



Pole Yard Site, trail would detour to future on-street facilities on HWY 12 through Rochester from here and west to Albany St.

Future Great Wolf Lodge Resort

# Gate-Rochester-Grand Mound Trail

16



- Trail, Shared Use, Planned** (Green dashed line)
- Trail, Shared Use, Potential** (Red dashed line)
- Featured Trail on Map** (Yellow solid line)
- Existing Bike Routes**
  - Bike Lane (Green solid line)
  - Wide Shoulder (Blue solid line)
  - Commonly Used Local Roads (Purple solid line)
  - Bicycle/Pedestrian Connection (Pink solid line)
  - Active Railroad (Black dashed line)
  - Local Streets (Black solid line)
- Schools** (Red triangle icon)
- Park & Ride Lots** (Blue square icon)
- Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation** (Purple shaded area)
- Urban Growth Areas** (Yellow shaded area)
- Parks, Preserves, and Open Space** (Green shaded area)
- DNR Managed Lands** (Light green shaded area)
- Unincorporated Thurston County** (Light blue shaded area)

**Disclaimer**  
This map is for general planning purposes only. Thurston Regional Planning Council makes no representations as to the accuracy or fitness of the information for a particular purpose.



## Gate-Rochester-Grand Mound Trail

**Length:** 10.5 miles

**Rochester Middle School to Rochester High School Length:** 3 miles

**Type of Facility:** Potential Shared-Use Trail with Rail

**Lead Agency:** Proposed, Thurston County

**Partners:** Puget Sound and Pacific Railroad (PSAP), Thurston Regional Planning Council, Washington State Department of Transportation, Rochester School District, Thurston County Fire District No. 1, Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation, local community members

**Rail Activity:** Puget Sound and Pacific Railroad's rail line passes through southwest Thurston County and provides a connection between Centralia, Grays Harbor, and Bremerton. Unit grain trains, often a mile or more long, travel from the Midwest to the Port of Grays Harbor along the PSAP for loading onto trans-Pacific grain ships. Trains typically operate at speeds below 35 mile per hour along this corridor. The route also serves a variety of customers on the Olympic Peninsula. Fortress Investment Group purchased the railroad from Rail America in January 2007, but the current owner's long term plans for this railway have not been determined.

**Description:** Rochester School District has four schools located within the Highway 12 Corridor. Non-motorized transportation facilities and safe routes to school are sorely lacking in this rural County Corridor. Although school bus transportation service is provided, community members including the Thurston County Fire District #1 Fire Chief and PSAP Railroad operators have all expressed concerns over the risks that vehicular travel and trains poses to school children and other pedestrians and cyclists in the unincorporated communities of southwest Thurston County. Community discussions have proposed the idea of a potential shared-use trail with rail within this corridor. PSAP Railroad owns 100 feet of ROW along the active corridor and has indicated a desire to partner with local agencies to explore the creation of a trail easement within their ROW. Early discussions have proposed developing the trail on the north side of the tracks.

This corridor could establish a model for shared-use trails with rail in the Thurston Region. This opportunity would benefit the greater southwest Thurston County unincorporated communities by providing a safe route to schools, increase recreation opportunities, provide opportunities for increasing physical activity, and creating a dedicated pathway that would separate people from active railroad tracks. Furthermore, this potential trail could connect to the future Gate-Belmore Trail and connect Grand Mound, Rochester, and the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation into the greater regional trail network.

**Cost Estimate:** Unknown, a feasibility study is required

**Connections and Destinations:** Unincorporated Communities of Grand Mound and Rochester, Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation, Rochester School District Schools, Great Wolf Lodge, Gate-Belmore Trail, Grays Harbor and Lewis counties.

### Conditions and Recommendations:

*(Recommendations are in bold)*

**This plan recommends that Thurston County take the lead with the appropriate stakeholders to explore the feasibility of this trail.**

Preliminary discussions have occurred, but no follow up work has transpired since Fortress Investment Group purchased the railroad. **Negotiations should include discussions on securing a permanent or long term easement if compatible with the current owner's long term plans for the railroad.** State and federal funding agencies would require such easements to ensure public investments are secure for future use.

- ① Albany Street to Highway 12 Overpass - The highest priority segment of this trail is from Albany Street and Highway 12 east to the Highway 12 overpass near Carper Road SW (3 miles). Operations in the pole yard along the railroad from 183<sup>rd</sup> Avenue west to Albany Street prohibit the development of a trail through this section and would require the development of on-street facilities through the unincorporated community of Rochester. This trail segment will also require a foot bridge across Scatter Creek. **The feasibility study will also need to evaluate how to negotiate trail users across the railroad, Highway 12, and Old Highway 9 to access schools from Carper Road. The safety of trail users and rail operations are critical, and construction of a fence will need to be considered along all potential segments of this trail.**
- ② Gate to Albany Street - **The stakeholders should also evaluate connecting the trail from Albany Street to the future Gate-Belmore trail (2.3 miles).** This will provide access to the regional trail network for the communities of Rochester and Grand Mound.
- ③ Highway 12 Overpass to Old Highway 99 - Additional expansion of this trail segment could proceed west into Grand Mound (3.3) miles. The trail could be connected to the future Great Wolf Lodge Resort via a future sidewalk or bike lane on Old Hwy 99 and increase recreation and tourism opportunities along this corridor.

- ④ Puget Sound and Pacific Railroad extends south to Centralia and west to Elma. The Willapa Hills trail stretches from the City of Chehalis to Willapa Bay. This trailhead is only 10 miles south of the Thurston/Lewis County border. **Long-term expansion to provide inter-county connectivity should be further studied and discussed with stakeholders in Lewis and Grays Harbor counties.**