

Summary Phase 1 Draft EIS Public Hearings

Kirkland Justice Center • February 23, 2016 • 6:00 – 8:00 pm

Renton City Hall • February 25, 2016 • 6:00 – 8:00 pm

Newcastle Elementary School • February 27, 2016 • 2:00 – 4:00 pm

Redmond City Hall • February 29, 2016 • 6:00 – 8:00 pm

Bellevue City Hall • March 1, 2016 • 6:00 – 9:00 pm

Introduction

During the public comment period on the Phase 1 Draft EIS (Environmental Impact Statement) on the Energize Eastside project proposed by Puget Sound Energy (PSE), the City of Bellevue (and Partner Jurisdictions) hosted a series of five open house/public hearings. An expanded comment period of 45 days provided an opportunity for agencies, Tribes, and members of the public to comment on four alternatives and possible adverse impacts and potential mitigation measures associated with each. The meetings were an opportunity to learn more about the Energize Eastside EIS and to provide oral comments on the Phase 1 Draft EIS. The information presented at all of the meetings was the same. People could also provide comments without attending a meeting by submitting comments via mail, email, or the online comment form on the project website during the Phase 1 Draft EIS comment period, which ended on March 14, 2016. Hearing materials are provided in the appendices attached to this summary. Appendix I includes notification materials and Appendix II includes the agenda and exhibits.

The Phase 1 Draft EIS programmatically evaluated the potential environmental impacts of various alternatives considered for addressing PSE's identified project need and objectives. This broad evaluation is intended to provide decision makers and community members with a better understanding of what constructing and operating the alternative methods would mean to the community, and how best to evaluate the environmental impacts of a project level alternative in Phase 2. The Phase 2 Draft EIS will address project-level construction and operation impacts of alternatives carried forward.

Phase 1 Draft EIS Notification

Notification of the release of the Phase 1 Draft EIS, 45-day comment period and dates, times, and locations of the public hearings was distributed via project signs installed along key

SEPA Lead Agencies must meet the basic requirement of WAC 197-11-502 to provide public notice and to invite comment on a Draft EIS. Every Lead Agency adopts its own specific noticing procedures, consistent with this state requirement and including additional measures as desired. The City of Bellevue as the SEPA Lead Agency for the Energize Eastside project identified and met all of the legal noticing requirements for each of the partner jurisdictions (legal notice in Seattle Times and Renton Reporter, specific electronic postings such as Bellevue's Permit Bulletin, mailings to specific properties and parties of record, and posting notices or signs as required in Renton, Redmond, and Newcastle). Bellevue made the Draft EIS available for purchase per WAC 197-11-504 to facilitate public and agency review. An expanded comment period provided the public with 45 days (instead of standard 30) to review and comment on the Draft EIS. One public hearing was hosted in each of the partner jurisdictions. Public notice of the comment period and hearings was distributed more widely than required via electronic postings, mailings, road signs, and paid advertisements in community papers.

roadways, legal notices, display ads, postal mail, email, social media and websites as outlined below.

DATE	NOTIFICATION	DISTRIBUTION
January 28, 2016	Project signs announcing public hearings and comment period	Installed along 26 arterial roads in the cities of Bellevue, Newcastle and Renton
January 28, 2016	Legal notice	Placed in City of Bellevue’s Weekly Permit Bulletin, in the Ecology SEPA register
January 28, 2016	Legal notice	Placed in the Issaquah Press — newspaper of record for the City of Issaquah
January 28, 2016	Official notice of availability	Sent via email and postal mail to the official SEPA mailing lists of Partner Cities, and also to the Energize Eastside EIS parties of record and interested parties
January 28, 2016	Hard copies of DEIS	Available at Cities’ public facilities for review
January 28, 2016	Official notice of availability	Posted on EnergizeEastsideEIS.org
January 29 & February 5, 2016	Legal notice	Placed in the Seattle Times — newspaper of record for the cities of Bellevue, Kirkland, Newcastle, and Redmond and in the Renton Reporter — newspaper of record for the City of Renton
February 10 & February 17, 2016	Display advertisement announcing public hearings and comment period	Placed in the Seattle Times
February 5 & February 12, 2016	Display advertisement announcing public hearings and comment period	Placed in the Bellevue Reporter, Kirkland Reporter, Redmond Reporter, and Renton Reporter
February 19, 2016	Legal notice correction to city contact email address	Placed in the Seattle Times — newspaper of record for the cities of Bellevue, Kirkland, Newcastle, and Redmond
February 18, 2016	Legal notice correction to city contact email address	Placed in the Issaquah Press — newspaper of record for the City of Issaquah
February 19, 2016	Legal notice correction to city contact email address	Placed in the Renton Reporter — newspaper of record for the City of Renton

Hearing Overview

Each meeting began with a 30-minute open house. Exhibits provided an overview of the proposal and EIS process with schedule, general information about regional electrical infrastructure, a detailed explanation of the State Environmental Protection Act (SEPA) review process, descriptions of the programmatic alternatives and highlights from select portions of the environmental analysis, including a chart comparing the relative impacts of each alternative for each element of the environment. The exhibit materials and presentation were posted to the project website on February 23, two hours prior to the first public hearing. City staff and their consultants were available to respond to questions from meeting attendees. PSE representatives staffed a table with exhibits and materials explaining PSE’s stated need and proposed solution.

After the open house, the formal hearing portion began with a short presentation giving a project overview and the purpose of the hearing. During the formal hearing, attendees were able to provide comments verbally to the City of Bellevue SEPA Official, Carol Helland. The order of individuals who signed-up to testify was randomly selected. To ensure all who wanted to speak were given the opportunity, individuals were allocated 3 minutes each while those representing non-profit or community organizations were allocated 5 minutes each. In cases where speakers were not yet finished when their allotted time expired, all were encouraged to briefly conclude their comments. Some were allowed considerable time to conclude their comments. When there was time available, other individuals spoke more than once at a given meeting after all others who wanted to speak had the opportunity. In order to ensure the court reporter could hear the speakers, clapping was discouraged while speakers were commenting. To show support and appreciation to those giving testimony, participants raised and waved their hands, held up signs, and clapped.

Meeting attendees were also offered the opportunity to provide their comments by completing a paper comment form or by providing comments through a web-based form located at EnergizeEastsideEIS.org. To facilitate this option, two internet-connected computers were available at each meeting for public use.

The informational exhibits addressed the following topics, organized by station.

Station 1: Project Overview

- Welcome + Agenda
- What is the Energize Eastside EIS?
- Phased Review Process/Schedule

Station 2: Electrical System Overview

- Power Delivery 101
- Purpose and Need for PSE's Energize Eastside Project

Station 3: SEPA Review

- What is an EIS?
- Heard During Scoping

Station 4: The Alternatives

- No-Action Alternative
- Alternative 1: PSE's Proposal
- Alternative 2: Integrated Resources
- Alternative 3: New Transformers

Station 5: Highlights of Potential Impacts

- Comparison of Impacts during Construction
- Comparison of Impacts during Operation
- Public Health and Safety
- Views and Visual Resources
- Property Values and Taxes

Meeting Characteristics

People arrived at each meeting early. Many of the participants spent considerable time viewing the open house exhibits and talking with staff; others spent the time talking amongst themselves and preparing to testify. Many of the same people attended and testified at multiple meetings. Many of the attendees at the meetings wore orange clothing to show support of CENSE, the Coalition of Eastside Neighborhoods for Sensible Energy. The Newcastle and Bellevue meetings were well attended, the Kirkland, Redmond, and Renton meetings had much fewer attendees. Participation at each meeting was as follows:

Kirkland	21 sign-ins	~25 attendees
Renton	16 sign-ins	~30 attendees
Newcastle	82 sign-ins	~110 attendees
Redmond	17 sign-ins	~20 attendees
Bellevue	142 sign-ins	~180 attendees

Public Hearing Testimony Highlights

Public comments most frequently provided at the five hearings are summarized below. *(Please note that a summary report with more detail about comments submitted during the 45-day Draft EIS comment period—including those submitted by email, mail, and website—will be prepared and posted to the project website at www.EnergizeEastsideEIS.org. The report will be available in April 2016.)*

Need for the Project

- Adequacy of the needs analysis conducted by PSE
- Desire for further independent analysis of need, or for need to be better defined before proceeding further with the EIS process
- Findings from CENSE-sponsored third-party evaluation of need assessment, the Lauckhart-Schiffman study
- Potential for demand-side reductions to address the need
- Findings from CENSE-sponsored third-party evaluation of Alternative 2, the EQL study
- Capacity solution far exceeds stated need of Eastside growth—seems scaled to address regional and international flow of electricity including California and Canada
- Importance of reliable power acknowledged
- Questioned PSE's motivation for building the project, suggesting it is motivated by profit rather than needs of the region

Alternatives

- Support for Alternative 2, or similar non wired solution
- Questioned the robustness of the development of Alternative 2
- Support for the No Action Alternative
- Opposition to Alternative 1
- Lack of good alternatives in the Phase 1 Draft EIS, for instance not considering turning PSE into a public utility

Proposed Route Alignment Concerns & Questions

- Concerns about locations
 - in residential areas
 - near community and recreation facilities (i.e., schools, parks, trails)
 - collocated with Olympic Pipeline

- across a major earthquake fault line
- along the lakefront
- in areas considered for other public purposes (i.e., light rail)
- Potential to reuse existing utility infrastructure corridors
- Potential to use corridors further east
- Mitigation for negative impacts

Process Concerns

- Transparent and equitable decision making that addresses community concerns
- Access to all un-redacted project data and documentation
- Need for review under National Environmental Policy Act
- Readability of Phase 1 Draft EIS
- Reliance on PSE data and subject matter experts in Phase 1 Draft EIS

Environmental Concerns

- Loss of trees
- Loss of wildlife habitat
- Impact on environmentally sensitive areas, including steep slopes, aquifers, streams, and wetlands
- Decreased soil stability from installation of tall poles

Long-term Community Character Impacts

- Tall poles
- Tree removal
- Views
- Industrial blight
- Increased noise
- Neighbors moving away

Residential Property Impacts

- Removal of homes
- Reduced quality of life
- Reduction in property values
- Loss of views
- Increase in electrical discharge noise from overhead wires
- Loss of trees that buffer views and noise from highways and other high-intensity land uses
- Having to provide easement access for utility vehicles
- Compensation or mitigation for impacts incurred for regional benefit

Public Health & Safety

- Safety of building electrical infrastructure in the same location as 50-year-old Olympic Pipeline
- Health impacts of electric and magnetic fields on people and animals
- Safety of building electrical infrastructure across an earthquake fault line
- Ability of tall poles to withstand earthquakes and severe weather

Financial Concerns

- Rate increase to pay for project combined with loss in property value places a double burden on adjacent property owners
- Property tax rate increase due to decrease in adjacent property values
- High impacts to Eastside residents for benefit of foreign investors
- Evaluate costs of alternative solutions vs. proposed solution
- Concern that proponent not revealing true cost of preferred alternative

Copies of written comments and transcripts of oral testimony received were posted to the project website in March 2016. A summary of these comments and responses will be posted on the project website in April 2016.