

Chapter 4 Other Environmental Considerations

4.1 *Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources*

NEPA Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations require an environmental analysis to identify “any irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources, which would be involved in the proposed action should it be implemented” (40 CFR 1502.16). Implementing any of the alternatives for the East Lake Sammamish Master Plan Trail would require a commitment of natural, human, and fiscal resources. These commitments would be the greatest for the East Alternatives, followed by the Corridor and Continuation of the Interim Use Trail Alternatives. The No Action Alternative would require a relatively minor commitment of resources.

Each of the Build Alternatives would require a long-term conversion of land resources to accommodate the trail, parking areas, restrooms, and stormwater facilities. In the case of the East Alternatives, some of the land converted to trail use would consist of residential properties that would be fully or partially acquired for the trail. Although the trail conceivably could be converted to other land uses at some time in the future, there is no reason to expect that such a conversion would be necessary or desirable. Thus such land conversion is considered to be an irreversible and irretrievable commitment.

Fossil fuels (diesel and gasoline), electricity (and the resources used to generate it), lubricants, and construction materials such as concrete, asphalt, aggregate, wood, and metal would be used in varying amounts for construction and operation of the alternatives. There is generally a sufficient supply of these materials, and the Master Plan Trail would not adversely affect their continued availability.

Some biological resources would be irreversibly and irretrievably committed as a result of the project. Some wetland and buffer areas would be filled, some areas of vegetation would be lost, and culverts would be extended on some streams. Unavoidable wetland impacts would be mitigated, potentially at another location outside the trail corridor. The Build Alternatives would result in an increase in impervious surface in the stream basins crossed by the trail, requiring the installation of permanent stormwater facilities to manage increased runoff.

As with any construction project, there is a possibility that unrecorded cultural deposits could be lost, damaged, or altered during construction of the Build Alternatives, although measures would be taken to prevent such impacts.

Substantial amounts of labor would be used in constructing and maintaining the Master Plan Trail. Labor is generally not considered to be in short supply, and the project would not adversely affect the continued availability of laborers. Construction of the Build Alternatives would require a substantial expenditure of public funds that would not be available for other uses.

The proposed commitment of natural, human, and financial resources for the Master Plan Trail is based on the purpose and need for the trail. The trail would provide an alternate transportation corridor access to recreation, employment, and retail centers in the Cities of Redmond, Sammamish, and Issaquah and complete a link in the King County trails system, thus benefiting businesses, employees, and residents.

These benefits are anticipated to outweigh the commitment of resources to construct and operate the Master Plan Trail.

4.2 Relationship between Local Short-Term Uses of the Environment and the Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-Term Productivity

NEPA CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1502.16) require an environmental analysis to consider “the relationship between short-term uses of man’s environment and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity.” Implementation of the Master Plan Trail would result in local short-term impacts and uses of resources, while providing an alternative non-motorized transportation corridor and multi-use recreational trail for the long term.

Short-term effects of constructing the Master Plan Trail would include the creation of construction jobs, construction-related noise and dust, and traffic delays. These short-term effects would result in a trail that would have long-term benefits by providing an alternative to motorized modes of transportation and a non-motorized linkage between recreational facilities.

Short-term erosion and water quality impacts could occur during construction of the trail, although best management practices would be used to minimize impacts. The long-term increase in impervious surface and associated storm runoff resulting from paving the trail would be offset by construction of permanent stormwater management facilities.

Some vegetation near streams may be temporarily disturbed or removed during construction. These short-term impacts would be mitigated through a combination of on-site and off-site stream buffer planting, thus substantially improving riparian quality and fish habitat.

Wetland functions such as storing water and providing wildlife habitat would be reduced locally as a result of filling small areas of wetlands and wetland buffer for construction of the trail. Wetland mitigation would be designed to replace these lost functions over the long term, potentially through use of a wetland mitigation bank located outside of the trail corridor.

Construction of the East Alternatives would require the full or partial acquisition of some properties along the trail corridor, resulting in the relocation of some residents. There may be some reduction in property tax revenues for the jurisdictions where these properties are located, although many of the displaced residents would be expected to relocate within the same jurisdiction.

The Master Plan Trail Build Alternatives are consistent with local comprehensive plans goals and policies to provide access to local and regional recreation opportunities, connectivity between neighborhoods, and links between neighborhoods and services. The Build Alternatives also support the comprehensive plan policies to promote an increase in alternative modes of transportation. The Build Alternatives are compatible with the projected population growth in the project vicinity.

By providing an alternate transportation corridor and access to recreation, employment, and retail centers in the Cities of Redmond, Sammamish, and Issaquah and completing a link in the King County trails system, the Master Plan Trail would enhance long-term productivity within the project vicinity.