

Information Item

Committee of the Whole



Meeting date: October 15, 2025

Topic

Imagine 2050 Outcomes Measurement Program – Continued discussion on the amendment and proposed measures

District(s), member(s):	All
Policy/legal reference:	Minn. Stats. §§ 473.145-147
Staff prepared/presented:	Sarah Nelson, Senior Researcher (651-602-1396); Krysten Ryba-Tures, Research Manager (651-602-1821)
Division/department:	Community Development / Research

Background

With the adoption of Imagine 2050 in February comes the opportunity to develop a new measurement program that centers outcomes related to intersectional regional policy direction and regional goals.

Imagine 2050 Outcomes Measurement Program direction

On June 4, 2025, community development research staff shared final updates for indicator projects under Thrive MSP 2040 (the previous regional development guide) to Committee of the Whole. Discussion included the trade-offs between:

- “Indicator project” approach—a limited number of high-level indicators selected to describe progress on pre-defined outcomes or goals; or
- “Programmatic” approach—a strategic alignment of monitoring, research, and policy that uses thematic structures to organize expansive sets of direct and indirect measures.

A programmatic approach to Imagine 2050 outcomes measurement received the strongest support. This approach includes pairing regional indicators with measures that describe the efforts of regional partners as well as Met Council’s direct roles for a more holistic understanding of regional change.

On September 3, 2025, community development research staff shared an update on program direction in the context of Imagine 2050’s five regional goals to Committee of the Whole. While discussion was limited due to time constraints, the direction of the Outcomes Measurement Program received support.

On September 15, 2025, staff presented proposed measurement slates for community development policy areas (Land Use, Housing, and Parks and Trails) with the Community Development Committee. Council members provided feedback, offered suggestions related to select topics, and asked questions about specific measures (answers were provided in a follow-up email the following day).

On September 23, Environmental Services staff shared proposed measures for the Water Policy Plan with Environment Committee. Council members again discussed the program, talked about logistics and the importance of partnerships, and provided recommendations to refocus proposed measures about “dollars spent” to more directly describe purpose of funds.

In addition, proposed measures for regional parks and trails have been presented to and discussed with Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission (MPOSC) on July 1, September 4, and

October 2, 2025.

On October 8, community development research staff presented new program information and returned to the discussion about proposed measures for regional goals at the Metropolitan Council meeting. Support for the program narrative, specifically the commitments and principles was expressed. After an overview of three (of five) regional goals, further discussion centered around potential co-benefits and other aspects of the program, such as:

- Opportunities for capacity building with local governments and other partners interested in monitoring efforts
- Balance and customization in new data collection efforts
- Alignment with other projects, such as the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
- Trade-offs in de-emphasizing output measures like dollars spent over the results of those investments; some anticipation that costs may remain part of the conversation despite measure design

Council members were also introduced to the Imagine 2050 Outcomes Measurement Program web page, where up-to-date information on proposed measures and key documents is now available. The web address is <https://metro council.org/Imagine2050Outcomes>.

Imagine 2050 Outcomes Measurement Program amendment

Staff have continued the development of the Imagine 2050 Outcomes Measurement Program, including further refinement to proposed measures and documenting the program's scope, commitments, and guiding principles into a program narrative, forming the basis of the amendment.

At the October 15 Committee of the Whole meeting, research staff will resume the discussion on proposed measures for regional goals (primarily around climate and natural systems), then open the conversation to any aspect of the program.

At Metropolitan Council's October 22 meeting, staff will seek authorization to release the Imagine 2050 Outcomes Measurement Program amendment for public comment in a business item.

