



City Council Agenda Bill

20070

Bill Number

Subject: Bellingham Railway Museum presentation to Council regarding a proposal for a trolley car tourist attraction along Squalicum Parkway

Summary Statement: David Baker, President of the Bellingham Railway Museum, will make a presentation to the City Council regarding a proposal to the City of Bellingham to partner with the Bellingham Railway Museum to create a tourist attraction using the last available Bellingham Bay & British Columbia Railroad right-of-way and track.

Previous Council Action:

Fiscal Impact: To be detailed

Funding Source:

Attachments: Project description

| Meeting Activity | Meeting Date | Staff Recommendation | Presented By | Time |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|----------------------|--|--------|
| Committee Briefing Information Only | 05-Aug-2013 | Select an Option | David Baker, President Bellingham Railway Museum | 15 min |
| | | | | |

Council Committee:

Parks & Recreation

Gene Knutson, Chair

Stan Snapp; Terry Bornemann

Committee Actions:

Agenda Bill Contact:

J. Lynne Walker, 778-8200

| Reviewed By | Initials | Date |
|---------------------------|----------|---------|
| Gene Knutson, Sponsor | GK/slw | 7/29/13 |
| Seth Fleetwood, President | | |
| | | |
| Legal | pmr | 7/30/13 |
| Mayor | KL/BA | 7/30/13 |

Council Action:



PROPOSAL TO THE CITY OF BELLINGHAM TO PARTNER WITH THE BELLINGHAM RAILWAY MUSEUM TO CREATE A TOURIST ATTRACTION USING THE LAST AVAILABLE BELLINGHAM BAY & BRITISH COLUMBIA RAILROAD RIGHT OF WAY AND TRACK, AN IMPORTANT PART OF OUR CITY HISTORY

BACKGROUND

The section of track running the length of Squaticum Way from Roeder Avenue to Meridian is the last remaining intact section of the original Bellingham Bay and British Columbia Railroad (BB&BC). The line, built in 1912, originally ran from Sehome Wharf in Bellingham to Sumas to connect to the Canadian Pacific Railroad. There was a branch just north of Everson, going to Lynden, and a branch at Sumas that went to Glacier. The line was purchased first by the Milwaukee Road Railroad and subsequently by BNSF. In 1982 when the bridge at Everson was destroyed by fire the line was abandoned. The short section to BCS Storage on Orchard St. was in use until 2006. The Lynden-Sumas section is still used by BNSF

As it is the only section of the railroad within the City a proposal has been prepared to preserve the line as part of the city's heritage and to use it to promote the tourist potential of the area.

Pictures of the track during Milwaukee ownership



CURRENT CONDITION

It is understood that the right of way is currently being negotiated between the City and BNSF for use as part of the Bay to Baker Trail. There is enough space to use the line as a Light Railway, using trolley cars that used to be operated on the Seattle waterfront. The project would proceed in stages as laid out below.

The present condition of the line can be assessed from the photographs below. The first task would be to clear the undergrowth then inspect and repair the track as necessary



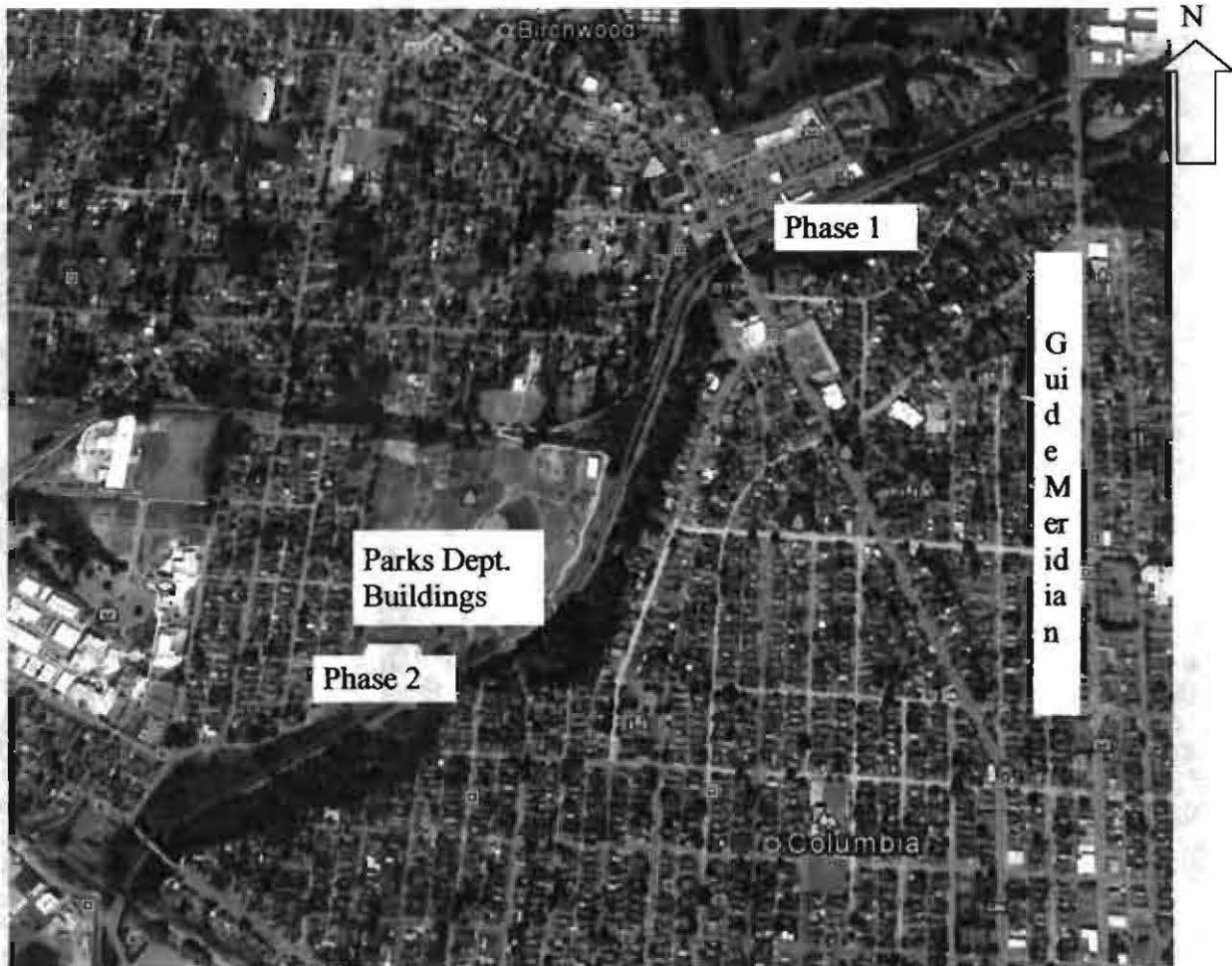
The Northern end of the line at the junction of Squalicum Parkway and Guide Meridian

The Northern end of the line at the junction of Squalicum Parkway and Guide Meridian

Proposed site of the new Workshop/Museum building, between the rail line and Squalicum Parkway

At the present time, the railway line infrastructure is basically intact. Due to inactivity, the line is overgrown. Just south of the entrance to the Parks Dept. buildings area the line is “washed out” for a distance of about 15 yards. This would have to be filled in during Phase 2.

MAP FOR PHASES 1 & 2



The idea of the Museum is to open this line as a tourist attraction as a Light Railway; initially using Speeder cars with a trailer but ultimately with trolley cars. The railway could also be a focus for historic artifacts of the area such as the locomotive # 7 currently in Bloedel-Donovan Park.

PHASE 1 (1.2 miles), RED LINE

If the negotiations with BNSF are successful the proposal would be for the City to lease the track bed of the railroad to the Museum to operate as a Light Railway. Initially 'Speeder' cars would be used but ultimately the line would use Trolley cars that until recently were operated on the Seattle waterfront. The railway could also be a focus for historic artifacts of the area such as locomotive # 7, currently in Bloedel - Donovan Park.

From Guide Meridian to the Squalicum Creek Park adjacent to the existing Parks Department Buildings. The Museum would design and build a suitable building, between the railroad tracks and Squalicum Parkway, for use as a Workshop/Museum to accommodate track and artifacts. A spur from the existing track into the area of this building is also proposed. The area round the building would be used to lay down a model railroad and form the basis of a Model Railroad Society; with tracks of various gauges. It is felt that this would become a large attraction for both locals and visitors.

Another location for this building could be across the existing tracks adjacent to Guide -Meridian.

PHASE 2 (0.5 miles), BLUE LINE

This would be from this point to where the line joins the BNSF line to Mount Baker Plywood. Just south of the Parks dept. Buildings area the line is 'washed out' for a distance of about 15 yards. This could be refurbished and the stream improved as part of the parks site development.

PHASE 3

This would entail the purchase and refurbishment of at least one Trolley car from Seattle. The car would be powered by a generator mounted on a 4 wheel trailer. This could be run on diesel, gas, or waste oil from local restaurants.

PHASE 4

Would be considered in the future and would take the line along the Bay to the area of the old Great Northern Station or to the park currently opposite the Bellweather

CRITICAL PATH FOR PHASE 1

1. Present ideas to the City Council.
2. Work with Parks Dept. to establish acceptable sites and clear line.
3. Set up platforms and run Speeder trains
4. Set up sign at junction of Guide Meridian and Squalicum Parkway.

After the Museum has become established on the site a publicity campaign would be started to raise funds and attract a wider number of volunteers.

The way forward from here would be to consolidate the track and begin the design and erection of a new Museum Building.

Cost of phase 1 would be in the region of \$250,00

CRITICAL PATH FOR PHASE 2

1. Complete Workshop/Museum building.
2. Move #7 loco from Bloedel Donovan to site

3. Provide secure cover for loco.
4. Fence in Building and prepare land
5. Add Switch to existing line
6. Track to building from existing line
7. Rebuild the line under the "washout" just south of the Parks Dept. site entrance.

COSTS FOR PHASE 2 Approx. \$500,000

CRITICAL PATH FOR PHASE 3

Prepare to buy and operate trolley car(s). Start to lay out model railroads around building.

Trolley car plus refurbishing

Generator for Trolley car

Model railroad layouts

COSTS FOR PHASE 3 Approx. \$1,000,000.

CRITICAL PATH FOR PHASE 4

This would depend entirely on integrating this scheme with future City plans for the development of the waterfront area. It has huge potential but it would be premature to speculate on the various options.