

E A S T S I D E R A I L C O R R I D O R

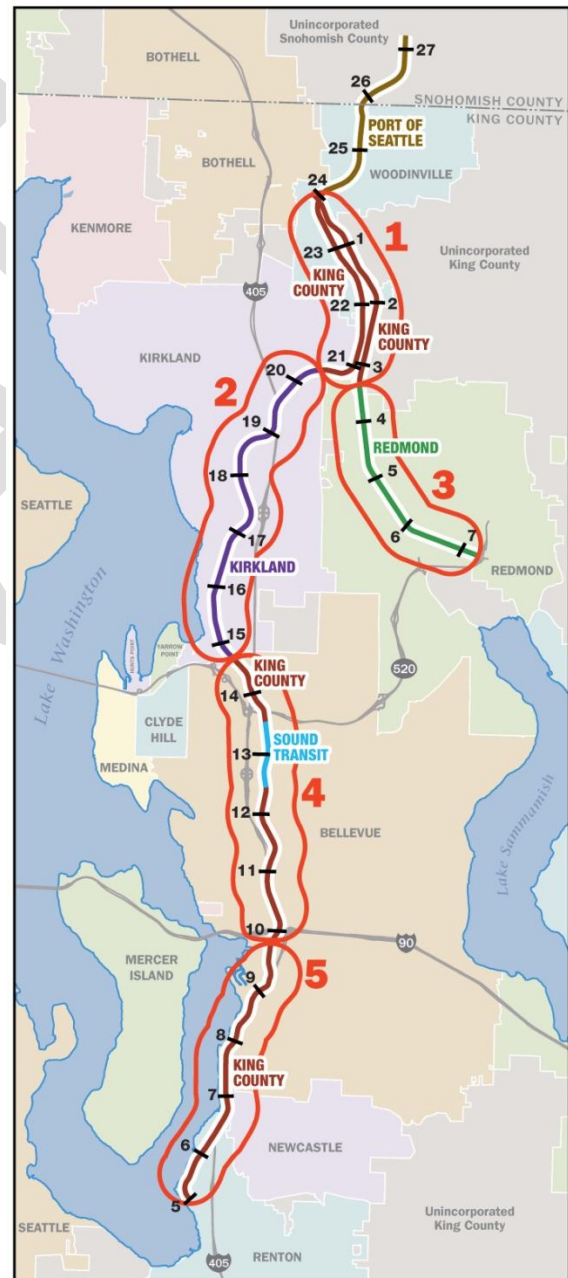
Segment 5: Renton to I-90

SEGMENT PROFILE

The Eastside Rail Corridor (ERC) Regional Advisory Council (RAC) includes representatives of the owners of the railbanked portion of the ERC: King County, Redmond, Kirkland, Sound Transit, and Puget Sound Energy. The RAC has organized a cooperative planning effort to support the multiple use vision for the corridor.

To facilitate that effort, the RAC has divided the corridor into five planning segments. Technical staff has organized planning workshops for the three segments encompassing ownership by King County and Sound Transit to gather information about current and planned conditions. For the segments owned by the cities of Redmond and Kirkland, the RAC will coordinate with those cities' existing planning processes. The primary purpose of these workshops is to gather and begin synthesis of information that will support development of recommendations by the RAC to meet their charter.

For Segment 5, technical staff organized a site visit on May 30, 2013; and a full-day planning workshop at the City of Renton Public Works Department on May 31, 2013. Staff from King County, Renton, Bellevue, Newcastle, Sound Transit, Puget Sound Energy, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), and Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) presented on current conditions and future plans.



SEGMENT DESCRIPTION

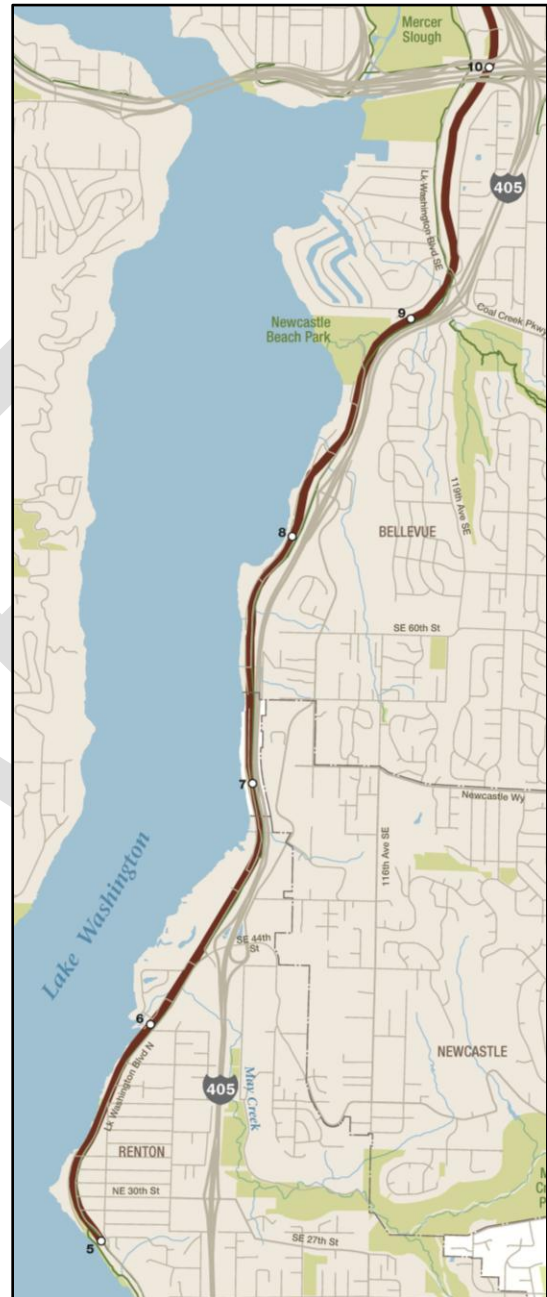
Segment 5 is the southernmost railbanked portion of the ERC. It stretches from Milepost 5.0, just north of Gene Coulon Memorial Beach Park in Renton, north to approximately Milepost 10.0 just south of where the ERC crosses over I-90. Segment 5 is located between the east shore of Lake Washington and I-405.

Ownership. This segment of the corridor is railbanked, and King County has been designated the Interim Trail Sponsor. King County is also the owner of this segment, having acquired a combination of fee simple and railroad easement interests in 2013 from the Port of Seattle, which acquired BNSF's underlying ownership rights in 2009.¹ In addition to King County's ownership, Sound Transit holds a high capacity transit easement in Segment 5 and Puget Sound Energy holds a utility easement.

South of Segment 5, the corridor is owned by BNSF. The area from Milepost 5.0 south to Black River Junction remains in active freight service, providing "head and tail" (turnaround) operations to serve Boeing's Renton facility.

Surrounding jurisdictions. Segment 5 passes through the cities of Renton and Bellevue. The city of Newcastle is located adjacent to the corridor, separated from it by I-405. A portion of unincorporated King County is also located adjacent to this segment of the corridor, along the shore of Lake Washington just north of the Virginia Mason Athletic Center (Seahawks training facility).

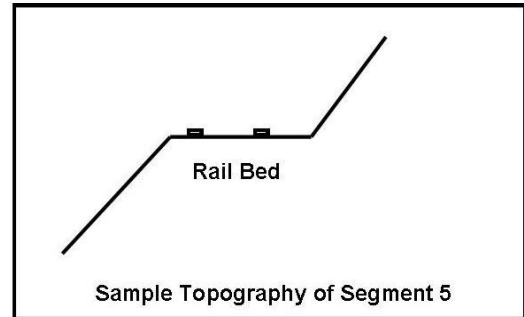
Corridor topography and condition. Segment 5 is located along the shore of Lake Washington. Although the rail bed itself is flat, the land at its margins slopes steeply down from east to west, meaning that in many areas the corridor right-of-way slopes down from I-405 or Lake Washington Boulevard to the rail bed and then down toward the lake shore. This configuration leads to the need for a drainage swale on the uphill side of the rail bed over many portions of its length within



¹ Due to railbanking, the corridor ownership remains intact, whether BNSF's original ownership rights – which were acquired at the turn of the 20th century – were fee simple ownership or railroad easement interests.

this segment. There are also several trestles in this segment, including trestles spanning May Creek, Ripley Lane, and Coal Creek.

The corridor is very narrow in many places along this segment, in some cases as narrow as 30 feet. The rail bed closely abuts residential properties in a number of areas.



The railbanked portion of the corridor has not been maintained in several years. Both the rail bed and surrounding right-of-way are overgrown and many drainage culverts are blocked. The margins of the corridor contain trees that have been tagged for removal as hazard trees (e.g., aging cottonwood trees).

CURRENT USES AND FUTURE PLANS

Surrounding Land Use. In Renton (Mileposts 5.0 through 7.0) the area adjacent to the corridor is primarily single family residential, with several areas of mixed office and commercial use.

- From Coulon Park to Port Quendall, surrounding land uses are single family residential, with several small neighborhood commercial nodes. This pattern is not anticipated to change.
- Near the Port Quendall Superfund site, the Barbee Mill development offers 113 homes and townhomes, and the planned Quendall Terminals development will eventually provide 660 residential units as well as 20,000+ square feet of retail. An EPA Record of Decision on the cleanup effort for the site is expected in 2014.
- The Virginia Mason Athletic Center (Seahawks training facility) is fully developed and not anticipated to change.
- Across Lake Washington Boulevard from the corridor at the I-405 interchange, the proposed Hawk's Landing Hotel would redevelop formerly industrial land.

Newcastle, as noted above, does not directly abut the corridor, but is separated from it by I-405. Most of the density in Newcastle is centered around the Coal Creek Parkway, approximately 1.5 miles from the corridor. A new school will be constructed in 2016 in Newcastle just east of I-405. Gaining access to the corridor across I-405 is an interest for Newcastle.

There is a small area of unincorporated King County along the shore of Lake Washington just north of the Virginia Mason Athletic Center (Seahawks training facility) that is adjacent to the corridor. Another small area of unincorporated King County is located between Renton and Bellevue, across I-405 from the corridor just east of Newcastle. Both of these areas are part of the West King County Community Service

Area. King County staff will work with the residents of unincorporated King County who live directly adjacent to the corridor on maintenance and permitting issues; and with all nearby unincorporated area residents on corridor planning and development.

In Bellevue,² in the area south of I-90 that comprises Segment 5, the corridor abuts single family residential, including the Newport Shores development between the corridor and Lake Washington. The corridor also passes adjacent to Newcastle Beach Park and the Mercer Slough Nature Park.

Recreation and trails. Segment 5 is located near a number of local parks and open spaces, including:

- Gene Coulon Memorial Beach Park
- Kenndale Beach Park
- Newcastle Beach Park
- Enatai Beach Park
- Coal Creek Park
- Mercer Slough Nature Park

Segment 5 is also located near a number of north/south and east/west trails, including:

- Lake-to-Sound Trail in South King County, with connections to the Cedar River Trail and regional trail network
- Sam Chastain Waterfront Trail in Renton south of Lake Washington
- May Creek Trail (eventually proposed to be developed into the May Creek Greenway to Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park)
- Lake Washington Loop Trail (several sections of this trail, totaling approximately 1.25 miles, are located in I-405 right-of-way directly adjacent to the ERC, and portions to the south are located in the Lake Washington Boulevard right-of-way)
- Several unimproved public right-of-way links that could provide for pedestrian crossings of I-405
- Coal Creek Trail through the Coal Creek Natural Area
- Mountain to Sound Greenway along I-90

These potential connections could offer many opportunities, including the possibility to help mitigate the corridor's narrow width in this segment and provide access points or activity nodes along the corridor. But they also present some challenges of their own. For example, Newcastle Beach Park could provide amenities such as restrooms for ERC users, but it suffers from parking shortages during the summer months and therefore might not be able to accommodate additional corridor users seeking parking. As another example, the segments of the Lake Washington Loop Trail located within the I-405 right-of-way may need to be relocated for I-405 widening.

² Bellevue abuts Mileposts 7.0-14.8 of the ERC. In Segment 5 (south of I-90) Bellevue abuts Mileposts 7.0-10.0.

In some areas the corridor itself offers or could offer compelling views of Lake Washington and areas to the west.

Transportation and rail uses. As noted above, the rail line south of Segment 5 (from Milepost 5.0 to Black River Junction) is still owned by BNSF and is in active freight use. North of Milepost 5.0, in the area of Segment 5, the corridor has been railbanked. Future transportation connections in Segment 5 will be affected by several ongoing planning processes:

- **I-405 Corridor Project.** In 2002, the State of Washington, in partnership with local communities, adopted the I-405 Corridor Plan, a \$10 billion, long-term plan to improve the I-405 corridor.

Projects in the plan include adding up to two new lanes in each direction, developing a bus rapid transit (BRT) line with stations along I-405, developing an express lane system, and making local improvements and connections. To date, \$1.7 billion has been spent on I-405 corridor improvements, including the widening project that led to the dismantling of the Wilburton Tunnel.

The adopted plan included a proposal for a BRT system that would operate with stops every two to three miles along I-405 and would use the high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) priority lanes, new HOV direct access ramps, and new in-line transit stations to maximize speed and reliability.

Future projects will include improvements to the I-405/167 interchange, which will begin construction in 2015; and corridor widening between Renton to Bellevue, which will begin preliminary engineering in July, 2013. The Renton to Bellevue I-405 widening is anticipated to affect approximately 1.25 miles of the Lake Washington Loop Trail, currently located on I-405 right-of-way.

- **Sound Transit ST3 planning.** Sound Transit either currently operates or is planning to construct several different rail and transit services to the north, south, and east of Segment 5. North of Segment 5, Sound Transit's planned East Link light rail line will intersect the ERC in Bellevue. South of Segment 5, Sound Transit operates Sounder commuter rail service from Lakewood, continuing north to downtown Seattle. East of Segment 5, Sound Transit operates several express bus routes (#560 and #566).

Both Segment 5 of the ERC and the I-405 corridor will be included in the corridor studies Sound Transit will be conducting later this year as part of its ST3 long-range planning effort. The Sound Transit Board has identified eight corridors that have the potential for high capacity transit. These corridors include:

- Transit service on the Renton to Bellevue portion of the ERC (Segment 5), and

- A review of the I-405 Corridor Plan's proposed BRT service along I-405 (east of the ERC).

These corridor studies will lead to a long-range plan update in 2014 and then to a new regional high capacity transit system plan, which will be prepared during 2015 and 2016. At the workshop, staff from the City of Renton noted Renton's ongoing support for the BRT proposal that had originally been adopted as part of the I-405 Corridor Plan. Renton staff noted that to the City of Renton, BRT on I-405 would be preferred to rail transit along the ERC within this segment.

Utilities. Both Puget Sound Energy (PSE) and King County Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD) have utilities in the Segment 5 area of the corridor. These include:

- **PSE electric lines.** PSE has several electric transmission crossings of the corridor. These larger facilities (150-230kV) are typically located above ground. PSE is studying the need for additional transmission lines in the corridor area. PSE also has smaller distribution lines along the corridor. In general, these types of lower voltage distribution lines are located underground. Placement of future electric facilities will depend on the needs of residents and businesses in the Eastside.
- **PSE gas lines.** PSE has numerous gas crossings of the corridor. As with electric lines, future placement of gas crossings will depend on the needs of residents and businesses in the Eastside.
- **King County Wastewater Eastside Interceptor (ESI).** The ESI is a trunk line to the Renton Treatment Plant that was constructed during the 1960s. It travels along the alignment of the ERC in Segment 5, with several smaller tributaries and siphons. In that area, its width varies between seven and eight feet, and its depth varies from at grade to 20-30 feet deep. The location of the ESI will affect the placement of other underground utility facilities, as well as the treatment of the surface. No additional wastewater projects are planned at this time in Segment 5, though occasional ESI maintenance projects of varying magnitude are likely, such as the project that will repair the lining of the ESI near the Seahawks training facility.

NEXT STEPS FOR STAFF

The initial analysis and planning work have identified several next steps for staff. These tasks include:

- **Compile additional information on unincorporated King County communities near the corridor.** Additional information will be gathered on existing land uses, future plans, access issues, and constraints for the areas of unincorporated King County on and near Segment 5 of the corridor.

- **Develop “envelope” estimates for different multiple use scenarios.** Staff from King County, Sound Transit, and Puget Sound Energy have begun working to identify the needed space for and separation between different types of uses, including trail, rail transit (light and heavy rail), electric utility facilities (distribution and transmission), gas utility facilities, and wastewater utility facilities. Staff will work to develop sample “envelopes” showing the total space needed for different combinations of uses.
- **Coordinate maintenance plans.** At the workshop, the director of the King County Parks Division noted that King County has assumed maintenance duties along the corridor. PSE staff noted that PSE is also engaged in active maintenance of utility facilities along the corridor. PSE conducts its maintenance using high-rail vehicles that can travel along the rail lines; King County staff noted that the County does not own any high-rail vehicles and will find maintenance along existing rail lines to be more challenging with existing equipment. Relevant staff will need to develop coordinated maintenance plans.
- **Reach out to adjacent communities regarding permitting and maintenance.** King County staff will continue to reach out to corridor neighbors about its work evaluating and renewing crossing and special use permits on the corridor now that King County has assumed ownership; and about the maintenance work King County will be undertaking to clear invasive and hazardous vegetation and clean culverts. Because of the corridor’s narrow width and proximity to residential uses in Segment 5, this outreach will be particularly crucial here.

ISSUES FOR RAC CONSIDERATION

Analysis of Segment 5 has highlighted a number of segment-specific issues the RAC may wish to consider as planning for the corridor continues. This analysis will be aided by detailed information provided by local jurisdictions, PSE, and Sound Transit, as well as by reviewing case studies of similar corridors around the country.

1. **Connections to the south.** Trail connections to South King County will be accomplished through the Lake-to-Sound Trail, which is proposed for funding in the countywide parks levy that has been submitted to the voters for an August, 2013 vote.

Transit connections to South King County will be more challenging, as the rail line between Milepost 5.0 and Black River Junction remains in active freight use. Transit connections – both along the corridor and for BRT on I-405 – will be studied by Sound Transit as part of ST3, and WSDOT will continue with its plans for widening I-405 (pending funding from this legislative session). If funding is available the widening would occur by 2017.

2. **Connections to the north.** Connections to the north will be challenging until the Wilburton Tunnel link is restored. The crossing over I-90 is narrow, posing

potential space constraints for multiple uses at that crossing. In addition, continued connection of the adjacent Lake Washington Loop Trail (which runs parallel to the corridor in portions of this segment) will be affected by the plans for I-405 widening. WSDOT staff identified the potential need to address the relocation of portions of the Lake Washington Loop Trail when I-405 is widened. WSDOT staff has been engaged in planning activities and these connection issues have been identified for further study.

3. **Connections to the east.** The I-405 right-of-way poses a connection challenge for residents of Newcastle and unincorporated King County east of the corridor. Planning creative ways to link to existing connections across I-405 or to create new connections will be essential to provide access to the corridor.
4. **Corridor topography and width.** The corridor in Segment 5 is narrow in places, steeply sloped from east to west, and very near existing homes and buildings in many places. These conditions will make placing multiple uses within the corridor right-of-way challenging in some locations. Ongoing coordination among King County, PSE, Sound Transit, and local communities will be essential to identify creative solutions in constrained areas.
5. **Connections to parks, trails, and destinations.** The corridor in Segment 5 passes near a number of local parks, trails, and destinations, including Gene Coulon Memorial Beach Park, Kenneydale Beach Park, Newcastle Beach Park, a number of east-west trails, including the Mountain to Sound Greenway and May Creek Trail, and portions of the Lake Washington Loop Trail.

There are many opportunities to connect to these destinations, and to connect to existing and planned developments and activity centers along the corridor. Work will continue with local partners to identify appropriate connections, with careful planning for trailheads, parking, and access points.

6. **Coordination with surrounding communities and landowners.** Given the narrow right-of-way and challenging topography, continued coordination among RAC partners and with surrounding communities and landowners will be essential.

SUMMARY

The site visit and planning workshop for Segment 5 have highlighted a number of issues and opportunities for the multiple usage of the Eastside Rail Corridor in this area. Additional study, work, and outreach on these issues will help the RAC understand segment development potential and interconnectivity and plan how to achieve its multi-purpose vision for this segment and for the entire Eastside Rail Corridor.

Similar planning studies for the other segments of the corridor with King County and Sound Transit ownership, and collaboration with Kirkland and Redmond on their local

planning efforts, will allow the RAC to identify a common set of issues and policies for the Eastside Rail Corridor and recommend next steps for the corridor's multi use development, as well as for long-term connections through and beyond the central Puget Sound region.

DRAFT