

Metropolitan Council

Meeting date: September 9, 2015

Subject: 2015 System Statements

District(s), Member(s): ALL

Policy/Legal Reference: Minn. Stat. 473.856 and Minn. Stat. 473.857

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Division/Department: Community Development / Regional Planning

Proposed Action

Information item only. No action needed.

Background

In mid-September, Council staff will be issuing system statements and launching the *Local Planning Handbook*. This information item explains the role of system statements in the decennial planning cycle, the relationship to the Council's planning documents, and gives an overview of the content and purpose of system statements. In addition, staff will provide an update on the development of the updated *Local Planning Handbook*.

System Statements

As part of the comprehensive development guide, the Council prepares and adopts metropolitan system plans for:

- Transportation, including highways, transit, and airports;
- Wastewater services; and
- Regional parks and open space

As required by Minn. Stat. 473.856, the Metropolitan Council issues **system statements** to each city, township, and county in the region:

- when the Council updates or revises the comprehensive development guide as part of the 10-year regional planning cycle, and
- generally whenever the Council amends or modifies a metropolitan system plan.

System statements are individualized reports for each community in the region that identify and explain the specific implications of the metropolitan system plans for that community. Each individual system statement details:

- the community's forecasted growth,
- how each regional system impacts that community, and
- whether there are planned changes to the any of the systems affecting the community.

The issuance of a decennial system statement initiates a community's obligation to review and as necessary, revise its comprehensive plan within three years. For this decennial planning cycle, comprehensive plans are due to the Council by December 31, 2018.

Relationship to Council Planning Documents

While sending the system statement is the official trigger that marks the beginning of the local comprehensive planning update process, it is not meant to stand alone. Rather, system statements are one of three major documents that direct and guide communities as they update their plans.

- The **comprehensive development guide** (*Thrive MSP 2040* along with the Council's metropolitan system and policy plans), contains the regional infrastructure plans, as well as specific policies and strategies guiding the growth and development of the region.
- The **system statement** is a distillation of the key changes and infrastructure plans in the Council's metropolitan system plans.
- The **Local Planning Handbook** is a guide that explains what specific tables, maps, data, and other information are required in local plans in order for the Council to fully evaluate a plan's:
 - conformance to system plans,
 - consistency with Council policy,
 - and compatibility with the plans of adjacent and affected jurisdictions.

The updated Handbook will also provide information and resources about optional elements that a community may consider including in their local comprehensive plan.

The comprehensive development guide (*Thrive MSP 2040* along with the system and policy plans), are the governing documents, while the system statement distills those plans for each community to include information pertinent to that community. The Handbook further individualizes the required elements of a local comprehensive plan so that the Council can evaluate the plan's conformance to and consistency with the Council's plans and policies. System statements do not provide new or different information from the comprehensive development guide (*Thrive MSP 2040*), but rather system statements repackage the information making it more concise and useable for each community.

System Statement Content

Pursuant to Minn. Stat. 473.856, a system statement "shall contain information relating to the unit and appropriate surrounding territory that the council determines necessary for the unit to consider in reviewing the unit's comprehensive plan." Further, the statutes indicate that the system statement includes the following:

- (1) *the timing, character, function, location, projected capacity, and conditions on use for existing or planned metropolitan public facilities, as specified in metropolitan system plans, and for state and federal public facilities to the extent known to the council; and*
- (2) *the population, employment, and household projections which have been used by the council as a basis for its metropolitan system plans.*

In addition, the system statement provides procedural information on the system statement definition, next steps, and the dispute resolution process should a community disagree with any element of the system statement. To view past examples of the full content, system statements issued in 2011 can be accessed on the [Council's website](#). The reader should note that these system statements are not decennial planning system statements, but rather were issued in response to updates to the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* and the *2030 Transportation Policy Plan*.

Building off of the previous round of system statements issued in 2005 and in 2011, this round of system statements uses the following outline.

- I. 2015 System Statement
 - a. Regional development plan adoption

- b. System statement definition
 - c. What is in this system statement
 - d. Dispute resolution process
 - e. Introduction to *Thrive MSP 2040*
 - i. Community designation
 - ii. Forecasts
 - iii. Housing Policy
- II. Transportation
- a. Federal Requirements
 - b. Key changes in the *2040 Transportation Policy Plan*
 - i. Metropolitan highway system
 - ii. Transit system
 - iii. Aviation system
 - iv. Other plan changes
 - c. System plan considerations affecting your community
 - i. Metropolitan highway system
 - ii. Transit system
 - iii. Aviation
 - d. Other plan considerations
 - i. Regional bicycle transportation network
 - ii. A Minor System / Functional Classification
 - iii. Freight
- III. Water resources
- a. Key concepts in the *2040 Water Resources Policy Plan*
 - b. System plan considerations affecting your community
 - i. Metropolitan sewer service
 - 1. Forecasts
 - 2. Description of the Metropolitan Disposal System serving your community
 - 3. Description of the Regional Inflow/Infiltration (I/I) Program
 - 4. Specific wastewater plan requirements (optional – will not apply to all)
 - ii. Management of sub-surface sewage treatment systems (SSTS)
 - iii. Surface water management
 - c. Other plan considerations
 - i. Water supply
- IV. Regional parks
- a. Key concepts in the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*
 - i. 2040 Regional Parks System Facilities
 - ii. 2040 Regional Parks System Components
 - b. Key Changes in the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*
 - c. System plan considerations affecting your community
 - i. Regional parks system components in your community
 - 1. Regional parks, park reserves, and special recreation features
 - 2. Regional trails
 - ii. State and Federal Lands in your community

What Happens After We Issue a System Statement

After system statements are issued, communities are directed to contact their sector representatives with any questions. If there are elements with which a community disagrees, the community should also start with the sector representative, who will then gather any necessary technical staff to work through issues. Typically, disagreements are resolved by working with staff.

If a community and the Council are unable to resolve disagreements, a community does have the ability to request a hearing to determine whether the system statement should be amended. The request must be made within 60 days of receipt of the system statement, and is conducted by either the Land Use Advisory Committee or the State Office of Administrative Hearings. If a hearing is requested, it must be held within 60 days after the request or at a mutually agreed upon date. Minn. Stat. 473.857 further details the timeframes under which a hearing report and final determination by the Council must be made. In the last planning cycle, there were five requests for a hearing.

If no requests for a hearing are made within 60 days of system statement receipt, the system statement is considered final. Communities may commence their local planning process and may avail themselves of the Council's technical assistance and workshops to aid in that process.

Consistent with the policies adopted by the Council in June 2014 ([Business Item 2014-143](#)) regarding review of local comprehensive plans and amendments, beginning January 1, 2016, the Council will review all plans and plan amendments under *Thrive MSP 2040* and its system and policy plans.

Update on the Local Planning Handbook

Over the course of updating the *Local Planning Handbook*, staff have provided progress updates to and solicited feedback from the Community Development Committee and the Land Use Advisory Committee. At the September 9, 2015, Metropolitan Council meeting, staff will provide a final update on the Handbook project.

The Local Planning Handbook will launch in mid-September to coincide with the distribution of system statements. To make the developed website and resources as relevant and useful as possible for the end user of the Handbook (local government), an aggressive and comprehensive testing program and schedule were developed for both internal and external focus groups.

Council staff solicited a large, comprehensive group of local planners and planning consultants for the external focus group through coordination with MetroCities, surveys through the Minnesota Chapter of the American Planning Association, and through professional contacts of the Council's Sector Representatives. Staff contacted each community in the region to ask for volunteers to participate in the Local Planning Handbook Focus Group and received an enthusiastic response. A total of 42 local planners and planning consultants participated in the external focus group, which tested web navigation, tested tools and resources, and reviewed written content within the Handbook for clarity and coherence.

In addition, staff coordinated across the divisions of the Council to form an internal focus group. This group included staff from the Local Planning Assistance and the Council-wide Technical Reviews team, which included representatives from wastewater, surface water management, water supply, transportation, transit, parks, housing, and research.

The final weeks before launch of the Handbook along with system statements involves resolving technical issues, incorporating all remaining feedback from internal and external reviewers, and ensuring functionality in the live environment. Staff will continue to update the Handbook with additional

tools and resources as new items are developed, with changes resulting from new legislation or rule changes (such as Critical Area), and with clarified language in response to local feedback.