

# 7

## Cumulative Impacts

# CHAPTER 7. CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

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“Cumulative impact” is not defined in the SEPA rules, but it is defined under federal rules implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). “Cumulative impact” is defined in the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations as the “*impact on the environment that results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions*” (40 CFR Part 1508). This chapter considers the effects of the Energize Eastside project when considered with other proposed actions or projects within the potentially affected area.

Washington courts have limited the requirement for cumulative impact analysis under SEPA, stating that an analysis of the cumulative impacts of a proposed project is not required under SEPA unless: (1) there is some evidence that the project will facilitate future action that will result in additional impacts, or (2) the project is dependent on subsequent proposed development. A project's cumulative impacts that are merely speculative need not be considered (*Boehm v. City of Vancouver*, 111 Wn. App. 711(2002) – Cumulative impacts).

## 7.1 LAND USE AND HOUSING

In general, as population and employment growth occurs, there is an increased likelihood that land uses will change, although consistency with comprehensive plans and subarea plans helps to decrease the potential for adverse impacts. The Energize Eastside project is proposed in response to expected growth, because a reliable electrical transmission system is needed to support that growth. The Energize Eastside project is not expected to affect the scale of future development, but it could affect the timing of future development, depending on the schedule of implementation. The availability of reliable electricity is not expected to represent a cumulative impact to land use. It will not incrementally increase or alter proposed land uses because it is being undertaken to supply land uses that have been identified in adopted land use plans.

## 7.2 SCENIC VIEWS AND THE AESTHETIC ENVIRONMENT

In general, as development occurs, there is an increased likelihood that scenic views and the aesthetic environment will be adversely impacted. Development can result in large buildings or structures that block or obscure views, and the trend of urbanization and densification results in changing views and vistas. The Energize Eastside project will contribute to that trend, by providing electricity to supply projected development. The incremental visual impact from the project will add to the increasingly urbanized visual environment within the study area. Because development is expected to conform to each community's plans, policies, and regulations regarding aesthetics, these cumulative impacts are not expected to be significant (beyond those identified for the Bellevue South and Newcastle Segments in Sections 4.2.5 and 8.2).

## 7.3 WATER RESOURCES

No long-term impacts to water resources would occur as a result of PSE's Proposed Alignment, and the project is not expected to contribute to indirect or direct impacts resulting from other projects; therefore, no cumulative impacts to water resources would occur.

## 7.4 PLANTS AND ANIMALS

Urbanization has resulted in an overall loss and degradation of available fish and wildlife habitat throughout the study area, although current regulations have slowed the trend of habitat loss to a degree, and in the case of fish passage in particular, future projects will likely improve habitat. The Energize Eastside project would contribute to the trend toward degradation directly by removing trees and altering available habitat conditions, and indirectly by continuing to supply energy to support a growing, developing region. Mitigation would help to reduce cumulative impacts, but it would not immediately replace all habitat lost. Replacing large, significant trees with smaller planting-sized trees would not fully replace the habitat functions provided by the existing conditions. In accord with regulations, over time the loss of function would be replaced through replacement trees and habitat restoration, reducing the net impact of development. Other large projects, such as Sound Transit's East Link project, overlap with the proposed Energize Eastside project. The East Link project will impact plants and animals by continuing to contribute to the trend of reducing habitat (forested areas) in Bellevue, Redmond, and King County (Sound Transit, 2011).

## 7.5 GREENHOUSE GASES

All GHG emissions contribute to cumulative climate change impacts. The analysis of the effects of GHG emissions is essentially a cumulative effects analysis that is subsumed within the general analysis and discussion of climate change impacts. Therefore, direct and indirect effects analysis for GHG emissions will adequately address the cumulative impacts for climate change from the project, and a separate cumulative effects analysis for GHG emissions is not needed (CEQ, 2016).

## 7.6 RECREATION

In general, there is pressure on recreation areas from development and increased use. The significant impacts to recreation sites from PSE's Proposed Alignment could contribute to the degradation of existing recreation resources and limit the ability for municipalities to provide additional recreation opportunities, unless mitigation is provided. Construction activity throughout the region could result in potential impacts to parks and other recreation sites. The most likely future action that could alter or affect recreation sites within the Energize Eastside study area is Sound Transit's East Link project, which could be constructed during the same general time frame as the project. The East Link project will impact some parks in Bellevue, Redmond, and King County (Sound Transit, 2011). In combination with the East Link project and other projects planned in the study area, the Energize Eastside project could potentially cause cumulative impacts to recreation if the same recreation sites are affected or if the construction periods overlap. The Energize Eastside project may avoid direct impacts to recreation sites by siting facilities outside of designated parks or recreation areas. Construction of the East Link project is scheduled to occur between 2015 and 2021. Construction for the Energize Eastside project may occur during this same period; however, construction of Energize Eastside and East Link could be coordinated to avoid or minimize impacts to recreation areas by limiting the duration of construction that would result in the closure of recreation areas or disruption of access to recreation areas. Coordination with potentially affected Cities will reduce potential impacts through facility siting, and would comply with applicable permitting requirements to mitigate impacts. With appropriate mitigation, the cumulative construction and operation effects of the project and other planned projects are not expected to change long-term trends related to the use of recreation facilities in the study area.

## **7.7 CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES**

The project has the potential for cumulative impacts by supporting development and redevelopment within the Eastside area. Development has the potential for ground disturbance, which could impact additional belowground archaeological resources, if present. For historic resources, development could involve demolition or alterations to the setting of existing historic resources, if present. It is probable that potential impacts to historic and cultural resources would be mitigated through appropriate preservation planning and, at the time of development, through consultation with DAHP, affected Tribes, and local governments, as applicable to the type of impacted resource.

## **7.8 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH – ELECTRIC AND MAGNETIC FIELDS**

The project would reduce magnetic fields along existing transmission line corridor; therefore, there would be no cumulative effect. All of PSE's Proposed Alignment is entirely within PSE's existing corridor, with no new sources of magnetic fields associated with a new corridor. Overall, no adverse cumulative effects are expected because existing sources combined with magnetic fields associated with the project are expected to be well below reference guidelines.

## **7.9 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH – PIPELINE SAFETY**

No significant adverse impacts to environmental health related to pipeline safety are likely from the Energize Eastside project. The likelihood of a pipeline incident would remain low in the shared corridor, and no substantial increase in risk compared to existing conditions has been identified. With implementation of mitigation measures, these risks would be even lower. Other activities by other parties (e.g., ground-disturbing activities), unrelated to the Energize Eastside project, may occur in the corridor on occasion. While these activities remain a source of potential pipeline safety risk in the corridor, the project would not contribute to adverse impacts resulting from these other activities; therefore, no cumulative impacts to environmental health from pipeline safety would occur.

## **7.10 ECONOMICS**

The economic impacts of the project have not been fully evaluated in this EIS because SEPA does not require an economic analysis. To the extent that the project supports growth and development as described under Land Use and Housing, property values are likely to rise, offsetting any potential adverse impacts to assessed value used for property tax assessment. The effects to ecosystem services would be cumulative with other development that removes trees. If mitigation is provided per codes and regulations, over time the loss of ecosystem services would be replaced through replacement trees, reducing the net impact of development. Temporal losses could also be offset with additional mitigation.

## 7.11 EARTH RESOURCES

Although the entire region is a seismically active area, geologic and soil conditions vary widely within a relatively short distance. Other projects in the area would also be required to adhere to the same Washington state and local building codes as the Energize Eastside Project, which would reduce the risk to people and property in the region. While future seismic events cannot be predicted, adherence to federal, state, and local programs, requirements, and policies pertaining to building safety and construction would limit the potential for injury or damage. The project would not increase the risk of damage or injury due to seismic events. Therefore, the Energize Eastside project, combined with past, present, and other foreseeable development in the area, would not result in a cumulatively significant impact related to geologic hazards, soils, or seismic conditions.