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# VIEWS

## COMMENT

### The real missing link

Up until now, the so-called "missing link" of the Burke-Gilman Trail was purely a matter of semantics. The construction of the \$3.5 million segment along 54th Street and Seaview Avenue, between the Ballard Locks and Northwest 60th Street, gives the bicycling lobby exactly what they wanted: a true missing link to the controversial trail.

In and of itself, the new trail segment is not a bad thing, unless you want to count the \$1.8 million from the city's general fund spent on the 0.7-mile project. That's money that could have been spent on things like police staffing, human services or even the long-suffering Parks maintenance budget.

We are in favor of safe transportation for bicyclists, pedestrians and everyone else who needs to get around this city. But what need does a stretch of asphalt less than a mile long serve?

In terms of transportation, very little. In terms of political leverage, the new trail segment could prove dramatically effective.

For years, bicycling advocates like the Cascade Bicycle Club and Friends of the Burke-Gilman Trail have lobbied for a trail along Ballard's industrial waterfront, calling it the "missing link."

Clever language; whenever we think of something as missing, our first instinct is to find it. In fact, before last week's trail opening, every bit of the trail west of 11th Avenue Northwest was as theoretical as quantum mechanics.

Thus begins anew the argument over whether the city should build a bicycle (or multi-use) trail along Shilshole Avenue, the site of Ballard's industrial waterfront where opposition to the trail has been strong yet pointless. The mayor endorses a trail there, as does City Council.

This doesn't bring peace to the bike-trail struggle; more likely, the war will continue.