

# Information Item

Community Development Commission



Meeting Date: October 3, 2022

## Topic

Regional Parks System Administrative Process for Minor Master Plan Amendments

<b>District(s), Member(s):</b>	All
<b>Policy/Legal Reference:</b>	Minn. Stat. § 473.313; <i>2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan</i> : Chapter 5, Planning and Chapter 6, System Protection
<b>Staff Prepared/Presented:</b>	Emmett Mullin, Manager (651-602-1360) and Tracey Kinney, Senior Planner (651-602-1029)
<b>Division/Department:</b>	Community Development / Regional Planning

## Background

Minn. Stat. § 473.313 requires that Regional Park Implementing Agencies prepare park and trail master plans and that these plans be consistent with the Metropolitan Council's *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* (Policy Plan). The Council is charged with reviewing these Agency plans for consistency with the Policy Plan, and Council staff are investigating an administrative review process for certain master plan amendments. The purpose of establishing an administrative amendment process is to create greater efficiencies and time savings for Council committees, staff, and Regional Park Implementing Agencies for routine and non-controversial park and trail plan amendments.

The proposed administrative amendment process would authorize the Regional Administrator or designee to administratively review certain amendments that qualify as minor master plan amendments. Qualifying amendments will be reviewed for consistency and conformance with the Policy Plan and other Council policies and plans, like all other requests. The proposed Regional Parks System administrative review process would have similar Council adopted guidelines to other existing Council administrative review processes including administrative review of minor comprehensive plan amendments, local water management plan amendments, and water supply plan amendments. Additional information about these similar processes that this Regional Parks System Administrative Review process is modeled after is included in business item [2007-244](#).

This information item serves as a first step in defining such criteria for qualifying Park and Trail Plan Amendment candidates. If the Council is supportive, Parks staff will work with the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission and others to further develop the concept and bring it back to the Council for review and approval.

As part of this initial exploration, Council staff reviewed all the regional park and trail master plan amendments the Council has considered over the past four years. Staff identified the following possible candidate criteria that may serve as a foundation for minor administrative amendment requests (see Table 1 below):

- In all cases, the proposed amendment conforms to regional system plans and is consistent with Council policies and plans.
- Public-to-public land exchanges that are part of an already approved Council Action.
- Public-to-public land exchanges that are less than one acre in size, are not controversial or politically charged, and include proposed replacement land that is of an equal or greater value to the regional system than the removal land.
- Corrects a minor mapping or design error that does not have a material impact on the planned park or trail.
- Provides a consent to easement for a natural resource monitoring, restoration, or enhancement project that would benefit the regional system and would not have a material impact on the planned park or trail unit.
- Provides a consent to easement for underground utilities that do not have a material impact on above-ground recreational opportunities or natural resources.

Staff determined that over the past four years, 10% of the 62 regional park and trail master plans reviewed by the Council could be characterized as meeting one or more of the above criteria (Table 1).

Council staff anticipate an increase in the need for minor amendments as staff advance the Council-led Regional Parks Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Improvement Project that establishes an annual update process of the Agencies' GIS data. For instance, Council staff anticipate there will be some minor corrections needed to accurately depict park and trail boundary information, but the changes do not warrant a full-scale plan amendment because the agency is not proposing a substantial departure from the existing plan, with related acquisitions and/or development concepts remaining unchanged.

An administrative review process would benefit the Council and Agencies by creating greater efficiencies and staff time savings which may encourage park implementing agencies to update their plans more frequently. Council staff estimate that Council committee review time would be reduced from approximately 60 days to 15 business days. Kelly Grissman, Director of Planning for Three Rivers Park District, supports the development of an administrative amendment process, stating, "Three Rivers manages a large system of parks and trails. Having updated park and trail plans is critical to making timely investments. Creating an administrative process to prioritize and simplify partner agency requests for routine, minor changes will build stronger Council-Agency working relationships for future collaboration on important regional issues."

The submittal requirements for the proposed administrative amendment process will require agencies to submit a brief memo that describes the request and relevant responses to the Policy Plan's Chapter 5, Strategy 1: Master Plan requirements. Depending on the specific request, Council staff will determine the number of required content areas to be included in the Agency proposal. Council staff will work with Agencies to determine exactly what must be submitted. Lil Leatham from Dakota County supports an administrative amendment process that reduces the administrative burden associated with the plan amendment submittal requirements. She stated, "Having an administrative review process for minor amendments would allow Agency staff to focus on the bigger, critical planning efforts in front of them. This new proposal would be heartily welcomed."

### Next steps

The proposed administrative amendment process candidate criteria will be co-developed with the Community Development Committee, Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission, and Regional Parks Implementing Agencies.

Council staff will report back to the Community Development Committee and Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission on the program's progress after one year of its implementation, as well as during Policy Plan updates thereafter.



Table 1. Administrative Amendment Candidates

Type	Business Item	Summary	Administrative Amendment Criteria
Land for Facility Exchange	Rush Creek Regional Trail Land-for-Facility Exchange, Three Rivers Park District ( <a href="#">2022-139</a> )	Three Rivers Park District provided a 0.439 permanent easement and 5.40-acre temporary easement to Brooklyn Park for a road extension in exchange for two grade separated trail crossings. The total estimated value of the two grade separated trail crossings is approximately \$2 million.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing Council approval for the same project</li> <li>Removal of 0.439-acre or &lt;2% decrease of the administrative boundary (total trail acreage estimated at 30 acres (18-mile trail that is approximately 14 feet wide)).</li> <li>Public to public agency transfer</li> </ul>
Land Exchange /Master Plan Amendment	Cleary Lake Regional Park Master Plan Amendment and Land Conversion, Three Rivers Park District ( <a href="#">2022-55</a> )	A minor error was discovered in the project design after it was approved by the Council. The correction required an additional 0.09 acres of land be added to the original project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing Council approval for the same project</li> <li>Design error of 0.09-acre or &lt;1% of the administrative boundary (total park acreage is 1,186 acres).</li> <li>Public to public agency transfer</li> </ul>
Consent to Easement	Three Rivers Park District request for consent to easement, Carver Park Reserve, Three Rivers Park ( <a href="#">2021-264</a> )	Three Rivers requested a Council consent to easement for Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR) groundwater monitoring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public-to-public agency transaction</li> <li>Natural resource monitoring conveyance</li> <li>No material impacts to recreational lands or natural resources</li> </ul>





Type	Business Item	Summary	Administrative Amendment Criteria
Land Exchange/ Acquisition Master Plan Amendment	Anoka County's Mississippi River Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment and Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park Acquisition Master Plan Amendment ( <a href="#">2021-222</a> )	Anoka County sold 0.3 acres of parkland to Minneapolis Water Works in exchange for 0.3 acres of replacement trail corridor land. The replacement land included Mississippi River shoreline.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land removal for land replacement equally valuable exchange</li> <li>• Public-to-public agency transaction</li> <li>• The replacement land was of equal or better quality for both recreation and natural resources.</li> </ul>
Acquisition Master Plan	Scott County's Blakely Bluffs Park Reserve Acquisition Master Plan Amendment and Boundary Adjustment ( <a href="#">2019-228</a> )	Scott County added 7-acres of parkland to the boundary that was inadvertently omitted at the time of mapping. Scott County also transferred 145-acres of inholdings (not Scott County owned) to the Department of Natural Resources for the Ney Nature Center.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mapping correction of 7 acres or a &lt;1% increase of the administrative boundary (total park acreage is 2,545 acres).</li> <li>• Public-to-public agency transaction</li> <li>• The inholding land that was removed from the park administrative boundary will remain in protected conservation status.</li> </ul>
Consent to Easement	Three Rivers Park District's Consent to Easements, Carver and Murphy Hanrehan Park Reserves ( <a href="#">2017-197</a> )	Three Rivers requested two Council consents to easement for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for groundwater monitoring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public-to-public agency transaction</li> <li>• Natural resource monitoring conveyance</li> </ul>