

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

Meeting date: October 1, 2020

Subject: Public Comment and Engagement Update for the Draft Amendment to the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*

District(s), Member(s): All

Policy/Legal Reference: Minnesota Statute § 473.147

Staff Prepared/Presented: Tracey Kinney, Senior Planner (651-602-1029) and Emmett Mullin, Regional Parks Manager (651-602-1360)

Division/Department: Community Development / Regional Planning

Proposed Action

None; information and discussion only.

Background

Minnesota Statutes 473.147, subd. 1 directs the Metropolitan Council (Council) to plan for the Regional Parks System. As part of the 2018 update of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*, the Council committed to convening a region-wide discussion about system additions in 2019. This effort began in October 2019 and continues to the present day. In addition to adding or expanding regional parks and trails, this draft amendment adds new policy language to strengthen equitable access and proposes a new future study on the history of the land where the parks and trails are located.

Currently, we are in the midst of the public comment period for the draft amendment to the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* (RPPP), which runs from August 26 to October 30, 2020. The public comment period is an opportunity to include advice from residents across the region, to ensure the plan increases equitable access to the Regional Parks System. Council staff is conducting a pilot engagement process to reach out to underserved populations through consultations with a range of organizations connected with parks and youth, in addition to the full wealth of resources the Council employs to welcome advice from the general public. At the October 1 meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission (Commission), staff will share a high-level update of the public comments received and the engagement activities to date.

Rationale

The Council's [Public Engagement Plan](#) recognizes that the public and key constituencies are "full and equal partners in the region's decision-making processes at all levels." An open discussion of key issues raised during the public hearing and public comment period for the amendment to the RPPP demonstrates the Council's and the Commission's commitment to listening and responding to public comments. This process will demonstrate how these comments inform the final version of the amendment to the RPPP.

Thrive Lens Analysis

The RPPP draft amendment advances the *Thrive MSP 2040* Outcome of Livability through increasing access to natural resource-based outdoor recreation, which enhances the quality of life throughout the region. It also advances the Thrive Outcome of Equity through strengthening equitable use of the regional parks system by reducing barriers to participation across race, ethnicity, income, and ability. These two outcomes were key considerations in scoring proposed additions to the regional parks and trails system.

Known Support / Opposition

During the public comment period, the Council will receive a wide array of comments in support of and in opposition to the current draft policy plan language.