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**Burke-Gilman Trail Missing Link EIS  
Frequently Asked Questions  
November 4, 2015**

**EIS Schedule and Process**

**Why is this Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) required, and why has it been delayed so long?**

The project has been under consideration for a long time, and there have been several appeals to the process along the way. In the latest round, the City of Seattle Hearing Examiner determined that an EIS was necessary in order to evaluate the project's impacts related to traffic hazards, identified by the Examiner as conflicts between truck movements and other vehicle traffic and trail users along Shilshole Avenue NW, between 17<sup>th</sup> and Vernon. SDOT has decided to expand the scope of the EIS beyond traffic hazards along the Shilshole Segment, to include different build alternatives and an evaluation of their potential impacts.

**How long will it take to complete the EIS, and why does it require so much time?**

In the current schedule the Draft EIS would be released in the spring of 2016. All of the environmental issues we are studying take time and have to be looked at very carefully. Part of the time needed is so that preliminary designs for each of the alternatives can be developed for the EIS. Also, a considerable amount of data must be collected. For example, data must be collected for traffic at various intersections, and for parking utilization in the area in order to properly evaluate potential impacts to transportation, parking, and land use. It is important to complete the EIS correctly and thoroughly, which takes time.

**What types of data are being used for the EIS? For example, do you have projections on the number of cyclists currently in the city, how that number is likely to grow, and the percentage of Burke-Gilman users in the future?**

Numerous data sources are being used for the EIS, and the type of data depends upon the element of the environment. All data sources will be disclosed in the Draft EIS. These will include information on existing and expected users of the Burke-Gilman Trail, which is based on current counts of trail users, projected population growth, and changes in travel modes over time.

**What alternative is SDOT most inclined to want to build?**

SDOT has not chosen a preferred alternative at this time. SDOT will consider each alternative's potential impacts to the environment, safety, and traffic, as well as other considerations such as the costs and benefits of each route before making a decision. A preferred alternative will be identified in the Final EIS, and may include a combination of different alternatives from the Draft EIS.

**What are the criteria that SDOT will use to evaluate all of the alternatives? Have the criteria been prioritized in one way or another?**

SDOT received a number of suggestions for potential routes to complete the Missing Link during scoping in 2013. These routes were screened in order to reduce the number of potential routes to four alternatives that will be evaluated in the EIS. Screening was completed in May 2015 using the following criteria, all of which was given equal weight:

- Directness of route
- Number and types of trail crossings (driveways and intersections)
- Street and arterial classification

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- Adjacent land uses
  - Right-of-way width

**The City of Seattle has adopted Vision Zero. How will the alternatives be evaluated in comparison to these goals?**

Vision Zero is an approach to traffic safety, with an ultimate goal of ending traffic deaths and serious injuries in Seattle by 2030. Major components of Vision Zero include lower speed limits and street design changes. The safety of trail users is a fundamental concern during the design process and the alternatives will be evaluated for their consistency with current trail and street design standards that are being implemented as part of Vision Zero.

**EIS Alternatives**

**What are the routes you are studying in the EIS? How did you select those routes?**

Routes were selected based upon the screening criteria described above. Through that process, three alternative corridors were identified, and four potential routes were determined, including routes along Leary Ave NW, Ballard Ave NW, and one along each side of Shilshole Ave NW. Those alternatives are shown on the EIS Fact Sheet, included in the June 17, 2015 Open House materials on the project website.

**Are all of the routes being treated equally? What are you using for the basis of design for the routes?**

All routes are being treated equally. Consistent with the project's purpose and need, the trail alternatives will be designed as a multi-use trail, as opposed to a split mode trail with one portion exclusively for bikes and another for other users. This is consistent with the nature of the rest of the Burke-Gilman Trail and means that each trail alternative will be designed to optimize the experience of trail users to the greatest extent feasible within the right-of-way.

**Are all of the potential routes being evaluated in terms of multiple uses, or just in terms of cycling uses?**

Yes, all of the potential routes are being evaluated in terms of multiple uses. This is an important point. It is easy to think of the Burke-Gilman Trail as just a bicycle facility, but in fact it is a multi-use trail intended for adults and children to safely engage in a variety of recreational activities such as walking, running, skating, and biking as well as for people commuting to work, school, and commercial and residential areas. All of the alternatives under evaluation will be analyzed for their potential to create a safe trail experience for all users.

**Why are you considering other routes when it is clear that cyclists will use the Shilshole route anyway?**

SEPA requires the consideration of alternatives when developing an EIS. The Burke-Gilman Trail is a multi-use regional trail that is used for a wide variety of recreational and transportation uses, not just cycling. SDOT needs to consider all potential users and uses when designing the trail. SDOT recognizes that some cyclists may not use the Burke-Gilman Trail if the route selected is not the fastest route between two points.

**Issues to Be Studied**

**What are all of the issues you will be studying in the EIS?**

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The issue areas and potential impacts to be studied include geology and soils, fish and wildlife, utilities, transportation and parking, air quality and greenhouse gas, cultural resources, and recreation. The EIS will also explore current land uses in the area, potential economic impacts to businesses adjacent to the trail, and the potential impacts of a proposed trail along the shoreline.

**How will you evaluate the impacts or potential benefits of the trail on existing businesses?**

The purpose of an EIS is to disclose the potential for significant adverse impacts. SEPA requires the evaluation of several elements of the environment, including transportation and land use, as well as an analysis of certain economic factors. As part of that evaluation, SDOT will consider potential adverse impacts on businesses related to both project construction and operation. And while the focus of the EIS will be on any potential adverse environmental impacts, SDOT may also include a high-level analysis to speak qualitatively about any potential benefits to businesses the project may have.

**How will you evaluate the potential loss of parking due to the trail?**

SDOT will evaluate the number of on-street and off-street parking spaces available relative to demand under each of the alternatives, and compare those numbers to the number of on-street and off-street parking available under existing conditions (No Build Alternative).

**How will you evaluate the potential to improve safety along the trail?**

SDOT will review collision history and known traffic hazards along each proposed alternative and consider how the project may increase or decrease the risk of conflicts for people using the trail (whether walking, biking, etc.) and people driving. Sight distances at impacted driveways and intersections will also be evaluated.

**Will you evaluate the potential health benefits of the trail?**

No, general health benefits will not be a part of the EIS analysis. However, by creating a safe, direct, and defined multi-use trail for people of all ages and abilities, the project expands the opportunities for recreation and non-motorized transportation, the benefits of which are widely documented.

**Why are Ballard businesses treated differently than other businesses in the city? Trails cross business driveways all of the time. What's the difference in Ballard?**

Ballard businesses are treated the same as other businesses in the city. However, the proposed trail alignments all travel through a manufacturing and industrial center which presents unique challenges. For example, Shilshole Ave NW, Leary Way NW, and NW 45<sup>th</sup> Street are designated as Major Truck Streets, which are primary routes for the movement of goods and services.

**Existing Conditions**

**The Missing Link is a very dangerous area; people get hurt there on a daily basis. Aren't there some other safety measures you could put in place now to make it less dangerous?**

We cannot construct a trail, or portions of a trail, until completion of the SEPA process, but SDOT implemented several safety improvements within the corridor during 2014 and 2015. They included 1) converting NW 45<sup>th</sup> St between NW 46<sup>th</sup> St and 11<sup>th</sup> Ave NW to one-way eastbound for traffic, a two-way protected bike lane on the north side of the roadway, and revised roadway markings at the intersection of 11<sup>th</sup> Ave NW, 2) repaving the shoulder on the south side of Shilshole Ave NW, and new roadway pavement south of the intersection at NW

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Market St, 3) creating a 4-way stop at the intersection of 17<sup>th</sup> Ave NW and Ballard Ave NW, and 4) creating a 3-way stop at the intersection of NW 48<sup>th</sup> St and Ballard Ave NW.

**An all-way traffic stop at 17<sup>th</sup> and Shilshole would make a big difference. Can you install this now?**

SDOT Traffic Operations staff will look at traffic volumes and collision history to see if an all-way stop is warranted at this location.

**Paving over the railroad tracks would result in significant safety improvements. Why can't they just be paved over?**

The Ballard Terminal Railroad is a functional railroad, operating under a franchise agreement, and as such, SDOT cannot pave over the tracks. Train movements are infrequent and occur almost exclusively at night, but nevertheless, it is still an operating railroad.

**It seems like removing parking from Shilshole would improve safety. Why is parking still allowed there?**

We are not aware of safety concerns related to parked cars along Shilshole. If issues do arise, we will look at monitoring the parking at that time.

**Public Process**

**What is the role of the public in the EIS, and what weight will public opinion have related to the final decision?**

An Environmental Impact Statement is not a decision document, but an analysis designed to help elected officials and other community leaders make the most informed decisions possible. The EIS will evaluate all of the alternatives equally, describe potential adverse impacts of each alternative and whether those impacts would be significant, and also describe proposed mitigation measures to reduce any potential adverse impacts. The public is encouraged to comment on the Draft EIS, but it will not be a vote for the most popular option. The City will identify a preferred alternative in the Final EIS that best meets the project's purpose and need. Ultimately, City officials will weigh the information presented in the EIS along with other factors before deciding upon the final project alignment.

**How will the public be kept informed about the progress of the EIS? What is the public process when the Draft EIS is released?**

Information and updates on the progress of the EIS will be posted on the SDOT [Burke Gilman website](#) when they are available. When the Draft EIS is released, notice will be provided according to the provisions of SMC 25.05.510 and SMC 25.05.455, which include publication in the *Daily Journal of Commerce*, the City's Land Use Information Bulletin, and the City's official SEPA register. In addition notice will be mailed and emailed to interested parties. The notice will include information about the availability of the Draft EIS, when the public hearing will be held, and how to provide comments on the Draft EIS. The public will have the opportunity to comment on the Draft EIS when it is published; the comment period will be at least 30 days. If you would like to be included in this notice please send your contact information to [BGT\\_MissingLink\\_Info@seattle.gov](mailto:BGT_MissingLink_Info@seattle.gov).

**What is the public process when the Final EIS is released? What is the process for appeal?**

Once the Final EIS is complete, notice will be provided according to the provisions of SMC 25.05.510 and SMC 25.05.460, and will undergo the same publication and distribution as the Draft EIS. The process for appeal of an EIS is described in the City's SEPA regulations, Seattle Municipal Code 25.05.