

# Chapter 5

# Public and Agency Coordination

## 5.1 Introduction

As described in Chapter 1, since 1998 King County has been working to convert approximately 11 miles of abandoned railroad right of way along Lake Sammamish into an alternative non-motorized corridor and a multi-use recreational trail. While the project appealed to many advocates and potential users of the trail, some homeowners living on the shore of Lake Sammamish were concerned about the prospect of runners, cyclists, or horseback riders using a trail on the railroad corridor through their backyards. Public involvement activities undertaken as part of the East Lake Sammamish Master Plan Trail project included citizens advisory groups, coordination with agencies, community workshops, and mailings to project area residents. These activities are described below.

## 5.2 Agency Environmental Review Process

The environmental review process for the East Lake Sammamish Trail project has occurred in two phases. Phase 1, the Interim Use Trail and Resource Protection Plan, was followed by Phase 2, the Master Plan Trail. Table 5-1 summarizes the dates key environmental documents were released for public review and the associated public meetings held on both projects to date. King County has taken into account all comments received on the East Lake Sammamish Trail project since 1999. Tribal coordination related to historic, cultural, and archaeological resources is described in Section 3.13. Tribal coordination related to fisheries issues is described in Section 3.5.

**Table 5-1. Environmental Review Process and Associated Public Meetings**

| DATE              | EVENT   |
|-------------------|---|
| November 2, 1999  | Determination of Significance and Request for Comments of Scope of Interim Use Trail and Resource Protection Plan EIS |
| November 17, 1999 | Public Scoping Meeting (Open House)   |
| May 19, 2000      | <i>Interim Use Trail and Resource Protection Plan Draft EIS</i> Issued  |
| June 20, 2000     | <i>Interim Use Trail and Resource Protection Plan Draft EIS</i> Public Hearing  |
| August 25, 2000   | <i>Interim Use Trail and Resource Protection Plan Final EIS</i> Issued  |
| October 31, 2000  | Determination of Significance and Request for Comments of Scope of Master Plan Trail Draft EIS                        |
| November 15, 2000 | Master Plan Trail SEPA Scoping Meeting  |
| February 20, 2001 | Master Plan Trail NEPA Scoping Meeting  |
| May 10, 2002      | <i>Interim Use Trail and Resource Protection Plan NEPA EA</i> Issued  |
| June 12, 2002     | <i>Interim Use Trail and Resource Protection Plan NEPA EA</i> Public Hearing  |
| March 13, 2003    | Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) on the <i>Interim Use Trail and Resource Protection Plan NEPA EA</i>         |

## **5.2.1 Interim Use Trail and Resource Protection Plan**

The environmental process for the East Lake Sammamish Interim Use Trail project began in November 1999 under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) with a Determination of Significance and public Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) scoping meeting. The Draft EIS for the Interim Use Trail and Resource Protection Plan was issued in May 2000 and open for public comments through June 2000. The Final EIS for the Interim Use Trail and Resource Protection Plan was issued in August 2000.

In early 2000, the project received federal funding (Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), triggering a requirement for federal environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). A NEPA Environmental Assessment (EA) was released in May 2002, and a public hearing on the document was held in June 2002. A Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was issued for the project in March 2003.

### **5.2.1.1 Public Scoping Meeting**

The EIS scoping meeting and open house for Phase 1, the Interim Use Trail and Resource Protection Plan, was held in November 1999. Public comment was requested on the environmental issues and alternatives to be considered and evaluated in the EIS. Important issues recorded at the meeting included ensuring adjacent property owner safety, protecting the natural environment, limiting noise and maintaining area aesthetics, and facilitating recreational uses. Over 100 people attended this meeting.

### **5.2.1.2 Draft EIS Public Hearing**

The *Interim Use Trail and Resource Protection Plan Draft EIS* was issued in May 2000, which was followed by a comment period lasting through early June 2000. To gather comments on the Draft EIS, a public hearing was held in June 2000. The project team recorded over 80 pages of comments during the public forum, along with over 40 pages of additional public comments taken in the lobby during the forum. The comments collected from this public hearing, in combination with those received during the comment period, were addressed and incorporated into the *Interim Use Trail and Resource Protection Plan Final EIS* issued in August 2000.

### **5.2.1.3 NEPA Environmental Assessment Public Hearing**

A public hearing for the Interim Use Trail and Resource Protection Plan was held in June after the EA was issued in May 2002. The hearing provided the opportunity to provide feedback on the EA directly to a court reporter. Comments were collected from 12 hearing participants through the public forum, and in the lobby during the forum.

## **5.2.2 Master Plan Trail**

The environmental process for Phase 1 resulted in the *Interim Use Trail and Resource Protection Plan Final EIS* in August 2000. A Determination of Significance and Request for Comments on the Scope of the Master Plan Trail EIS began at the end of October 2000. A SEPA scoping meeting was held in November 2000, and a NEPA scoping meeting was held in February 2001.

### **5.2.2.1 SEPA Scoping Meeting**

In November 2000, the SEPA scoping meeting for Phase 2, the Master Plan Trail, was held. After developing alternatives through community workshops and comments, nearly 80 neighbors and citizens gathered at this meeting and provided over 150 comments. Maps and presentation boards were set up

around the meeting room displaying the alternatives and identifying important topics such as public safety, trail design, traffic, surface water impacts, and impacts on plants and animals.

### **5.2.2.2 NEPA Scoping Meeting**

At the NEPA scoping meeting in February 2001, the project team presented potential trail alignment alternatives for a permanent use trail, along with the required No Action Alternative. The alternatives presented at this meeting were slightly altered based on the responses to comments received from the SEPA scoping meeting in November 2000. At the request of the project Citizen Advisory Group, the East Lake Sammamish Trail project team also provided corridor maps of each alternative, laid out side by side, to highlight the differences between the alternatives. Both oral and written comments were collected from over 100 neighbors and citizens attending this meeting.

## **5.3 Agency Coordination**

Key efforts of the agency coordination for the East Lake Sammamish Master Plan Trail project are summarized in the following sections.

### **5.3.1 Agency Workshop**

Following the scoping meeting for the Interim Use Trail and Resource Protection Plan in November 1999, an agency workshop was held in December 1999 to collect comments from and provide background information to local agency members. After identifying the proposed project alternatives, schedule, and current SEPA issues, a workshop discussion was facilitated that considered topics such as anticipated permits, alternatives, anticipated impacts, evaluation methodologies, preliminary mitigation measures, and anticipated permitting concerns.

### **5.3.2 Agency Scoping**

In May 2001, as part of the Draft EIS development process for the Master Plan Trail, an agency scoping meeting was held. The meeting was conducted in two parts: (1) a guided trail walk, and (2) a scoping discussion. The trail walk allowed participants to observe the affected environment and understand the alternatives being considered. During the scoping discussion, input and concerns from the attending agency members focused on the natural environment, the built environment, the review process, and measures to mitigate any project effects. Participants included local cities (Issaquah, Sammamish, and Redmond), King County Land Use Services, King County Parks, King County Roads, Washington State Department of Transportation, Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, Washington State Department of Ecology, Washington State Parks and Recreation, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, NOAA Fisheries, and Federal Highway Administration.

### **5.3.3 Interdisciplinary Team**

At the recommendation of the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT), an Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) for the project was convened. Three IDT meetings were held in the summer of 2002 to: (1) refine the project's purpose and need statement, (2) establish criteria for selecting alternatives that could be evaluated in the Master Plan Trail EIS, and (3) develop design criteria for ensuring progress on the design of the alternatives. The IDT consisted of staff from project area cities, King County, the state, and resource agencies.

The IDT was provided with a project overview, including the results of the extensive public scoping process and public comments. The IDT provided suggestions for revising the draft purpose and need statement for the project and assisted the County in screening project alternatives. Based on the project purpose and need, the IDT then helped identify the criteria appropriate for screening the alternatives. This process ultimately resulted in three screening criteria: consistency with local and regional plans; consistency with design guidelines; and linkage to regional trails and bicycle lanes.

## **5.4 Public Coordination**

The East Lake Sammamish Trail project required focused engagement of local citizens to address the many differences among trail users and those citizens within the project's impact area. Public involvement activities are summarized below.

### **5.4.1 Citizen Advisory Group**

The Citizen Advisory Group (CAG) was an invaluable resource in coordinating the input of various stakeholder groups. The CAG assisted the planning and public participation process for both the Interim Use Trail and the Master Plan Trail. The 13-member group represented community and regional interests, as well as property owners along Lake Sammamish. The CAG met throughout the environmental, planning, and development phases of the project. Meetings were held during weekday evenings and were open to the public. Citizen Advisory Group meetings were advertised in local newspapers to encourage participation from the general public. Public comments and questions were taken at several of the CAG meetings when time allowed. Key input gained from the CAG included comments on the scope of the environmental review, concerns about trail safety, feedback on the *Interim Use Trail and Resource Protection Plan Draft EIS*, and recommendations for the development and operation of the Interim Use Trail.

#### **5.4.1.1 Citizen Advisory Group Meetings**

Seven CAG meetings were held between April and December 1999. In 2000, five meetings were held, and three meetings were held in both 2001 and 2002. At each meeting, project staff took notes and provided detailed summaries as a follow up, with these summaries being approved by the CAG.

### **5.4.2 Workshops**

The project team wanted citizens to take an active role in planning a trail that fulfills the local as well as the regional vision; therefore, several public workshops were held in the project impact area to engage citizens in the planning process. Workshops were held both with the general public and with trail user groups.

#### **5.4.2.1 Neighborhood Vision Workshops**

Five neighborhood workshops were held during the winter and early spring of 2000. One workshop was held for each of five segments of the trail to get specific input from attendees regarding opportunities and constraints on the right of way and how these might be best addressed in the planning for the Master Plan Trail. The workshops were held at the request of community members who wanted to kick off the Master Plan Trail process. These workshops provided an opportunity for direct neighborhood input to shape the details of the Master Plan Trail alternatives. Response to these workshops was substantial, with over 150 citizens attending the workshops. Residents were grouped by shared characteristics such as access, natural resources or relationship to natural and built features. Large-scale plan sheets, design guidelines, and group facilitators were provided. Each of the five meetings was organized into 6 to 11 roundtable groups.

#### **5.4.2.2 User Group Workshops**

Beyond engaging the public on the segments of the trail project, the East Lake Sammamish Trail project team sent letter to over 45 user groups and held workshops with trail users to help identify their concerns and issues.

#### **Executive Horse Council**

A workshop held by the project team for the Executive Horse Council in September 2000 allowed the Council to learn more about the project and to provide feedback and comments on the trail. Specific issues addressed included access points and parking, crossings and amenities, and separating public from private space along the project corridor and trail alignment. This group identified concerns relating to local trail linkages, local and regional parking facilities, crossing signage, conflicts among users (including personal watercraft, non-motorized wheeled activities, and pedestrians), fencing places away from the trail, and placing the alignment away from East Lake Sammamish Parkway.

#### **Cherry Hill Rider Group**

In October 2000, the East Lake Sammamish Trail project team held a second user group workshop with the Cherry Hill Rider Group. This workshop addressed the same issues as the Executive Horse Council September 2000 workshop, including access points and parking, crossings and amenities, and separating public from private space along the project corridor and trail alignment. This group identified similar needs as the Executive Horse Council, including the need for both local and regional access points, activated traffic lights high enough for riders, soft surfaces, how to prevent conflicts with other trail users, trail signage, and linkages to other trails.

#### **Cascade Bicycle Club**

In the fall of 2000, members of the project team attended a club meeting of the Cascade Bicycle Club. This group was provided information about the proposed trail and given a questionnaire to provide feedback regarding trail features and routes.

### **5.4.3 Newsletters**

Newsletters were an integral component of the public involvement effort for this project. Newsletters served as a way to connect with the community and provide project updates as well as extend meeting and event invitations to citizens. Six newsletters were distributed between November 1999 and the summer of 2003. Each newsletter was widely distributed to addresses in Redmond, Sammamish, and Issaquah and to all residents along the proposed trail. Newsletters were mailed to roughly 2,300 individuals and organizations.

### **5.4.4 City of Sammamish Outreach**

In May 2004, the City of Sammamish prepared an independent survey for city residents regarding the East Lake Sammamish Trail. The purpose of the City's survey was to better understand their citizens' concerns related to the construction, operation, and management of the trail. Issues identified in the survey include: lack of privacy, aesthetics, concerns of trespassing, trash disposal, noise, pet refuse, both decreased and increased property values, recreational benefits, alternative commuting opportunities, and improved neighborhood connectivity. These issues are discussed throughout this EIS.