

# CHAPTER 1



## EASTSIDE RAIL CORRIDOR REGIONAL TRAIL MASTER PLAN

“Our Puget Sound region is blessed with dramatic topography, majestic natural features, and large, picturesque water bodies. While adding immensely to the beauty and quality of life in our region, those same features also create challenges when developing transportation, recreation and utility connections. The Eastside Rail Corridor (ERC) provides a rare and unique chance to develop a major north-south corridor for a variety of important purposes: mobility, utility infrastructure, and recreation.”

- Excerpt from the Eastside Rail Corridor Regional Advisory Council report



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Eastside Rail Corridor (ERC) connects some of King County's largest and fastest growing communities. In its entirety, the ERC is a 42-mile rail corridor that stretches from Renton to Snohomish, passing through Renton, Bellevue, Kirkland, Woodinville, Redmond, and portions of unincorporated King and Snohomish counties. Originally, the rail line was known as the Lake Washington Belt Line and supported development along the eastern shore of Lake Washington. After over 100 years in service for freight rail, the corridor has been brought into public ownership to provide a potential route for trail, transit, and utilities.

Currently, the corridor south of Woodinville is owned by a combination of public agencies and a private utility. Together, through their partnership in a Regional Advisory Council (RAC), these corridor owners have developed a collaborative vision for the ERC as a location for infrastructure to support continued development of Eastside communities.

Potential uses envisioned for the ERC include a nonmotorized trail, transit, and utilities. This document, the Draft ERC Regional Trail Master Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (Master Plan), describes options for developing a nonmotorized, regional trail (also known as a shared use path) in approximately 16.7 miles of the corridor without precluding potential future use for transit and utilities. While the trail is being planned in the context of potential future transit or utility uses, these would be considered in separate planning processes by the proponent agencies.

The Master Plan is the first step towards planning, environmental review, design, and construction of a nonmotorized regional trail in the corridor.

The Master Plan describes options for the character and location of a trail in the ERC, and discusses the range of benefits and concerns associated with different approaches to building a trail in the corridor.

The ERC trail would connect commercial districts, residential neighborhoods, employment centers, and transit hubs. The ERC trail would also link several significant regional trails that are currently not connected. Individual trails like the I-90/Mountains to Sound Greenway Trail, SR 520 Trail, Cross Kirkland Corridor, Sammamish River Trail, and others would be connected as an integrated trail network.

When complete, the ERC would likely be the most heavily used trail corridor on the Eastside. With a design similar to the Sammamish River Trail or Burke-Gilman Trail, the ERC trail would connect the Eastside's largest communities and employment centers. The trail would become part of the everyday experience for thousands of King County residents for commute trips, trips from home to school, and recreation.

## 1.1 PLANNING FOR A TRAIL IN THE EASTSIDE RAIL CORRIDOR

### What is a regional trail?

*King County is home to some of the nation's most celebrated shared use paths.*

*Regional trails are classified as "shared use paths" by the Federal Highway Administration and are a component of the Central Puget Sound's regional transportation plan, Transportation 2040, administered by the Puget Sound Regional Council. The regional trails network in King County is also being developed as part of the Regional Bicycle Network and Active Transportation Plan. Facilitating both recreation and regional mobility, regional trails are designed to safely accommodate nonmotorized activities such as walking, jogging, bicycling, rollerblading, and other active uses. Regional trails anticipate higher user volumes and a wider variety of activities than local trails or paths would typically accommodate.*

*Regional trails are typically built to high development standards with limited grades and wide trail cross-sections with a combination of smooth paved surfaces and soft surfaces to accommodate different users and to reduce user conflicts.*

King County Parks prepared this Master Plan as an initial step in developing a new regional trail in a portion of the ERC. Once completed, the trail would provide improved connections among other local and regional trails and parks. In addition to recreational opportunities, the trail would provide a nonmotorized or "active" transportation option for commuters connecting to surrounding neighborhoods, employment centers, and commercial areas.

The purchase of the ERC was an investment in the future of the Eastside communities. Following over 100 years of railroad use, new uses in the corridor would meet the needs of a changing region. The ERC has played an important role in the development of Eastside communities. Historically, it carried people and goods between communities and provided a connected corridor for infrastructure. Although the railroad is no longer active in most of the railbanked portion of the corridor, the ERC can continue to play a critical role supporting community development.

In its entirety, the ERC includes approximately 42 miles of right-of-way. This Master Plan includes the railbanked sections of the ERC Main Line between Renton and Kirkland, between Kirkland and Woodinville, and along the Spur from Woodinville to Redmond. Throughout the Master Plan, the line between Renton and Woodinville is referred to as the "Main Line," and the line connecting Woodinville and Redmond is referred to as the "Spur". King County is also responsible for master planning a trail in the 1.1-mile section of the corridor owned by Sound Transit in Bellevue. In total, this Master Plan is focused on approximately 16.7 miles of the 42-mile corridor. King County owns approximately 15.6 miles of the corridor covered in the Master Plan, and Sound Transit owns a 1.1-mile segment located within the City of Bellevue.

The Cities of Kirkland and Redmond have completed their planning for a trail in their respective ownership areas of the corridor. In the future, through coordination and partnerships with the City of Woodinville, City of Snohomish, and Snohomish

County, the ERC trail may continue from Woodinville north through Snohomish County where it would connect with the Centennial Trail in the City of Snohomish. See Figure 1-1 for an understanding of the ERC ownership and area considered in the Master Plan.

Through partnerships and coordination with transit agencies, the trail would form connections to the regional transit system, expanding multimodal options for commuters throughout the region. As a nonmotorized transportation option, the trail supports multimodal transportation choices, connects with high-capacity transit, and is already at the heart of new development that would, like Google's campus on the Cross Kirkland Corridor, orient itself toward this vibrant public multimodal transportation and recreational corridor.

The planned ERC trail would become part of King County's Regional Trails System. Currently, the Regional Trails System has over 175 miles of trails for bicycling, hiking, and walking that extend from Auburn to Bothell and Seattle to the Cascades. The ERC trail would not only expand the Regional Trails System, but would also serve as a north-south spine to an unprecedented interconnected network of regional and local trails, providing opportunities to connect between Seattle and the Eastside and from south King County communities all the way north to Woodinville, passing through urban growth centers all along the Eastside.





### A TRAIL IN A COMPLEX CORRIDOR

By the early 2000s, demand for rail service along the ERC was in decline. Fewer and fewer businesses relied on bulk freight shipping, and there was a continuing shift from manufacturing to services in the communities served by the rail corridor. In 2003, Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway (BNSF) announced its intent to divest itself of the corridor. BNSF sought interest from local and regional jurisdictions for preservation of the rail corridor in public ownership for public use, rather than having it sold off in pieces and losing a rare and irreplaceable asset of a continuous linear corridor through the rapidly growing Eastside.

In 2009, a group of regional partners, including King County, signed a Memorandum of Understanding that envisioned a regional approach to preserve the corridor for multiple uses. The Port of Seattle acquired ownership of the corridor between Renton and Snohomish. The portion of the corridor between Renton (approximately milepost 5.0) and Woodinville (milepost 23.8) and the Spur between Woodinville and Redmond were railbanked in fall 2008 while negotiations among BNSF, King County, and the Port of Seattle were ongoing. King County then became the interim trail sponsor of the railbanked portion. South of approximately milepost 5.0 and northeast of milepost 23.8, the ERC remains an active rail corridor.

Following railbanking and acquisition, the Port of Seattle sold its interests in the corridor to the current owners:

- The City of Redmond purchased ownership of the Spur within its boundaries in June 2010.
- Puget Sound Energy (PSE) purchased a utility easement along the entire corridor (except within the Redmond-owned portion) in December 2010.
- The Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (Sound Transit) purchased ownership of 1.1 miles of the corridor in Bellevue for its East Link light rail. Sound Transit also purchased and hold an easement for high-capacity transit in the entire railbanked area.
- Also in April 2012, the City of Kirkland purchased ownership of 5.75 miles of the corridor within its boundaries.
- In February 2013, King County purchased ownership of the remaining approximately 15.6 miles of the railbanked area between Renton and the Woodinville “wye,” and the Spur between the Woodinville “wye” and Redmond. In connection with the initial railbanking and acquisition, King County earlier purchased a multi-purpose easement in the railbanked area, which it still holds in the areas owned by Kirkland, Sound Transit, and the Port of Seattle.

#### What is railbanking?

*Railbanking is the legal process of preserving inactive railroad right-of-way for potential rail re-use in the future. The railbanking process was established in 1983 as part of the National Trail Systems Act.*

*When a corridor is rail-banked, the railroad is allowed to remove all of its equipment, except bridges, tunnels, and culverts, and to turn the corridor over to any qualified entity to maintain it for future trail use (the “interim trail sponsor”).*

*For railbanking, an “interim use” trail is any trail developed in the corridor during the time that there is no active railroad use.*

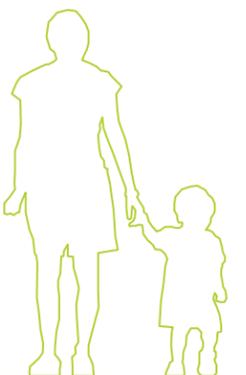


FIGURE 1-1. EASTSIDE RAIL CORRIDOR OWNERSHIP

Figure 1-2 depicts the various ownerships and easements held in the corridor. This Master Plan does not address any portion of the ERC south of approximately milepost 5.0, northeast of milepost 23.8, where rail is active, or the portions of the ERC owned by Kirkland or Redmond. The easements and agreements in place between the various owners establish the nature and relationship among the different uses in the railbanked portion of the ERC.

The ERC provides an opportunity to establish a major regional trail spine on the east side of Lake Washington between Renton and Woodinville. Similar to thousands of miles of other disused railway corridors across the country that have been railbanked under the National Trails System Act (Rails to Trails), the historic freight rail line—with continuous linear right-of-way, established bridges and tunnels across topographical, and engineered barriers—makes the ERC an ideal candidate for an invaluable regional public trail where none exists today.

This Master Plan is focused on the development of a regional trail in the sections of the ERC owned by King County and Sound Transit (approximately 16.7 miles.) A large group of Eastside jurisdictions and public agencies have interests in the future development of the ERC. These include both the jurisdictions and agencies with ownership interests in the railbanked portion of the corridor, and the underlying Cities of Renton, Bellevue, and Woodinville, which have regulatory and land use authorities and responsibilities that have significant bearing on the use and development of the corridor where it passes through their boundaries. The different ownership interests in the corridor and the multiple jurisdictions through which the corridor passes add complexity to the plan for a trail.

As a strategy for promoting a coordinated vision for the corridor, the five owners of the railbanked portion of the ERC (King County, Sound Transit, City of Redmond, City of Kirkland, and PSE) formed a RAC in 2013, and developed recommendations for a multi-purpose corridor in a report titled Creating Connections (King County et al. 2013). This initial planning done by the RAC supports implementation of projects including the Redmond Central Connector, Cross Kirkland Corridor Interim Trail, Sound Transit’s East Link Light Rail Project, and King County’s process to develop this Master Plan. Each of the ERC owners has completed some work towards planning for their ownership in the corridor. These efforts and the planning goals for the underlying jurisdictions in the corridor create the context for the Master Plan.

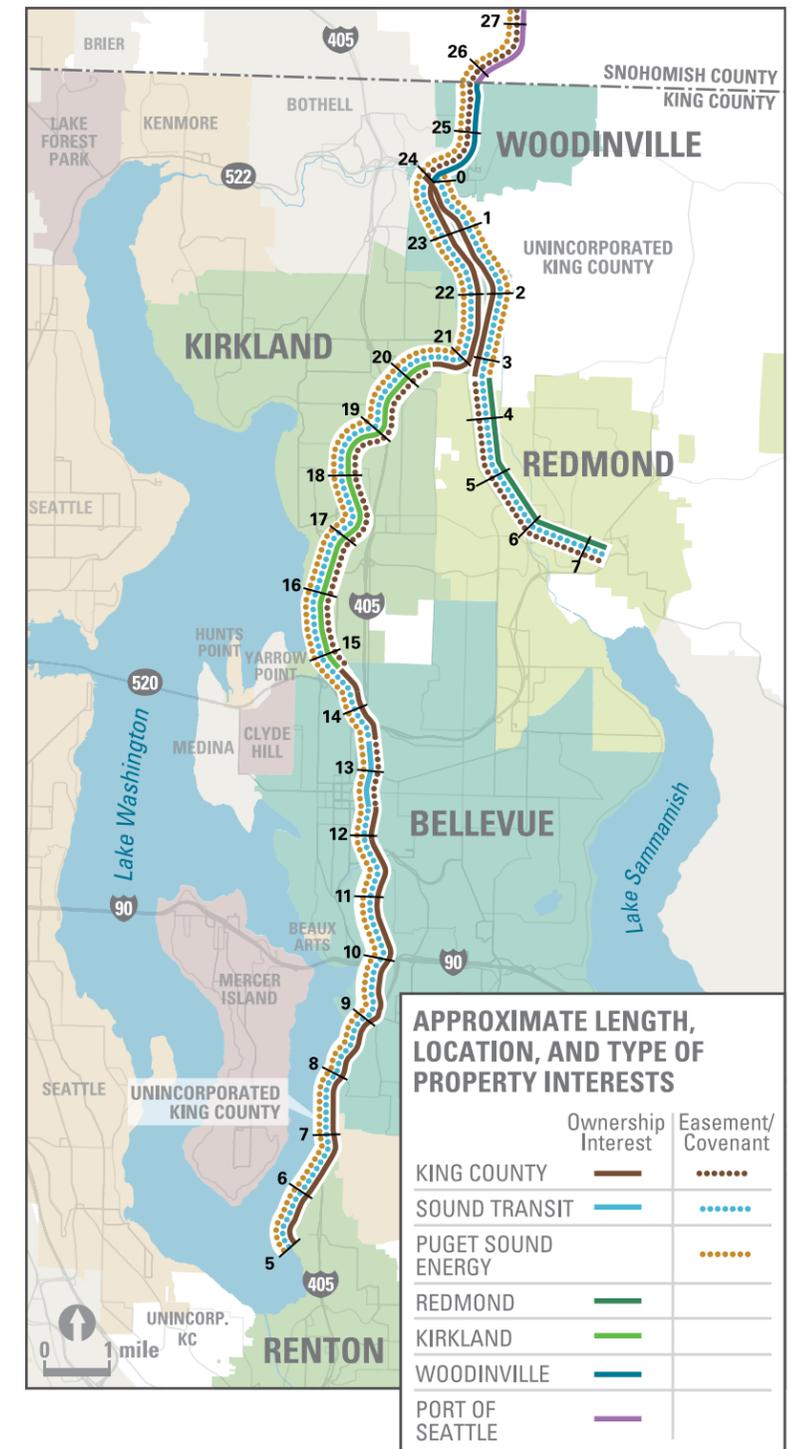
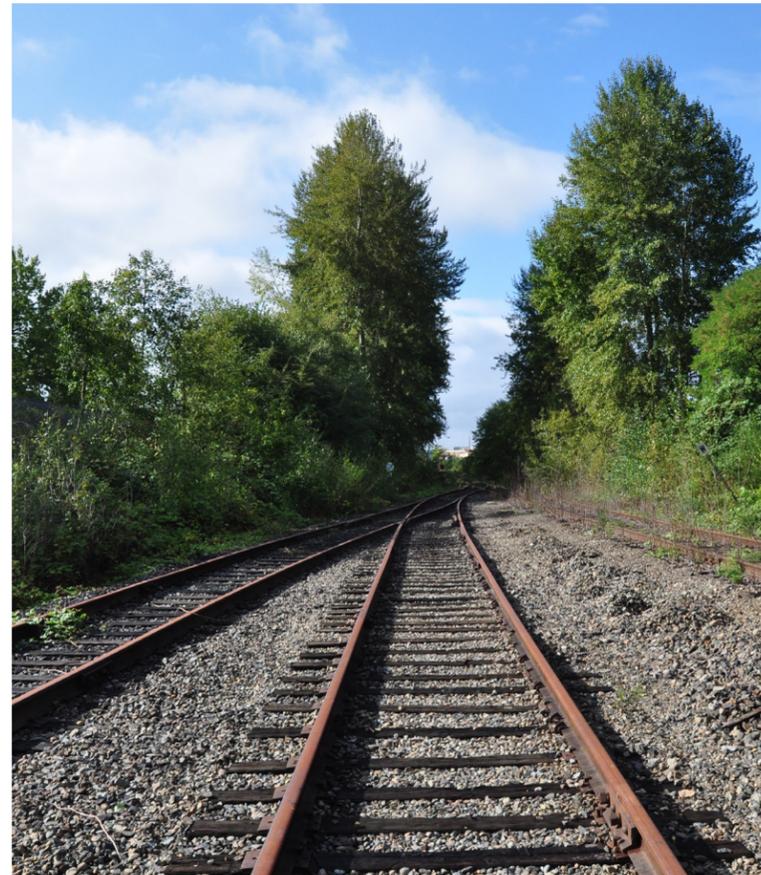
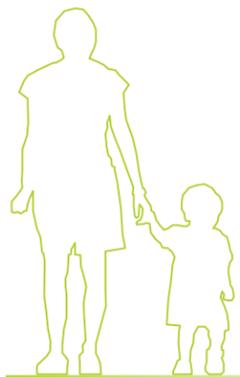


FIGURE 1-2. EASTSIDE RAIL CORRIDOR INTERESTS AND EASEMENTS





## SOUND TRANSIT

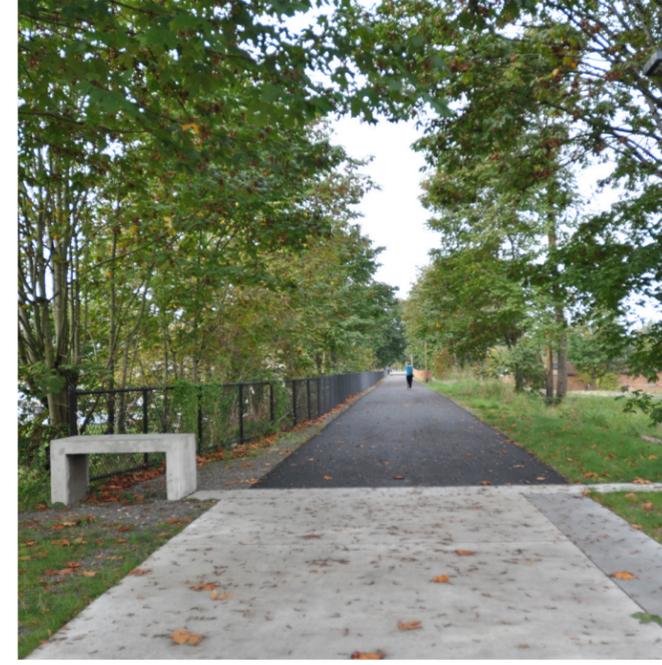
Sound Transit has been advancing the development of a portion of its East Link light rail, Wilburton Station, and Operations and Maintenance Satellite Facility, all of which would occur within the 1.1-mile portion of the ERC owned by Sound Transit in Bellevue.

In addition, Sound Transit has been assessing the long-term needs of the region for high-capacity transit. These assessments have included a look at portions of the ERC for which Sound Transit holds an easement (Sound Transit 2014). Along with Sound Transit's update to its Long-Range Plan, transit in this corridor would be considered by the Sound Transit Board of Directors in its planning of system expansion measures—Sound Transit 3 (ST3)—that could go before voters for approval as early as summer or fall 2016.



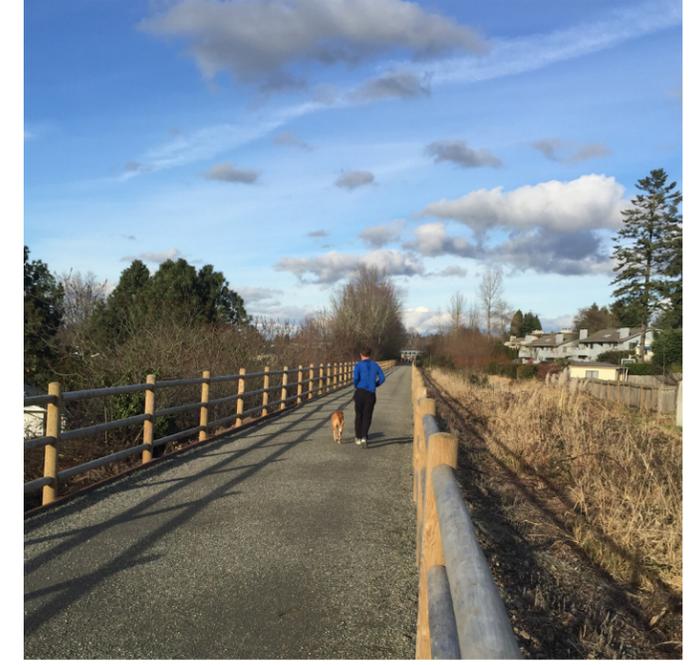
## PUGET SOUND ENERGY

The demand for electricity and other utilities in King County is expected to grow. The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) VISION 2040 estimates an additional 1.3 million people and 1.0 million jobs will be added in the region between 2010 and 2040. PSE is currently designing the Sammamish–Juanita 115-kV transmission line project, which proposes to locate transmission poles in the ERC corridor east of Totem Lake. As part of this project, PSE is also considering transmission poles along the Spur. The ERC is also a potential site for high-voltage power lines proposed under the Energize Eastside project. The final strategy for Energize Eastside, potentially including the location for new transmission lines, will be completed in 2017 or 2018.



## CITY OF REDMOND

In 2010 to 2011, the City of Redmond developed a master plan for the 3.9-mile portion of the Spur within its city limits, called the Redmond Central Connector. Redmond constructed a 1-mile segment in 2013 that extended from the Bear Creek Trail near SR 202 and Redmond Way to the Sammamish River Trail. A 1.3 mile extension of the Redmond Central Connector from east of the Sammamish River Trail to the 9900 block along Willows Road, near the south end of the Willows Run golf complex, is anticipated to be constructed in 2016. The remaining 1.6 miles of trail that would extend this route to Kirkland and Woodinville across NE 124th Street are yet to be funded (City of Redmond 2015).



## CITY OF KIRKLAND

In June 2014 the City of Kirkland adopted a master plan for the 5.75-mile ERC section within its ownership, named the Cross Kirkland Corridor (City of Kirkland 2014). The City's master plan was developed with the understanding that multiple uses, such as high-capacity transit and utilities, may be implemented in the future. The Cross Kirkland Corridor has been the focus of interim trail development and was opened in January 2015.

## 1.2 THE VISION

### MULTI-USE VISION FOR THE ERC

The vision for the railbanked portion of the ERC established collaboratively by the RAC is to develop a multi-use corridor that enhances regional mobility and connectivity, supports utility infrastructure needs, and provides recreational opportunities.

The initial RAC planning efforts emphasized the long-term value of the ERC for development of a trail, transit, and utilities. The RAC report describes the potential long-term opportunity to accommodate multiple uses in the corridor, potentially including transit, power transmission, and underground utilities in addition to a trail. Although this Master Plan is only focused on developing a trail in the corridor, it is intended to preserve flexibility for potential transit and utility uses being located within the ERC in the future.

### VISION FOR THE TRAIL

The vision for the trail in the ERC is to create an exceptional trail that provides a safe and enjoyable experience for people of all ages and abilities within the context of the broader vision for the corridor. The trail would link vibrant Eastside communities with natural areas, landmarks such as the Wilburton Trestle, unique experiences, and views. Over time communities would embrace the trail, creating an engaging trailside environment and integrating the trail into the evolving land use plans for areas neighboring the trail corridor.

*“This trail system is a gem that will provide healthy recreation for our communities for years to come.”*

- Bellevue Open House, Fall 2015

*“This trail will become a feature that defines the Eastside, much as the Space Needle defines Seattle.”*

- Online Comment, Fall 2015



## 1.3 OBJECTIVES

The King County- and Sound Transit-owned sections of the ERC include over 16 miles of potential new regional trail, and pass through an exceptionally diverse setting. It is likely that the trail would be developed in phases, and different local jurisdictions and public agencies would be involved in implementing the Master Plan and its envisioned connections.

King County intends to develop a regional trail that would be a high-quality facility for safely accommodating a wide range of users. The trail would be both a nonmotorized transportation option for commuters and a recreation option for residents. The trail would be built to high development standards, including limited grades, with wide, smooth, paved trail surfaces to accommodate a wide range and high volume of users. It would also be developed to preserve flexibility for potential future transit and utility use in the ERC, and to accommodate potential future reactivation of freight rail in the corridor consistent with railbanking.

The objectives of the Draft Master Plan are to guide development of a regional trail in the ERC that:

- Connects Eastside communities by linking to:
  - Existing and planned regional trails
  - Existing and planned local trails
  - Transit
  - Residential, commercial, and business and employment centers
- Provides nonmotorized active transportation options and expands recreational opportunities to:
  - Expand access for underserved areas of King County
  - Support opportunities for economic development
  - Benefit public health
  - Improve air quality
- Incorporates Eastside heritage and culture

These objectives for the trail would guide consistent implementation of the plan. They also specify the outcomes the Master Plan is intended to achieve, the trail experience that is envisioned for future users, and the benefits the trail is expected to provide to trail users and local communities. Several important objectives of the Master Plan align with King County priority strategic objectives, including regional mobility, equity and social justice, and confronting climate change.

### IMPROVE REGIONAL MOBILITY—CONNECT EASTSIDE COMMUNITIES

#### Regional Trails

The ERC provides an opportunity to connect existing regional trails throughout Eastside communities, establishing a continuous network of public nonmotorized recreation and active transportation facilities in the region. This network would serve an aggregate population of over 350,000 citizens within the Eastside alone, and well over 1 million when considering users who could access the ERC from its connections to communities west of Lake Washington.

The ERC trail would present recreation opportunities and provide transportation options. The Eastside is served by some of the region’s best trails—the Sammamish River Trail, I-90/ Mountains to Sound Greenway Trail, Cedar River Trail, and SR 520 Trail—that connect pieces of the region. Trails are an important component in the transportation system for people who commute by nonmotorized transportation options such as walking, running, or bicycling. The ERC would bring all of these trails together into a connected network, increasing both nonmotorized transportation options and recreation opportunities on the Eastside.

#### Local Trails

The ERC also provides the potential to connect several local trails with the corridor. Local trails that serve the Eastside community include the May Creek Trail, Coal Creek Natural Area Trails, Mercer Slough Nature Park Trails, and Wilburton Hill Park Trails. Connecting local trails to the Regional Trails System would further enhance the network and increase community access to recreation opportunities and transportation options.

#### Transit

Jurisdictions across the region are working to integrate transit and other multimodal transportation options. The ability to walk or bicycle to transit stops is an integral part of accessing transit. Approximately 93 percent of transit riders in King County walk or

bicycle to transit (King County 2015a, 2015b); connected, high-quality nonmotorized facilities enhance people's ability to access transit. The ERC presents an important opportunity for making transit connections.

### Residential, Commercial, and Business Centers

The ERC passes through (or runs very close to) core business districts of Renton, Bellevue, Kirkland, Woodinville, and Redmond. Residential areas are located near the ERC through Renton and south Bellevue, and also in north Kirkland and Woodinville. It would be an effective connector for most of the Eastside's largest communities.

## PROVIDE NONMOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS AND RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The ERC is within an approximate half-mile distance of 13 parks and 22 schools along the route and passes through local retail districts and residential areas. The ERC trail would provide a walking route for many neighborhoods that currently lack pedestrian facilities, encouraging healthy active recreation and transportation choices for local trips.

### Expand Access for Underserved Areas (Equity and Social Justice)

Neighborhoods near the southern terminus of the ERC have a more diverse population and a greater percentage of lower income households compared to neighborhoods along the rest of the ERC. King County has defined equity and social justice to mean a "fair distribution of public goods, institutional resources and life opportunities for all people." A new regional trail in the ERC would provide opportunity for commuters and recreational users near the southern terminus to tie into other regional trails. The ERC trail would improve the active transportation connections between affordable housing in the southern portion of the corridor and job centers in east King County. Local trail connections are also envisioned for adjacent transit stops and

park-and-ride facilities, benefiting individuals that rely on a combination of transit, cycling, or walking.

### Support Opportunities for Economic Development

A regional trail on the ERC would improve nonmotorized access to and between adjacent or nearby communities, employment centers, and retail hubs. The ERC's southern terminus is near Gene Coulon Park with envisioned extensions to and through The Landing in Renton. The corridor would support access north through the Wilburton neighborhood, medical center, and Spring District in Bellevue. In Kirkland, the ERC passes through the developing Google campus, and connects to the growing Totem Lake neighborhood. The corridor then continues through the growing winery and tourism district in Woodinville. The Spur also connects to Redmond's town center, a centerpiece of the city's mixed-use downtown redevelopment. A regional trail would enable neighboring communities to encourage economic development in proximity to the commercial centers along the ERC. Increased mobility would support economic growth and could become a regional asset that helps attract new residents and businesses to the corridor. Regional trails generate economic benefits for communities they serve, including documented direct spending by trail users. The ERC could be an exceptional amenity for some of the region's most exciting, newly developing mixed-use neighborhoods.

### Benefit Public Health

A regional trail in the ERC would provide opportunities for physical activity such as walking, running, and cycling, which would have public health benefits. King County has a goal to raise the activity levels of King County residents who are currently sedentary and decrease their risk for chronic disease. In 2013, approximately 78 percent of adults (18 years of age and older) did not meet physical activity requirements (King County 2014). Connecting the ERC to other regional and local trails would link more communities to the trail network and provide residents with options for exercise and recreation.

### Improve Air Quality and Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The development of the ERC into an active nonmotorized transportation route provides an opportunity for King County to make progress toward its goal of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 80 percent by 2050 (as compared to a 2007 baseline) (King County 2015c). King County works to protect the health of communities by improving air quality. Air pollution can have health impacts while GHG emissions contribute to climate change. King County is designated as a maintenance area for both ozone and carbon monoxide by the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology 2015). While the air quality is generally good, the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency indicated unhealthy air quality levels were reached in 2013 and 2014 (PSCAA 2015).

Motorized transportation is the predominant contributor of GHG emissions in King County. The County adopted a Strategic Climate Action Plan in 2015 and has committed to "reduce countywide sources of GHG emissions, compared to a 2007 baseline, by 25 percent by 2020, 50 percent by 2030, and 80 percent by 2050." Providing an opportunity for walking, running, and cycling on a regional trail could reduce automobile use in the I-405 corridor and on other parallel routes, which would decrease pollution and GHG emissions, thereby benefiting air quality.

A 2008 report prepared by The Trust for Public Land, *Quantifying the Greenhouse Gas Benefits of Urban Parks*, established a methodology for calculating the reductions in GHG emissions that are possible to achieve by people shifting their modes of transportation from motorized to nonmotorized, given the opportunity to do so on dedicated linear pathways such as the planned ERC trail (The Trust for Public Land 2008). Based on this methodology, The Trust for Public Land completed an analysis in 2015 of the potential for GHG reductions that may result from the development of the ERC as a new nonmotorized transportation route.



**Community Meetings and Public Open Houses**

*A summary of what King County Parks heard between June and November 2015 at the Community Meetings and Public Open Houses can be found on the CD attached to hard copies of this document or the website in the Project Library at:*

[www.kingcounty.gov/erc](http://www.kingcounty.gov/erc)

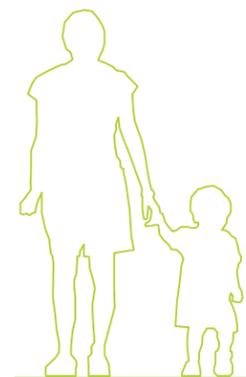
*The project team used this input, along with technical information, to develop proposed alignment alternatives for the Eastside Rail Corridor Regional Trail.*

Based on The Trust for Public Land analysis, which uses conservative assumptions, it is estimated that the development of the ERC will eliminate over 575,000 vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per year, which would reduce carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions by approximately 524,000 pounds per year (The Trust for Public Land 2016). According to this organization’s report, this is the equivalent of the carbon sequestered by about 6,100 tree seedlings grown for 10 years or 195 acres of forest in the United States in 1 year. Considered on a “per trip basis” using this methodology, every 1 mile biked on the ERC, rather than driven, results in emission saving of 0.91 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub>.

The Trust for Public Land analysis recognizes that actual use of trail corridors as an alternative to car travel is highly variable in response to factors such as cultural norms, climate, and public education. However, using conservative assumptions for these variables, the analysis predicts that actual utilization and GHG reduction benefits in King County will “outperform” the predicted outcomes.

**INCORPORATE EASTSIDE HERITAGE AND CULTURE**

The trail would become a place to memorialize and celebrate the culture of Native American peoples and the heritage of the original railroad line. Art installations and urban design elements would also enhance neighborhoods along the corridor. The Wilburton Trestle, the railroad bridge across I-90, and other key locations along the corridor would preserve and transform Eastside landmarks into favorite public places.



**1.4 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

To realize the goals and the full potential of the ERC trail, King County has engaged with stakeholders and the broader community in a process spanning 18 months. King County Parks will continue to engage with communities and stakeholders as alternatives are refined and through completion of the Master Plan. Through this process, King County has been working to understand the community’s various interests and ideas and to incorporate those ideas into this Master Plan. Public engagement has included the activities below.

**Collaboration with Local Jurisdictions**

Although the Cities of Renton, Bellevue, and Woodinville are not owners of the railbanked portion of the ERC, they are critical partners for the successful planning, development, and operation of the trail. King County began coordinating with these local jurisdictions in June 2014 to understand how the regional connections envisioned could be made and to understand and incorporate their perspectives on the project. That collaboration has continued, with recently held meetings in September 2015 to discuss preliminary information about the alternatives included in the Master Plan.

**Discussions with Key Businesses**

Engaging local businesses, organizations, and economic centers is key to developing a trail that successfully integrates with the built environment. King County met with businesses and prominent organizations in both Bellevue and Woodinville. In Bellevue, the project team was joined by representatives from the City of Bellevue, Overlake Medical Center, Seattle Children’s Hospital, Whole Foods, and REI. Wright Runstad and KG Investments, two companies working closely on the development of Bellevue’s Spring District, were also in attendance. Meeting participants in Bellevue said they view the trail as a major benefit for their employees and visitors, and asked King County to create logical access points and connections along the trail in the area. They also recognized the future trail as an important factor in the development of the urban environment and transportation hub shaping Bellevue’s economic future. In Woodinville, King County was joined by a representative from the City of Woodinville, rail advocates, and local businesses along the Spur. Participants in the Woodinville session expressed a strong interest in maintaining rail operations there as the trail develops on the railbanked portion, sustaining current business operations for light industrial companies along the Spur, and supporting the area’s burgeoning tourism economy.



## 1.5 OVERVIEW OF THE MASTER PLAN

### Scoping Meetings

In June 2015, King County hosted three meetings in Renton, Bellevue, and Woodinville to kick off master planning and scoping for the EIS. Attendees were asked to provide input on trail design concepts, provide feedback on how they envisioned using the trail, and identify concerns that should be addressed in the EIS. In July 2015, King County met with several of the agencies responsible for permitting the trail, including the local jurisdictions, as well as the Washington State Department of Transportation.

### Follow-up Open Houses

In October 2015, King County hosted three open houses in Renton, Bellevue, and Woodinville to share how some of the comments submitted during scoping were being addressed and to gather input on the alternatives presented in the Master Plan. At these drop-in meetings, attendees were asked to provide input on what amenities they would like to see incorporated in the trail, as well as access points to and from the trail. Each workshop presented segment maps that depicted the alternative trail alignments.

Themes common to both the scoping meetings and the follow-up open houses were the importance of connections and access to other trails, parks, transit, businesses, and parking, and the safety and comfort of trail users and adjacent property owners.



The Master Plan is a key step in defining where the trail would be located within the corridor, what the trail would look like, and how the trail would connect to surrounding communities.

The Master Plan, however, is only one of the early steps towards the design, permitting, and construction of a trail in the ERC. The Master Plan describes general options for the location of the trail within the ERC corridor—the spatial envelope for the trail—and the design criteria for how the trail would be constructed. The Master Plan also describes potential implementation strategies.

King County recognizes that there are different approaches to developing a trail while maintaining flexibility for other future uses. Given the complexities, this Master Plan:

- Describes alternatives for locating the regional trail
- Evaluates the potential impacts of the different alternatives in an environmental impact statement
- Reflects feedback from the public and other agencies gained through the master planning process

Upon review of the Draft Master Plan and public and agency comments received, the King County Executive will select a preferred alternative and present a Final Master Plan for King County Council adoption (Figure 1-2). Design and construction of the trail is anticipated to begin soon after the adoption of the Master Plan. Design and construction would likely occur by corridor segment, based on funding availability.

**Chapter 2** provides a more detailed description of the corridor and its surroundings.

**Chapter 3** presents design guidelines for the trail such as trail width, surfacing, and treatments at road crossings.

**Chapter 4** describes the trail alternatives by segment.

**Chapter 5** describes how the Master Plan could be implemented.

### PART 2 DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

**Chapter 6** analyzes the potential environmental consequences. This section contains the draft environmental impact statement that supports the master planning efforts.

**Chapter 7** includes the list of references.



FIGURE 1-2. MASTER PLANNING TIMELINE