

# Alternative Uses for Levy Funds for Green to Cedar Rivers Trail North Segment A Report

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July 9, 2020



**King County**

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## II. Proviso Text

Ordinance 19021<sup>1</sup>, Section 73, Department of Natural Resources and Parks, Proviso P2.

Of this appropriation, \$100,000 shall not be expended or encumbered until the executive transmits a report on exploring alternative uses for the \$9,000,000 in parks levy proceeds listed on Attachment C to Motion 15378<sup>2</sup> for the Green to Cedar Rivers Trail - North A, and a motion that acknowledges receipt of the report and references the subject matter, the proviso's ordinance, ordinance section and proviso number in both the title and body of the motion, and the motion acknowledging receipt of the report is passed by the council.

The report shall include, but not be limited to, a summary of engagement, discussion of the alternatives explored, and the joint recommendations of the city of Maple Valley and the department of natural resources and parks for use of the funding.

The executive should file the report and the motion required by this proviso by June 30, 2020, in the form of a paper original and an electronic copy with the clerk of the council, who shall retain the original and provide an electronic copy to all councilmembers, the council chief of staff and the lead staff for the mobility and environment committee, or its successor.

## III. Executive Summary

The Green to Cedar Rivers (G2C) Trail is a critical part of the Regional Trails network in King County and the long term goal is a paved, multi-use, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible trail connecting the cities of Renton (via the Cedar River Trail), Maple Valley and Black Diamond. The proviso calls for the Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) to explore alternative uses for the \$9 million in the 2020-2025 King County Parks, Recreation, Trails, and Open Space Levy for North Segment A of the G2C Trail.

The analysis for this report was done in close collaboration with the City of Maple Valley. Based on preliminary cost estimates and other analysis done by the Parks and Recreation Division of DNRP, it appears to be feasible to use the \$9 million for development of an interim gravel trail in South Segment A rather than fully developing North Segment A. There are greater uncertainties and unknowns with developing South Segment A because less design work has been done on this segment, and these uncertainties could impact the cost and slow implementation of the project. However, DNRP and the City of Maple Valley agree that there is public benefit to extending the existing G2C Trail to the very popular and heavily used Black Diamond Open Space (BDOS) Natural Area, and recommend the next phase of developing the G2C Trail should be construction of an interim gravel trail in South Segment A.

This proposed change in phasing of the G2C Trail development is strongly supported by the community as demonstrated by a survey conducted by DNRP. Over 1,000 people responded to the survey, with 92 percent either strongly supporting or somewhat supporting the proposal to move the next phasing of

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<sup>1</sup> [Link to Ordinance 19021](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Link to Motion 15378](#)

the G2C Trail development to developing an interim gravel trail in South Segment A, with only 3 percent of respondents either somewhat opposed or strongly opposed to the proposed change.

## IV. Background

**Department Overview:** The Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) works in support of sustainable and livable communities and a clean and healthy natural environment. Its mission is to foster environmental stewardship and strengthen communities by providing regional parks, protecting the region's water, air, land and natural habitats, and reducing, safely disposing of and creating resources from wastewater and solid waste.

The Parks and Recreation Division (Parks) of DNRP operates and maintains a vast parks and recreation system with more than 200 parks, 175 miles of regional trails, 215 miles of backcountry trails and close to 30,000 acres of open space including such regional treasures as Marymoor Park, Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park, and the world-class Weyerhaeuser King County Aquatic Center. Parks provides recreational opportunities for King County residents and protects our region's public lands, leaving a legacy for future generations, with the majority of funding coming from voter-approved property tax measures.

**Key Historical Context:** The G2C Trail is a longstanding priority regional trail project in south King County. The path's overall planned alignment runs approximately 11 miles from the Cedar River Trail in north Maple Valley to the Green River Valley south of Black Diamond. The trail's alignment is on an abandoned railroad spur line that once carried coal between the mines in Black Diamond and Maple Valley.

The G2C Trail is developed for 3.3 miles as a gravel regional trail in the City of Maple Valley between the Cedar River Trail and SE Kent-Kangley Road (State Route 516). The abandoned rail line continues south of SE Kent-Kangley Road, providing an informal local trail in south Maple Valley. The city previously placed gravel on part of this segment to encourage walking by local residents.

The G2C Trail is included in DNRP's [Regional Trails Needs Report](#) (RTNR), which is an adopted plan that is part of Technical Appendix C2 of King County's [Comprehensive](#) Plan. The trail was included in the first edition of the RTNR in 2008. The trail was also envisioned by earlier regional trails plans. It was included in the Regional Trails Plan (1992) and in DNRP's [Regional Trail Inventory and Implementation Guidelines \(2004\)](#).

Development of the G2C Trail is considered a part of the DNRP [Strategic Climate Action Plan](#) (SCAP). The current SCAP goals envision the completion of an additional 10 miles of new paved or interim regional trails by Parks by 2025, and G2C Trail development during the current Parks Levy period will contribute to this effort.

The development of the G2C Trail is also consistent with the mobility and safety goals of County's Strategic Plan. Regional mobility enhancements have been an important consideration in trail development. Extending the regional trails through Maple Valley and Black Diamond will enhance travel alternatives and promote active transportation and integration of modes of travel.

The G2C Trail was the focus of a regional trail feasibility planning study in [2012](#). Funding for the preliminary design of the South Segment and the design and paving of the 3.3-mile-long North Segment was included as part of the [2014-2019 King County Parks, Trails, and Open Space Replacement Levy](#). DNRP hired [Parametrix](#) to do 30 percent design of the South Segment of the G2C Trail which it completed in 2019. In addition, DNRP hired [KPF](#) Consulting Engineers to design and construct the North Segment and held three community meetings in 2017 to gather public input on the design.

The KPF project team completed the 60 percent design for the 3.3 mile North Segment in the spring of 2018. However, DNRP management made the difficult decision to delay the North segment project due to insufficient funds, based on the 60 percent cost estimate. The recent building boom in the Puget Sound region caused significant increases in construction costs including the costs of building trails. DNRP did not have sufficient funding to complete all of the trails in the 2014-2019 King County Parks, Trails, and Open Space Replacement Levy.

**Key Current Context:** The [2020-2025 King County Parks, Recreation, Trails, and Open Space Levy](#) includes \$9 million to continue development of the G2C Trail. Similar to the 2014-2019 King County Parks, Trails, and Open Space Replacement Levy, the current levy would focus the next phase of development of the trail starting at the north end of the trail. However, the current levy funding would only include development of approximately half or 1.8 miles of the 3.3 mile long North Segment which would improve the trail between its intersection with the Cedar River Trail and the Lake Wilderness Center. See North Segment A on the map of G2C Trail in Appendix A.

At the request of the City of Maple Valley, and in response to this proviso, DNRP evaluated the feasibility of reallocating the funding in the current Parks Levy for the North Segment A of the G2C Trail to development of an interim gravel trail between Kent-Kangley Road and the Black Diamond Open Space (BDOS) natural area (South Segment A).

**Report Methodology:** To evaluate the feasibility of the moving the next phase of the G2C Trail development from fully developing the North Segment A to construction of an interim trail in South Segment A, DNRP staff developed preliminary cost estimates for elements of the G2C South Segment A development based on the 30 percent design work that had already been completed. Staff documented the uncertainties and issues outside of King County's purview regarding the South Segment A that could cause increases in cost and/or construction delays. In addition, staff estimated the time it would take to hire a consultant team, complete design, secure necessary permits, and construct an interim trail for the South Segment A. Because the G2C North Segment project is at 60 percent design, its cost estimates and timeline are better known and there are fewer risks and uncertainties than with the South Segment A project.

DNRP staff also conducted a field trip to the South Segment A of the G2C Trail to see in person the complexities of the crossings at the BNSF railroad and SE 288<sup>th</sup> Street and to discuss engineering design, environmental permitting, and operations and maintenance issues.

DNRP and the City of Maple Valley both agreed that it would be important to gauge community support for this proposed change. Given the current COVID-19 pandemic and the need for social distancing for public health and safety, DNRP decided that an on-line public survey was the best option for public outreach on the proposed change.

DNRP developed a short survey explaining the proposed change using the survey tool Public Input that includes an automatic translation feature which can translate the survey into multiple languages. The survey was distributed to 4,598 people including the email lists for the Green to Cedar Rivers Trail project and DNRP Regional Trails. In addition, Councilmember Reagan Dunn’s office distributed the survey through a District 9 e-newsletter, and the Cities of Maple Valley and Covington promoted the survey through their social media channels. DNRP staff also asked equestrian groups and accessibility rights organizations to share the survey with their contact lists.

1,113 people responded to the survey with the following results:

- 77 percent strongly supported
- 15 percent somewhat supported
- 5 percent were neutral
- 2 percent somewhat opposed and
- 1 percent strongly opposed

See the Green to Cedar Rivers Trail survey and full summary of the survey results in Appendices B and C.

## V. Report Requirements

The proviso requires a report that shall include, but not be limited to, the following information:

- A. A summary of engagement*
- B. Discussion of the alternatives explored*
- C. The joint recommendations of the city of Maple Valley and the department of natural resources and parks for use of the funding*

### A. A Summary of Engagement

Staff from DNRP and the City of Maple Valley met five times from October, 2019 to May, 2020 to discuss the feasibility of Maple Valley’s request that the next phase of the G2C Trail development be changed from fully developing and paving North Segment A, to an interim gravel trail in South Segment A.

During the course of these meetings, DNRP and City of Maple Valley agreed to hold regular quarterly meetings to improve communications and coordination on various topics including the G2C Trail, and to analyze the feasibility of the City’s request to change the G2C project. There was a field trip to see the BNSF railroad and SE 288<sup>th</sup> Street crossings of the G2C Trail corridor and discussion regarding the need for safe crossings at these locations. Based on information gathered, DNRP staff developed preliminary cost estimates, timeline estimates for design and construction of the two alternatives for the next phase of trail development, and potential risks, uncertainties, and unknowns involved with moving the trail project to the South Segment. This analysis was shared and discussed with the City of Maple Valley which affirmed its interest in moving the trail project to the South Segment and outlined the benefits it saw with this change in the phasing of the G2C Trail. Based on these discussions, DNRP staff developed a draft joint agreement which was reviewed and finalized over the last two meetings. See Section C. below for details.

## **B. Discussion of the Alternatives Explored**

Two alternatives for the G2C Trail were analyzed for this budget proviso: North Segment A and South Segment A. A map of the two alternatives can be found in the Appendix A. The North Segment A alternative is included in the 2020-2025 King County Parks, Recreation, Trails, and Open Space Levy and would complete design and fully develop and pave 1.8 miles of the G2C Trail to regional trail standards between the trail's intersection with the Cedar River Trail and the Lake Wilderness Center. This project is at 60 percent design and ready to go to permitting. Construction of the trail project would be anticipated to begin in 2022 if initiated as planned. The project would consist of grading and widening the trail footprint, developing stormwater drainage, formalizing neighborhood connections, paving, signage, landscape restoration, and site furnishings.

South Segment A is the alternative requested by the City of Maple Valley. This alternative would design and construct an approximately two mile long interim gravel trail between Kent-Kangley Road and the Black Diamond Open Space Natural Area. The project is at 30 percent design currently and if the decision is made to implement this alternative rather than North Segment A, construction is anticipated to begin in 2023-24. This project includes the need for improved, safe crossings at several intersections, particularly the crossings of the BNSF railroad and SE 288<sup>th</sup> Street.

## **C. The Joint Recommendations of the City of Maple Valley and Department of Natural Resources and Parks for Use of the Funding Reached on May 1, 2020**

DNRP has analyzed the feasibility of building an interim, soft surface trail between Kent-Kangley Road and the BDOS (G2C Trail South Segment A), and joins the City of Maple Valley in recommending using the \$9 million currently proposed to pave the G2C Trail North Segment A to build South Segment A instead while considering the following risks and caveats:

- There is greater uncertainty regarding the cost estimates, drainage and permit requirements for the G2C Trail South Segment A which is only at 30 percent design versus G2C Trail North Segment which is at 60 percent design.
- Construction on the G2C Trail South Segment A would begin in the timeframe of 2023 through 2024.
- The delay of completing G2C Trail North Segment A will likely increase the overall cost to complete this segment due to the time and costs associated with procuring consultants, the potential for economic downturns and changes in regulations over time.
- Building the G2C Trail South Segment A as an interim trail and then returning to complete it as a paved fully accessible trail at a future date will increase the overall cost of completing the full vision of the G2C Trail.

Recognizing these risks and caveats, DNRP and the City of Maple Valley agree:

- The G2C Trail is a critical part of the Regional Trails Network in King County and the long term goal is a paved, multi-use, ADA accessible trail connecting the cities of Renton (via the Cedar River Trail), Maple Valley and Black Diamond. Ultimately, the City of Covington will also be connected via the planned Covington Highlands Trail.
- There is public benefit to extending the existing G2C Trail approximately two miles south and providing an improved, safe connection to the very popular and heavily used BDOS natural area with an interim soft surface trail.

- DNRP and the City of Maple Valley will continue to provide updates to the cities of Black Diamond and Covington regarding the proposed change in sequencing of the G2C Trail project. DNRP and the City of Maple Valley will also work together to seek general public input from residents within the City of Maple Valley, Covington, Black Diamond and surrounding areas regarding the proposed change in sequencing of the G2C Trail project.
- An interim trail will provide safe crossings at intersections and, where possible, avoid grades over 5 percent in line with ADA requirements and American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials guidelines.
- The highest priority crossings in this segment to address for public safety are the crossing of the BNSF railroad and SE 288<sup>th</sup> Street. The only feasible safe crossing of the BNSF railroad will be a bridge.
- Because the G2C Trail South Segment A is only at 30 percent design and cost estimate, there is greater uncertainty about the cost and design needs of the SE 288<sup>th</sup> Street crossing than the BNSF railroad crossing. DNRP will strive to make the best possible interim trail with safe crossings with the funding budgeted for this project, but cannot commit at this point, to what the design of the crossing will be at SE 288<sup>th</sup> Street.
- DNRP and the City of Maple Valley will continue to communicate on the G2C Trail project and the SE 288<sup>th</sup> Street crossing as it evolves through planned quarterly meetings to develop the best possible interim trail within the allocated budget.

## VI. Conclusions/Next Steps

The G2C Trail is a critical part of the Regional Trails network in King County and the long term goal is a paved, multi-use, ADA accessible trail connecting the cities of Renton (via the Cedar River Trail), Maple Valley, and Black Diamond. However, there is public benefit to extending the existing G2C Trail approximately two miles south and providing an improved, safe connection to the very popular and heavily used BDOS natural area.

The G2C Trail Alternatives Budget Proviso calls for DNRP to explore alternative uses for the \$9 million in the 2020-2025 King County Parks, Recreation, Trails, and Open Space Levy for North Segment A of the G2C Trail in partnership with the City of Maple Valley. After a collaborative process with the City of Maple Valley, it appears to be feasible to use the \$9 million allocated in the 2020-2025 Levy for the G2C Trail to develop an interim gravel trail in South Segment A rather than fully developing North Segment A. DNRP and the City of Maple Valley recommend this proposed change in phasing of the development of the G2C Trail. This proposed change is strongly supported by the community as demonstrated by the survey conducted by DNRP which found the majority of respondents strongly supported the proposal to focus on developing South Segment A. The final decision regarding the use of the \$9 million in the 2020-2025 Parks Levy for the G2C Trail rests with the King County Council.

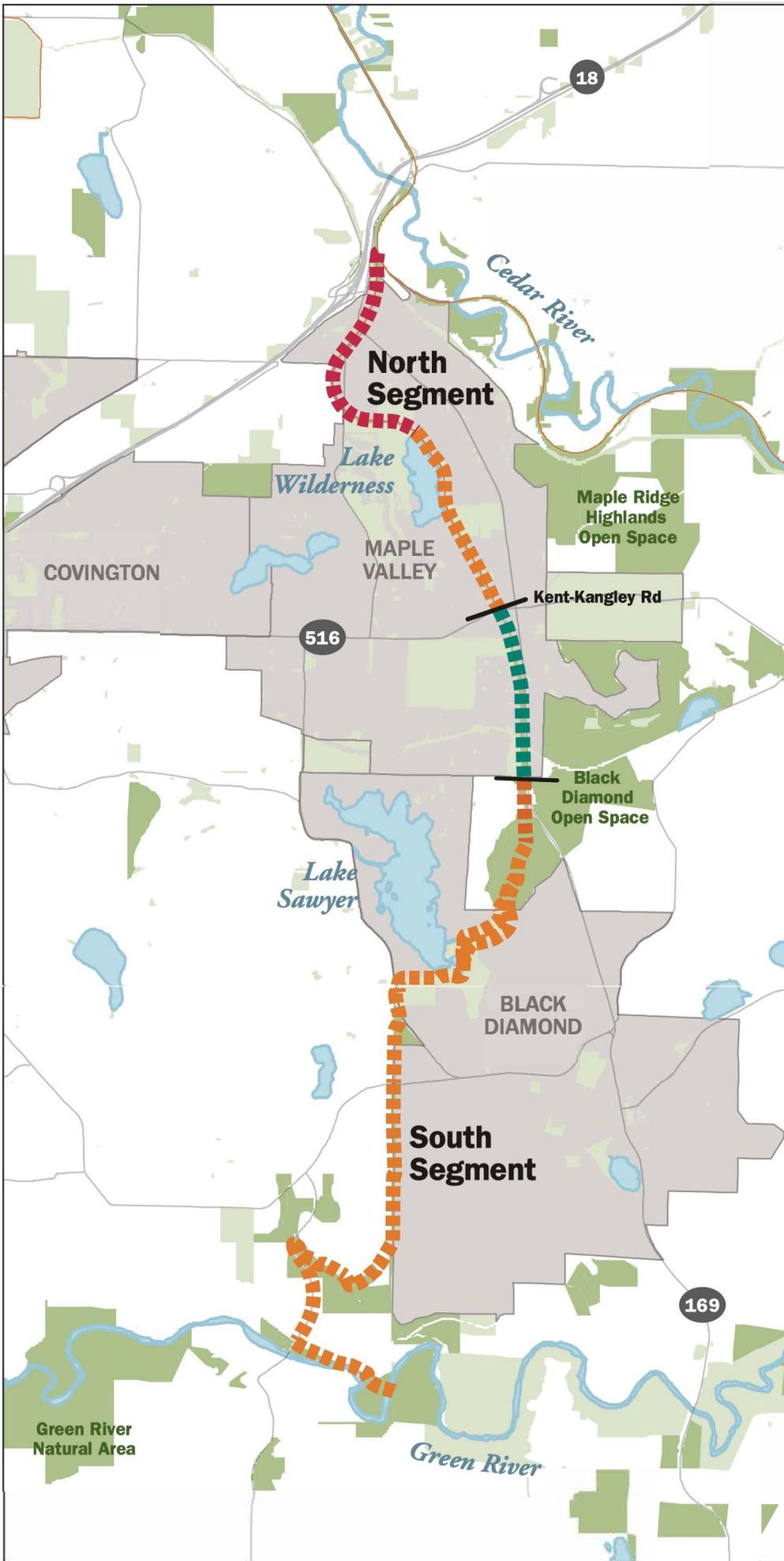
## VII. Appendices

- Appendix A: Green to Cedar Rivers Trail Map
- Appendix B: Green to Cedar Rivers Trail Survey
- Appendix C: Summary of Results

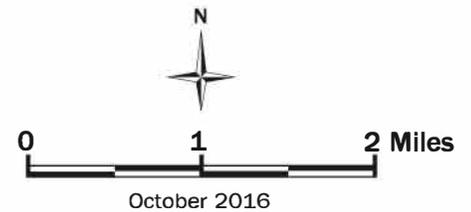
# Appendix A: Green to Cedar Rivers Trail Map

## KING COUNTY REGIONAL TRAILS

# GREEN TO CEDAR



-  Future Green to Cedar Trail
-  North Segment A
-  South Segment A
-  King County Parks
-  Other Regional Trails and Easements
-  Other Public Lands
-  Incorporated Areas
-  Major Roads



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 Data: King County Datasets  
 File: 1610\_7033w\_trailmap\_GTC.ai



# PARKS

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## Feedback on Green to Cedar Rivers Trail Development

In partnership with the City of Maple Valley and King County Councilmember Reagan Dunn's office, King County Parks is proposing changes to the next phase of development of the Green to Cedar Rivers Trail (G2C Trail) in South King County and would like to get your feedback.

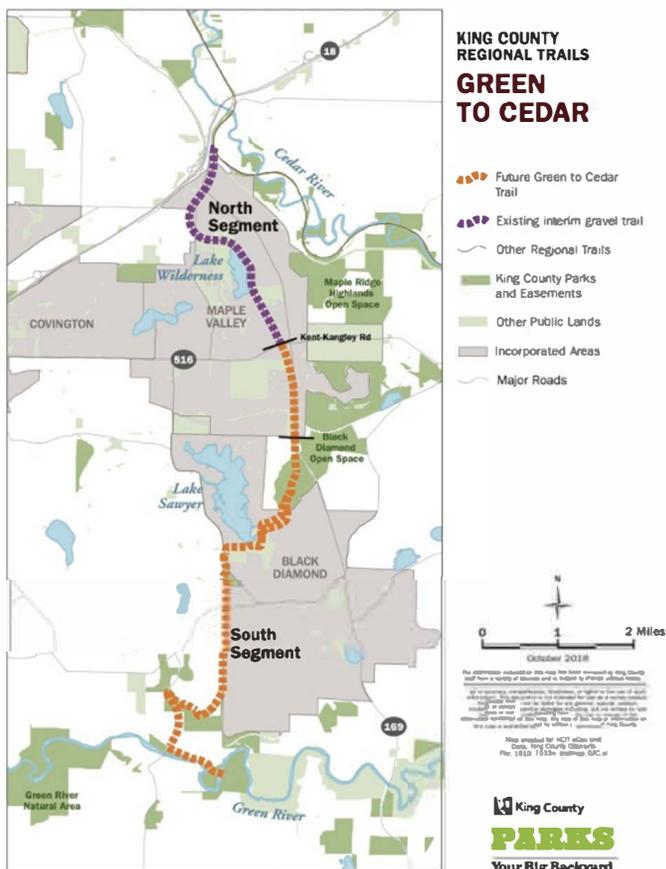
Please read each section and answer the four survey questions. We ask that you complete this 2-minute survey by June 30, 2020.

- Long-term Vision
- Trail Development
- What's It For?
- Survey Questions
- Thank you

### The Long-Term Vision for the Green to Cedar Rivers Trail

The G2C Trail is a part of a larger vision of improving mobility and access to high-quality regional trails for all residents of King County. Once completed, the G2C Trail will be an approximately 11-mile-long paved, multi-use, accessible trail connecting the cities of Renton (via the Cedar River Trail), Maple Valley, and Black Diamond and extending to Flaming Geyser State Park on the Green River. Ultimately, the city of Covington will also be connected via the planned Covington Highlands Trail.

Currently, an existing interim gravel trail extends 3.3 miles from the Cedar River Trail through the heart of Maple Valley to SE Kent-Kangley Road.



Continue





## Feedback on Green to Cedar Rivers Trail Development

In partnership with the City of Maple Valley and King County Councilmember Reagan Dunn's office, King County Parks is proposing changes to the next phase of development of the Green to Cedar Rivers Trail (G2C Trail) in South King County and would like to get your feedback.

Please read each section and answer the four survey questions. We ask that you complete this 2-minute survey by June 30, 2020.

Long-term Vision

**Trail Development**

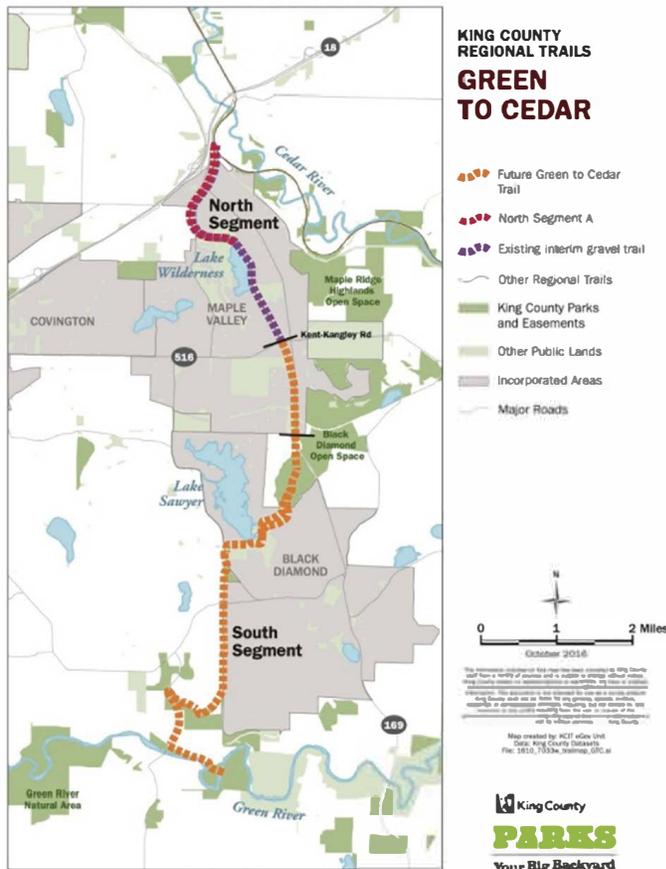
What's Proposed

Survey Questions

Thank you

### Trail Development

Funding for the preliminary design of the entire corridor and the paving of the 3.3-mile-long North Segment was included as part of the 2014-2019 King County Parks, Trails, and Open Space Replacement Levy. We completed the preliminary design work for the corridor; however, in 2019 King County Parks made the difficult decision to delay the project due to insufficient funds. The recent building boom in our region caused construction costs to skyrocket which also increased the costs of building trails. \$9 million was included in the 2020-2025 King County Parks, Recreation, Trails, and Open Space Levy to continue development of the G2C trail, but scaled back to the development of a 1.8-mile-long portion of the North Segment (on the map below as North Segment A).





## Feedback on Green to Cedar Rivers Trail Development

In partnership with the City of Maple Valley and King County Councilmember Reagan Dunn's office, King County Parks is proposing changes to the next phase of development of the Green to Cedar Rivers Trail (G2C Trail) in South King County and would like to get your feedback.

Please read each section and answer the four survey questions. We ask that you complete this 2-minute survey by June 30, 2020.

Long-term Vision

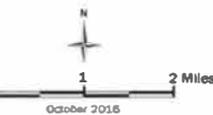
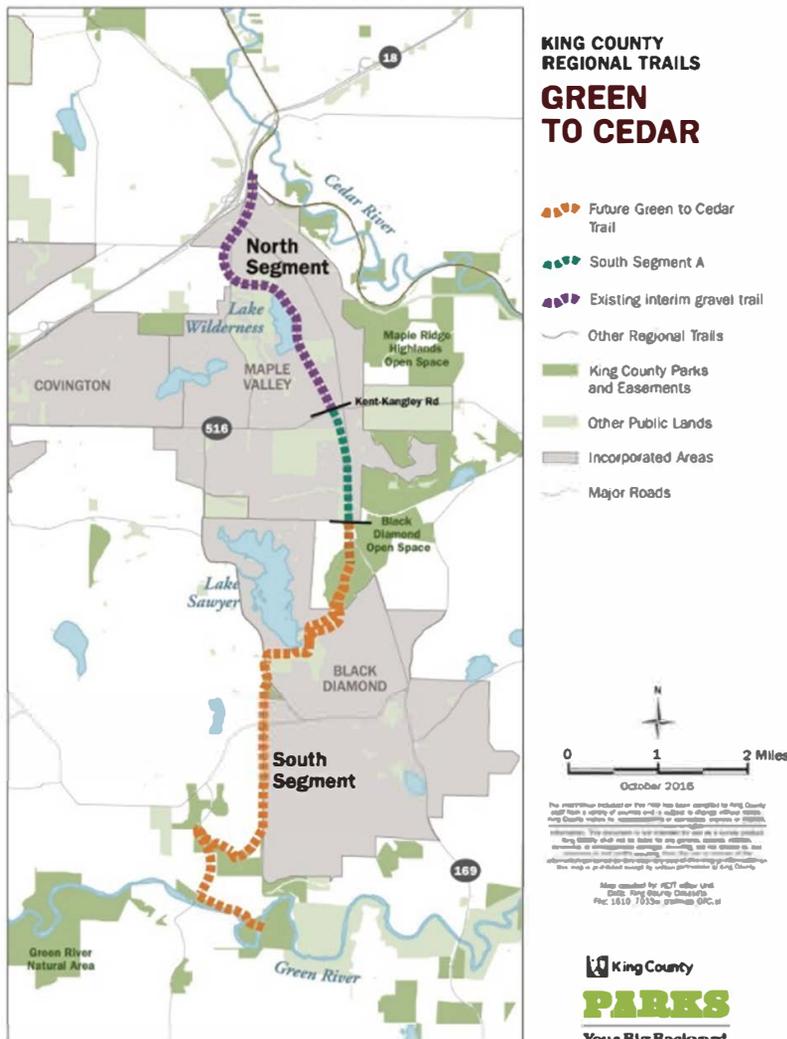
Trail Development

**What's Proposed**

Survey Questions

Thank you

In partnership with the City of Maple Valley and King County Councilmember Regan Dunn, King County Parks is proposing a change to project development. Currently under consideration is building an interim, approximately two-mile-long, gravel trail from Kent-Kangley Road south to the very popular Black Diamond Open Space Natural Area (South Segment A). The project would include constructing a bridge over the BNSF Railroad tracks where the existing G2C Trail corridor currently ends and installing safe crossings at SE 288th Street. The trail will be similar to the interim sections of the Eastrail (see image below), with gentle grades and packed gravel surfacing. If this change is approved by King County Council, King County Parks estimates that construction would begin in 2023 and be completed in 2024.



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An interim trail and bridge on the Eastrail

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## Feedback on Green to Cedar Rivers Trail Development

In partnership with the City of Maple Valley and King County Councilmember Reagan Dunn's office, King County Parks is proposing changes to the next phase of development of the Green to Cedar Rivers Trail (G2C Trail) in South King County and would like to get your feedback.

Please read each section and answer the four survey questions. We ask that you complete this 2-minute survey by June 30, 2020.

[Long-term Vision](#)
[Trail Development](#)
[What's Proposed](#)
[Survey Questions](#)
[Thank you!](#)

What activities do you currently enjoy on the trail?

 Walking

 Running

 Cycling

 Horseback riding

 Other

Closed to responses

How frequently do you use the existing trail?

Regularly (daily to multiple times per week)	37%
Frequently (multiple times per month to monthly)	30%
Periodically (multiple times per year to once a year)	21%
Infrequently (a few times to one time)	8%
Never used it	4%

Closed to responses | 1,107 Responses

\* How supportive are you of the proposal to build an interim, gravel trail between Kent-Kangley Road and the Black Diamond Open Space for the next phase of the Green to Cedar Rivers Trail development?

Strongly support	77%
Somewhat support	15%
Neutral	5%
Somewhat oppose	2%
Strongly oppose	1%

Closed to responses | 1,100 Responses

\* What is your zip code?

This question is closed to responses.

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Spread the word



# Feedback on Green to Cedar Rivers Trail Development

## Project Engagement

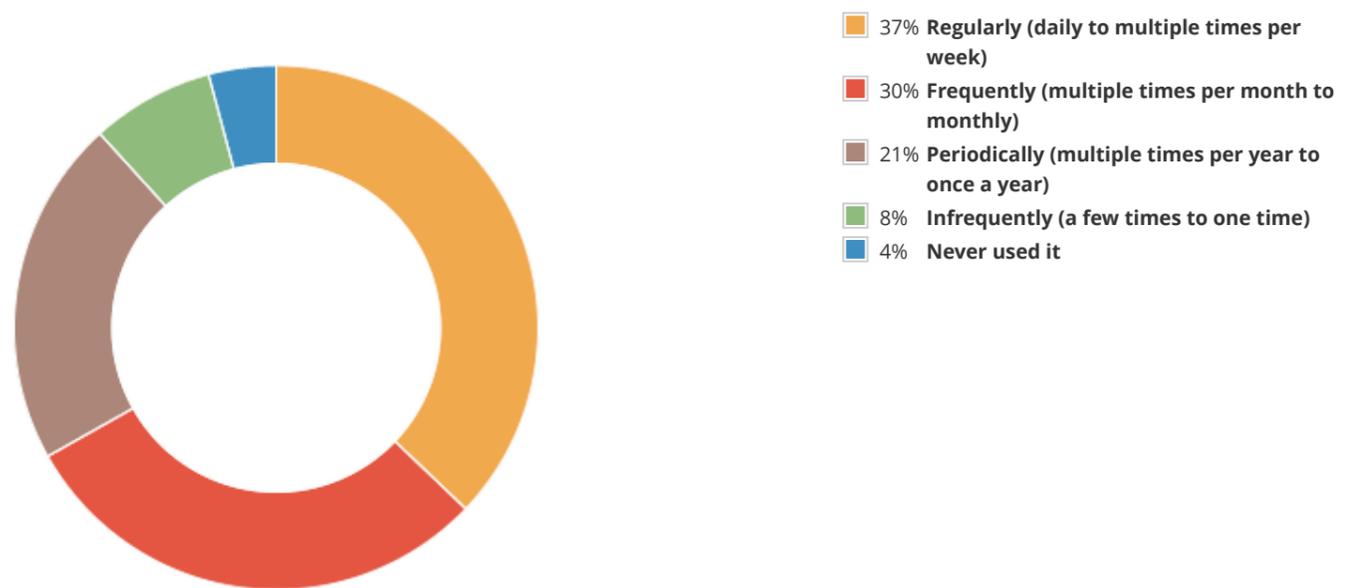
VIEWS	PARTICIPANTS	RESPONSES	COMMENTS
3,180	1,113	5,433	0

### What activities do you currently enjoy on the trail?

76%	Walking	826 ✓
66%	Cycling	719 ✓
44%	Running	478 ✓
7%	Horseback riding	73 ✓
4%	Other	39 ✓

1,089 Respondents

### How frequently do you use the existing trail?



1,107 respondents

### How supportive are you of the proposal to build an interim, gravel trail between Kent-Kangley Road and the Black Diamond Open Space for the next phase of the Green to Cedar Rivers Trail development?

77%	Strongly support	848 ✓
15%	Somewhat support	167 ✓
5%	Neutral	53 ✓
2%	Somewhat oppose	18 ✓
1%	Strongly oppose	14 ✓

1,099 Respondents

\* What is your zip code?

