

## Eastside Rail Corridor Acquisition

I want to thank the Port for continuing to pursue the acquisition of the BNSF Eastside Rail Corridor. The Corridor has the potential of serving up to 6,000 passengers a day according to Sound Transit's report to the Puget Sound Regional Council. That number is high for a commuter train route and approaches the current numbers on ST's Tacoma-Seattle route.

The Port's press release yesterday wasn't specific about the closing date of the new extension or whether BNSF still agrees to the donation of the Kennydale to Wilburton and Redmond to Woodinville sections of the Subdivision.

Also, I've not heard whether King County has negotiated an interim trail use/railbanking agreement regarding these two sections of the Subdivision with BNSF. If not, the U.S. Surface Transportation Board has decided that BNSF may abandon the two sections as of April 25<sup>th</sup>, next month. I have heard rumors that BNSF has been in negotiations to sell portions of these segments for other uses.

Loss of right-of-way between Kennydale and Wilburton would eliminate potential rail service between Auburn and U.W. Bothell as well as between Snohomish and Renton. These two routes account for a large number of passengers in Sound Transit's report to the PSRC.

Loss of right-of-way between Redmond and Woodinville would reduce the possibility of passenger rail service between Issaquah, Redmond, U.W. Bothell and, ultimately, Sound Transit's light rail line in the 1-5 corridor. This is a route that needs preserving for future public transportation to serve a growing population.

How can the Port finance acquisition of the Eastside Rail Corridor? Sound Transit's ST2 plan that passed the voters last November included \$50 million "...which may be used for engineering and design, and for purchase of capital equipment and **real estate**..." in the Eastside Rail Corridor. Could the Port partner with Sound Transit in the purchase of the Corridor?

Sound Transit has collected a significant amount of tax money in the East King County Subarea. That money is programmed for construction during the last half of the next decade. Until then, Sound Transit has invested these funds. But, today's economy has limited the returns on their investments. Could the Port borrow money for the purchase of the Eastside Rail Corridor from these funds at a rate favorable to Sound Transit and the Port?

Preservation of the Eastside Rail Corridor is an investment in the future of public transportation. With the help of Sound Transit, the Port can secure the Corridor. I hope the Port will approach Sound Transit and ask for that help.

Thank you,  
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