

# Thrive MSP 2040 Policy Discussion Outline

## Climate Change

---

### Scope, geography and authority of the discussion

The Council has proposed the following goal for *Thrive MSP 2040*:

*A resilient region minimizes its contributions to climate change and is prepared for the challenges and opportunities of a changing climate.*

While climate change is a new topic for the planning work of the Metropolitan Council, the Council is already addressing climate change through its transit and wastewater operations as well as through its planning work, especially related to surface water and water supply issues.

Several of the Council's peer regional planning organizations are undertaking explicit efforts to address climate change:

- For example, the [Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission](#) has an Office of Energy and Climate Change Initiatives which leads, supports, and coordinates efforts to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions in their region.
- The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning produced a [strategy paper](#) to explore how it might address climate change through its GO TO 2040 Plan.
- The New York Capital Region has created a [Capital Region Sustainability Plan](#) that focuses on sustainable land use policies, infrastructure investment and growth.

Today's issues are strongly connected to past and future *Thrive* discussions on:

- Agriculture Policy;
- Economic Competitiveness;
- Geographic Planning Areas;
- Natural Resources Policy;
- Transportation Policy (Highway, Transit and Bicycle / Pedestrian);
- Water Sustainability.

### Existing policy direction

The [Regional Development Framework](#) contains little direct discussion about mitigating the impacts of climate change. Nonetheless, many of the Framework's policy directions and priorities work toward minimizing climate change – such as the emphases on transit ridership, bicycle connections, access to parks, and mixed-use development.

In 2006, Governor Tim Pawlenty launched the process that became the Minnesota Climate Change Advisory Group (MCCAG), which submitted its [final report](#) to the Legislature in April 2008. Some of the MCCAG recommendations relevant to the work of the Metropolitan Council are already in Council policy. For example, the [2040 Transportation Policy Plan](#) adopted in 2010 emphasizes preserving the existing highway system and making strategic road investments that support transit expansion – a recommendation that aligns with the MCCAG recommendation to prioritize existing roads and design new and expanded roads to serve higher-density, more compact, pedestrian-friendly development in priority growth areas.

Under the [Next Generation Energy Act of 2007](#), Minnesota set a goal of reducing statewide greenhouse gas emissions to a level at least 15 percent below 2005 levels by 2015, to a level at least 30 percent below 2005 levels by 2025, and to a level at least 80 percent below 2005 levels by 2050. The [Minnesota Pollution Control Agency](#) monitors greenhouse gas emissions statewide.

In 2012, the Council adopted a [Sustainability Policy for Internal Operations and Management](#) which states that the Council will conduct its own operations in a sustainable manner, when economically feasible, specifically to:

- 1) increase energy efficiency and use of renewable energy sources;
- 2) reduce greenhouse gas emissions from Council operations;
- 3) conserve and protect water resources; and
- 4) reduce solid waste generation, reuse and recycle materials.

# Thrive MSP 2040 Policy Discussion Outline

## Climate Change

---

### Emerging tensions

Interest in how the Metropolitan Council's work aligns with climate change has been rising over the last two years. Key landmarks demonstrating this increased interest have been:

- The 2012 Minnesota Department of Health [report](#) summarizing their review of 53 local comprehensive plans for eleven public health and climate change indicators;
- The recent proposal, to add the Metropolitan Council chair to the Environmental Quality Board as an ex officio member;
- The release of the [Regional Indicators](#) website documenting citywide energy use, water use, waste production and vehicle miles traveled;
- Rising stakeholder interest:
  - [How should the next regional plan address climate change](#)
  - [Metropolitan Council: Address Climate in the Twin Cities](#)

### Questions for discussion

- A. In 2007, the state of Minnesota formally adopted [goals](#) for reducing statewide greenhouse gas emissions. What roles should the Council play in advancing these goals?
- Adopt the statewide greenhouse gas emission reduction goals in *Thrive MSP 2040*;
  - Develop and adopt region-specific greenhouse gas emission reduction goals and monitor regional performance;
  - Consider greenhouse gas emission reductions in planning decisions;
  - Expect greenhouse gas emission reduction goals from jurisdictions requesting Council grants;
  - Include greenhouse gas emission reduction goals in local comprehensive plan review.
- B. The Council has already undertaken a number of initiatives to respond to climate change in its operational divisions, thus demonstrating a role

of leading by example and inspiring other to undertake similar efforts. Broadly defined, what additional Council roles are appropriate to support regional and local planning to address climate change?

- Information:
    - Providing energy and climate data;
    - Collecting, aggregating and disseminating the next generation of the Regional Indicators data;
    - Developing a regional greenhouse gas emissions inventory.
  - Technical assistance to the region's local governments, including identifying best practices and model ordinances for climate change mitigation and adaptation and working in partnership with the MPCA's statewide Minnesota [GreenStep Cities program](#);
  - Regional convening and leadership on climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- C. Peer regional planning entities have created either organizational functions or plans that focus on issues associated with climate change. The Council already has an internal team that is collaborating on implementing the sustainability policy for Council operations. What additional steps are appropriate for the Council?
- Include a goal on climate change in *Thrive* and identify appropriate policies in the systems and policy plans to advance the goal;
  - Form an internal agency Climate Change team from staff across the Council to identify opportunities to address climate change mitigation and adaptation in the Council's planning work;
  - Convene a Climate Change Working Group of Councilmembers to parallel the scope of the Equity Working Group;
  - Collaborate with partners to develop a regional Climate Change Action Plan as a *Thrive* policy plan, encompassing mitigation and adaptation in the Council's operations and local / regional planning;
  - Create a permanent staff function within the Council – similar to the TOD unit – to focus the Council's efforts, both operations and planning, on climate change mitigation and adaptation.