

Docket number **EP-749-1**.

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It took three years of legal work and civic commitment within our region and the City of Kirkland to finalize the acquisition of what would become the much beloved rail-trail, the Cross Kirkland Corridor. And that does not include the DECADES of work, interest and planning within the City of Kirkland that occurred prior to the acquisition.

From a memorandum regarding the acquisition of the Eastside Rail Corridor, dated December 5, 2011: *'Kirkland has long been interested in the Kirkland Segment as the site of a pathway for bicycle and pedestrian transportation. As early as 1986, it was shown in the Lakeview and Central Houghton neighborhood plans as a possible pedestrian and bicycle way. More than 15 years ago the City identified the Cross-Kirkland Trail project and began working on development of a trail that would parallel the existing active rail line. Complications with the railroad stalled that work. The line was purchased by the Port of Seattle in 2009. The Port obtained the Corridor on behalf of the region to keep the Corridor in public ownership, with the intent of selling portions to other agencies and maintaining freight operations on the northern part of the line between Woodinville and Snohomish. In response to potential sale of the Corridor by BNSF, the Puget Sound Regional Council completed a study that found benefit to keeping the Corridor in public ownership. In March of 2009, Council approved the City's Active Transportation Plan which identified development of a Cross-Kirkland Trail as the city's highest priority active transportation project.*

In December 2009, the Port purchased the Corridor from BNSF. In response to that action and in preparation for a potential regional discussion on how the trail should be developed, the Kirkland City Council directed the Transportation Commission to develop an interest statement for use of the Kirkland Segment. Adopted by Council in April of 2011, the statement (Attachment 2) identifies 13 interests (see Figure 2), including planning for a multi-use facility. In February of 2011, Council adopted a 2011 work plan, one element of which directed staff to complete due diligence for purchase of the Kirkland Segment.'

Purchase of the Corridor within Kirkland was finalized on April 13th, 2012.

Many things could have delayed the finalization of those negotiations. We had the market crash and recession begin during those times. We were lucky that our region fared much better than most in the United States during that time, so we had the financial resources and staff remaining to even consider these negotiations. We had a dedicated and resilient City Council and City Manager that were willing and knowledgeable enough to pursue this endeavor. We also had citizens such as myself who were ready to support and continue those efforts by local government. As you know, most rail bank negotiations rarely have the history, planning, and knowledge already in place when rail abandonment opportunities arise for a community. We know we were lucky and it still took almost 4 years even with everything in place. Please do not restrict railbanking negotiations to six 180-day extensions. Please don't leave it to luck for other communities to take advantage of what has turned into one of Kirkland's finest assets, the railbanked trail known as the Cross Kirkland Corridor and the Eastside Rail Corridor.

Sincerely,

Lisa McConnell

Eastside Trail Advocates