

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Committee

Meeting date: September 3, 2020

For the Community Development Committee meeting of September 8, 2020

Subject: Public Engagement Approach on the draft Regional Parks Policy Plan Amendment

District(s), Member(s): All

Policy/Legal Reference: Minn. Stat. § 473.147, *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*

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Division/Department: Community Development/ Regional Planning

Proposed Action

None; information and discussion only.

Background

The draft amendment to the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* is open for public comment from August 26 through October 30, 2020. The amendment proposes to add, expand, or modify regional parks and trails, 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.

The public comment period is an opportunity to include advice from residents across the region and ensure the plan increases equitable access to the Regional Parks System. The Metropolitan Council's Community Development Committee and the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission have provided feedback that underserved populations should be prioritized when planning for the Regional Parks System.

Staff proposes to pilot a new engagement process that consults with a range of organizations connected to parks and to youth. Also, there is an effort to gather input from the broader public. Through this proposed process, Council staff are inviting collaboration from the Community Development Committee, Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission, Implementing Agencies, and organizations around the region, to extend our reach to these critical communities.

Engagement Request

Council staff requests MPOSC's partnership and leadership in engaging additional youth-serving and outdoor recreation related organizations with whom Commissioners have existing relationships. At the September 3 MPOSC meeting, staff will provide a brief presentation to share the proposed engagement process including topics on which staff seek advice. Staff will provide Commissioners with resources and tools to use to help make this solicitation process simple and straight forward. Then, Council staff will facilitate a conversation with the Commissioners to generate ideas of possible organizations to engage as well as explore ways in which MPOSC members would like to engage them.

[Amendment Topics](#)

The amendment topics highlight the major changes in the Policy Plan. When the public comment period opens, the Metropolitan Council's [Policy Plan webpage](#) will feature these topics on the site itself and through a survey and video challenge.

Adding parks and trails: Following record use of the Regional Parks System in 2019, the Council's plans to add parks and trails to the system are reinforced. People use the region's parks for connecting with family and friends, building community, picnicking, camping, hiking, biking, and being in nature, among other popular activities.

- Do you support adding parks and trails to the Regional Parks System?
- What parks and trails do you use and love? What do you do when you visit?
- What would your dream Regional Parks System look and feel like?

Reconsidering history: The Regional Parks System's parks and trails are on lands that the Anishinaabe people and the Dakota people have long cared for and called home. The lands hold great historical, spiritual, and personal significance for these original stewards, the Tribal nations, and the peoples of the region. The Metropolitan Council, in partnership with the 10 regional parks implementing agencies, seeks to honor this history through land acknowledgment and broader regional conversation.

- Do you support efforts to tell a more inclusive history of the Regional Parks System? What would this mean to you?
- How could the Regional Parks System reflect your history and culture better?
- What does a land acknowledgment mean to you?
- Who do you think should be included in this work?

Equitable access: The Regional Parks System will gain a new type of special recreation feature called a "Bridging Facility" with this update. The goal of this facility will be to ensure our parks encourage broader participation by people of different races, ethnicities, national origins, ages, abilities and income. This update will also consider establishing a "water trail" park providing safe places for people to paddle creeks and rivers in the region.

- Do you support unique approaches to welcome new park users?
- Do you support parks and trails that include paddling on a water trail?
- What does a welcoming Regional Parks System look like to you?

Climate resilience: Trees are the lungs of the atmosphere, cleaning the air of pollutants for a more resilient future climate. Parkland plays a significant role in mitigating climate change – keeping us healthy, protecting water, providing habitats, moderating temperature, and teaching future generations about nature. By expanding the Regional Parks System, we're fighting pollution, managing water, and providing critical habitats.

- Do you support adding parks and trails to care for and protect the environment?
- Why does caring for our environment matter to you?
- What would adding high quality natural resources to the Regional System mean to you?

Thrive Lens Analysis

The new public engagement process for the draft amendment to the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan advances *Thrive MSP 2040's* outcome of equity. Equity connects all residents to opportunity and creates viable housing, transportation, and recreation options for people of all races, ethnicities, incomes, and abilities so that all communities share the opportunities and challenges of growth and

change. Prioritizing underserved populations through extended engagement ensures that the full range of voices heard are represented of the region.