



# North Sound to Olympics (NSTO) Planning Study

## Frequently Asked Questions

Aug. 8, 2022, **Updated Mar. 7, 2023**

Project page: <http://kcowa.us/NSTO>

Submit questions: [Questions](#)

### What is the purpose and need for the North Sound to Olympics (NSTO) Planning Study?

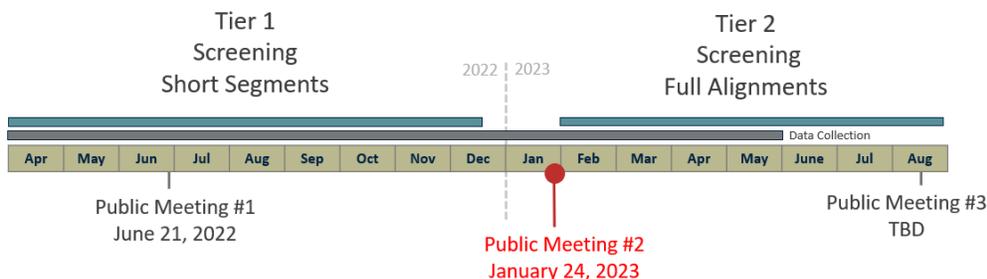
The purpose of the study is to advance analysis of the North Sound to Olympics (NSTO) shared use path concept identified in the “grass roots” outreach and planning effort documented in the “[String of Pearls](#)” Plan (2011) and the [County’s Non-Motorized Plan](#) (2013, 18). The plans envisioned connecting communities, parks, and open space between Kingston and Port Gamble Heritage Park with a shared use path.

The study will analyze potential route alternatives to assess the feasibility, potential positive and negative impacts, and identify a preferred alternative route for the NSTO. This is the third feasibility study focusing on different sections of the NSTO. The “[Divide Block](#)” (2015) study identified a preferred alternative route for the NSTO section between Miller Bay Road and Port Gamble Road. The “[Port Gamble Trail](#)” (2018) study identified a preferred alternative route for the NSTO from Stottlemeyer Road to Port Gamble, through the Port Gamble Forest Heritage Park. Both studies were conducted with extensive public outreach and received near unanimous support from the community.

### What is the schedule for the NSTO Planning Study? (Updated)

The schedule for the project was revised in January 2023, extending completion of the study to late summer.

Project Schedule (revised)



## Project Tasks:

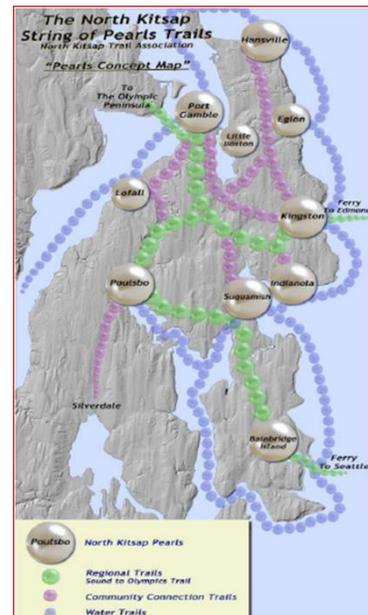
- Initial Alignment Screening (Tier 1)
  - Wider analysis/study area
  - Identify and screen options
  - Public Open House #1
  - Public Open House #2
- Secondary Alignment Screening (Tier 2)
  - Detailed analysis and refinement of selected alignments
- Preferred Alternative
  - Public Open House #3

## Where did the Sound to Olympics (STO) concept come from?

The STO shared use path concept came from the North Kitsap community. It was a signature outcome of an extensive public outreach process organized by the volunteer group “North Kitsap Trails Association” and was a key element to the County and private efforts to acquire large tracts of private property from the Olympic Property Group (OPG) for parks and open space.

The “String of Pearls” Plan (2011) expressed a “grass roots” vision of North Kitsap.

“The String of Pearls Trails plan is envisioned as a way of enriching all of Kitsap County by connecting North Kitsap’s unique communities with a trail system that will help create a myriad of community, regional, land and water trails, and link to each community and their neighborhood trails. These trails will enhance the quality of life for residents by connecting people with natural areas and creating options for active lifestyles. An integrated trail system will enhance the local economy with options for exercise, transportation, eco-tourism and enjoyment of beautiful natural settings. The trails will become a safe, pleasant, healthy and frequent choice for people of all ages, interests and abilities. The trails we plan and build today will shape a legacy for future generations.” (pg. 6)



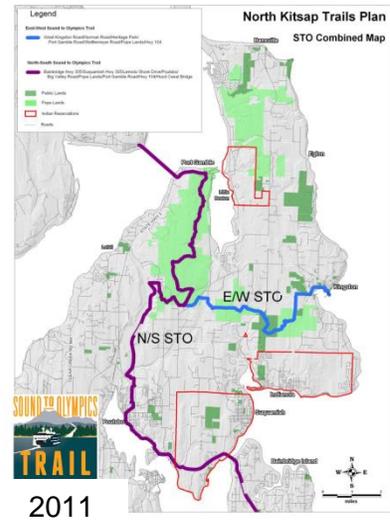
An extensive public outreach process evaluated a wide range of trail system options to connect the communities, parks, and open spaces of North Kitsap and selected to:

“...prioritized a single spine of paved bike routes combining the Sound to Olympics (STO) Trail and on-road community connectors bike routes....[and] supports a wider network of unpaved trails...” (pg. 11)

The “String of Pearls” Plan was adopted by the County and the STO was incorporated into the County’s Non-Motorized Plan. Additional analysis and public outreach were conducted for the “Divide Block” (2015) section between Miler Bay Road and Port Gamble Road and for Port Gamble Heritage Forest Park (“Port Gamble Trail”, 2018) to refine the path alignment within these two segments.

The “String of Pearls” Plan and the STO were key elements to County and private fund raising activities to purchase large blocks of property from the Olympic Property Group that would expand the Port Gamble and North Kitsap Parks as well as large tracts of the “Divide Block” purchased by the Great Peninsula Conservancy.

“...top priority is to obtain access through 8,000 acres of OPG [Olympic Property Group] land. Without this land there would be very few trails in North Kitsap.” (pg. 11)

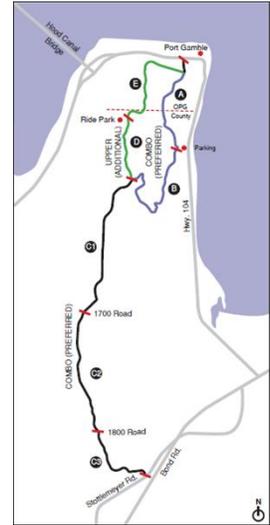


### What has occurred since the 2011 “String of Pearls” plan?

Since the “String of Pearls” portions of the Sound to Olympics shared use path have advanced:

- **2011** – “String of Pearls” was adopted by the County.
- **2013** – STO incorporated into County’s Non-Motorized Plan and Non-Motorized Routes maps.
- **2014** – North Kitsap Heritage Park expanded with purchase of the “Expansion Block” property.
- **2015** – 175 acres of “Divide Block” property acquired by Great Peninsula Conservancy.
- **2015** – “Divide Block” feasibility study was completed to identify the STO alignment between Miller Bay Road and Port Gamble Road.
- **2018** – “Port Gamble Trail” feasibility study was completed to identify the STO alignment through Port Gamble Heritage Park. The study analyzed various possible alignments within the park and identified a preferred alternative route.

- **2018** – Bainbridge Island constructs first mile of South STO along SR 305 from the WSF Terminal. (City and Federal grant).
- **2018** – Non-Motorized Plan maps was updated.
- **2020** – 2020 STO Network Map was updated.
- **2021** – Port Gamble Trail
  - Design and engineering (Kitsap Public Facilities grant) begins for Segments A, B, & D, with construction (County and partial Federal grant) scheduled for 2023.
  - Rayonier (formerly Olympic Property Group) scheduled to construct portion of Carver Drive (western portion of Segment E) 2023.
- **2022** – North Sound to Olympics (NSTO) Trail study (County and Federal grant).
- **2022** – Poulsbo constructs (City and Federal grant) portion of Noll Road corridor (South STO) and STO tunnel under SR 305 (City, Federal grant, and State funding).



### What is the funding for the NSTO Study?

The budget for this study is \$405,000 with 86.5% funded through a Federal grant and 13.5% from the County Road Fund.

### What and who is the Study’s “Working Group”?

#### Working Group

- KC Parks Advisory Board – Grady Martin
- NKHP Stewardship Committee – Jay Zischke
- Accessibility/Disability Group – Marsha Cutting
- Kitsap County Parks Department – Alex Wisniewski
- Rayonier (OPG) – Linda Berry-Maraist
- Great Peninsula Conservancy – Adrian Wolf
- North Kitsap Trails Association (NKTA) – Don Willott
- KC Non-motorized Committee – Deborah Weinmann

The Working Group is a volunteer ad-hoc advisory group to the Study. The makeup of the group is similar to prior shared use path studies conducted by the County. The individuals were suggested by Parks, North Kitsap Trails Association, Non-Motorized Committee, Accessibility CAC, and the major property owners.

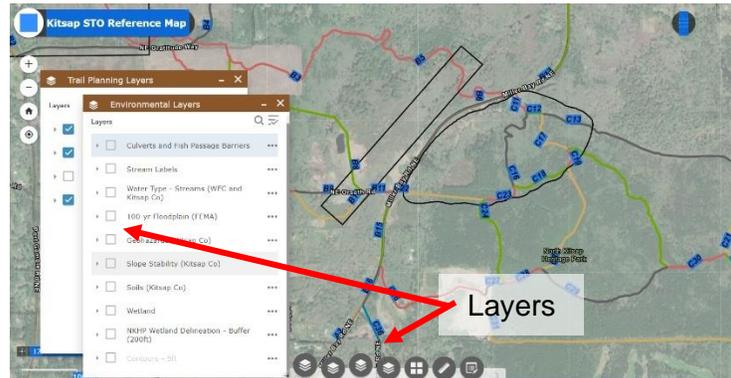
The Working Group was formalized around March 2020 and will be active for the duration of the study. They meet

with the project team throughout the study including field visits to get firsthand knowledge of route alternatives and to provide insight to the study. While the members are active in groups with interest in the study, the members participate in the Working Group as individuals and not as representatives of a group. The group is advisory, providing information and insight to the project team. All decisions and recommendations relative to the study are the purview of County.

## What route alternatives are the Study analyzing? (Updated)

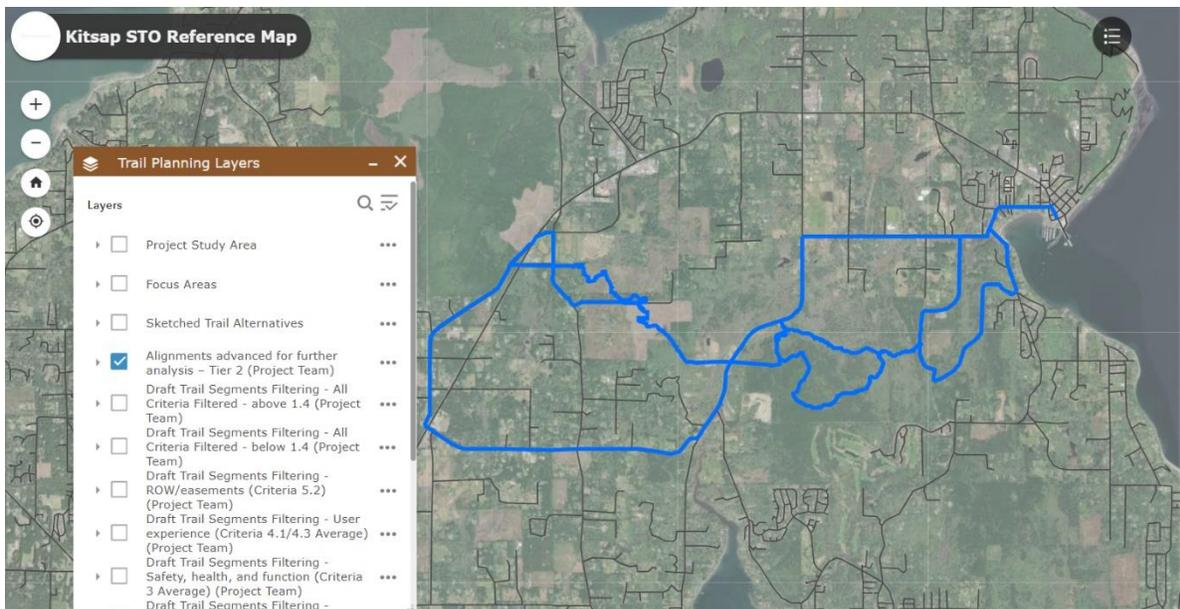
The study website <http://kcowa.us/NSTO> has a link to an interactive map to support the study. You can see a variety of the data layers being used to analyze potential routes.

During the first phase of the study, “Tier 1”, a large number of potential path segments (around 60 segments) were analyzed. The segments can be viewed on the map by activating the “Draft Trail Segments”.



The Tier 1 analysis will lead to refinement of the segment alignments and narrowing the number of segments being considered. Selected segments will be combined into 2-3 east-west path alignments alternatives for further analysis in Tier 2.

The Tier 2 phase analysis will concentrate data collection and analysis on the 2-3 east-west path alignments. The Tier 2 alignments are shown on the interactive map, “click” on the layer named “Alignments advanced for further analysis – Tier 2” or access the PDF version on the study home page.



From the Tier 2 analysis a “Preferred Alternative” will be identified for the NSTO.

## What Criteria are being used to analyze the potential routes? (New)

The study identified 17 criteria to analyze and rate each segment during the Tier 1 phase of the project. The criteria are organized into five categories:

- Provides access to communities, parks, and open space (4)
- Environmental (6)
- Safety, health, and function (2)
- User experience (3)
- Project delivery (2)

For each criterion, the Tier 1 segments were analyzed and rated “low”, “medium”, or “high” impacts or “positive”, “moderate”, or “negative” for outcomes.

The complete Tier 1 criteria and scoring is posted to the study home page in three formats:

- Criteria and segments scores (Excel spreadsheet format)
- Segment scoring maps graphically showing segment scores (PDF format)
- Segment scores on interactive map (Interactive map)

The screenshot shows the website interface for the North Sound To Olympics (NSTO) Trail Planning Study. At the top, there's a banner with the title. Below it, a navigation menu lists three options: A. Updated Criteria-Segment Analysis Documents, B. Maps showing Tier 1 trail segment analysis, and C. The NSTO Interactive Map. Option A includes links for the Excel spreadsheet and instructions. Option B includes a link for the PDF maps. Option C includes a link for the interactive map. There are also icons for submitting questions and a frequently asked questions sheet.

In the Tier 1 segment analysis (A above), each criterion has a “description”, “metric for rating”, and “basis for rating”.

### Screening of Segments:

#### Criteria Category #1 Example:

- Description
- Metrics for ratings
- Basis of Rating

1 - Connecting Communities, Parks, & Open Spaces		TIER 1 CRITERIA	
Code	CRITERIA	Information used for T1 qualitative screening	T1 Ratings
1	Provides Access to Communities, Parks, & Open Spaces	Support the regional Sound to Olympics and connectors concept?	Based on existing federal, state, and local requirements and existing GIS data and determined by team's environmental scientists.
1.1	Access to communities	Estimated level to which the segment provides all ages and abilities' connectors between existing or planned non-motorized facilities in Kingston and Port Gamble.	High = Short relative distance & high relative # of connectors (most direct route between communities) Medium = Medium distance and # of connectors Low = Long distance and minimal connectors (not a direct route between communities)
1.2	Access to parks and open space	Estimated level to which the segment provides all ages and abilities' connectors to link between regional parks and open spaces and 2) internal connectors between parks and open spaces.	High = Short relative distance & high relative # of connectors, plus internal connectors Medium = Medium distance and # of connectors, plus access adjacent to parks and open spaces Low = Long distance and minimal # of connectors, plus distant access
1.3	Consistency with adopted County plans, policies, and requirements	Level to which segment demonstrates general consistency with adopted County plans and policies (Office of Parks, 2011; Non-motorized Plan, 2012); County Draft Feasibility (2015); based on survey review.	High = Mostly consistent Medium = Somewhat consistent Low = Rarely consistent
1.4	Places of interest	Trail segment accesses places of interest to users including parks, open spaces, other recreational and educational opportunities, and connecting trails	High = More places (3+) Medium = A couple places (2) Low = Less places (1 or less)

The analysis shows how each segment was rated and you can compare how all the segment rating for a specific criterion.

Criteria Category #1 Example:

- Actual ratings (only 15 of 60 segments shown below)

The segment scores are mapped. PDF (B above) and interactive map (C above).



### Will the NSTO utilized existing trails?

Many path segments under consideration are based on existing or former logging roads and trails. The “String of Pearls” STO alignment stressed using existing logging roads where possible within the Port Gamble, Divide Block, and NKHP areas. The Port Gamble Trail portion of the NSTO is predominantly aligned to existing logging roads.

In the study area, logging roads exist within the “Divide Block” and North Kitsap Heritage Park. The North Kitsap Heritage Park’s 2015 Forestry Stewardship Plan describes the logging roads:

Access for the removal of old growth timber in the late part of the 1800’s and early 1900’s was accomplished using narrow gauge railroad lines. In the late 1930’s early 1940’s rail gave way to a network of forest haul roads when trucking became the most economical way to move harvesting equipment and haul timber. The park has approximately 12 miles of service roads that were built between 1940 and 1970, now between 45 and 80 years old. The service roads in the park are an important asset and have provided access for the public for generations (Pope has always allowed non-motorized access). Labeled as trails on NKHP maps, these forest roads have had a history of transporting forest products harvested by the previous landowner, Pope Resources and its predecessors. Some of these forest roads have subsequently been designated as trails within the park and will continue to be used as trails. Some portions of forest roads will continue to see use for hauling forest products or for service vehicles. Others have fallen into disuse and will be abandoned. (pg. 9)

The logging roads within North Kitsap Heritage Park and the “Divide Block” typically provide access to the broadest areas, minimize steep slopes, and offer the easiest alignment within an area based on topography and critical areas. The main, longest used routes tended to follow

the gentlest slope and avoid critical areas where the road would be more difficult to construct and maintain. The roadbeds were typically compacted crushed rock (an impervious surface) and utilized culverts sized for stormwater without consideration for the passage of fish in streams.

The interactive map on the project website identifies the routes under consideration. The potential segments include alignments based solely on, or a combination of the following existing conditions:

- *An existing or former logging road*
- *An existing trail* (IE, single track or double track trail with no significant impervious surface such as compacted crushed rock.)
- *Utilize a new alignment* (no existing logging road or trail). **Note:** Path options adjacent to an existing road would be a new alignment because the majority (or all) of the shared use path would be outside of the existing road’s footprint.

### What is the proposed design of the Shared Use Path?

The “String of Pearls” identified a desired shared use path design based on the needs of the potential users:

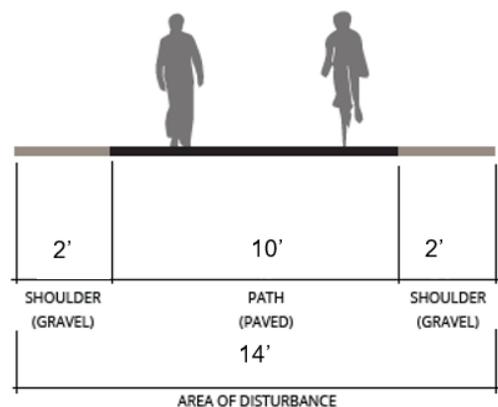
“A shared use path provides a travel area separate from motorized traffic for bicyclists, pedestrians, skaters, wheelchair users, joggers, and other users. Shared use paths can provide a low-stress experience for a variety of users using the network for transportation or recreation.” (pg. 4-3)

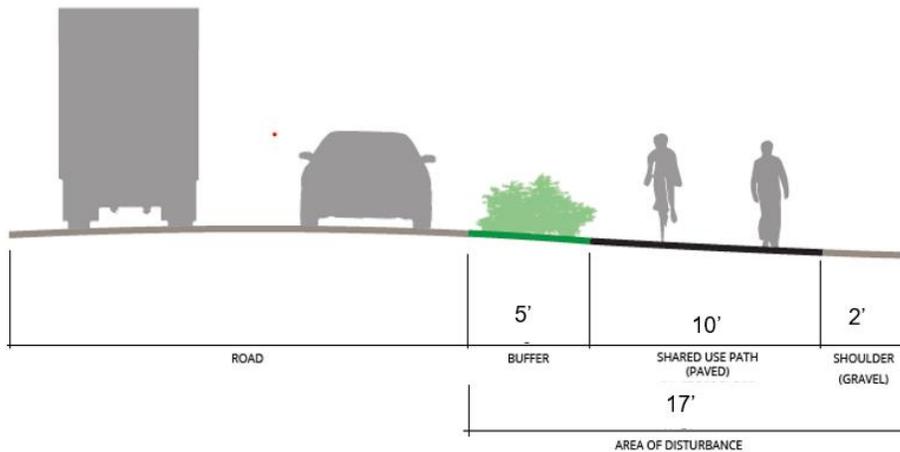
“Shared use paths are required to be accessible by all users, including those with mobility devices and vision disabilities.” (FHWA, Small Town and Rural Multimodal Networks, 2016, pg. 4-8)

“NKTA has prioritized a single spine of paved bike route combining the Sound to Olympics (STO) Trail and on-road community connectors bike routes...supports a wider network of unpaved trails.” (String of Pearls, 2011, pg. 11)

The study is evaluating the feasibility of a standard shared use path design (US Department of Transportation and Washington State Department of Transportation) of a 10’ paved path and 2’ gravel shoulders which is accessible for all ages and ability and modes (walk, bike, wheelchairs, strollers, etc.).

If the shared use path is adjacent to a roadway (Side Path), the standard shared use path is separated from the roadway by a minimum 5’ buffer.





Based on the geography of a specific path segment location, such as steep slopes or near critical areas, the design may vary to address the specific conditions of the location.

The study will use the standard design as the basis of analysis.

Where conditions may not allow use of the standard design, the study will identify whether variances to the design are feasible.

### What path surface is being considered for the Sound to Olympics Trail (STO) shared use path?

For the purpose of study analysis, the shared use path surface is assumed to be paved, asphalt. The STO concept envisioned a paved shared use path:

“...prioritized a single spine of paved bike routes combining the Sound to Olympics (STO) Trail and on-road community connectors bike routes...[and] supports a wider network of unpaved trails...” (pg. 11)

A paved surface is consistent with shared use path design standards.

“The appropriate paved width for a shared-use path depends on the context, volume, and mix of users....The minimum paved width, excluding the shoulders on either side, is 10 feet.” (WSDOT Design Manual, Shared Use Paths 1515.02(2)(a), pg. 1515-3, Sep. 2021)

“Asphalt is the most common surface for shared use paths. (FHWA, Small Town and Rural Multimodal Networks, 2016, pg. 4-8)

A paved surface provides the best surface for accessibility for persons of all ages and abilities, all weather access, and supports multiple user types.

## **When was the Sound to Olympics Trail (STO) shared use path first proposed for North Kitsap Heritage Park (NKHP)?**

A STO shared use path accessing and connecting North Kitsap Heritage Park to North Kitsap communities, parks, and open space was formally envisioned by the community in the 2011 “String of Pearls” plan. This ‘grass roots’ process evaluated multiple routes, both within and outside of NKHP and selected a shared use path alignment within the park as providing the best opportunities for the community to access the park and provide connections between the park and the community.

The shared use path idea predates the expansion of NKHP and was a key element to the land acquisition campaign which led to expanding the NKHP by 325 acres, expansion of Port Gamble Heritage Park, and acquisition of portions of the “Divide Property” by the Great Peninsula Conservancy.

The “String of Pearls” priorities include:

1. Acquire access across the OPG property for the Sound to Olympics Trail.

Without access, there will be no trails. NKTA's highest priority is obtaining access across the OPG property for the future Sound to Olympics Trail. This would link from Port Gamble south through the Port Gamble Block, proceed east across the Divide property to the NK Heritage Park and then into Kingston. It would also link west to Big Valley and from Big Valley south to Poulsbo, Suquamish and Bainbridge. (pg. 23)

2. Conserve as much of the OPG open space as possible.

The Port Gamble Block is heavily used and highly valued by the North Kitsap community for recreation, enjoyment of nature and wildlife habitat and serves increasingly as an eco-tourism/adventure travel destination. NKTA’s ranked priorities are:

1. As much land as possible in the Port Gamble Block (south of the town-site and mill-site). For cost effectiveness begin with the inland property.
2. The Option property (adjacent to the North Kitsap Heritage Park)...” (pg.24)

## **Is the Sound to Olympics (STO) Trail compatible with the County’s Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan (2018)?**

The Sound to Olympics (STO) Trail is consistent with the County’s Parks and Open Space Plan (2018). Consistency elements include:

Regional non-motorized connectivity within and to parks is identified as one of the “Key interests – Public Survey and Stakeholder Commitments”:

“There is an expressed need to provide safe and multi-accessible trails (bike and pedestrian) throughout Kitsap County, and notably to connect parks, business centers and residential communities.” (pg. 8)

The PROS Plan sets the Regional Trails Goals to:

**Goal:** Improve coordination with other trail plans and trail management systems throughout the County”

**Objective:** Plan a coordinated, interconnected non-motorized trail system with parks and regional trail systems.

**Strategies:**...Support the plans and development of the Sound to Olympics Regional Trail System, working with Kitsap County Public Works, State Department of Transportation, and other jurisdictions and organizations.”(Pg. 31)

**Goal:** Address trail needs for specialized users.

**Strategy:** Develop trails and trail-training areas which would serve specific underserved or new user needs, such as...trails for users with disabilities or limited abilities,...nature observation trails. (Pg. 32)

### **Are there potential restrictions on properties that may impact or prohibit the NSTO?**

All the potential path segments/alignments being analyzed for the NSTO cross public and private properties with each property having unique conditions and circumstances. The study will work with property owners to identify potential restrictions on properties that may impact the potential feasibility the NSTO to cross a property. Potential property restrictions or conditions are part of the Study’s evaluation criteria.

Some examples include:

- Kitsap County Parks has agreements with conservation organizations on portions of the North Kitsap Heritage Park.
- Great Peninsula Conservancy has identified conservation goals on the Grover’s Creek area of the “Divide Block” properties.
- Rayonier has specific land management goals for their properties within the “Divide Block” and near SR 104 and SR 307.
- Suquamish Tribe has specific land use and Tribal Trust Land objectives.
- Individual private property owners have identified concerns related to potential impacts to their properties (e.g., avoidance/minimization of impacts to sensitive habitats including wetlands and late seral forest stands.)

## Will potential impacts to wildlife habitat and wetlands be considered in the study? (Updated)

The study will conduct planning level environmental analysis of possible path segments. The analysis will be increasingly more detailed as the study advances from Tier 1 to a preferred alternative level. Analysis includes research of existing wetland, habitat, and critical area data and on-site verification and analysis. The study will look at potential impacts, both negative and potential positive to the environment.

The evaluation criteria include analysis of:

- Habitat connectivity and fragmentation
- Wetland impacts
- Wetland buffer impacts
- Stream impacts
- Stream buffer impacts
- Restoration potential
  - Fish passage barriers
  - Invasive vegetation etc.

## Why were these environmental criteria selected and how was the assessment done? (New)

- The environmental criteria reflect regulatory standards for critical area protection from the County, state, and federal levels.
- The evaluations used existing mapping from Kitsap County Parks, prior studies/inventories, and were supplemented by on-site field assessments.
- The Tier 1 analysis reflects both impact quantity (e.g. approximated feet of path) and quality of the resource affected (e.g., wetland category, stream type, buffer condition, etc.)

## How is the environmental assessment being applied in the overall evaluation of alternatives? (New)

The environmental criteria are not weighted more or less than other criteria in Tier 1. Consideration of the project purpose and need are central to the context of the environmental analysis. **All routes alternates have environmental impacts and will require mitigation.** County, state, and federal laws require projects avoid and minimize environmental impacts for “practical” and “reasonable” alternatives.

### Practicable Alternative:

*Available and capable of being done after taking into consideration cost, existing technology, and logistics in light of overall project purposes.”*  
Source: 40 CFR 230.10 (CWA)

### Reasonable Alternative:

Feasibly attain or approximate a proposal's objectives, but at a lower level of environmental degradation.  
Source: SEPA Rules

### **Who is the final decision-maker for selecting a preferred alternative? (New)**

The preferred alternative is the result of the study's analytical process. The study will analyze potential route alternatives to assess the feasibility, potential positive and negative impacts, and identify a preferred alternative route for the NSTO. Based on the study's analysis and process the County makes the final determination of the preferred alternative included in the study.

### **What happens after the study? (New)**

The study's goal is to identify a preferred alternative that will include approaches to advance the project(s) to construction. The project(s) will be eligible for inclusion as a candidate project(s) in the annual Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) process. [Public Works Project Planning \(kitsapgov.com\)](http://kitsapgov.com)

The TIP process captively evaluates/scores candidate projects based on the TIP Project Evaluation System and ranks all the candidate projects within the County. The top candidate projects are further analyzed for funding and grant competitiveness and project delivery considerations. Based on the score, available funding during the 6-year TIP cycle, and project delivery considerations projects are added to the TIP.

If selected, the TIP will identify the schedule and funding source(s) for the project. Successful projects will undergo a: preliminary engineering phase to design the project; right of way phase to purchase needed lands and easements; and a construction phase to build the project. The overall schedule for a selected project varies depending on the complexity of the project and funding types.

### **Is the study looking at only the NSTO or planning for North Kitsap? (New)**

The purpose of the study is project/concept specific to the North Sound to Olympics (NSTO) shared use path concept which was identified in extensive public planning processes over many years.

The study does look at how the NSTO might also contribute to or fulfill other transportation needs. Each segment and alignment alternative analysis looks at how that area might fit in with other transportation needs or potential projects.

As an example, the segment/alignment along West Kingston Road passes two school which have an identified need for improvements for students to walk, biking, or rolling to and from school. When analyzing this segment/alignment the fact that it might serve additional transportation needs is recognized.

If this segment/alignment is not selected as part of the preferred alternative alignment for the NSTO the need for improvements for students will still be carried forward as an independent project into annual Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) process.

## What are the opportunities to provide comments to the NSTO study.? (New)

All communications to the NSTO study are reviewed and analyzed by the project team and Working Group. Comments and questions are received via the link on the project website, Open Houses, emails, and phone calls to County staff and elected officials.



[CLICK HERE TO SUBMIT A QUESTION OR COMMENT](#)

The study strives to provide all people the opportunity to freely access the process, analysis, and information and to ask questions and provide comments free of intimidation by groups or people with differing opinions.

For Open House #2, civil community discussion and engagement was facilitated through post presentation direct interaction between people and the project team. People could talk freely to project team members and participate in discussions with people with opposing views occurred.