

Information Item

Community Development Committee



Meeting Date: November 18, 2024

Topic

Imagine 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan: Public Comment Summary and Next Steps

District(s), Member(s):	All
Policy/Legal Reference:	Minn. Stats. §§ 473.145 and 473.147
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Colin Kelly, Planning Analyst (651-602-1361) Emmett Mullin, Parks Manager (651-602-1360)
Division/Department:	Community Development / Regional Parks

Proposed Action

Information item; no action is proposed at this time.

Background

On October 7, 2024, the public comment period closed for the draft Imagine 2050 plan, the Met Council's regional development guide. Imagine 2050 includes each of the Met Council's system and policy plans, including regional parks and trails, transportation, water resources, and housing.

At the November 18, 2024, Community Development Committee (CDC) meeting, Council staff will share a summary of the public comments that focus on the Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan (draft policy plan) and outline next steps.

Comments on the draft policy plan were received from agencies, local governmental units, and the public, including the National Park Service and most of the regional park implementing agencies. Many commenters provided feedback via an online platform implemented by the Met Council specifically for the Imagine 2050 public comment period. Others provided comments via email, during the public hearing, or at one of over 20 Art + Policy engagement events. In addition to more traditional narrative comments, over 200 flags were sewn, 144 mural blocks were painted, and 16 Indigenous youth manifestos were written.

Given the variety of engagement opportunities at multiple scales, comments ranged from very broad (e.g., responding to the prompt, "what are your dreams for the region?") to highly specific (e.g., commenting on a draft action within the policy plan). Broad comments primarily came from the public and those attending Art + Policy engagement events. Specific comments came from regional park implementing agencies and local governmental units. At the November 18, 2024, CDC meeting, Council staff will share key themes emerging from the public comment process, provide examples of comments received, and solicit feedback on proposed policy plan direction.

While the focus of the November CDC meeting will be on public comments received, work continues on the draft Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan and Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook (draft planning handbook). On January 21, 2025, Council staff will share a draft final policy plan, planning handbook, and public comment report for CDC's consideration. Imagine 2050 is proposed for adoption by the Metropolitan Council on February 12, 2025 (Table 1).

Table 1: Schedule for Finalizing Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan, Planning Handbook, and Imagine 2050

Date/Timing	Milestone
October 3, 2024	90% draft Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook (Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission information item)
October 7, 2024	Public comment period closes
November 7, 2024	High-level summary of public comments received on the draft Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan (MPOSC information item)
November 18, 2024	High-level summary of public comments received on the draft Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan (CDC information item)
December 5, 2024	Continue sharing comments and draft proposals for plan revisions (MPOSC info item)
January 9, 2025	Draft final Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan, Planning Handbook, and public comment report (MPOSC business item)
January 21, 2025 (Tuesday)	Draft final Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan, Planning Handbook, and public comment report (CDC business item)
February 12, 2025	Metropolitan Council adoption of <i>Imagine 2050</i>

The draft policy plan is the result of numerous discussions with regional park implementing agencies, the Metropolitan Council’s Committee of the Whole, CDC, and MPOSC, as well as extensive outreach to prioritized communities and the public. Engagement with MPOSC on *Imagine 2050* began in August 2022, with focused discussions on updating the *Regional Parks Policy Plan* beginning in October 2022. A summary of the engagement appears in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of Regional Development Guide engagement with Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

Date	Focus
October 6, 2022	Regional vision, values, and goals; kick-off the Regional Parks Policy Plan update process; gather input on key topics and issues to inform policy plan workgroups
March 2, 2023	Council-endorsed regional values and vision statements; Regional Parks Policy Plan project timeline; proposal for regional park implementing agency-Council policy plan workgroups.
April 6, 2023	Small group activities focused on developing vision, mission, and values for the regional parks and trails system.
June 1, 2023	Developing shared regional goals and policy area objectives
August 3, 2023	Regional goals; regional parks and trails system vision, mission, and values; the development of a community, stakeholder and public engagement plan; launch of two more policy plan workgroups
November 2, 2023	Outcomes of policy plan workgroups; draft regional parks and trails objectives; preview remaining policy plan workgroups
January 4, 2024	Proposal for engaging MPOSC in early 2024, schedule for finalizing the Regional Development Guide, revised set of draft



Date	Focus
	parks objectives
February 1, 2024	Revised set of draft parks objectives, subset of the draft objectives surrounding the Climate and Natural Systems topic, local forecasts
March 7, 2024	Revised draft regional parks and trails objectives; emerging ideas on policies and actions; background information on the existing Regional Parks Policy Plan and how components of it may change going forward
April 4, 2024	Revised regional parks and trails objectives; emerging ideas on regional parks and trails policies and actions; emerging thinking on a Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook
May 2, 2024	Overview of the draft 60% Regional Parks and Trails Plan; deeper dives into section 7 (Recreation, Facilities, and Programming) and section 8 (Finance)
June 6, 2024	Overview of the draft Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook; deeper dives into section 3 (Natural Systems) and section 4 (Climate Resilience)
July 11, 2024	Deeper dives into section 2 (System plan), section 5 (Planning), and section 6 (System protection), and associated content in the draft planning handbook
August 1, 2024	Overview of the public comment (90%) draft of the 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan, with a particular focus on new and different elements of the draft 2050 plan
October 3, 2024	Update on the draft Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook, with a particular focus on section 5 (Planning) and regional trail boundary adjustment criteria
November 7, 2024	High-level summary of public comments received on the draft Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan

Minnesota law requires the Council to conduct a comprehensive review of the Regional Parks Policy Plan at least every four years (Minnesota Statutes, section 473.147). Completion of the policy plan update, as an integrated part of *Imagine 2050*, is expected in early 2025.

