

Business Item

Metropolitan Council



For the Metropolitan Council: September 27, 2023

Business Item: 2023-229

Establish the Climate Group and Appoint Members

District(s), Member(s):	All
Policy/Legal Reference:	Bylaws of the Metropolitan Council, art. III.C.
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Charlie Zelle, Chair, 651-602-1390
Division/Department:	Chair's Office

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council approve Chair Zelle's recommendation to:

1. Establish an internal advisory Climate Work Group through December 31, 2026.
2. Appoint the following members to serve on the work group: Peter Lindstrom, Chair; Deb Barber; Chai Lee; and Sue Vento.

Background

For many years, the Council has been working to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce energy use, and provide technical assistance to local governments to implement climate-related actions. In its Strategic Plan (2020-2022), the Council identified as an objective the development of an "agency-wide sustainability plan," and in December 2022, adopted that plan as the [Climate Action Work Plan \(Business Item 2022-336\)](#). In the Council's new Strategic Plan (2023-2027), the Council also included a Sustainability Priority to advance the implementation of the Climate Action Work Plan and provide direction to the development of the regional development guide.

The Council is also engaged in the development of its 2050 Regional Development Guide, for which it has set a working goal of: "We Lead on Addressing Climate Change." And legislation passed in the 2023 session further directed the Council to incorporate climate adaptation and mitigation into the regional development guide, including specifics around meeting state-wide greenhouse gas emissions reductions goals and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) targets. In addition, the Council was recently awarded a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency to create a regional greenhouse gas emissions reductions plan for the 11-county region. These activities and directives require significant cross-divisional coordination and new areas of discussion and policy work for the Council.

Work Group Purpose

The Climate Work Group is intended to provide a forum for Council Members to work with Council staff on the following items:

- Guiding the development of the climate policy, objectives, and actions for the 2050 Regional Development Guide in light of new requirements and funding opportunities
- Guiding and monitoring the implementation of the commitments, strategies, and actions of the Climate Action Work Plan

- Guiding and monitoring the strategies identified in the Council's Sustainability priority in the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan

The establishment of this internal advisory Climate Work Group will guide staff related to the above issues and will help identify additional topics for exploration as they emerge, particularly in the long-range climate policy work. This group will not make any formal decisions. Rather, discussion and recommendations on climate policy will be conducted in the standing committees of the Council where appropriate as well as meetings of the full Council. The climate policy and related objectives and actions will be integrated into the various chapters of the 2050 regional development guide and presented to the governing body as a component of the 2050 Regional Development Guide. Reporting on progress to implement the Climate Action Work Plan will be brought to the full Council.

Rationale

The development of climate policy in the regional development guide will require consideration of new or revised policy direction that requires more time for deeper issue exploration and discussion with Council Members and staff. The Climate Work Group will allow for more time and collaborative discussion to explore climate-related issues than would otherwise be available in existing meetings, especially given the cross-divisional nature of the work.

Thrive Lens Analysis

The Climate Work Group will take an integrated approach to the development and incorporation of climate policy in the 2050 Regional Development Guide, including representation from each of the Council's standing committees. The Work Group and supporting staff from across the Council's divisions will think holistically about how the Council approaches its long-range planning work and its implementation of the Climate Action Work Plan to further these outcomes on an agency-wide basis. The Climate Work Group will improve the Council's ability to advance the policies and outcomes identified in *Thrive MSP 2040* and the direction in the Council's Strategic Plan as they relate to Sustainability.

Funding

The Community Development Division will provide primary staff support for the Climate Work Group, such as meeting and agenda coordination, as part of its regular work. Development of the 2050 Regional Development Guide is funded through division budgets for Environmental Services, Community Development, and Metropolitan Transportation Services. The Council has received \$1 million from the Environmental Protection Agency to support the development of a regional greenhouse gas emissions reductions plan, along with related GHG inventories and analyses. In addition to the staff time for the interdivisional teams supporting the implementation of the Climate Action Work Plan, the Council has allocated \$500,000 as part of its 2023 budget to support additional implementation efforts.

Small Business Inclusion

N/A

