

Business Item

Environment Committee



Committee Meeting Date: July 23, 2024

For the Metropolitan Council: August 14, 2024

Business Item: 2024-192 JT

Release the 2050 Water Policy Plan for Public Comment

District(s), Member(s):	All Council Members
Policy/Legal Reference:	Minn Stat. § 473
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Division/Department:	Environmental Services

Proposed Action

The Environment Committee recommends to the Metropolitan Council to release the 2050 Water Policy Plan for formal public comment.

Background

This item is part of the Imagine 2050 plan and will be brought forward as part of the consolidated action with the same business item for the governing body of the Metropolitan Council. Each of the committees will review and take action on specific components of Imagine 2050.

The Metropolitan Council is required by Minnesota Statute 473 to create a long-range plan to establish the vision, values, goals, and actions to guide the growth and development of the Twin Cities metro region. This includes a plan focused on the water resources (Minn. Stat. § 473.157), the regional wastewater treatment system (Minn. Stat. § 473.146), and water supply planning (Minn. Stat. § 473.1565) for the seven-county region. The drafted regional planning document, Imagine 2050, sets cross-cutting goals and expectations that apply to and are supported by policy plans – the Transportation Policy Plan, the Regional Parks Plan, the Regional Housing Plan, and the Water Policy Plan.

The 2050 Water Policy Plan is an integrated plan that is dedicated to ensuring sustainable water resources of the region. It provides a framework of addressing current and future water concerns through three distinct components – water policies, the Metro Area Water Supply Plan, and the Wastewater System Plan. This cycle, policy makers decided to include these components as one document to support water planning, management, and utility operations collectively, as water is interconnected flows through and across the natural and built environments. The policies and actions included in this plan will influence the Met Council's and local water planning and operations over the next decade to foster partnerships, collaboration, and shared action to achieve our desired outcomes.

Met Council staff have been engaging with policy makers and stakeholders to create this content since early 2020, starting with our policy research project. This process has allowed us to explore areas of concern and identify approaches and actions to address them at the regional level. Met Council staff carried out a robust stakeholder engagement process throughout the development of

the 2050 Water Policy Plan policy development in 2023-2024, resulting in over 500 comments which allowed for co-creation and directly informed the Draft 2050 Water Policy Plan.

Advisory Committees

In addition to the robust stakeholder engagement, the Water Policy Plan had four formal advisory committees working with Met Council staff in the development of content:

- Metropolitan Council Environment Committee
- Metro Area Water Supply Advisory Committee (MAWSAC)
- Metro Area Water Supply Advisory Committee Technical Advisory Committee (MAWSAC-TAC)
- Water Advisory Committee

These groups were composed of policy makers, state agency staff, local water utility and public works staff, watershed administrators, and industry water professionals. They all provided insight and guidance throughout the plan's development.

MAWSAC holds an additional responsibility in the approval body for the Metro Area Water Supply Plan. On July 11, 2024, they recommended moving the Draft 2050 Metro Area Water Supply Plan for public comment.

Public Comment Process

The Metropolitan Council will release the comprehensive development guide for the Twin Cities metropolitan area, Imagine 2050, for public comment. Imagine 2050 includes the following system and policy plans: 2050 Transportation Policy Plan, 2050 Water Policy Plan, 2050 Regional Parks Policy Plan, 2050 Housing Policy Plan, and regional policy guidance related the land use, climate, and equity.

The public is encouraged to view the plan and provide public comment, by 5 p.m. Monday, Oct. 7, through the Met Council online engagement site: [Engage.metrocouncil.org](https://engage.metrocouncil.org).

If you are unable to use the online tool to submit comments, you may use any the following methods:

- Written comments: Metropolitan Council 390 N. Robert St., St. Paul, 55101
- Record comments on Council's Public Comment Line at 651-602-1500
- Send TTY comments to 651-291-0904

Comments must be submitted by 5 p.m., Monday, Oct. 7.

The Metropolitan Council has planned a public hearing at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 25, in the Metropolitan Council Chambers, 390 Robert Street North, St. Paul.

All interested people are encouraged to attend the public hearings and offer comments. Those attending may register in advance to speak by calling the Met Council at 651- 602-1500.

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Met Council staff will review public comment and evaluate changes to the proposed policies to address the comments submitted by the public. A recommendation for final adoption of the Imagine 2050 plan will be considered by the Metropolitan Council in early 2025.

Draft Water Policy Plan Documents

Attached to this business item are two versions of the Water Policy Plan.

1. Imagine_2050_WPP_ChangesForPublicCommentDraft.pdf document highlights the edits (in green font) that were made to the last version of the Water Policy Plan shown to the Environment Committee on June 11, 2024.
2. Imagine_2050_WPP_PublicCommentDraft.pdf is a clean version without edits highlighted.

Thrive Analysis Section

The Regional Development Guide and the different system and policy plans within it have been developed in keeping with the spirit of the Thrive MSP 2040 outcomes. With each 10-year planning cycle, the resulting regional policy builds on the prior regional development guide. Imagine 2050 includes responses to the Thrive MSP 2040 outcomes, as well as an updated vision and goals for the region in 2050. It also contains the shared regional goals that guide all of the policy work, including additional detail related to equity, addressing racial disparities, and climate change.

Small Business Inclusion

There are no direct impacts to small businesses with the proposed action.

