



**CITY OF KIRKLAND**

**City Manager's Office**

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**[www.ci.kirkland.wa.us](http://www.ci.kirkland.wa.us)**

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**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Dave Ramsay, City Manager

**From:** David Godfrey, Transportation Engineering Manager

**Date:** June 10, 2008

**Subject:** CORRESPONDENCE CONCERNING BURLINGTON NORTHERN RAIL CORRIDOR

RECOMMENDATION:

City Council approves the attached letter as a template response to letters and emails regarding the BNSF rail corridor.

BACKGROUND:

The City Council has received numerous letters and emails regarding the future use of the BNSF rail corridor. Staff was asked to draft a template response that could be used to respond to most of the correspondence on the City Council's behalf. Staff will maintain a log of interested parties for use in future public involvement efforts that may be accompany planning efforts for the rail corridor.

June 17, 2008

**DRAFT**

Lisa Edwards  
6533 106<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE #B  
Kirkland, WA 98033

Dear Ms. Edwards;

Thank you for your correspondence regarding the BNSF rail corridor. On May 12, the Port of Seattle and BNSF signed an agreement to acquire the 42 mile rail corridor that runs through Kirkland. At the same time, the Port and County signed an agreement granting King County an easement to develop a trail on 32 miles of the corridor. The Port is acquiring the corridor from BNSF for \$107 million. King County is contributing \$2 million toward the purchase price, and is granted an easement for trail development on the southern segment of the corridor. The northern portion of the corridor (between Woodinville and Snohomish) will continue to be used for freight service. The Kirkland City Council has supported efforts to complete this agreement as we believe that this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to secure a transportation asset of immense value.

Now that the agreement documents have been signed, the Surface Transportation Board must approve the Port and King County's application to "rail-bank" portions of the corridor. The Surface Transportation Board is expected to grant approval in the fall of this year. At that time, the Port will begin a public process to gain input on how King County citizens would like to see the rail corridor used. It is our intention that Kirkland citizens will participate fully in this process.

The City of Kirkland has long looked upon the BNSF right-of-way as primarily a facility for non-motorized travel. However, we are also interested in an investigation of how rail transport might function alongside a trail. There are a number of unanswered questions concerning rail operations including ridership potential, parking accommodation and station locations. A feasibility study of commuter rail, and an adjacent trail, will be done by Sound Transit and the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), under a bill (HB3224) passed by the Washington State Legislature. It will include a survey of existing studies and, as necessary, a feasibility study to provide information on whether commuter rail service between eastern Snohomish county and eastern King county, can be a meaningful component of the region's future transportation system. A report on the results will be provided to the transportation committees of the House of Representatives and Senate by February 1, 2009.

We are excited that realization of a trail across Kirkland is closer than ever and we hope that this study will be a valuable tool in understanding how rail might work along with a bicycle/walking trail. The final decision on how the corridor is used will be made by the Port of Seattle and will involve an opportunity for the public to comment. For more information, visit the Port of Seattle website at [http://www.portseattle.org/news/press/2008/05\\_12\\_2008\\_72.shtml](http://www.portseattle.org/news/press/2008/05_12_2008_72.shtml).

Sincerely,  
KIRKLAND CITY COUNCIL

By James L. Lauinger  
Mayor