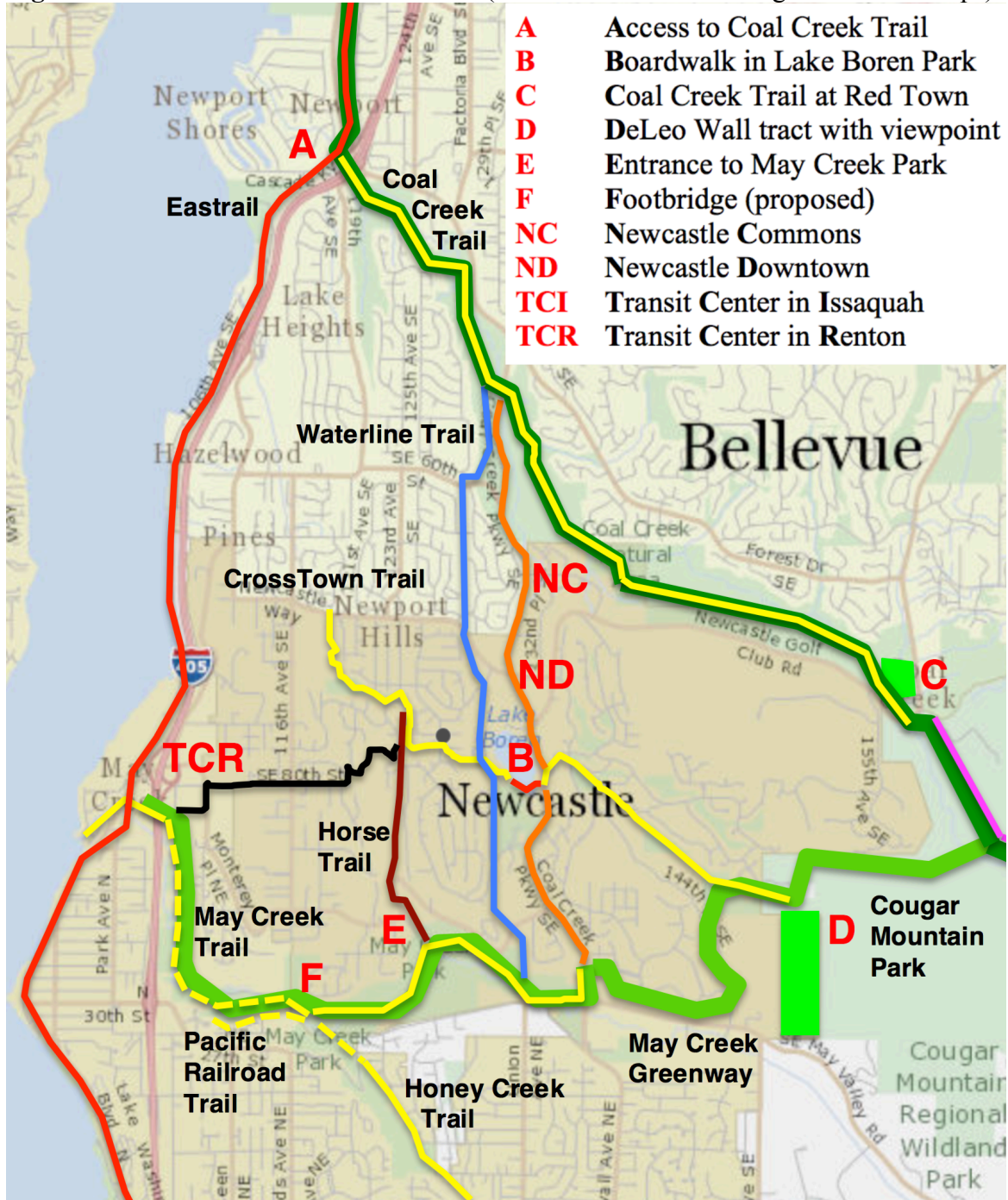


## Linking Renton & Newcastle Trail Systems

Garry Kampen, 2/16/23

This note argues for a **May Creek Trail Footbridge** (F in Figure 1), linking Newcastle to the Renton Highlands, Kennydale, and Eastrail (at TCR) by trail, and completing two major trail routes: the **May Creek Greenway** from Lake Washington to Cougar Mountain, and a **Grand Loop** around Newcastle using the Coal Creek Trail. Figure 2 shows new subdivisions and trails in SW Newcastle and Renton. Figure 3 shows trail connections to the bridge. **Proposal:** build the bridge and the connecting trails from 2024 onward.

**Figure 1. Newcastle Area Trails in 2024** (with new I-405 interchange and transit stops)



**Trails.** The map in Figure 2 shows trails 1-10 below. In all maps, trails are colored the same, with solid lines for trails existing now (or likely by 2024). Dashed or dotted lines mark proposed trail routes. Trails 1-6 are in the **Renton Trails and Bicycle Master Plan**.

1. The **May Creek Trail** is part of the May Creek Greenway. It's a shared trail, complete within Newcastle. The Renton section will be extended at least to Jones Avenue by 2024.
2. The proposed **Pacific Railroad Trail** has a trailhead near Kennydale School. It follows an old railroad grade on public land in Renton. The dashed section is walkable, but needs brush clearing. The dotted section (not in Renton's Plan) will need switchbacks.
3. The **Honey Creek Trail** is complete from a point near NE Sunset Boulevard to an access point on NE 27th Street in Kennydale. The proposed extension will join Renton's May Creek Trail near the footbridge (F). The last segment requires a trail easement.
4. The proposed **Gypsy Creek Trail** will link Renton's future Kenyon-Dobson Park and the LaCrosse neighborhood to the May Creek Trail near the bridge site. Renton's Plan calls it the **Kenyon-Dobson Trail**. It's a shared trail on public land, mostly in Newcastle.
5. The proposed **Hillside Trail** is a shared trail, mostly in Newcastle. Newcastle's Comprehensive Plan calls it the **112th Avenue SE Trail**. In Renton's Plan it's not named.
6. The **Eastrail** is a regional multiuse trail complete from Bellevue to Renton's Coulon Beach Park. It connects to Bellevue's Coal Creek Trail and Renton's May Creek Trail.

**Figure 2. Trails in SW Newcastle and Renton Near the Footbridge**



7. The **Horse Trail** runs south from the CrossTown Trail to the new 45-home May Creek Park Assemblage (M). It will be completed into May Creek Park (M to E) in 2022.

8. The **Sylvan Trail** section running south from the 84th Street Trail will be completed into May Creek Park (M to E) in conjunction with the May Creek Park Assemblage.

9. The **84th Street Trail** will be completed from the Horse Trail to the Hillside Trail in 2024 via the planned Hiemstra subdivision (H) and its park. As part of Renton's Canopy subdivision (C), the Hillside Trail will be completed to the 80th Street Trail, which will link to the May Creek Trail in 2024 – when the latter extends under I-405 to Jones Avenue.

10. The **80th Street Trail** will link Renton's May Creek Trail to the Hillside Trail and the rest of Newcastle's citywide trail and sidewalk system.

11. **116th Avenue SE** runs south past Risdon Middle School, Hazelwood Elementary School, and the Hazelwood, 80th Street, and 84th Street trails, to May Creek Park Drive, with potential easy access to Kenyon-Dobson Park and the proposed Gypsy Creek Trail.

**Proposal: a Bridge-Trail Project.** On 6/27/2012, Newcastle launched an effort to complete the May Creek footbridge, becoming lead agency in a partnership with Renton and King County. Newcastle completed its May Creek Trail to the bridge site, but Renton's trail effort stalled, awaiting property acquisitions and the new I-405 interchange. A bridge-trail project would complete the bridge and one of trails 1-3 at the same time.

**The time is ripe** to reactivate the partnership, with Renton or King County as lead agency. By 2024 it's likely that: (a) the I-405 interchange will be complete; (b) Renton's May Creek Trail will extend under I-405 to Jones Avenue; (c) Newcastle's trail system will be largely complete, with a new park; and (d) new developments (including C, H, and M in Figure 2) will greatly expand the trail-using population near the bridge and May Creek Park.

**Figure 3 below** shows how trails 1-3 connect to the bridge, and notes the ownership of the parcels they cross. Parcels labeled KC are portions of May Creek Park owned by King County; UNKN (owner unknown) is the one parcel needed for the bridge; and an easement on HILLMAN (private owner) is needed to complete the Honey Creek Trail to the bridge.

1. The **May Creek Trail** could be completed as follows: build segment M1, and use the road (Jones Avenue NE and NE 31st Street) as a temporary trail segment. It's a rural road, with light traffic but narrow shoulders (or none) in places. An area near M1 or M2 could serve as a trailhead for the bridge and the trails that join it, with parking for bikes, cars, and vans. But increased traffic and other issues might outweigh the advantages of a trailhead.

2. The proposed **Pacific Railroad Trail** could be built (like M1) quickly at low cost entirely on public land (Newcastle owns parcel UNKN). Volunteers could build the easy section on the railroad grade, working from 1 (trailhead) to 2 (historic trestle site). From 2 on, professionals could build switchbacks with cribbing, working up from the bridge site, where construction materials could be delivered by road. M1 could be built concurrently.



**Summary.** Completing any one of trails 1-3 would justify building the bridge. Each one would link a large Renton population to the Newcastle trail system, which extends via May Creek Park to Cougar Mountain and beyond. The bridge project could start at any time, since at least one trail – the Pacific Railroad Trail - could be completed in step with the bridge.

**Trail Benefits: Recreation and History.** The Pacific Railroad Trail uses an old railroad grade that can be followed, mostly on trails, across May Creek and past Lake Boren to the historic Coal Creek mining area at Cougar Mountain's Red Town Trailhead (C in Figure 1). Kenndale residents would enjoy the wooded trail, the bridge, and views of the creek. Just up from the bridge there's a picnic area, an interpretive history sign, a viewpoint bench, and a kiosk with a trail map and photos of railroad trestles here in the 1800s. Similar amenities could be added at points 1 and 2 in Figure 3: the trailhead at 1 and a viewpoint at 2 where the trestles started and the trail descends. The **Renton History Museum** could cooperate with the Newcastle Historical Society on kiosks and interpretive signs in both cities.

**Trail Signs.** Trail signs are important. They're useful for wayfinding (keeping walkers on the trail), and for advertising the presence of trails (many folks are unaware of local trails). Trail signs are visible from a distance. They mark the trail, give its name and ownership, and tell you where it goes.

**Bellevue and Newcastle.** Newcastle adopted Bellevue's design for trail signs: 8"x8" wooden bollards, with aluminum signplates (upper and lower) embedded in one or more faces of the bollard. Bellevue's plates are blue; Newcastle chose burgundy. Both use white letters, with the City name and logo on the top plate. Each lower plate includes a list of destinations, with distances and directions. Bellevue uses an extra small plate to identify each sign. Newcastle uses an identifier on each lower plate: "133N" means "sign 133, north face". This makes it easier to install plates and report damaged ones.

**Renton.** It would make sense for Renton to adopt the Bellevue-Newcastle trail sign standard for these connecting pedestrian trails, using Renton's color and logo. It's a proven design, refined over time, and it would assure uniform signage (a common trail language) over a large and interconnected trail system.