Visitor Study Data Discussion 1: Background and Visitor Satisfaction

Overview:
The summer workshop series is an opportunity to unpack the learnings of the 2021 Visitor Study. Conversations will focus on the study's practical implications for operations and management for the regional park system.

Study Background

Why:
The 2021 Metropolitan Council Park and Trail Visitor Study presents findings from a Council-administered survey. The survey was developed to:
- Help inform planning, policy, and management
- Evaluate and stengthen equitable usage of regional parks and trails in accordance with the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan
- Update data in funding formulas to help determine where funding goes for parks and trails

Who:
Sample of visitors over 12 years old who went to the regional park system during summer 2021.

What:
The survey asks visitors about their reasons for visiting, activites they participated in at the site, information used and desired for planning visit, how they got to the site, group size, seasonal visitation, and demographic information.

How:
Method: Intercept survey (people approached and invited to participate).

Sample Size: 5,405 visitors

Response rate: 52%

Completed Surveys: At least 393 per implementing agency. Surveys administered in proportion to park or trail visitation in 2019.

Guiding Discussion Questions:
- What findings stand out to me?
- How does my system have influence to respond to these trends? What factors lie outside of our control? How would I like the Council to respond?
- What else would I like to know?
- What are the implications for my work?

Visitor Satisfaction

For parks and trails systemwide, 88% of visitors reported that the facilities on the day of their visit were "excellent" or "very good."

Implementing agencies	% of visitors
Dakota & Washington Counties, Three Rivers Park District	>95%
Anoka, Carver, Ramsey, and Scott Counties, City of Bloomington	90-95%
MPRB and City of St. Paul	80-85%

Table 1: Percent of visitors rating park or trail facilities on the day of visit as "excellent" or "very good," by implementing agency.

Visitor Suggestions

Visitor recomendations connect with current concerns in the Regional System:
- Summer 2021 was the hottest on record for the Twin Cities. Visitors' recomendations for facilities reflected this, with desire for more shade and water access.
- As the regional trail system continues to expand, trail maintenance also requires investment.
- Visitors care about basic amenitites like bathooms and water access. They value a natural setting with high water quality and free of litter.

Unit type	Most suggested	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Parks	Nothing/all good	Better trail/path maintenance	Better bathroom facilities	More/better signage	Need shade/more trees
Trails	Better trail maintenance	Nothing/all good	More water/drinking fountain access	More bathroom facilities	More trails; longer/extended trails

Table 2: Top recommendations for improvement to the day's visit, parks and trails compared.

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Visitors suggest trail condition improvement, basic amenities, relief from heat. Many had no suggestions.

Implementing Agency	Most mentioned	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Anoka County	Better trail maintenance	Nothing/all good	More bathroom facilities	More water/drinking fountain access	More trashcans/litter issues
Bloomington	Nothing/all good	Less garbage/litter, better trash service	Better water quality	Water/drinking fountain access	More trails; longer/extended trails
Carver County	Nothing/all good	More shade/more trees	Better trail maintenance	More trashcans	Enforce rules for pets in parks (leash, pick up)
Dakota County	Nothing/all good	More/better signage	Water/drinking fountain access	More trails; longer/extended trails	Construction
MPRB	Better trail maintenance	Bathroom access	Water/drinking fountain access	Water fountains turned off	Nothing/all good
Ramsey County	Better trail maintenance	Nothing/all good	Litter/trash/animal waste	More trails; longer/extended trails	More/better signage
Saint Paul	Nothing/all good	Better trail maintenance	Litter/trash	More shade/more trees	Bathrooms cleaner
Scott County	Nothing/all good	More trash cans	Better trail maintenance	Better water quality	Separate paths for bikes and pedestrians
TRPD	Nothing/all good	Better trail maintenance	Water/drinking fountain access	More/better signage	More shade/more trees
Washington County	Nothing/all good	More bathrooms	More/better signage	Better trail maintenance	Water/drinking fountain access

Table 3: Top five visitor suggestions to improve park/trail on their day of visit, by implementing agency

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