



2026 Regional Parks and Trails System Visitor Study – Contract Number 25P041

Community Development Committee, Business Item 2025-182



August 4, 2025 – Ismael Ramirez, Ph.D. Principal Parks Researcher

Survey Purpose & Background



- The Regional Parks and Trails Visitor Study is conducted every 5 years. The first study was done in 2008.
- The purpose of the study is to gather in-person data on visitor demographics, park usage, group size, and experience
- Results help inform:**
 - Part of the Statutory funding allocations (Minn. Stat. §§ 85.53 & 473.351)**
 - Inform the multipliers for the annual use estimates (e.g., vehicle, seasonal)**
 - Planning, equity analysis, and agency decision-making**
- Last completed in 2021, results revealed disparities in access and experience across race, income, and ability. Continuing these studies ensures consistent data to measure progress and inform investments.

Selection and Procurement Process



- A request for proposals was released: **April 16, 2025**
- 28 plan holders (including 14 small/disadvantaged firms)
- 6 proposals received
- Evaluated by a panel of Council + regional park implementing agency staff
- Key Criteria: Proposal quality, qualifications and experience, service delivery plan, key personnel, subconsultant qualifications, and price.

Consultant Selection



Panel concluded:

- Selected Consultant – Wilder Research
- Methodological rigor, including validated sampling + data cleaning
- Proven ability to engage underserved populations
- Strong plan for oversampling and focus groups
- History of success on similar work, including 2021 study

Equity and Budget

Budget:

- Contract not to exceed \$1,000,000
- Funded through 2025–2026 Community Development budget

Equity:

- Met 10% MCUB goal
- Advances Imagine 2050 core values:
 - Equity: Inclusive data collection
 - Accountability: Consistent tracking across cycles
 - Stewardship: Supports regional planning and funding fairness



Recommendation

That the Metropolitan Council:

Authorize the Regional Administrator to negotiate and execute Contract No. 25P041 with Wilder Research to conduct the 2026 Parks and Trails Visitor Study, in an amount not to exceed \$1,000,000.

