

# Public Comments

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EASTSIDE RAIL CORRIDOR REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

March 13-April 2, 2013

## Dick Burkhart

### INTERESTS

Bicycling, Rail, Transit, Hiking, Connections

### CONTACT

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### COMMENT

Hello, I am Dick Burkhart, a long time volunteer with the Sierra Club on transportation issues for Washington State, and before that with the Cascade Bicycle Club. I love bicycle trails, but I've become very disturbed by this rip-out-the-rails mentality. This is because I've become a student of the rise and fall of civilizations, especially of the critical roles of ecosystems and resources. As a Ph.D. mathematician and former Boeing engineer, the numbers look pretty grim to me.

The fabulous wealth of modern civilization has been built upon cheap fossil fuel and those days are rapidly disappearing. Already cheap oil is gone, having peaked in 2005, never to return. Thus global economic growth has already slowed dramatically and I see it transitioning to long term contraction in the 2020s, just as the costs of climate change are becoming ever more serious. So what happens when gas at the pump hits \$10 a gallon and good jobs are hard to come by? The global economy downsizes and relocalizes, but it's a different economy. Trucking and driving costs have gone through the roof. Suddenly we are clamoring for electrified trains, for both freight and people. The Eastside Rail Corridor becomes a very valuable resource.

We need to start planning now for a corridor from Renton to Snohomish with freight tracks, commuter or light rail tracks, utilities, plus a nice bike trail. Before any more tracks are ripped out, I'd like to see preliminary engineering of what such a corridor would look like, mile by mile, how best to sequence the development, and ball park cost estimates, especially for choke points, such as bridges. Almost certainly the bike path would follow one edge of the corridor, as it already does for a stretch I've often ridden south of I-90, so let's keep the current rail bed for trains now, not generations hence.

I find the absence of major stakeholders, such as railroad interests, on the Advisory Council to be astonishing. The Excursion Train, of course, and local freight, but what if the main north/south tracks through Seattle becomes overloaded? Then the Eastside Corridor could be critical as a bypass or alternate route.

Note: As the railbanking Interim Use Manager, King County has the "full responsibility for management" of the corridor rights-of-way. Therefore the ERC Proposed Charter language "The regional planning process will respect the individual ownership of the corridor by members of the RAC" is misleading, as customary ownership rights are limited by King County's responsibility to manage the corridor for interim use. And certainly viable commercial train usage on existing tracks should have first priority, if "railbanking" is to be more than a slogan.

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## Eldon Jacobson

### INTERESTS

Bicycling, Rail, Adjoining land use

### CONTACT

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### COMMENT

I support bicycling and continued railroad use of the corridor. My preference is that any bike trail be build adjacent to the railroad track, but separated from the railroad track by a brown, green, or black coated galvanized chain link fence.

All the jurisdictions in the corridor should plan on building grade separations between the corridor and all the at-grade crossings.

I am also concerned about adjacent property owners who either inadvertently or purposely expand their property onto the publically owned right of way without obtaining the proper permission. This needs to be managed in a courteous but firm manner so as not to negatively impact any future use of the corridor.

I prefer that there be no new driveway crossings allowed in the corridor, and that plans be made to remove or relocate any existing driveways that cross the corridor.

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## Stephanie Weber

### INTERESTS

Rail, Transit, Connections, Adjoining land uses

### CONTACT

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### COMMENT

I have been a resident of Kirkland for nearly 25 years. I live in Juanita across I-405 from Cross Kirkland Corridor's north end. I ride King County Metro's #255 buses when traveling to Seattle and often use the South Kirkland Park-and-Ride near the Kirkland Rail Corridor's south end. I would like to add my voice to those who do not want to see this important rail link between the north and south end of Kirkland removed at this time.

I support a multimodal corridor on the Eastside, which should include commuter rail. The Kirkland rail section is vital for future commuter rail connectivity along the Eastside and in the region. Rails are harder to replace when they are removed. This corridor can become an important future transportation link and a green alternative to I-405.

I think that the city of Kirkland is missing a real economic opportunity if the rails are now removed in the Cross Kirkland Corridor. I support the vision of the TRailways Alliance and the elected officials from Snohomish and Woodinville to preserve the rails on the Eastside Rail Corridor for future use along the corridor in King and Snohomish counties.

Rails and trails have been shown to coexist in other places and Kirkland residents like me will use the rail for commuting and the trail for bicycling and walking. A good example of this shared use is the Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART Transit) now being built in San Francisco's North Bay. More information about this commuter rail and multi-use trail project can be found at: [www.main.sonomamarintrain.org](http://www.main.sonomamarintrain.org).

Eastside Community Rail sent a proposal to Kirkland for a trail beside the tracks that is wider than the current trail. The existing rail can then be used to remove spoils from some of Bellevue's projects such as East Link. The public will appreciate less congestion on I-405 with reduced carbon emissions and Eastside residents will appreciate forward-thinking by Kirkland. The city can become greener by preserving and using its rails and rail bed for freight and excursion trains now and commuter rail with a

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recreational trail beside it in the future.

The Bounty of Washington Tasting Train is an inspirational marketing idea for our local food and beverages. It will draw tourists and locals to ride the tasting train and try local products, wine, and beer that are produced in Kirkland, nearby in Woodinville and Snohomish, and from around our state. This train would provide a good interim use of the rails in Kirkland and it could help stimulate the Kirkland economy in general and especially in Totem Lake.

The Tasting Train could reinvigorate the Totem Lake area by drawing more businesses and perhaps inspiring Trader Joe's store to expand and attract additional businesses in Totem Lake Mall. A Trader Joe's store in Portland's Hollywood neighborhood was built a block north of Portland's MAX light rail transit line and it includes murals of the neighborhood. Shoppers can drive to the store or use light rail to access it easily. Why not support commuter rail use near Totem Lake to encourage economic development?

A future commuter rail stop near Totem Lake could also service the new Slater 116 mixed use apartments and retail development currently being built at the south end of Totem Lake off 124th Avenue NE and NE 116th Street. An ad on Slater's website promotes Washington Wine Country 20 minutes away. Let's bring wine country closer to this development by supporting the tasting train with a stop nearby in Totem Lake. Why not consider future developments such as this one a transit-oriented development, not merely a development near the tracks?

Google announced this week that it is doubling the size of its Kirkland campus and hiring 1,000 additional employees by 2015. Now is the time to preserve the tracks and add a trail for future commuter use. Increased traffic on 6th Street S where Google is located will create congestion on NE 68th Street and 108th Avenue NE and in the surrounding neighborhood in Kirkland. The growth of Google in Kirkland will encourage more growth in businesses and traffic in this area. These traffic impacts can be mitigated by use of rail and trail with a station planned at the Google campus since the rail corridor currently passes through it.

A greener Kirkland will encourage economic and transit-oriented development near the Eastside Rail Corridor. Commuter rail and trail can provide seamless connections with existing bus transit. Why not retain Kirkland's tracks for future commuter rail and use them now for freight and tasting trains to help the Eastside economy get back on track?

I hope that Kirkland will wait for completion of the King County Eastside Rail Corridor Regional Advisory Council's report to move forward. I urge you to support the vision of Snohomish and Woodinville to keep the Eastside Rail Corridor intact and to delay removal of Kirkland's tracks within the corridor. Green multimodal transportation should move forward on the Eastside.

I believe in the quote in Cross Kirkland Corridor's Vision Statement of 2011 - - "Planning or implementing one mode must not foreclose future corridor use by another mode". Please do not foreclose commuter rail in the future from Woodinville through Kirkland, south to Bellevue, and along the entire Eastside in both Snohomish and King counties.

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## Georgine Foster

### INTERESTS

### CONTACT

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### COMMENT

I'd like to offer but one, of many, reasons why I believe that the City of Kirkland is correctly forging ahead with development of a Trail in the Cross Kirkland Corridor.....it was the "top priority" recommendation of the Urban Land Institute, a nonpartisan organization that is long recognized as one of America's most respected and widely quoted sources of objective information on urban planning, growth, and development of sustainable thriving communities worldwide. Our City Council sought an objective opinion about Totem Lake and how Kirkland might help spur development there.

In a report entitled Urban Land Institute Technical Assistance Panel Recommendations to the City of Kirkland on Totem Lake, on page 13, ULI most strongly recommends the development in the BNSF Corridor of a "trail (that) has the potential to brand Kirkland as progressive on transportation....there is obvious value in developing the corridor as a bicycle and pedestrian trail, even as it retains its potential for future regional rail transit...." On page 4: "leverag(ing) open space assets and trail potential...deserves top priority".

[www.kirklandwa.gov/assets/cmo/cmo+pdfs/uli+tech+assist+recommendation+report.pdf](http://www.kirklandwa.gov/assets/cmo/cmo+pdfs/uli+tech+assist+recommendation+report.pdf)

Totem Lake is Kirkland's designated Urban Growth Area (as required and recognized by the State and King County under the Growth Management Act). The City is actively pursuing codes and regulations that encourage re-development in the area, and promote a more integrated, vital and sustainable neighborhood that will responsibly help fulfill Kirkland's designated share of the anticipated growth in the region. The ULI's recommendation to develop a Trail in the CKC suggests one very important project that will facilitate meeting those GMA goals.

Kirkland citizens support the City of Kirkland (with the purchase of the 5.75 mile segment of the Corridor within our city and passage of the permanent Parks Funding Levy) moving forward with an interim Trail, while yet planning for high capacity transit in the future when the Corridor can be designed AND engineered to 21st century transit standards.

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## Kirk McEwan

### INTERESTS

### CONTACT

Bicycling, Regional trail and transit connections

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### COMMENT

I understand that due to rail banking, this corridor will always be available for future rail options, and that at the moment there are no approved plans to use this for any type of rail service. Although, apparently there is a private group that would like to profit from public dollars to use this line. My vote is to make it a trail is quickly and cost effectively as possible (Like Kirkland is doing) and when Sound Transit has a plan that is approved by the voters, then we can make adjustments for rail.

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## Patricia Brown

### INTERESTS

Adjoining land uses

### CONTACT

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### COMMENT

As a property owner adjoining the ERC, I want to make sure that King County involves All of us in their future plans for the LEAST impact possible. Thanks.

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## Elya Baches

### INTERESTS

Bicycling, hiking

### CONTACT

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### COMMENT

I live on Greenwich Crest and I am curious if a trail will be built along the ERC from I-90 south. The western portion of my property is against the ERC and it would be nice to have a way to get to the trail system without having to cross a very busy intersection to get there.

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## Scott Kaseburg

### INTERESTS

Adjoining land uses

### CONTACT

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### COMMENT

You/we have a monumental task & opportunity in front of us. As an adjoin property owner, I appreciate that you've been designated as a contact. In reviewing the Pinch Points document <http://www.kingcounty.gov/operations/erc-advisory-council/meetings/~media/operations/erc-advisory-council/meetings/2013-02-20/G1ERCAtlasNov2012.ashx> I am curious as to what the analysis actually shows at Map points 8 & 9 . . . these maps are missing from the posting, but I expect they are available. Can someone send them to me?

These are shown as no constraint, which is surprising to me. The terrain and roadway and home encroachments along the north part of Pleasure Point LN SE, Bellevue will make this area very challenging, especially for dual use. There is a steep bank with only a narrow track bed at the top. As I've heard, Department of Transportation already plans to relocate the roadway between the corridor and Hwy. 405 when 405 eventually gets expanded, unfortunately towards the corridor which will further constrain options for a level 100' bed.

Residents along Pleasure Point can't be denied property access and 40 foot high retaining wall will be unreasonable. Clearly, all engineering solutions aren't going to get hammered out at this stage, but I would think there would be increased support if these kind of situations have a well thought-out solution and the adjoining owners can see it and provide input. Maybe spinning these off to neighborhood meetings where the options with pro/cons are discussed? Again, please send the Maps 8 & 9.

*<<NOTE: Staff contacted commenter to respond that only pinch point area maps were included in this particular handout. Maps 8 and 9 are not identified as pinch points and therefore are not in this handout, but will be part of the larger planning process.>>*

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## Julian von Will

### INTERESTS

Adjoining land uses

### CONTACT

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### COMMENT

I live alongside the corridor, 4240 and 4248. I think its smart to have public transportation and a bike trail but I think its difficult to have both without extensive shoring work. Please inform neighbors alongside corridor from Coal Creek to I90 to not cut or trim the trees supporting the bank. There is serious possibility for landslide. Thank you.

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## Lisa McConnell

### INTERESTS

### CONTACT

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### COMMENT

I attended Sound Transit's Open House last Thursday. It became very apparent to me that there is a time sensitive issue to be dealt with by the partners in the ERCRAC right now. Sound Transit is entering its final phase of design work for the Hospital Station section of East Link. The City of Bellevue has extensive plans and designs for pedestrian and bicycle access to the Bel-Red Corridor and Spring District. I think now is the time for King County to enter the discussions, particularly around the Hospital Station but also northward on the Corridor to the South Kirkland Park and Ride about its trail intentions and desires. The Corridor from Hospital Station to the South Kirkland Park and Ride offers a unique opportunity for non-motorized access from the under construction TOD at South Kirkland to the upcoming development and urban center that will be Bel-Red. At significantly less cost than trying to put sidewalks and bike paths on 116th and Northup. Also significantly less (to none) disruption to traffic flow on neighborhood or arterial streets.

But the time to do this is NOW, when we are still in design phase. Trying to shoehorn it in "after the fact" will cost us money and will not get us the optimum use of this Corridor for pedestrians, bicycles, transit/rail, autos, businesses, or residents.

Also to be considered at this time is PSE's role on the Corridor here. In the news now is the ever increasing useage of electric vehicle charging stations. Will/can PSE install more truck lines under a trail now to handle the capacity for more EV charging stations that might occur at Hospital Station, Spring District, Bellevue Maintenance Center, and the South Kirkland Park and Ride? All of these occur directly adjacent to the Corridor. Not to mention the possibility in the future for an electric system for light rail on the line. We can all take some good advice from Redmond Mayor John Marchione and build our Corridor from the (under)ground up.

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