

City of Kirkland Eastside Rail Corridor Interest Statement

City of Kirkland Transportation Commission
DRAFT November 30, 2010

Summary

The Eastside Rail Corridor is a transportation facility that represents enormous opportunity for the City of Kirkland and the region. The main focus should be on development of a trail in the short term with the goal of adding transit when feasible, likely in the medium to longer term.

Ultimately, the best use of the corridor is as the site of an active, non-motorized transportation facility for pedestrians and bicyclists and a high capacity transit system. Ideally, active and transit users could use the corridor simultaneously. A safe, fully featured high capacity rail system would be very expensive and would require a great deal of careful planning. Such a system is currently contemplated in the Sound Transit master plan. There may be less expensive large capacity transit options that could be developed in the shorter term, such as bus rapid transit or diesel commuter rail. Alternately, a facility for bicycles and pedestrians could be developed. Each option would likely require public financing. The options may need to be phased in with the planning process for each influenced by cost and desirability or acceptability. While a bicycle and pedestrian trail would be far less expensive and require a less extensive planning process, the planning should be done with multiuse as the long term goal.

The following interests should be used to evaluate proposals. Proposals that satisfy more of the interests would rank more highly than the proposals that satisfy fewer of the interests.

Interests

Serve Transportation needs of Kirkland

Transportation on the corridor should be integrated with and support the City's transportation goals¹, giving options for travel within Kirkland and to points outside Kirkland.

Develop a plan to actively use the corridor in the near future

Because the corridor is a valuable asset that could be used to transport people, letting it remain unused/undeveloped has a high opportunity cost. The longer it is not used, there will be more resistance to a particular use, and over time any use can develop. For example, a temporary non-paved trail could be built initially, leading to a more formal trail or trail/rail system in later years.

The Eastside Rail Corridor (black line) touches many neighborhoods and parks in Kirkland



A section of the right-of-way in the Highlands neighborhood



Council Goal concerning Balanced Transportation :

Kirkland values an integrated multi-modal system of transportation choices.

Council Goal: To reduce reliance on single occupancy vehicles. (September 2009)

Keep the corridor in public ownership

The region has determined² that the public interest is served by public ownership of the corridor.

Maintain the corridor in good condition

The corridor should be maintained to protect the value of the corridor and adjacent properties. Proper operation of drainage facilities, prevention of encroachment, and safety of structures and crossings are key maintenance concerns. This maintenance need exists even if the corridor is not actively developed in the short term.

Contribute to economic sustainability

Development of the corridor should be done in a cost effective manner and should consider the short and long term costs of construction, maintenance and operation. It should support current and future plans for economic and neighborhood development.

Connect Totem Lake with Transit

Because of the corridor's proximity to the Totem Lake neighborhood, it has the potential to help connect Totem Lake to the rest of the city and the region. It is potentially a major transportation link between the South Kirkland Park and Ride and the Totem Lake business community.

Serve pedestrian/bicycle transportation needs

An active transportation facility should allow all weather, day/night use. It should be sized to allow simultaneous safe passage for both pedestrians and all types of non-motorized cyclists. Its development should include protection of existing and new connections to the City's streets and trails. The Active Transportation Plan³ has a list of such connections.

Disclose and mitigate environmental impacts

Prior to any development of the corridor, a complete environmental review should be conducted to identify and disclose impacts and propose mitigations for those impacts. Noise, air quality, surface water and sensitive areas are typical topics that would require analysis.

Consider grade crossing delay and safety

The designs for use of the corridor should consider the delays for vehicles on existing crossing streets and potential safety concerns. Grade crossings must provide a reasonable level of safety for both users of the corridor and for street traffic.

Plan any transit use in close consultation with the City of Kirkland.

Because high-capacity rail or bus transit can profoundly impact surrounding land use, planning should consider access to the transit

The existing corridor contains many drainage facilities that require regular maintenance.



Objective under goal G1 from the Active Transportation Plan:

Objective G1.1: By 2015, open a section of the Cross-Kirkland Trail on the Eastside Rail Corridor.

Cross-Kirkland trail is the working name of a bicycle/pedestrian trail located on the right-of-way.

This area in the Houghton neighborhood contains wetlands.



The busy at-grade crossing at NE 124th Street



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offered. For example, choosing the locations of transit stations and associated parking (if any) is a decision with major short and long term impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods and on the transportation network. A process to determine station locations should include extensive work with neighborhood groups, appropriate boards and commissions and the City Council.

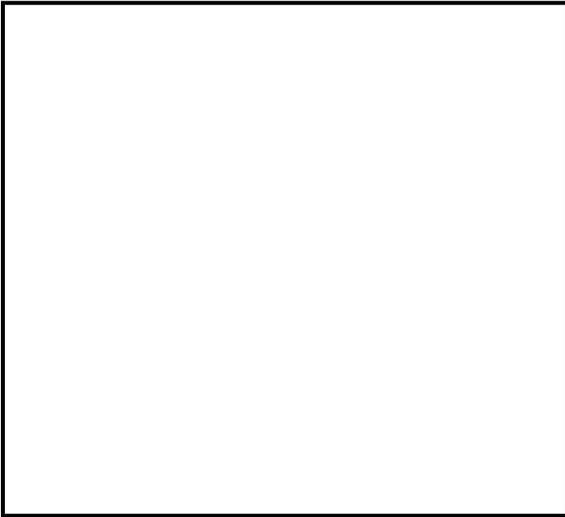
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Transit service must be designed to move people

Economically viable transit service along the corridor should be designed to attract a high level of ridership⁴. It should be frequent, available most of the day, operate between desirable destinations and be easily accessible by potential riders. The technologies to be used may vary over the planning period but should favor flexibility while offering high capacity for ridership. The transit system should also encourage bicyclists and walkers to access and use the service.

Plan for a multi use facility

The planning or implementation for one transportation mode must not foreclose future use of another mode. In the long term, transit, pedestrians and cyclists should be able to simultaneously travel safely and efficiently in the corridor. Additionally, consideration of the underground utilities that currently use and will continue to use the corridor⁵ must be in the implementation.



NOTES

¹ City of Kirkland Council Goals. <http://www.ci.kirkland.wa.us/Assets/City+Council+Goals.pdf>

² BNSF Corridor Preservation Study, Final Report May, 2007 Puget Sound Regional Council. Page 7. http://www.psrc.org/assets/3176/07-20_BNSFfinalreport.pdf

³ More People, More Places, More Often, an Active Transportation Plan City of Kirkland, March 2009. Page 100. <http://www.ci.kirkland.wa.us/depart/Public Works/Transportation Streets/Active Transportation Plan.htm>

⁴ Ridership on existing King County Metro routes could be a reasonable benchmark.

⁵ Puget Sound Energy and Cascade Water Alliance are examples of current and potential users respectively.