

EASTRAIL REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

MEETING SUMMARY

October 18, 2021 | 1 – 3 PM

Zoom Meeting

Regional Advisory Council (RAC) Members Present: Kathy Lambert, King County Councilmember; Jon Pascal, Kirkland Councilmember (alternate for Deputy Mayor Jay Arnold), John Stokes, Bellevue Councilmember; Vicky Clarke, Eastside Greenway Alliance; Claudia Balducci, King County Councilmember; Christie True, Director, King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks; David Hoffman, Puget Sound Energy; Jessica Forsythe, Redmond Councilmember; Randy Corman, Renton Councilmember; Tom Teigen, Snohomish County; Don Billen & Ariel Taylor, Sound Transit; Les Rubstello, Woodinville Deputy Mayor

Welcome and Introductions

Christie True called the meeting to order at 1:02 pm, welcomed all in attendance to the final RAC meeting of 2021, and reviewed the agenda.

Approval of July 19, 2021 RAC meeting summary

Councilmember Forsythe moved to approve the July 19 meeting summary and Councilmember Balducci seconded. There being no objections, the summary was approved as written.

Amazon Funding Donation and Private Sector Engagement

Katherine Hollis of Eastrail Partners and Jared Axelrod of Amazon announced that Amazon will commit \$7.5M to complete the segment between the NE 8th Street bridge and to round out funding needed for the Trestle rehabilitation. This will support public amenities and provide non-motorized transit options for the 25,000 jobs that Amazon is bringing to Bellevue and Redmond in the next few years. Members expressed appreciation and excitement for Amazon's partnership and investment.

Trail Visitor Information Management System Plan – Principals Staff Team Recommendations

Mike Ullmer of King County Parks shared results from 2021 manual trail user counts on Eastrail and provided updates on the Eastrail data collection program and management system and staff recommendations for their work plan.

Trail User Counts

- Manual counts were conducted by volunteers at ten locations across Eastrail on Sept. 25th and 28th tracking user types, travel direction, and time of travel.
- For times where data was collected in both 2020 and 2021, weekday counts were down 13% from 2020 (possibly due to inclement weather) while Saturday counts were up 22%. Staff are considering moving count timing earlier in the fall to take advantage of more favorable weather.
- Counters on Mountain View Ave and VMAC in Renton saw dramatic increases, possibly due to newly paved sections north of these areas.

Trail Use Information Management System

- This is a collaborative effort between PST members to collect and manage data for Eastrail to build awareness of how people use the trail, measure the impact of new segments on trail use, and have data for developing competitive grant applications.

- Staff will continue manual counts annually as appropriate, and eight automated counters (one existing, seven proposed) are proposed to be permanently installed to collect continuous data on mode, volume, direction, and time of day usage. Staff will also use online and in-person intercept surveys to collect qualitative data on demographics, safety perception, primary use, trip length, starting location, etc. as well as gather data from trail non-users.
- At the previous RAC meeting, members discussed a potential concept for a public-facing online data portal built by KCIT, though further exploration deemed this not a cost-effective option. However, the vendor of the automated counting devices, Eco-Counter has an off-the-shelf data portal option with one-time setup cost of \$3,000 that can display data for installed counters. Staff are considering developing a website with this feature embedded where they can also display results from manual counts and intercept surveys.
- The next step is to secure funding from participating jurisdictions via the biennial budget process to deploy counters. In 2023-2024, staff will install automatic counters, continue manual counts, and develop intercept surveys. Between 2024 and 2030, staff will evaluate manual counting strategy, ensure sustained funding for continual data collection, and begin reporting data.

Questions/Comments

- Manual counts occur 7-9 am and 4-6 pm so there is no data after dark. Having data about trail use after dark could help justify the costs of lighting the trail.
- Automated counters can be hardwired into existing power sources (traffic cabinet, etc.) if available to avoid ongoing costs of battery power.

Federal and State Engagement for Eastrail Trail Support

Katherine Hollis provided updates on federal and state funding opportunities for Eastrail.

- *Federal:* there were three Eastrail projects included in the House INVEST Act (\$3M for Redmond Central Connector III, \$2M for Totem Lake Connector Bridge in Kirkland, and \$1.6M for signal crossing at SE 1st St in Bellevue). None were carried over into the Senate version of the transportation bill, though there will likely be increased funding for some grant programs for which Eastrail projects would qualify.
- *State:* there was \$29M for Eastrail projects included in the Senate and House new revenue transportation budgets, including \$6M for acquiring a trail extension to Gene Coulon Park, \$18M for I-90 steel bridge and adjoining segments, and \$5M for SR202 widening in Woodinville.
- As some projects with levy and private funding have advanced and no longer need to seek federal/state support, RAC member agencies should be considering new priority projects and messaging for legislators. Previously, staff developed a list of RAC funding priorities to use in communications for consistency. King County and Eastrail Partners staff will develop an updated priority list and key messages to discuss at the next RAC meeting.

Eastrail Fiber Project Update

Darryl Hunt of King County Information Technology provided updates on the Eastrail fiber project.

- Eastrail fiber project parties include King County, Sound Transit, PSE, Woodinville, Kirkland, and Redmond, and the project goal is to place fiber in the Eastrail corridor. Parties will have access to one of the four-inch conduits to use for public benefit and support projects in the Eastrail.
- Nearly all owners have approved an MOU to guide project intent and collaboration; Sound Transit's board will review on Nov. 4th and 18th.
- Project team has also been developing a vendor services contract, Eastrail owners agreement, and an RFP. The vendor services contract is a common lease template that will exist between the vendor

and Eastrail owners. The owners' agreement governs post-project allocation and use conditions, maintenance costs, and revenue sharing resulting from the fiber. Staff have engaged the County's Real Estate Services Group and will share that and the vendor services contract with Eastrail owners. The RFP will be released late Q1 or early Q2 of 2022. The RFP currently includes options for fully private and public/private ownership. King County Council is interested in a fully public option as well. However, this model financially obligates Eastrail owners and thus requires a different solicitation process (public works solicitation) than the goods and services solicitation they are currently developing. Options for a more inclusive RFP will require more research. Darryl will provide additional updates at the next meeting.

- While federal and state funding opportunities associated with broadband infrastructure are usually restricted to last mile projects, staff are watching infrastructure bills in Washington in case there are any with fewer restrictions that could fund middle mile projects like the Eastrail fiber project.

Progress and Success Updates

Snohomish County – still working through legal negotiations for eliminating the operator of the railroad on a segment to be able to develop in the right-of-way. They expect resolution in six to seven months.

Woodinville – also working with Snohomish County on the railroad issue.

Sound Transit – three new light rail stations opened as part of the Northgate Link extension and included connection points for non-motorized transportation over I-5. As light rail comes to the east side, there will be similar structures to provide non-motorized access to light rail via bike-ped bridges at NE 8th St. and Overlake in 2023 when East Link opens. Sound Transit has also partnered with King County and Redmond to connect at trails at 520 and SR202 in 2024.

Redmond – 200 attendees came to the Welcoming Week event at the Sammamish River Trail and Eastrail. Move Redmond held an event on Sept. 12 focused on the value of trails and protected bike lanes, transit, and last mile connections, and highlighted why trails will be important when light rail opens. A public hearing was held for the PSE maintenance access road project (Redmond Central Connector III will lay on top of the road). Redmond City Council approved \$2.8M to begin RCCIII design, though due to a funding gap from federal packages they are still about \$3M short of full funding for construction.

Kirkland – Council had ribbon cutting for Willows Road Connection Trail. Totem Lake Park opened in August with a new boardwalk through wetlands that connects to the trail. Totem Lake Connector Bridge over 124th is scheduled for completion this time next year. They awarded a contract to install pedestrian-scale lighting on the Cross-Kirkland Corridor under Totem Lake. Kirkland is advancing completion of the trail near the Google campus and is also working with King County Parks on a study of the crossing of Slater Ave NE and 132nd Ave NE at the end of the Cross-Kirkland Corridor.

Renton – Councilmember Randy Corman is retiring and expressed his appreciation for RAC members and staff. They are determining who will replace him on regional committees including this one.

Eastrail Partners – created a user map (available at <https://eastrailpartners.org/map>) with private sector support to help people access and navigate Eastrail. They also held seven different events this year in partnership with community-based organizations. Welcoming Week was a great example of this, as well as the event in Renton to spur conversations about the regional trail system. They have also launched

three Eastrail geocache adventures (digital scavenger hunts in Renton, Kirkland, and Redmond, available at <https://eastrailpartners.org/events>).

Bellevue – they continue to see support from business partners and members of the public. Bellevue is looking forward to the NE 8th Bridge crossing and are actively advocating in the legislature to continue to make connections and realize the full vision for Eastrail.

Puget Sound Energy – echoes excitement about Redmond Central Connector III and the fact that their service road construction will unlock Redmond’s ability to complete that segment of the trail. They have also recently submitted their draft implementation plan for the Clean Energy Transformation Act which lays out a plan for clean electricity investments and programs between 2022 and 2025, including investments to get PSE’s energy supply to 60% clean energy by the end of 2025.

King County – May Creek Trestle is open. There is legislation before the County Council to accept Amazon’s contribution as well as REI and Facebook’s contributions for the Northup connector. The NE 8th overcrossing project is out to bid right now and will hopefully break ground in January (potentially with a public event, more details to come). The 2.5 miles of trail constructed by WSDOT will open at the end of the month. King County is hosting an event in Bellevue on the Eastrail on Nov. 10th; staff will send more information. They are reviewing bids for the connection between Kirkland and Woodinville. Staff will share the schedule for 2022 RAC meetings soon, assuming quarterly meetings in January, April, July, and October.

Public comment

- Ann Simpson, a resident of Renton and Mountain View Avenue, noted that there have been issues with people using the residential street rather than the trail, causing safety concerns due to areas of low visibility. She requested additional signage asking pedestrians and bikers to use the trail.
- Leo Gilbert, a resident of Kirkland, commented that a lit, paved trail would be more accessible and inclusive for all trail users, including walkers/runners, individuals using wheelchairs, cyclists, and rollerbladers. He hopes data about frequency of injuries can help address concerns about cyclists going too fast on paved trails, especially when used as a justification not to pave.
- Christine Baker requested more information about funding and timeline for the I-90 steel bridge and potential bike/pedestrian access. Joe Inslee will follow up via email.
- Jeanne DeMund, also a resident of Mountain View Avenue, expressed interest in a pedestrian connection to Coulon Park. She also requested adding signage requesting people to walk on the trail. Councilmember Corman thanked them for their comments and noted that the RAC is committed to making the connection with Coulon Park. He will also speak with City staff about signage options.

The meeting recording is available here: <https://kingcounty.gov/council/issues/erc/2021-meetings.aspx>. Interested parties should send comments to eastrail@kingcounty.gov. Joe Inslee will compile any additional comments received.

Next steps and adjournment

Staff will share the RAC meeting schedule for 2022.

The meeting adjourned at 2:55 pm.