

Eastside Rail Corridor Regional Advisory Council

Meeting Summary

June 5, 2013, 3:00 – 5:00 PM

Puget Sound Energy Offices, Bellevue

Council members present: Sound Transit CEO Joni Earl; County Council Vice Chair Jane Hague (Co-Chair); County Councilmember Kathy Lambert; Dave Namura, Puget Sound Energy Manager of Local Government and Public Policy; Kirkland City Manager Kurt Triplett (for Mayor Joan McBride); Leah Zoppi (for County Councilmember Larry Phillips)

Advisory Council members excused: County Executive Dow Constantine; Redmond Mayor John Marchione

Facilitator and presenters: Jennifer Altschuler (Puget Sound Energy); John Howell, facilitator (Cedar River Group); Mel Huie (Metro – Portland, OR); Ric Ilgenfritz (Sound Transit); Doug Jacobson (City of Renton)

Welcome and Introductions

Jane Hague, Advisory Council Co-Chair, called the meeting to order, and welcomed Regional Advisory Council (RAC) members and others attending. RAC members and members of the audience introduced themselves. John Howell reviewed the packet of materials for the meeting. Mary Bourguignon explained that the piece titled “Segment 5: Renton to I-90” is summary from the technical workshop that took place on Friday, May 31 focusing on the corridor segment from Renton to I-90 in Bellevue. Attending were staff from City of Bellevue, City of Newcastle, City of Renton, King County, Puget Sound Energy, Puget Sound Regional Council, Sound Transit and Washington State Department of Transportation. The workshop discussion included current uses and future plans for the corridor. Participants also identified issues, opportunities and constraints.

Puget Sound Energy Presentation

Dave Namura welcomed the RAC to Puget Sound Energy (PSE) offices. PSE has 1.1 million electric and 700,000 natural gas customers. Both systems have multiple crossings of the Eastside Rail Corridor.

Jennifer Altschuler described PSE’s easements and facilities on the corridor, and offered Electricity 101 and Natural Gas 101. (See presentation slides, “PSE Facilities: Eastside Rail Corridor.”) Key points were:

- PSE has an easement through the Eastside Rail Corridor except for the spur in Redmond.
- PSE has multiple crossings of the corridor:
 - Overhead electric: 60
 - Underground electric: 26
 - 115 kV transmission: 19
 - 230 kV transmission: 5
 - Gas: 75
- Multi-use corridors are common. Electric and natural gas lines are compatible with other uses.
- PSE is regulated by federal, state, regional and local authorities.

- Specific clearances are required between transmission poles and the ground, and around the poles. Only low-growing trees are compatible.

In response to questions from RAC members, Ms. Altschuler said that PSE might seek an easement through the Redmond spur of the corridor; PSE is currently working with the City of Redmond on several projects. In terms of long-range planning, expansion of the system will depend on where growth occurs. PSE is in the middle of a study of needs projected for the next 10 years, is now upgrading some of the transmission lines, and is looking at one major project on the east side of I-405.

City of Renton Presentation

Doug Jacobson, Deputy Public Works Administrator for the City of Renton, described the portion of the corridor in Renton and the opportunities the City of Renton sees. (See presentation slides, “Renton – Eastside Rail Corridor.”) The corridor in Renton is just under 2 miles long—Milepost 5 to Milepost 6.9. South of Milepost 5, the corridor is still in active freight use to serve Boeing operations.

From the City of Renton’s perspective, the greatest opportunities for the corridor are to connect people with regional and local trails, and provide several view corridors. Challenges include: the need to provide trailhead access and rest stops; ways to complement existing and planned pedestrian and bicycle facilities along Lake Washington Boulevard; how to accommodate corridor crossings that are the sole access to residential properties along Lake Washington; and how to develop the corridor without delaying implementation of the bus rapid transit (BRT) that was proposed for the I-405 corridor as part of WSDOT’s 2002 I-405 Corridor Plan.

In response to questions, Mr. Jacobson provided the following additional information:

- **Active freight:** The freight serving Boeing goes as far north as Gene Coulon Park.
- **Port Quendall development proposal:** The proposed Quendall Terminal development would be 20 acres in size and located on Lake Washington. It would be mixed use, with 660 residential units and 20,000 square feet of retail. The Port Quendall site is currently a Superfund site, but a Record of Decision from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is expected in 2014.
- **Power facilities:** PSE has a storage yard, substation operation department and small switching department in the area of the corridor.
- **Relationship to proposed BRT:** There are two places that might be good connections between BRT on I-405 and the Eastside Rail Corridor: NE 8th to serve Quendall Landing, and NE 44th. North of Coulon Park, there is a large difference in elevation between I-405 and the corridor, which would pose a challenge for making a connection.

Case Study Follow-up

Additional Corridors

At the last RAC meeting, the RAC asked the Technical Team to research two additional corridors: Denver and Austin. In addition, public comments had suggested looking at the Lakawanna Cutoff in New Jersey. The “Comparison of Multi-Use Corridors” document adds a second page with summary information about these three corridors. The Technical Team also created a set of criteria for corridors to study in

more depth. These criteria were presented to RAC members as the basis for staff's analysis. (See "Draft Criteria for Selection of Multi-Use Corridors for Further Study.") The key criterion is that corridors to be studied be truly multi-use, with at least rails, trails and coordination of utilities. Both the Denver and Austin corridors are part of larger regional transportation networks with connections to regional trails, but currently have limited trail on each corridor; the Lackawanna Cutoff does not include a trail component.

Also at the last meeting, the RAC expressed interest in hearing from representatives of other corridors about their experience and lessons learned. The Technical Team invited a representative of the Springwater Corridor in Portland, Oregon, to this meeting.

Springwater Corridor (Portland, Oregon)

Mel Huie, Regional Trails Coordinator for Portland Metro Parks, presented information about the Springwater Corridor. (See presentation slides, "Springwater Corridor Trail: Portland to Boring, Oregon," and other materials.) Key points from the presentation and questions were as follows:

- Springwater is a railbanked, multi-use, 21-mile trail. It was originally a freight railroad and electric streetcar line. There is still a short line railroad on 5 miles of the corridor.
- The corridor has been in planning and development since the early 1980s and should be complete in 2015.
- The corridor involves three cities, two counties, a short line railroad, and an electric utility company.
- The corridor averages 100 feet wide, though is narrower in some places. The bike pedestrian trail that has been developed in the corridor is a hard surface path 10 to 12 feet wide, with 2-foot shoulders.
- It currently has 1 million users per year, including walkers, joggers, bicyclists and people using wheelchairs.
- There is also a wildlife corridor adjacent to the trail.
- The corridor is part of a larger system of regional trails that will eventually connect to the lodge at Mount Hood, and from Portland to the Pacific Coast.
- Signage includes brochures with maps, signs at historic sites, and maps and other information on "The Intertwine," a web site about parks and trails in Portland. Parks is developing some wayfinding signs (such as "X miles to Portland") and looking at smart phone QR codes.
- A track relocation is underway on the portion of the corridor where the short line railroad runs so as to allow the corridor to accommodate both rail and trail. The trains are infrequent and slow (15-30 miles per hour). However, there were many regulations to meet, especially for the separation between active rail and trail, and much work with the railroad company, local and state transportation departments and adjacent neighbors. There were issues about who paid for the relocation costs and for ongoing maintenance.
- For funding, there were bond issues in 1995 and 2006, and a park levy in 2013. Parks received some federal funding, and made use of development charges allocated to parks.
- In the future, if rail were put back on the trail it would most likely be light rail. Other corridors are being used for passenger rail, and the regional freight plan did not designate this corridor.

- There are some businesses still located on the trail, such as a brick factory. But it is planned as a recreational trail corridor.

Mr. Huie suggested the following “to do” list for developing a rails with trails project:

- Conduct intensive public involvement.
- Conduct a Feasibility Study and an Opportunities and Constraints Study.
- Learn the law on rail banking.
- Coordinate with the state, county and local Transportation Departments.
- Create a Master Plan and a Management Plan.
- Conduct fundraising, including bond measures.
- Facilitate interagency agreements.
- Plan for safety. For example, the “Trail Watch” program uses teams of two to three volunteers who walk the trail to check conditions, pick up trash, hand out dog poop scoop supplies, etc.

Rail 101

Rick Ilgenfritz of Sound Transit provided a briefing about rail high-capacity transit. (See presentation slides, “Rail 101: High Capacity Transit Modes.”) He explained the differences among: commuter (“heavy”) rail, light rail, diesel multiple unit (DMU), and streetcar. In response to a question about running light rail on the same rails as passenger/freight rail, Mr. Ilgenfritz said that Sound Transit would likely not be able to run light rail on the same tracks as Sounder trains because of federal crash worthiness standards. Cities with DMUs or commuter rail systems that share rail lines with freight avoid the potential for collisions by running commuter transit during the day and freight at night.

Public Comment

Three individuals offered comments:

- Lisa McConnell, Eastside Trail Advocates
- Roche Scheuerman, Eastside Rail Now
- T.G. Court, Bellevue College student

The comments included the following points:

- **Metrics:** A commenter suggested starting now to get a baseline for the number of people using the trail and how they use it, and developing an ongoing system of measurement. These measurements will be useful for seeking grants and reporting to the public on how their investment is being used.
- **Separating uses:** A commenter applauded efforts to separate bicycle traffic from pedestrians. Bicycles can operate at high speeds compared to those on foot.
- **Multi use of tracks:** A commenter stated that both Philadelphia and New Jersey have shared tracks, with light rail in the daytime and freight trains at night. He also stated that in Europe there are street cars and freight trains on the same track.

Next Meeting

The next RAC meeting will be on June 26, 2:00 to 4:00 PM, at Bellevue City Hall. There will be presentations from King County as a corridor owner, and from a multi-use corridor in Minneapolis.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 PM.