



EASTSIDE RAIL CORRIDOR REGIONAL TRAIL

DRAFT MASTER PLAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

KING COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION DIVISION
FEBRUARY 2016



Dear Friends:

In our rapidly developing region, we are fortunate to be able to preserve the Eastside Rail Corridor (ERC) in public ownership from Renton to Snohomish. The regional vision for the ERC is to develop a multi-use corridor that enhances mobility and connectivity, supports utility infrastructure needs, and provides recreational opportunities. Within this broader vision, the ERC offers a unique opportunity to create a nonmotorized (regional trail) connection between many vibrant, growing, and dynamic areas, providing a safe and enjoyable recreational experience for people of all ages and abilities and promoting healthy, livable communities. One day, it's possible this corridor may connect from Vancouver WA to Vancouver BC.



The intent is to develop a regional trail in the 15.6 miles of ERC under its ownership and the 1.1 miles of ERC owned by Sound Transit in which the County holds a trail easement that does not preclude future transit or utility use of the ERC, while meeting the following objectives:

- Connect Eastside communities by linking to:
 - Existing and planned regional and local trails
 - Transit centers, park and rides, and East Link light rail stations
 - Residential, commercial, and business centers
- Provide nonmotorized active transportation options and expand recreational opportunities to:
 - Benefit public health
 - Improve air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions
 - Expand access for underserved areas of King County
- Incorporate Eastside heritage and culture
- Support opportunities for economic development

This Master Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is an important first step towards planning, environmental review, design, and construction of a regional trail in the corridor. The Master Plan and EIS describes options for the character and location of a trail in the ERC with on- and off-railbed alignments. The trail location can vary in places and doesn't need to be the same throughout the entire corridor.

The Master Plan and EIS also address potential impacts associated with trail development and mitigation. Key issues for decision makers include how additional future uses of the corridor, transit, and utilities could affect the trail, as well as the cost to develop the trail.

Many agencies and the community have participated in the stakeholder and public process for the master planning effort, offering ideas and suggestions about the development of the regional trail. The Master Plan and EIS reflects that input and enables the continuation of the conversation. Comments on this document should be submitted by March 31, 2016, to Erica Jacobs at ERCtrail@kingcounty.gov or sent via mail to 201 S. Jackson Street, Suite 700, Seattle, WA 98104.

With your continued support and participation, King County looks forward to realizing the remarkable potential of the ERC.

Sincerely,

Dow Constantine
King County Executive

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks

King County Council

King County thanks the following partners for their contributions to this Master Plan and to the broader vision for developing the Eastside Rail Corridor.

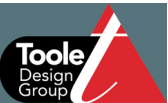
COLLABORATING PARTNER AGENCIES AND REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

CONSULTANTS



Parametrix



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SUMMARY

King County proposes to develop a regional trail to accommodate nonmotorized transportation and recreation in the railbanked portion of the Eastside Rail Corridor (ERC). In its entirety, the ERC is a 42-mile rail corridor, part of the Woodinville Subdivision, which passes through Renton, Bellevue, Kirkland, Woodinville, Redmond, and portions of unincorporated King and Snohomish counties (Figure S-1). King County intends to develop a trail in the approximately 15.6 miles of the ERC under its ownership and the 1.1 miles of ERC owned by Sound Transit in which the County holds a trail easement. This approximately 16.7 miles of the railbanked portion of the ERC is the focus of the Draft Master Plan and Environmental Impact Statement.

The intent is to develop a regional trail that does not preclude future transit or utilities in the railbanked portion of the ERC. The objectives of the ERC trail are to connect Eastside communities to other regional trails, local trails, transit, and residential, commercial, and business centers; to provide nonmotorized active transportation options and recreational opportunities that expand access for underserved areas of King County, support opportunities for economic development, benefit public health, and improve air quality; and to incorporate Eastside heritage and culture. To realize these objectives, King County has engaged with and will continue to engage with stakeholders and the broader community.

A regional trail, also known as a shared use path, facilitates recreation and regional mobility, accommodates a variety of activities such as walking, running, bicycling, and rollerblading, and anticipates higher user volumes than local trails or paths would typically support. Based on the type and volume of trail use expected, the trail is envisioned as 12 to 14 feet of pavement with a 6-foot gravel shoulder on one side and a 2-foot gravel shoulder on the other. The ERC right-of-way ranges from a minimum of approximately 25 feet wide to 100 feet. To

accommodate the trail width, the Master Plan defines a planning envelope, typically 30 to 40 feet wide, where the trail could be located within the ERC. Other trail design elements described in the Master Plan include intersection treatments, retaining walls, bridges and boardwalks, fencing and barriers, signage, lighting features, landscape elements, and public art.

King County, in coordination with project stakeholders, intends the ERC trail to provide an exceptional trail experience, and expects the trail to be a preferred recreational and commuting facility for users throughout the region. To achieve this, the trail would be designed to a high standard of quality and performance, be sensitively designed to fit the landscape and context, and provide connections to the surrounding region. The ERC is set in a diverse and dynamic area, passing through communities, neighborhoods, and landscapes with distinctly different characteristics. For master planning and descriptive purposes, the 16.7 miles are described in three segments. The Lakefront Segment, between Renton and I-90, passes through mostly residential neighborhoods with topography at times sloping steeply toward Lake Washington to the west. The Wilburton Segment, between I-90 and Kirkland, passes through a more mixed land use and includes the 1.1-mile portion of the corridor owned by Sound Transit where light rail is being constructed, and an area in which the City of Bellevue is planning redevelopment. The Valley Segment includes the ERC Main Line from Totem Lake to Woodinville as well as the Spur from Woodinville to Redmond. The Main Line portion of the Valley Segment begins in a commercial and light industrial area near Totem Lake but soon enters a forested, often steep hillside area. By comparison, the Spur portion traverses relatively flat terrain in the Sammamish River Valley, transitioning from an industrial/warehouse area to mainly agricultural land to the south.

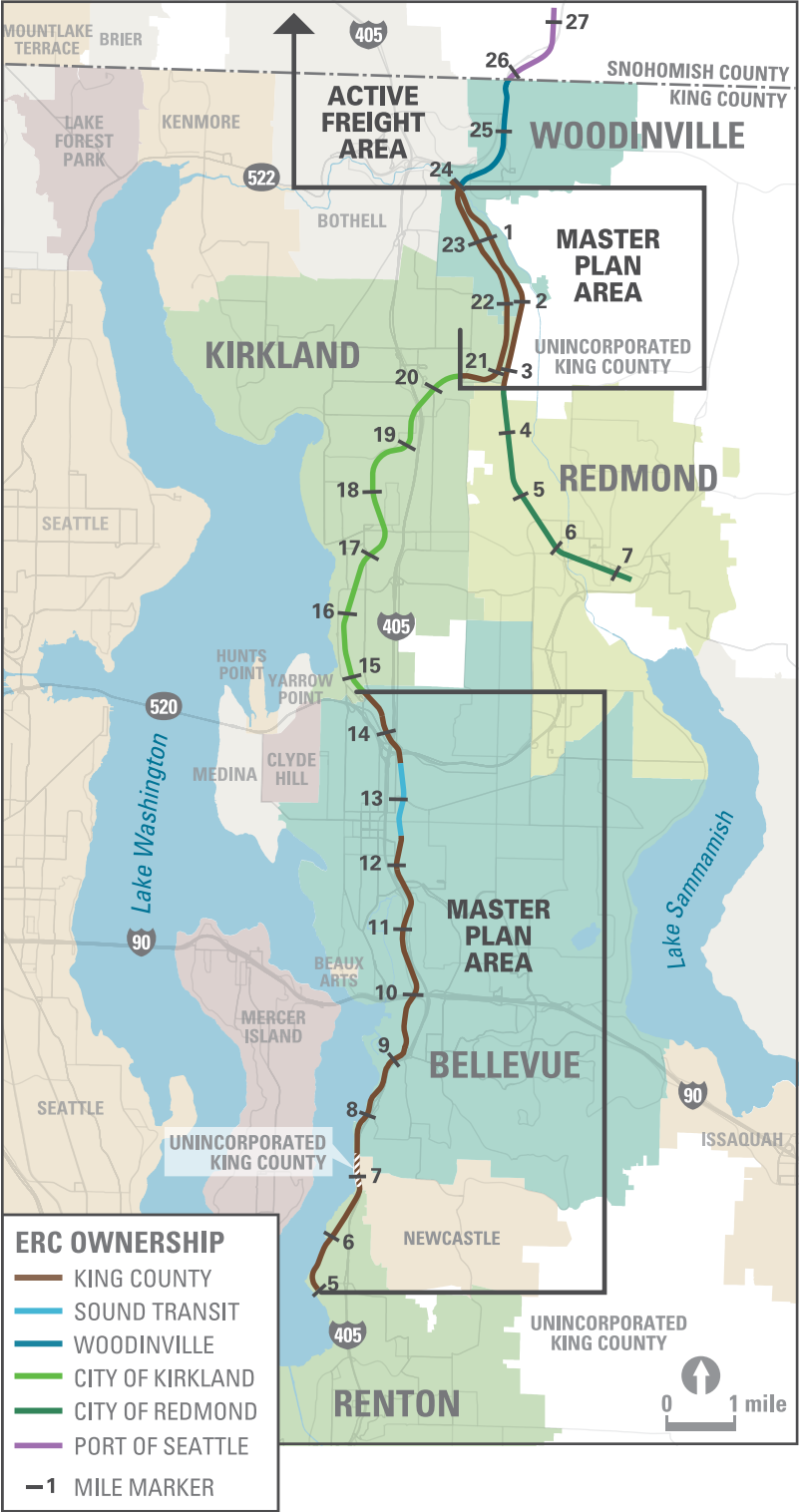


FIGURE S-1. EASTSIDE RAIL CORRIDOR OWNERSHIP

In addition to a No Action Alternative, this Master Plan and Environmental Impact Statement generally describes two alternative trail alignments. An On-Railbed Alternative would align the trail along the existing railbed, taking advantage of the relatively flat area created for rail use typically near the center of the ERC. An Off-Railbed Alternative would primarily align the trail along the edge of the ERC to provide flexibility in accommodating other future uses within the corridor. However, there are portions of the ERC where only one trail alignment is feasible, and this Master Plan calls those out as well.

To compare each alternative, potential consequences are considered to historic and cultural resources, geology and soils, hazardous materials and contamination, consistency with local planning, consistency with potential future uses, transportation facilities, parking and access, consistency with stormwater regulations, trails and parks, ecological resources, surrounding communities, and utilities. For many of these elements, the differences between the two alternative alignments are minor, based on planning-level information. Public engagement found concerns over perceived loss of privacy for some areas adjacent to the ERC. Regardless of the alternative selected, all significant adverse impacts can be avoided, minimized, or mitigated. Table S-1 summarizes key impacts of and mitigation for the alternatives.

Upon review of the Draft Master Plan and comments received, the EIS will be finalized (including responses to comments), and the King County Executive will select a preferred alternative and present a Final Master Plan to the King County Council for adoption. The preferred alternative could include portions of both the On-Railbed and Off-Railbed alternatives in a given segment of the ERC.

The Draft Master Plan and Environmental Impact Statement are seen as the first step in a phased environmental review. After adoption of the Final Master Plan, it is anticipated that the trail would be developed, as funding allows, in smaller segments with further environmental review, design, and permitting. These smaller segments are not necessarily the same as the Lakefront, Wilburton, and Valley segments.

Considerations affecting the potential sequence or phasing of trail development include, but are not limited to, opportunities for developing interim improvements such as gravel surfacing, coordinating trail development with the timing and proximity of other projects in the corridor and immediate vicinity, taking advantage of proximity to existing nonmotorized facilities, and the availability of funding

TABLE S-1. Key Impacts of the Trail Alternatives

Alternative	General Impact	General Mitigation
On-Railbed Alternative	Other future transit and utility uses may have to be located to the sides, or the trail may have to be relocated.	Relationship between uses would be negotiated based on mechanisms in the easements and agreements between the owners
Off-Railbed Alternative	More extensive earthwork, retaining walls, vegetation and tree removal, and construction cost; generally closer to adjacent uses.	Locate trail on the edge of the ERC with fewest impacts; replant vegetation and trees, where practical and consistent with King County policies
Both Build Alternatives	Traverse wetlands, streams, and associated buffers.	During design, refine the alignment to minimize impacts; contemplate boardwalk over high-quality wetlands; analyze intersecting streams in more detail, and provide fish-passable culverts or bridges in compliance with applicable laws and regulations

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- Historic and Cultural Resources
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- Community Meetings and Public Open Houses-Comments and Summary