

EASTSIDE RAIL CORRIDOR REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

MEETING SUMMARY

January 25, 2019 – 10:30 AM
Redmond City Council Chambers

Advisory Council Members Present: Claudia Balducci, King County Councilmember (Chair); Jay Arnold, Deputy Mayor, City of Kirkland (Vice-Chair); Angela Birney, Council President, City of Redmond; Reagan Dunn, King County Councilmember; David Hoffman, Local Government Affairs & Public Policy Manager, Puget Sound Energy; Luke Lamon, Government & Community Relations Corridor Manager, Sound Transit; Richard Smith, Executive Director, Eastside Greenway Alliance; John Stokes, Bellevue Councilmember; Tom Teigen, Parks, Recreation and Tourism Director, Snohomish County; and Christie True, Director of King County Natural Resources and Parks.

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Claudia Balducci called the meeting to order at 10:43 a.m., welcomed all in attendance and asked the Regional Advisory Council (RAC) members to introduce themselves.

Approval of meeting Summary

The summary of the November 29, 2018, was approved as presented.

ERC Trail Funding Commission

Gene Duvernoy and Greg Johnson, co-chairs of the ERC Trail Funding Commission, presented an overview of the Funding Commission activities. The group met seven times over the course of the year to address how to engage the private sector in the Eastside Rail Corridor (ERC), specifically what steps could be taken to generate private funds to support trail development and what could be done to build and sustain overall support through advocacy and partnership. Additionally they considered what the RAC and RAC members could do to make the ERC more attractive to private investment.

The Funding Commission determined that the three key components in the work ahead are:

- Connecting – closing the gaps and making it a single connected piece of trail infrastructure,
- Constructing – paving and signage,
- Completing – integrating the trail into the surrounding areas to make it a part of each community.

Priority projects to achieve the connection portion are the NE 8th Street crossing, the Wilburton Trestle, the I-90 Steel Bridge, completion of access into Renton and Woodinville, and the Totem Lake Connector. These are in addition to WSDOT's projects to build the new trail connection across I-405 southbound and a trail segment south of I-90 in Bellevue as part of the I-405 expansion project.

Commission Recommendations:

- Work with jurisdictions to commit to capital funding to connect the trail and secure those projects

- Develop new land use policies and incentives, working with landowners around the trail
- Create opportunities for private participation, particularly for completion of the trail
- Streamline ways to partner with the private sector

As part of these recommendations, the Funding Commission is asking that the RAC charter a new entity of business representatives and community members working side by side with the RAC to ensure that capital funding is secured, develop new policies, and create and recognize opportunities for private partnership.

The RAC Co-Chairs committed to come back to the RAC in April to present suggestions for membership and operations of the new entity and how it would govern itself. The Funding Commission is requesting a \$100,000 contribution from the RAC to help kick-start the new entity.

Discussion ensued regarding the role of the entity beyond the funding aspect, description of its leadership, integration of art into the trail, how the \$100,000 would be put to use, establishing milestones that align to the funding needs and evolution of the entity, and more detail regarding the governance structure.

The Chair noted the RAC’s acceptance of the report and approval of the next steps to be presented at the April meeting to include more detail on a business plan, governance, and funding.

The Chair offered the opportunity for public comment. No members of the public volunteered.

ERC Brand Development

David St. John provided a recap of discussions at the previous meeting, a description of the scope of the branding project contract, noting that it does not include funds to promote the final brand, and a summary of feedback from additional outreach conducted by staff.

Further discussion addressed the potential lack of diversity reflected in the outreach respondents, what the branding consultants anticipated from the online survey, member input regarding the four naming options and the need to remain culturally sensitive in selecting a name.

The group opted to consult with the Office of Equity and Social Justice (ESJ) regarding potential pronunciation difficulties for non-native English speakers. If the ESJ office finds no fatal flaws in the name, ICON would be given the go ahead to develop the brand element deliverables for the “Eastrail” name and present them for discussion at the next RAC meeting.

RAC Work Plan Priorities for 2019

The group addressed having an annual event to promote the entire corridor in addition to the individual segment events.

The priorities noted were:

- Staff will work with the Funding Commission to further flesh out their recommendation for an entity. If there is a desire to have Jamie and Emily work on that, more resources will need to be provided.

- Have ICON move ahead with the branding of “Eastrail” for the next RAC meeting, conditional on the feedback from the ESJ office.
- Develop ideas for a corridor-wide event.
- Create a matrix to track funding and work plan recommendations.

Member Progress and Success Updates

Kirkland – As part of the City’s budget process, funding was provided for the Totem Lake Connector Bridge.

Redmond – Working on design work for the Redmond Central Connector Phase III at the Kirkland, Woodinville, King County border and in negotiations with Puget Sound Energy in that regard; finalizing plans for Sound Transit’s new guideway through to downtown Redmond and moving a large piece of art.

Bellevue – Sound Transit 2 and 3 are moving along, the Grand Connection will cross over I-405, which will include a lid and a 3-4 acre public space on top of the freeway that will connect with the corridor.

Sound Transit – EastLink and the Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF) East are both well under way – on schedule and on budget, 42% of the agency’s capital budget for 2019 is being spent on the Eastside. 2020 is a big year for the OMF as that is when new trains start arriving, commends DNRP for their collaboration on the Wilburton connection.

Eastside Greenway Alliance – Working with King County to advance the regional trail network.

King County – Will be working on the renewal of the King County Parks Levy; discussions are in progress regarding the NE 8th crossing in Bellevue; appreciation was expressed for all the feedback received on the Parks Levy which has been targeted for the August ballot - the amount for the ERC will be more than the last Levy but not enough for completion; thanks to Sound Transit for their coordination on the East Lake Sammamish Trail and Marymoor Park connections; and progress is being made on the NE 8th Crossing, Wilburton Gap and Trestle and the Lake Lanes Trail projects.

Snohomish – Have started an exploratory conversation with 19 cities regarding a countywide trails bond, when the 12 miles is finished it will make a total of 42 miles and connect to King County.

Public comment

- Lisa McConnell with the Eastside Trail Advocates – Emphasized the multi-use nature of the corridor to include slope stabilization, storm water management, fish passages and other wildlife considerations. Areas of particular concern are the Wilburton Gap and areas south including Kelsey Creek. What is often not addressed are the amphibians and reptiles, salamander and frogs in particular, that are migrating to the lake and water at this time of year. Would ask the RAC to consider opportunities to provide passages for these little-talked-about species, and also to consider the lighting used, which can be disruptive to these species. She also noted the opportunity to acknowledge the history and contributions of Japanese Americans from the Bellevue area.

Next steps and adjournment

The next meeting will be held in April.

The meeting adjourned at 12:43 p.m.