

Bill Dawson Trail FAQ

Updated March 2025

What's happening with the Bill Dawson Trail?

Starting as early as May 12, 2025, Skanska will close the Bill Dawson Trail from the east end of the new pedestrian tunnel under Montlake Boulevard to the Montlake Playfield. The closure area is marked in red on the map on the right.



When will the trail close and for how long?

The trail will close as early as Monday, May 12, 2025, and remain closed for five years until 2030.

Why are you closing the trail for so long?

We need this long-term trail closure so crews can safely access the work site to construct new retaining walls and the new Portage Bay bridges. Crews will use heavy machinery (cranes, drill rigs, man-lifts, etc.) to move large girders and build permanent support structures near and above the Bill Dawson Trail. We expect hundreds of trucks to use this work access road to deliver concrete, reinforced steel, formwork and other materials. This work would pose a major safety risk for trail users moving through the work zone.

Additionally, part of the trail will be filled with embankments (soil walls) and used for required construction access. This fill and construction access will create a physical barrier blocking trail access even when construction activities are not happening.

Was this closure planned?

Yes. In 2011, we noted in the [SR 520 Program Final Environmental Impact Statement](#) that we would need to close the Bill Dawson Trail throughout most of the Portage Bay Bridge and Roanoke Lid Project for construction staging and access. We've been sharing this message with the community for the past four years as the project design progressed.

Will there be any trail closures before the long-term closure starts in May?

Yes. Before the long-term closure begins, we will have some short, intermittent trail closures in April and May for tree and vegetation removal near the trail. We need to clear some of the trees and vegetation near the trail to make space for upcoming construction activities.

The short-term closures will last from 1-3 days. See map on page 2 for the signed bicycle and pedestrian detour routes.

Is it possible to open the trail intermittently during construction?

We understand this long-term closure isn't ideal, especially for frequent trail users like University of Washington students and staff, Montlake residents and commuters.

After careful review, we determined that it is not physically safe or possible to keep the connection open during construction. The graphics on page 5 show how tightly we're constrained by space in this area and why opening the trail even for smaller time periods is not safe.

Will you offer signed detour routes when the trail is closed?

Yes. Since construction started, we have been working closely with the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) to develop signed detour routes that are safe and accessible while we complete construction activities on and around the Bill Dawson Trail.

The map below shows the two signed detour routes that we'll post in the Montlake neighborhood – one for people walking/rolling and the other for people biking. We selected the bicycle detour route to make use of the new, separated bicycle and pedestrian bridge over SR 520 and to direct cyclists away from busy roads and intersections.



Note: In the State of Washington, bicyclists are allowed to ride on the sidewalk. Using the sidewalk is a great way for riders to separate themselves from vehicle traffic if they're not comfortable riding on the road.

What's a Neighborhood Greenway (shown in green on the detour map above)?

[Neighborhood Greenways](#) are safer, calmer residential streets that prioritize people walking and biking. The 22nd Avenue E Neighborhood Greenway includes features like 20 mph speed limit signs, speed humps to calm traffic, stop signs for side streets crossing the neighborhood greenway, and signs and pavement markings to help people find their way.

What will the trail look like at the end of the project?

The trail between the west end of the new tunnel and the Montlake Playfield will be wider (from 8 feet to 14 feet) and flatter (the grade to be no steeper than 5%). We'll also restore the westside connection from the Bill Dawson Trail to Montlake Boulevard near the NOAA property by adding new stairs and an ADA-compliant ramp on the west side of Montlake Boulevard.

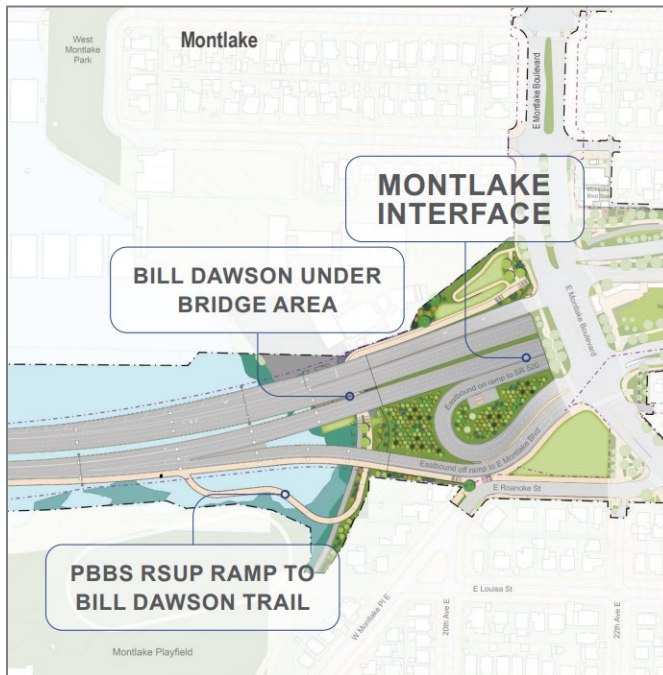
In addition to the above improvements, we are adding:

- A raised six-foot-wide sidewalk – next to the 14-foot path – to separate walkers and bikers
- New lighting and more clearance under SR 520
- New landscaping and hardscaping features
- A new ramp structure connecting the Bill Dawson Trail to the new SR 520 Trail extension across Portage Bay



Will you rebuild the westside connection from the Bill Dawson Trail to Montlake Boulevard?

Yes. We'll restore the westside connection from the Bill Dawson Trail to Montlake Boulevard (near the NOAA property) by adding new stairs and an ADA-compliant ramp on the west side of Montlake Boulevard. See conceptual rendering below.

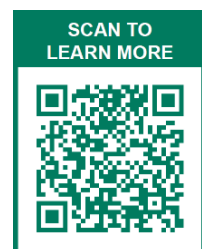


Conceptual rendering; subject to change.

How can I stay informed about trail closures and detour routes during the closures?

To stay informed about the trail closure and general construction activities, please:

- Keep an eye out for signage placed on and near the trail.
- [Sign up](#) for our weekly *Rest of the West* newsletter.
- [Visit](#) the SR 520 Construction Corner website for closure notices.
- Attend our monthly construction update meetings.
- Call our 24-hour hotline at 206-319-4520.
- Email us at sr520bridge@wsdot.wa.gov.



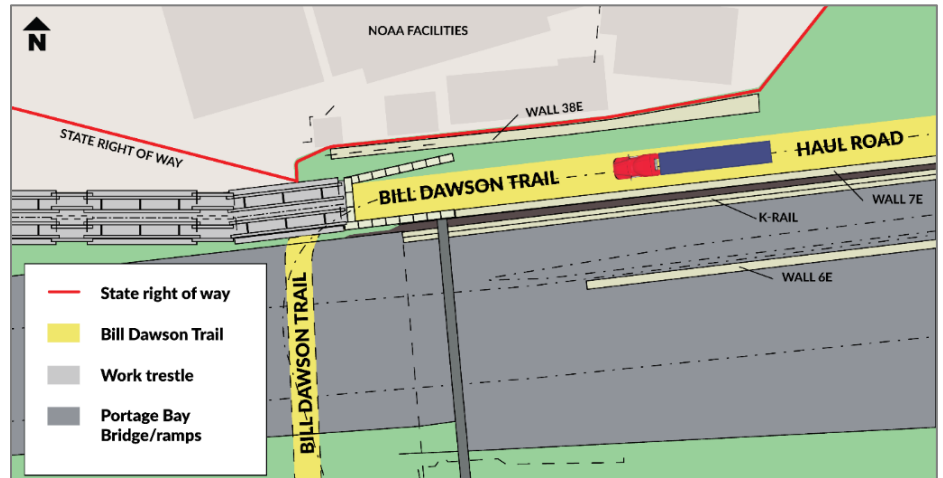
Who can I contact for more information?

You can reach us by calling our 24-hour construction hotline at 206-319-4520 or emailing us at sr520bridge@wsdot.wa.gov.

Additional reference graphics

Graphic 1: Bill Dawson Trail and Haul Route

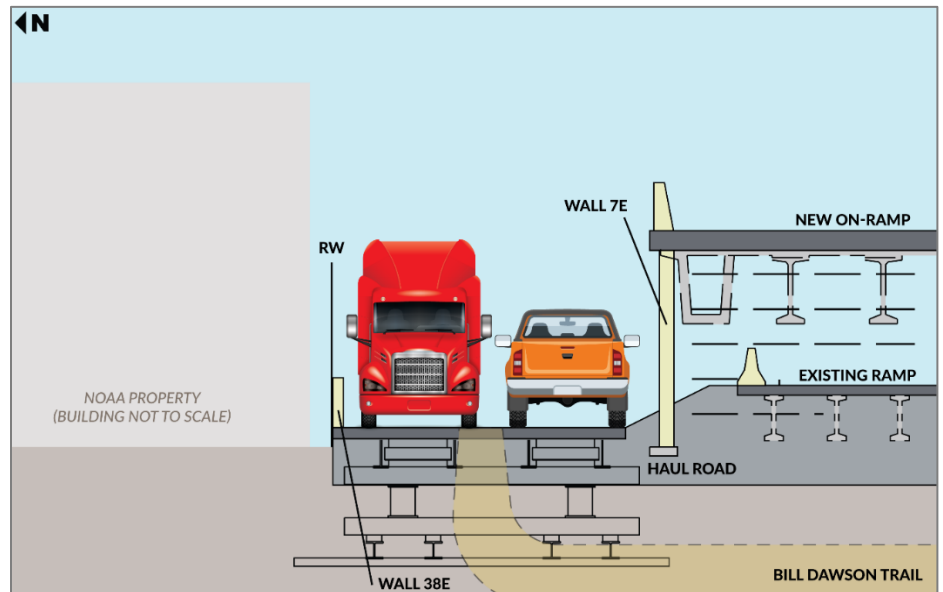
This graphic shows how Skanska will use the space for construction vehicles to access the temporary work trestle. The red line represents the state right-of-way and shows how close the NOAA property is located to the new retaining wall Skanska will build (Wall 38E).



Graphic 2: Haul route cross-section

This graphic gives you a straight-on view of the haul route (as if you're looking east from the work trestle). The haul road and platform will be built over the Bill Dawson Trail itself with fill on each side towards the retaining walls. The building on the left is the NOAA property and will be almost flush with Wall 38E. With vehicles anticipated to be going each direction on this haul road and an ecology block wall blocking the existing trail as it comes under SR 520, it would make it physically impossible to allow the public to use this section of the trail.

We'll also use this area to build Wall 38E and Wall 7E and would require drill rigs and other equipment to remain onsite, further preventing access for the public.



Graphic 3: Haul route profile/elevation view

This side-angle graphic gives more perspective for how the haul route works. The Bill Dawson Trail, noted on the right, would be covered by fill, eco blocks and the haul road platform.

