

KING COUNTY GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLANNING COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM

AGENDA TITLE: Eastside Rail Corridor

Background

The Eastside Rail Corridor (ERC) is a 42-mile former BNSF rail corridor that stretches north-south from Snohomish to Renton, passing through Renton, Bellevue, Kirkland, Woodinville, Redmond, and portions of unincorporated King County. South of Woodinville (at the “wye” at milepost 23.8), the corridor is railbanked under the federal National Trails Act.

Five entities own significant real-property interests in the railbanked portion of the ERC: King County, City of Kirkland, Puget Sound Energy, City of Redmond, and Sound Transit.¹ Given the five entities’ interests and various internal processes, the Eastside Rail Corridor Regional Advisory Council (RAC) was created in December 2012 to establish a framework for a collaborative, regional planning process for the ERC, with the goal of accommodating multiple uses in the corridor. The RAC has been meeting regularly since February 2013.

The RAC’s work in 2013 culminated in the “Creating Connections” report, issued in October 2013. The report identifies the vision, goals, and objectives for the ERC. It also provides guidance on actions to continue collaboration between the “owner” entities, as well as with adjacent jurisdictions, other governmental agencies, stakeholders, individuals, and local communities. A copy of the report can be found here: <http://www.kingcounty.gov/operations/erc-advisory-council.aspx>

Recommendations from the Regional Advisory Council

A. Regional significance and multipurpose uses

While the ERC has near-term possibilities for creating important regional connections, the RAC’s vision is that the corridor also has the potential to be something even bigger and grander—“A Corridor for the Ages”. If planned carefully,

¹ See the Attachment 1 for a breakdown of the various interests in the corridor.

the ERC will connect communities, trails, and transportation networks from Vancouver, Washington to Vancouver, British Columbia—and beyond.

Planning for the future use of the corridor will directly impact the quality of life for our residents and our regional economy. The ERC can provide key infrastructure for transportation, recreation, and utilities, all of which could help to support concentrated development of housing, jobs, and economic growth adjacent to the corridor. The ERC thus presents an unparalleled opportunity to implement multiple Growth Management Act goals along one single, shared-use corridor.

The ERC has the potential to be a new north-south, regional spine for mobility, growth, and economic development. It has the potential to:

- Provide uses and connections that will promote jobs/housing linkages.
- Serve growing communities.
- Offer amenities to businesses and residents.
- Support the protection of King County's resources – the protected forest land and open space to the east.

Specifically, the ERC can serve as a cross-jurisdictional, shared-use transportation facility that will provide multimodal connections, including high-capacity transit and non-motorized trail use. These connections will help further integrate the pieces of the region's larger transportation network. This network will extend beyond the initial 42 miles of this corridor, also connecting to trails and transportation systems in the greater Puget Sound area. Long-term, the corridor also has the potential to eventually become part of statewide and West Coast rail and trail systems.

Additionally, the ERC can connect jobs, housing, and services among diverse communities. We have the opportunity to attract residential and employment growth by locating housing, jobs, and services close to the potential transit and trail investments in the corridor. This will encourage dense communities, allowing people to both live and work in walkable, transit served neighborhoods. These investments can increase access and opportunity for all the region's residents, and will help reflect values of public health, public safety, equity and social justice, and sustainability.

The 2013 RAC report also notes that the ERC could also “enable key utility improvements to help meet the demands of a growing population” through King County's wastewater conveyance rights and Puget Sound Energy's utility easement.

Lastly, the ERC can expand the recreation network, helping to create equitable access for all residents, and benefiting generations of Puget Sound-area residents and visitors. The King County portion of the ERC offers opportunities to connect to other regional trails such as the Mountains to Sound Greenway I-90, Cedar River, Green River, Interurban, Lake to Sound trails to the south; the East Lake Sammamish Trail to the east; and the Burke Gilman, Sammamish Valley, SR 520, and Centennial Trails to the north.² These connections could allow the region to

² See Attachment 2 for a regional connections map.

create a seamless north-south, multicounty trail corridor linking Pierce, King, and Snohomish counties.

B. Shared Regional Policy Framework for the Corridor

The 2013 RAC report highlighted the ERC's potential to create enhanced connectivity in the region. In that context, the report identified recommendations and actions for the RAC's continued work.

The report's first recommendation is to develop a "shared regional policy framework" to:

- Highlight the value and importance of the railbanked corridor.
- Avoid planning in "silos".
- Make wise near-term decisions consistent with long-term vision and avoid unnecessary reinvestment or "do overs".
- Identify the corridor as part of a multicounty network of transportation, recreation, and utility systems, integral to the well-being and prosperity of the region.
- Prioritize the development of the corridor in local and regional capital plans.
- Prioritize the corridor for local, regional, state, and federal funding.
- Encourage the region to "aim high" and help achieve the bold vision for the corridor.

This shared regional policy framework calls for promotion of the ERC vision and goals in the various regional planning documents, specifically calling out the Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC) VISION 2040 and Transportation 2040 plans, as well as the Growth Management Planning Council's (GMPC) Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs).

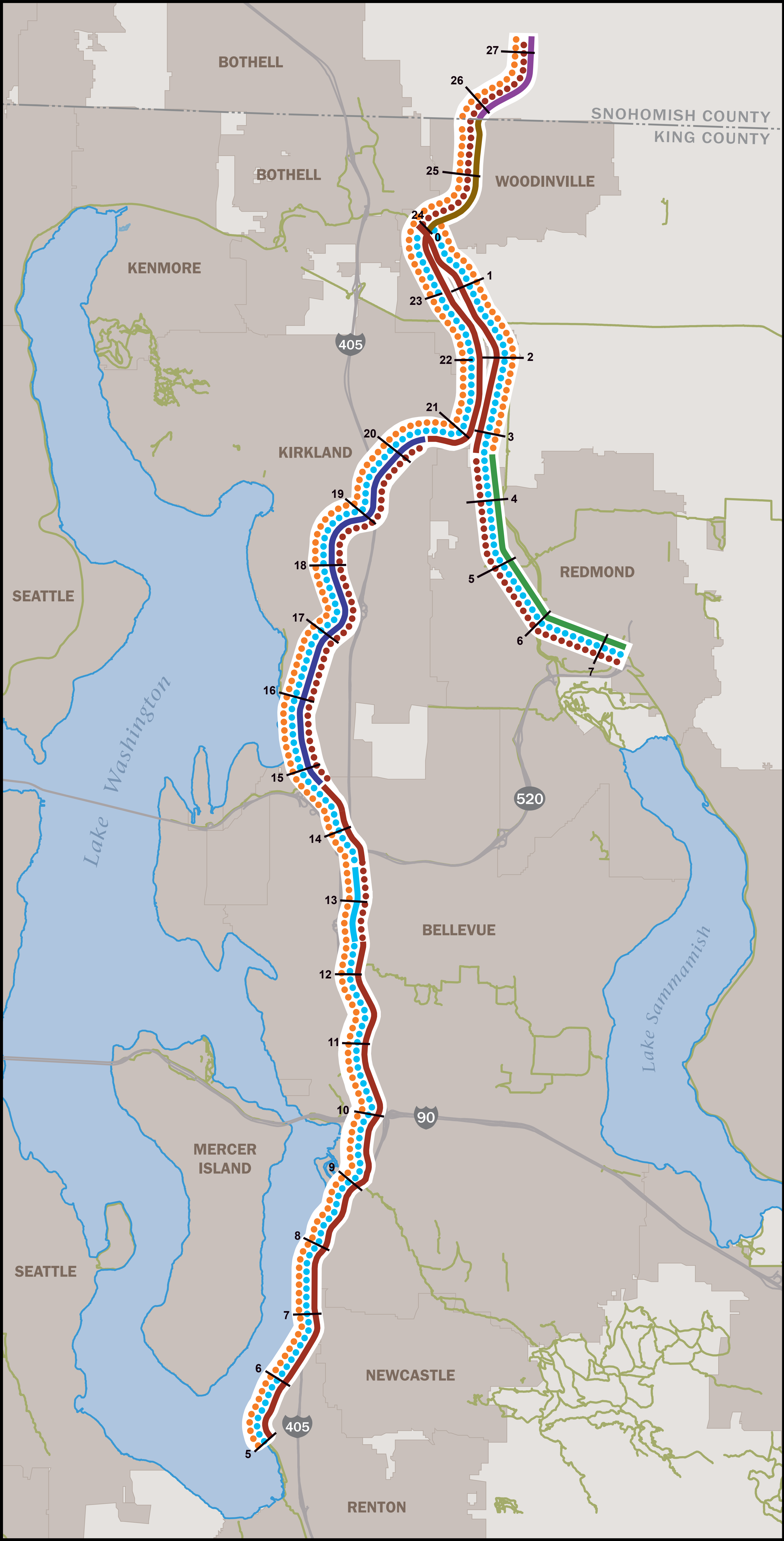
In particular, the RAC report identifies the need for CPPs regarding the regional significance of the corridor and its multipurpose uses. The ERC presents a unique opportunity to implement and enhance the GMPC's countywide vision and overall growth management framework for the future of King County. The current CPPs may not fully address the importance of maximizing this one corridor's unparalleled ability to connect jobs and housing, provide enhanced regional mobility, spur economic development, provide utilities, and enable important linkages to recreation and the regional trail network. Possible new CPP language could help to support and incentivize cross-jurisdictional and regional planning to more fully implement the multipurpose potential of the ERC, and thereby further the multiple goals and mandates of the Growth Management Act. The CPPs could also possibly identify the ERC as a corridor of regional significance.

Next Steps

The briefing today is intended to lay the foundation for possible GMPC action on CPP policy amendments in 2015. The RAC hopes to continue the discussion on how we can utilize the CPPs to highlight and more fully maximize the unique potential for creating important regional connections along the ERC.

ERC Property Interests (2014)

AS OF 8/11/2014



Approximate length, location, and type of property interests

	Fee*	Easement/ Covenant
King County	<div></div>	<div></div>
Sound Transit	<div></div>	<div></div>
Puget Sound Energy		<div></div>
Port of Seattle**	<div></div>	
Redmond	<div></div>	
Kirkland	<div></div>	
Snohomish County	<div></div>	

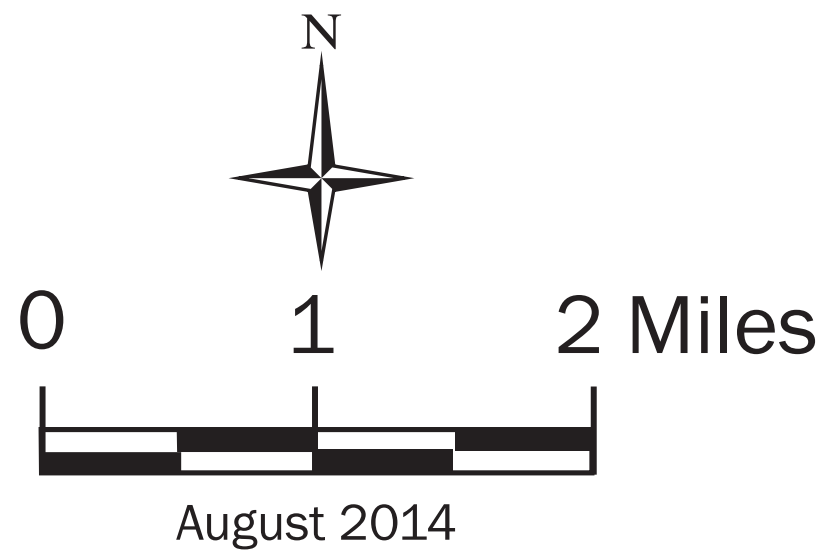
* “Fee” here is shorthand for ‘all of the rights that BNSF conveyed to the Port, less those specific easement rights conveyed by the Port to others (e.g. PSE, Sound Transit, etc.).’ The interests labeled as “fee” here thus may amount to fee simple title to the corridor in some segments, or a railroad easement in others.”

** The City of Woodinville is in the process of acquiring the last stretch of corridor owned by the Port of Seattle.

Legend

- Existing trail
- Freeway
- Incorporated Area
- Unincorporated Area
- Lake
- 13

 Trail Mileposts



Note: Width of trail is exaggerated for information display purposes.

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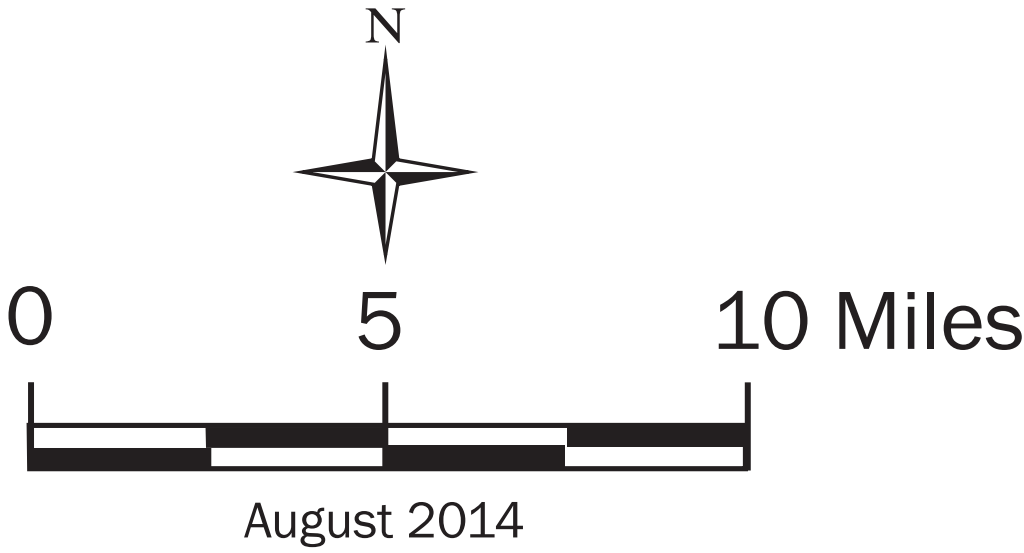
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Eastside Rail Corridor - Three County Area

AS OF 8/11/2014



- Legend**
- Eastside Rail Corridor - Snohomish County
 - Eastside Rail Corridor - King County
 - Tri-County Corridor
 - Snohomish County Regional Trails
 - King County Existing Regional Trails
 - King County - Proposed Regional Trails
 - King County - Regional Trail On-Street Connectors
 - Pierce County Regional trails
 - East Link Alignment
 - Link Light Rail (Existing and Proposed)
 - Park and Ride Lots
 - Sound Transit: East Link Alternative Stations
 - Light Rail Stations (Existing and Proposed)
 - Snohomish County Parks
 - King County Parks
 - Pierce County County Parks
 - Freeway
 - Incorporated Area
 - Unincorporated Area
 - Lake



Note: Width of trail is exaggerated for information display purposes.

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