

Eastrail Fiber Overview

Project Background

The Eastrail is a regional trail that connects the Eastside and provides the cities of Renton, Bellevue, Kirkland, Woodinville, and Redmond with opportunities for utilities, recreation, and transportation.

The development of the Eastrail Corridor presents a unique, time-sensitive opportunity to create new communications infrastructure in a region where a lack of adequate fiber access may have a negative impact on municipalities, local businesses, economic development, and smart community project opportunities.

A fiber feasibility study was completed in 2019 and focused on understanding the long-term vision, use cases, construction feasibility and cost, as well as opportunities for regional collaboration and revenue. The ROI (return on investment) study gauged favorable private sector interest in access to fiber if it was built.

Project Team

Property owners (King County, Sound Transit, and the Cities of Redmond, Kirkland, and Woodinville); plus, easement holders (Puget Sound Energy, King County, and Sound Transit); and permitting authorities (Cities of Renton and Bellevue).

Project Timeframe

01/01/2019 – 12/31/2024

Current Scope of Project

This project presents the opportunity to build conduit and fiber optic infrastructure within the Eastrail Corridor through a significant (28.7-mile) portion of King County's fast-growing metropolitan areas (Woodinville, Kirkland, Redmond, Bellevue, Renton, and unincorporated parts of King County).

Potential Business Models in the RFP

- Publicly funded project—Eastrail right-of-way owners implement, own, and operate the infrastructure
- Privately funded project-Private entity implements, owns, and operates the infrastructure.
- Public-private partnership-Joint public-private or public non-profit ownership and operations.
- A hybrid model.

Documentation/Agreements

- Developing a non-binding MOU (memorandum of understanding)
- An RFP (request for proposals) for the project
- Investment and revenue share agreements
- Vendor contract/lease agreement

Project benefits and Outcomes

Fiber Optics will provide the communication infrastructure to support regional planned and future activities along the Eastrail Corridor. New opportunities to use the fiber optics to support trail & community projects. Including non-motorized recreation, transportation, and trail enhancements, including internet access, smart lighting, smart trail sensors, public safety, and traffic crossing signals.



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The 2019 feasibility study by consultant CTC Energy and Technology identified fiber optic infrastructure as an economic development benefit. As part of the Return on Investment (ROI) study, talking with more than 12 private companies in the region (real estate developers, aircraft manufactures, telecom companies, and architectural firms), there are indications that additional infrastructure capacity is needed along the Eastrail. In addition, the RFP will determine the potential of this infrastructure to generate revenue by leasing property rights and spare fiber to private partners. The return on investment analysis, concluded, “The potential revenue opportunity is robust, as is the significant value and avoided cost derived by public sector users over time. “The consultants expect that revenues will cover operational expenses and debt service.

Project Priorities

The intent is to advertise an RFP that includes the following priorities, which are consistent with the Eastrail Owners’ input:

- Increase the capacity for service to underserved and/or unserved areas of the County.
- Balance upfront and ongoing costs with maximizing service.
- Encourage equitable economic development.
- Address privacy and data security.
- Preserve or advance the potential for a municipal-owned broadband system.
- Provide benefits or enhancements for Eastrail users
- Support partnerships that enable extensions from the Eastrail Fiber main route to last mile connections.