

The Seattle Times

Bellevue looks to light rail to shape its growth

Editorial—Bellevue is bringing rhetoric to life with a plan to attract employment and residential growth around a light-rail line in an underdeveloped part of the city.

LIGHT-RAIL advocates extol the transformative potential of connections between population centers and transit-oriented development around rail stations. Bellevue city leaders are working to bring rhetoric to life.

Sound Transit's planned East Link, between downtown Seattle and downtown Redmond, is divided into segments with alternatives now undergoing preliminary review. The Bel-Red corridor, an underdeveloped, long-dormant 900-acre swath of land identified as Segment D, has fired imaginations.

Bellevue's preferred path would eventually link downtown Bellevue and Redmond's high-tech enclave of Overlake by 2021. In between would be four light-rail stations surrounded by high-rise buildings, housing, parks and commercial development.

Times' reporter Katherine Long found an impressive confluence of enthusiasm among investors, political leaders, city planners and environmental groups.

"It's really an opportunity to put into practice all of the smart-growth strategies that have been talked about for some time," Bellevue Mayor Grant Degginger said.

A Cascade Land Conservancy program director, Jeff Pavey, agreed, "This is a smart, well thought-out way to grow."



A vision of attracting employment and residential growth around a transportation network has propelled regional mass-transit plans. Skeptics, including this editorial page, have wondered if light rail trumps the flexibility of buses, but community leaders are resolving that debate close to home.

Sound Transit's board will be identifying preferred alternatives this spring, which will advance to 30-percent engineering and more review. A strong, affirmative endorsement from Bellevue City Council will carry weight.

The opportunity, creativity and enthusiasm stirred by light rail is evident in Bellevue's plans.