



## King County

**Ron Sims**

King County Executive

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[www.metrokc.gov](http://www.metrokc.gov)

June 13, 2005

The Honorable Phil Noble  
Deputy Mayor, City of Bellevue  
11511 Main St.  
P.O. Box 90012  
Bellevue, WA 98009-9012

Dear Deputy Mayor Noble:

As you have probably heard, our region has been given an opportunity of a lifetime with the chance to transform into public use the 47-mile Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) rail corridor from Snohomish to Renton. After more than a century of use for trains, this corridor offers wide-ranging possibilities for use by the people of this region including more trails for biking and walking, new public rail transportation, and other alternative modes of transportation.

The only way to preserve public choice is through public ownership. BNSF is planning to sell the corridor and has been looking for a buyer for some time. King County has signed an agreement with BNSF for exclusive rights to negotiate possible purchase of this land.

No final decision on the use of the corridor has been made. However, we strongly believe it is good public policy to preserve the entire corridor for public use. You and your constituents will help decide its final use as part of a full, thorough public process.

The REET #1 funds being used as earnest money to open negotiations do not commit the county to a final decision on the corridor's use. Additionally, these REET #1 funds are excess revenues beyond what was projected or budgeted for in the 2005 adopted budget. No projects have been cut or deferred to fund this acquisition. We must use this extra one time money to secure a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

On Tuesday, May 31, 2005, I transmitted to the Metropolitan King County Council an ordinance authorizing the BNSF Rail Line acquisition project and appropriating \$3.8 million to the project.

I am aware of the Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC) interest and investment in the corridor. I can reassure you that our negotiations will not compete with PSRC's study of the corridor.

The Honorable Phil Noble.

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If we can reach an agreement with BNSF on a fair price, my priority is to make the corridor into a trail, creating an important link in our regional trail system that currently serves as many as 9,600 people on a given Saturday. However, building a trail does not preclude other uses. It is important to note that the Rails to Trails Act permits dual uses so as we move forward, we are open to discussions about transportation uses, as well. The rails to trails process also serves the public with the most economical and cost effective way to purchase the corridor.

Since announcing our plans for the railroad corridor I have heard from people throughout King County that they welcome the idea of a new link in our regional trail system, should we successfully acquire the corridor. A strong trail system brings with it increased tourism dollars, greater health benefits for people throughout the region and supports alternative forms of transportation.

As we move forward, an important part of the process will be working with our city partners, those communities adjacent to the rail corridor and recreational enthusiasts throughout the region. I look forward to hearing from you and keeping you updated as things progress.

Please feel free to contact Nori Catabay of my office, at 206-296-4629, should you have any questions or would like more information. She would be more than happy to set up a briefing for you and/or your staff. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ron Sims". The signature is stylized with a large, circular flourish at the beginning.

Ron Sims

King County Executive