimates.

- **2020-2022 Work Plan Priorities.** In January, the ERAC reached consensus on a draft work plan that includes the following:

- Coordinated outreach and communications to develop a strategic communications plan to achieve increased Eastrail brand awareness and will include coordinated online and social media programming.
- Engagement of underrepresented communities by conducting outreach at community events and other venues to raise awareness and solicit input.
- Wayfinding and signage plan by engaging a consultant to develop a coordinated wayfinding and signage plan across all Eastrail segments.
- Legislative outreach as each of the ERAC organizations has legislative priorities, and staff does not recommend creating an ERAC legislative agenda. Instead, staff recommends identifying one-to-three priority projects and developing materials to advocate for state funding.

Given COVID-19-related funding constraints, ERAC members asked to defer or phase the work plan tasks. ERAC staff will draft an adjusted work plan for discussion at the August meeting.

- **Member Updates.** ERAC members were invited to share updates about trail projects. King County Councilmember Chair Balducci and County staff briefed the ERAC on efforts to recognize Japanese American heritage as part of the NE 8th Street Overcrossing project.

The Overcrossing is west of the former site of the Bellevue Growers Association Packing and Shipping Warehouse, which was owned and operated by Japanese American farmers who used it to store and ship their produce to markets locally and nationally. Community members have expressed interest in commemorating Japanese American agricultural history as well as the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II.

The overcrossing has been identified as an opportunity to memorialize the contributions of the Japanese American community in Bellevue, as part of a larger project—the Japanese American Commemoration Project—that is exploring potential sites throughout the area. The NE 8th Street Overcrossing design team drew on this element of the site’s history to inform the aesthetic treatment of the bridge. The Bellevue City Council received an update on this project in February. The City’s Arts program is contributing \$40,000 to this effort.

Since then, the Japanese American heritage group has assessed commemoration options, is in the process of identifying a preferred concept, and will submit it to the NE 8th Street Overcrossing design team. The cost to implement the preferred concept will likely exceed the available budget of \$40,000. The heritage group is working with King County to identify those elements of the design that can be incorporated into the bridge construction contract and those elements that will need to be funded and implemented in a future phase. Construction of the NE 8th Street Overcrossing will begin later this year and must be completed in 2022, in advance of energizing the East Link light rail line.

August 14 “Experience the Eastrail” Event

- The ERAC convened a 17-member Eastrail Funding Commission (Commission) in 2018 to provide recommendations regarding:
 - Potential funding sources for trail projects.
 - Candidate projects for private-sector funding.
 - Strategies to build and maintain support for Eastrail corridor development.

Last year, the Commission recommended creating an independent organization to raise private-sector funding, engage stakeholders, create partnerships, and advocate on behalf of the trail. The ERAC supported this recommendation. The “Eastrail Partners” was registered as a non-profit in July.

- The ERAC and the Eastrail Partners co-hosted a legislative outreach event to advocate for federal investment in Eastrail projects. The event took place virtually due to COVID-19.
- Over 50 people attended, including staff from the offices of Senator Maria Cantwell, Congressman Adam Smith, and Congresswoman Suzan DelBene.
- The event featured an introductory video with comments from Bellevue Mayor Lynne Robinson and elected officials from other stakeholder agencies.
- At the event, the Eastrail Partners and ERAC members advocated for funding for priority projects, including:
 - Wilburton Trestle in Bellevue
 - NE 8th Street Overcrossing in Bellevue
 - I-90 Steel Bridge in Bellevue
 - Totem Lake Connector Bridge in Kirkland

The next ERAC meeting is scheduled for October 29.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLANNING COUNCIL

June 24 meeting summary:

- **Approved proposed Urban Growth Area (UGA) Changes:** The GMPB voted to approve minor UGA changes proposed in the 2020 King County Comprehensive Plan which includes three amendments to the UGA boundary:
 1. Area Adjacent to City of Woodinville
 2. Area Adjacent to City of Maple Valley
 3. Area Adjacent to City of Issaquah

The GMPC makes recommendations to King County regarding any amendments the County

proposes to the UGA boundary. Following the recommendation, King County retains discretion to amend the UGA boundary. If approved by the County Council, these amendments need to be ratified as an amendment to maps in the Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs).

- **Recommended deferral of proposed changes to the 4 to 1 Program under consideration in the 2020 Comprehensive Plan.** The King County 4 to 1 Program is a program under the Growth Management Act (GMA) which creates a continuous band of open space along the UGA boundary to prevent sprawl. Since the inception of the program, about 360 acres have been added to the UGA nearly 1,400 acres of permanent open space have been conserved.

King County staff proposed amendments to the program based on implementation experience in order to make it more effective. Some of the proposed changes include improving the quality of open space by restricting construction of roads and providing policies that will support affordable housing within urban areas under the program.

The GMPC recommended that the King County Council defer action on any changes to the 4 to 1 program related to the CPPs and instead consider those amendments as part of the 2021 update to the CPPs. The amendments noted included: allowing facilities that serve the new urban area to be located in the adjacent rural area; reducing the requirement for at least four acres of new open space for each new acre of urban land; prohibiting 4 to 1 proposals on parcels that are designated as natural resource lands; and requiring the city or town affiliated with the new urban area to add the land to their Potential Annexation Area (PAA). The GMPC made no recommendation on other 4 to 1 program amendments under consideration by King County.

- **Briefing on the 2021 update to CPPs.** The CPPs create a shared framework for growth management planning for all jurisdictions in King County. They implement the GMA and the VISION 2050 Multicounty Planning Policies. Local comprehensive plans are developed from the framework created by the CPPs.

The CPPs are being updated in advance of the 2024 periodic update of comprehensive plans to reflect changes to the regional policy framework since 2012. GMPC received a briefing from King County staff on the revised schedule for the update, the guiding principles and scope for the update.

- **Briefing on the Urban Growth Capacity Report.** The GMPC received an update from King County staff on the Buildable Lands work which is now being called the Urban Growth Capacity work. This King County led effort continues to work on data collection, engaging regional stakeholders, and drafting new CPPs. Work is to be completed by November to address new statutory requirements passed by the State Legislature.

The next meeting of the GMPC is scheduled for September 30. Bellevue Councilmember Jennifer Robertson serves on the GMPC.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE (AHC)

July 22 meeting summary:

The Affordable Housing Committee (AHC) is a standing committee of the Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC). It was formed in 2019 to address regional affordable housing needs. Work includes implementation of the King County Regional Affordable Housing Task Force Plan and update of the Housing Chapter of the Countywide Planning Policies. Bellevue Mayor Lynne Robinson serves on the committee. The committee includes a staff working group—the Housing Interjurisdictional Staff Team (HIJT).

In July the AHC revised its work program to prioritize actions that address housing impacts from the COVID-19 economic downturn and reviewed a statement supporting Strategic Land Acquisition in King County. The Committee received a briefing on affordable housing finance and revenue by the HIJT Finance and Revenue workgroup. The HIJT workgroup is reviewing new and untapped revenue sources needed to address the King County Affordable Housing Task Force finding of housing need at 44,000 new or preserved units affordable up to 50 percent area median income by 2024. The AHC also received a briefing on funding and legislative advocacy needed for eviction prevention from Michele Thomas of the Washington Low Income Housing Association (WLIHA).

The next meeting of the AHC is scheduled for September 30. The agenda includes a briefing on the Countywide Planning Policies Housing Chapter update and a draft of shared principles to guide future affordable housing revenue decisions.