

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

Update on King County's Eastrail Framework Plan for Wilburton

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DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL**INFORMATION
ONLY**

Tonight's Study Session will provide Council with a progress update on King County's Eastrail Framework Plan for Wilburton which includes significant public outreach and Bellevue staff participation on the project core team and steering committee.

RECOMMENDATION

N/A

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

Bellevue and King County staff are coordinating to develop a Framework Plan to articulate a vision for the Wilburton Segment of Eastrail, which will be the most urbanized portion of the 42-mile multiuse trail corridor. The Framework Plan will inform future development within the 100-foot-wide corridor as well as intersectionality with adjacent properties and land uses. Through assessment of opportunities and constraints, the Framework Plan will define distinctive character zones within the Wilburton Segment and identify potential uses, improvements, and access points. Further, it is expected to include examples of how the trail and adjacent land uses will mutually support activity along the trail and the adjacent development. Finally, the Framework Plan will set out principles for partners to use in future design and development.

Staff from Community Development, Transportation, and Parks & Community Services are collaborating with the County. The County is managing the overall Framework Plan development while the City is managing the community outreach and engagement component. This summer, staff have been focusing on engagement activities for the community and stakeholders to gather input regarding the overall character, uses, and activities that are seen as most desirable and feasible within the Wilburton Segment.

Community Engagement

To date, staff have provided briefings to and solicited input from groups including:

- Wilburton Neighborhood Association
- Youth Link
- Eastside Easy Rider Collaborative
- Bellevue Diversity Advantage Network
- Bellevue Network on Aging

In addition, staff are conducting stakeholder interviews with owners of key adjacent parcels to identify their interests and opportunities with respect to the Wilburton Eastrail segments. Some property owners have shared preliminary design ideas for how their properties could provide access to Eastrail and a variety of activities for trail users. Other property owners were well-informed about the framework effort and willing to explore future opportunities with their current tenants. In summary, property owners who participated in the meetings were all very excited about the Wilburton Eastrail Framework Plan and want to be engaged with the upcoming City-led Wilburton Vision Implementation as well.

Virtual Walk: In late July, staff hosted a Virtual Walk of the Wilburton Segment where community members had the opportunity to learn more about the trail development and participate in small group discussions sharing ideas for how they would like to use the trail in the future and what they hope to see in the way of trail activities, access, and interface with surrounding development. Mayor Robinson provided the welcome and opening remarks. Councilmembers Stokes, Zahn, and Lee were also in attendance.

Outreach through the Virtual Walk and other community meetings confirms that the public is excited about this corridor. There is interest in ensuring that the corridor is accessible to walkers, runners, bikers, and rollers and that user safety is prioritized. There was significant support for informal gathering spaces within the corridor. Access for users of all abilities was viewed as a key consideration. Many participants also indicated that the natural environment is highly important, as they see the Eastrail corridor as a respite from adjacent hustle-and-bustle. Having trees and other vegetation is important in that regard.

Online Survey: Concurrent with the stakeholder interviews and Virtual Walk event, Community Development hosted an online survey that closed September 3. Over 230 people participated in the survey and shared their interests and desires for Eastrail. Some of the top trail activities that were identified by current trail users were biking and walking and connecting with nature.

Eastrail features people said they are most interested in seeing along the Wilburton Segment include food trucks and coffee carts, public art and performance space, and playground equipment. Other trail features identified include separation between walkers and cyclists to accommodate people moving at different speeds, good lighting, call boxes for emergencies, restrooms, and opportunities to pull off the trail to sit, gather and picnic.

Next Steps

The Wilburton Eastrail Framework Steering Committee includes staff from King County, City of Bellevue, and Sound Transit, as well as representatives from Eastrail Partners. Emil King and Michael Shiosaki are participating on the City's behalf. The Steering Committee will meet for the second time on October 19 to review opportunities for the Wilburton Segment and consider each agency partner's potential role in realizing the vision for its future. An example of how the City of Bellevue can help realize the Wilburton Segment vision will be through Comprehensive Plan policies and code provisions to guide development and investment that interfaces with Eastrail. The Steering Committee will

convene again in December and in early 2022, to complete their work. The products and recommendations of the Eastrail Framework Plan for Wilburton will be relevant resources for the City's forthcoming Wilburton Vision Implementation process.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

The Council adopted a revised Interest Statement for the Eastside Rail Corridor (now known as the Eastrail) on November 21, 2016 that recognizes the unique quality of this corridor and its potential to serve multiple uses (included as Attachment A).

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.

One of the five strategic themes in the City's 2020 Economic Development Plan is about "Connection" and directly relates to Eastrail. It reads "Fostering a strong economy and community relies on bringing people together through light rail, parks, and pedestrian walkways such as the Grand Connection and Eastrail. Bellevue will continue to encourage greater connectivity between people, businesses, public spaces, and different geographic parts of the City."

Fiscal Impact

As a partner to this County-led project, the City has engaged a consultant, Third Sector Intelligence, at a contract cost of up to \$35,000 to facilitate the Steering Committee meetings for the Eastrail Framework Plan for Wilburton and support key elements of the stakeholder engagement.

King County has engaged a consultant, the Berger Partnership, to support the primary design and analysis components of the Eastrail Framework Plan for Wilburton.

OPTIONS

N/A

ATTACHMENTS & AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS

- A. Bellevue Interest Statement for the Eastside Rail Corridor, November 2016
- B. Project flier for owners and occupants of adjacent properties (to be mailed week of October 4)

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

N/A