

BNSF Railroad Right-of-Way Corridor

Frequently Asked Questions



Question: What is the status of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad tracks and right-of-way through the middle of Downtown Redmond?

Answer: The tracks in Downtown Redmond are part of the much larger 42-mile Eastside Rail Corridor. They currently cross the Sammamish River and Redmond Way on two railway trestles and end just west of Bear Creek and SR 520. There are currently no rail customers in Downtown Redmond. The Downtown Redmond tracks connect at Woodinville to a north-south rail line that extends from Renton to Snohomish. BNSF has been interested in selling the entire Eastside Rail Corridor since 2003 because of decreasing freight use and revenues; and increasing maintenance costs. The Port of Seattle, BNSF Railway and King County signed a Memorandum of Understanding in November, 2007 that will result in the Port's acquisition and receipt by donation of the 42-mile Eastside Rail Corridor from BNSF. The next step is for the Port and King County to rail-bank the corridor as a future transportation corridor.

Question: What will happen with the BNSF Eastside Rail Corridor now that the railroad has been sold to the Port of Seattle?

Answer: The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) and Sound Transit will conduct a study for the purpose of "determining whether commuter rail service between eastern Snohomish County and eastern King County ...can be a meaningful component of the region's future transportation system." The study will examine potential ridership, locations that would benefit from service, potential station sites, analyze the ability of the existing rail line and sections to accommodate service, and estimate costs for establishing a concurrent bicycle and pedestrian pathway. A final report must be submitted to the State Legislature by February 1, 2009 (SHB 3224).

Question: What Government agencies are involved in funding this process?

Answer: The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and Sound Transit are jointly funding the \$300,000 study.

Question: I have seen the corridor highlighted on the Sound Transit Phase II (ST2) plan. How does ST2 fit in to the WSDOT/Sound Transit study?

Answer: Sound Transit proposes to set aside \$50 million in the ST2 plan as a potential contribution to a partnership for commuter rail service in the BNSF corridor. The PSRC/Sound Transit study authorized by the State Legislature will develop information about the potential for future commuter rail opportunities that could be used by any future partnerships formed by Sound Transit. Also, ST2 is considering linking Downtown Seattle and Downtown Redmond via Downtown Bellevue and Overlake with light rail transit. Sound Transit is currently preparing an environmental impact statement and preliminary design that uses a portion of the BNSF in Downtown Redmond to accommodate this new transportation mode.

Question: What other uses are being considered for the Downtown Redmond BNSF corridor?

Answer: The corridor is planned to be developed as a regional trail and a downtown park, with a variety of passive uses such as open lawn areas, park-like landscaping and some public plazas/seating areas. We anticipate it will be a significant amenity for Redmond residents.

Question: How can I be involved in this process?

Answer: The Port of Seattle will be conducting three Eastside Rail Corridor Open Houses. This is a chance for the public to learn about the purchase of the BNSF corridor, the transaction timeline, and future opportunities for the corridor. An open house will be held on Wednesday, June 25 from 7:00-9:00 PM at the Newport High School Commons (4333 Factoria Blvd. SE, Bellevue). For more information contact Geri Poor, phone number (206) 728-3778, or e-mail poor.g@portseattle.org.