



**CITY OF KIRKLAND**  
**Department of Public Works**  
123 Fifth Avenue, Kirkland, WA 98033 425.587.3800  
[www.ci.kirkland.wa.us](http://www.ci.kirkland.wa.us)

---

**To:** Kurt Triplett, City Manager

**From:** David Godfrey, P.E., Transportation Engineering Manager  
Ray Steiger, P.E., Interim Public Works Director

**Date:** July 8, 2010

**Subject:** LETTER TO SOUND TRANSIT REGARDING THE EASTSIDE RAIL CORRIDOR

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council authorize the Mayor to sign a letter to Ms. Joni Earl, Sound Transit CEO, describing Kirkland's interest in Sound Transit's upcoming Request for Proposals (RFP) process.

BACKGROUND DISCUSSION:

Sound Transit II, a plan approved by the voters in November of 2008, includes a provision by which Sound Transit could invest in rail operation in the Eastside Rail Corridor outside the East Link program. The plan language is shown below. If the \$50 million is not used on the Eastside Rail Corridor, it is to be used to fund BRT on I-405.

Sound Transit has indicated that it plans to issue a Request for Proposals this fall to solicit partners for possible passenger service on the corridor, and work on developing the RFP is beginning soon. The purpose of the attached letter is to express Kirkland's interests to Sound Transit, so that they can take them into account as they develop and later evaluate the RFP.

The interests expressed in the letter reflect the interests discussed by the Transportation Commission at their June meeting. The Transportation Commission has reviewed and edited the attached letter.

Language from ST2 regarding the Eastside Rail Corridor

The ST2 Plan sets aside funds that may be used in connection with rail passenger development and associated work that may be undertaken by other local governments and public agencies for long-term passenger rail service on an existing BNSF line. This rail line, portions of which BNSF intends to abandon and which the Port of Seattle is purchasing through the federal rail-banking process, stretches from the city of Snohomish to the city of Renton, east of Lake Washington. The State of Washington has directed Sound Transit and the PSRC to complete a feasibility study of potential passenger rail on this corridor. In addition, other parties in the region have expressed an interest in passenger rail service on this line.

Any future passenger rail service along this corridor would be implemented and operated by other public and/or private parties, particularly along the portion of the corridor located in Snohomish County outside

Language from ST2 regarding the Eastside Rail Corridor continued

the Sound Transit District. The ST2 Plan does not include funds to operate such passenger rail service. Sound Transit's investment in this project is limited to a maximum contribution of \$50 million dollars, which may be used for engineering and design, and for the purchase of capital equipment and real estate that can either be sold or used on Sound Transit's existing transportation system. Sound Transit's investment is also contingent upon the satisfaction of the following conditions prior to December 31, 2011:

- a. Completion of the Sound Transit/PSRC feasibility study and determination that passenger rail on the Eastside BNSF corridor is feasible and would be a meaningful component of the region's future transportation system, as required by state law;
- b. The Sound Transit Board's determination that the ridership forecasts, financing plan, and capital and operating cost estimates and operating plan are reasonable and that the service will provide substantial benefits to the regional transportation system in the Sound Transit District; and
- c. Execution of an agreement with other public or private parties regarding the implementation of a passenger rail system.

If a partnership for passenger rail on the BNSF corridor in East King County is not executed by December 31, 2011, the \$50 million included in the ST2 Plan for a partnership will be reprogrammed to further the implementation of HOV BRT service in the I-405 corridor in East King County. Options for alternative investments in the I-405 corridor will be developed for Board review and approval prior to expenditure of these funds.

July 21, 2010

**D R A F T**

Ms. Joni Earl, CEO  
Sound Transit  
401 S. Jackson  
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Ms. Earl:

The City of Kirkland is keenly interested in development of the Eastside Rail Corridor. We appreciate the recent presentation made to our Transportation Commission by Sound Transit staff as part of our fact finding efforts. The work we have done to learn about the corridor and to start formulation of an interest statement on rail and trail development has interested and involved many of our citizens. Therefore, we want to clearly express our desire to work closely with Sound Transit on decisions that will influence corridor use.

We recognize that Sound Transit's examination of a potential partnership with a rail operator is an important element in determining how the corridor will be developed. The availability of \$50 million in ST2 funding will likely lead to some innovative proposals. At the same time, Sound Transit's forthcoming Request for Proposals (RFP) for that funding must consider the wide range of interests in the corridor and address the myriad of technical and policy issues necessary to make an informed decision on future rail service.

We would like to offer some of Kirkland's interests for your consideration as the RFP is both being formulated and then evaluated:

- Kirkland has long viewed the Eastside corridor as a premier location for a facility that supports bicycle and pedestrian transportation. The RFP should request details on how a non-motorized and pedestrian trail would function while collocated on the corridor with a proposed rail operation.
- An overarching interest of Kirkland's is the operational concept proposed by responders to the RFP. The plan for rail operations is central to many areas such as safety, land use, and movement of people through our community. Our evaluation to this point has shown the importance of assessing any potential service's train speeds, frequency of operation, and times during which service will be operated. Additionally, vehicle type has been a subject of much interest to many citizens who have communicated with us about the corridor. Finally, the economic viability of the proposed operation is dependent upon the operational concept.
- Ensuring safety of the design and operation of train service combined with security of the right of way and abutting land use are among our greatest interests. To that end, we expect that proposals will describe impacts to safety of all types along the entire corridor. Specific areas of concern to Kirkland include: impact on at grade crossings, size and placement of structures, noise and security effects on properties

Letter to Ms. Joni Earl

July 21, 2010

Page 2

abutting the corridor, and design elements that impact development of a trail along the corridor.

- Kirkland is interested in seeing how responses to the RFP address questions of financial sustainability for their rail operations given forecasts of likely ridership, costs, and outside funding. In particular, we would want to see a link between the operational concept and predictions of economic viability over the long term.
- The adopted master plan for I-405 includes a commitment to build a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system along the corridor. Since ST2 calls for an investment in the BRT program on I-405 if a partner for the rail corridor is not found, we request a careful comparison of the benefits of a BRT investment with those of a potential rail partnership.
- Rail service on the corridor has the potential to make profound impacts on land use in Kirkland. Station locations and design must be fully developed, vetted, and approved by local jurisdictions prior to the start of service. Some of our particular interests include where and how station access and parking will be provided. We also request that the proposals address the effects on parking, access, and traffic at the South Kirkland Park and Ride facility should the rail operation not extend further south into Bellevue.
- Prior to any proposal being approved, an appropriate environmental document must be prepared. The purpose of this document is to identify and disclose any impacts on noise, air quality, surface water, sensitive areas, and traffic.

Thank you for considering the interests of Kirkland as you develop the RFP process. Representatives from the City of Kirkland would appreciate the opportunity to be involved both in the review of the Request for Proposal itself and in the evaluation of responses. We look forward to our continued working relationship with Sound Transit on this project.

Sincerely,  
Kirkland City Council

Joan McBride, Mayor

cc: Sound Transit Eastside Subarea Board Members  
Councilmember Claudia Balducci  
Deputy Council President Fred Butler  
Mayor John Marchione  
Mr. Greg Walker, Planning and Development Director, Sound Transit  
Ms. Pam Bissonnette, Assistant Deputy County Executive, King County