

May 9, 2025

Sound Transit East Link 2-Line | Rail Grinding

Overview. To prepare for pre-revenue simulated light rail service for the East Link 2-Line, rail grinding work is required to occur before running trains on installed track. Rail grinding of track is required to improve rider comfort, ensure safe operations, and reduce operating noise of the light rail transit system. This critical maintenance activity is needed to reshape the installed rails to an optimal and consistent profile to extend the useful life of rail.

Project Description: Rail grinding significantly increases the useful life of rail by improving the rail profile. This important work activity is needed to lower the wear rate of installed rail, prevent fatigue, and eliminate surface defects, while controlling the destructive forces from light rail vehicle wheels in advance of East Link pre-revenue testing. Rail grinding operations are required to occur during night to take advantage of cooler evening temperatures and naturally occurring dew on the rails to reduce risk fire hazard risk. This rail grinding effort is needed prior to start of pre-revenue simulated light rail service on track within the Cities of Bellevue, Mercer Island, and Seattle. Following successful completion of the pre-revenue testing phase, ST anticipates opening light rail service from International District/Chinatown to South Bellevue Station in Q4 2025. Sound Transit's rail maintenance program requires that rail grinding occur every 3-yrs to mitigate high levels of wear and reduce disruptions to the operating transit system from costly and time intensive track replacement projects.

Schedule: Sound Transit rail grinding activities within the E130 Seattle-Bellevue segment is anticipated to be completed in sixteen (16) days beginning the evening of June 1st to early morning June 16th. Rail grinding shifts will begin Monday evenings at approximately 12AM and end early the following morning at 5AM. The work will go West to East, starting in Seattle and completing in Bellevue for this segment.

- Seattle will take ~4-5 days (June 1-5)
- Floating Bridge ~3 days (June 6-9)
- Mercer Island ~4-5 (June 10-15)
- Bellevue ~1 day (June 16)

Outreach: Mailers will be sent out notifying all properties within a 500' radius of the tracks of the work two weeks prior to commencement. The Sound Transit Community Outreach 24-hr Construction Hotline is included: 888-298-2395

Equipment: A specialty rail grinding machine is arriving from LORAM. A spec sheet is included in the application. Noise generation is estimated to be approximately 110dB, however, this will not be a fixed point and will move along the track so the disruption will only be for a short period.