

Information Item

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Meeting Dates: October 5, 2023

Topic

Administrative Process for Minor Long-Range Plan Amendments

District(s), Member(s):	All
Policy/Legal Reference:	Minn. Stat. § 473.313; <i>2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan</i> : Chapter 5, Planning and Chapter 6, System Protection
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Emmett Mullin, Manager (651-602-1360) and Tracey Kinney, Senior Planner (651-602-1029)
Division/Department:	Community Development / Regional Planning

Proposed Action

Information item; no action is proposed at this time.

Background

Minn. Stat. § 473.313 requires that Regional Park Implementing Agencies prepare park and trail long-range plans and that these plans be consistent with the Metropolitan Council's *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* (Policy Plan). The Council is charged with reviewing these Agency plans for consistency with the Policy Plan. In this information item, Council staff are investigating the creation of an administrative review process for certain minor long-range plan amendments. As *Imagine 2050*, the Metropolitan Council's Regional Development Guide including the Parks and Trail Policy area is being developed, Council staff propose to add an administrative amendment process for certain minor long-range plan amendments. (Attachment 1).

As part of developing this administrative approval proposal, Council staff reviewed plan amendments over the past five years with an eye to identifying possible criteria for administrative review candidates. Council staff identified 7 candidates from the 29 regional park and trail long-range plan amendments reviewed by the Council during this time. These amendments posed no material impact to the parks or trails and/or the development concepts and were not politically sensitive. Examples of amendment candidates for the proposed administrative process may include minor or routine changes to natural area management, transportation impacts that result in no material change to the park or trail, and/or underground utility improvements (Table 1).

Additionally, the Regional Parks and Trails System GIS Improvement Project has revealed a number of minor corrections that are needed to update the park and trail boundaries (Table 2). Taken together and paired with on-going advice from the Parks Implementing Agencies, Council staff propose the development of an administrative review process. Council staff shared this idea with the Community Development Committee (CDC) at their October 3, 2022 meeting ([CDC Information Item](#)), stating that this administrative process would help save time and money on minor, routine plan changes. The CDC authorized Parks staff to move forward on the development

of a Regional Parks and Trails System administrative process for minor long-range plan amendments.

The proposed administrative process would authorize the Executive Director of Community Development or designee to administratively review certain minor regional park and trail long-range plan amendments without requiring review and action by the governing body of the Metropolitan Council or its advisory committees. An administrative process for certain minor, long-range plan amendments is intended to create greater efficiencies and time savings for Regional Park Implementing Agencies, Council committees, and staff. Again, this process would be reserved for minor and routine park and trail plan amendments, and only for those that meet the Council-approved, narrowly defined administrative review criteria. It would enable Agencies and the Council to document system changes more quickly and it would result in more accurate regional park and trail long-range plans.

Amendment requests would be considered for the administrative review process only if they meet the below draft criteria. These requests would be reviewed for consistency and conformance with the Regional Parks Policy Plan and other Council policies. Council staff estimate that Council committee review time would be reduced from approximately 60 business days to 15 business days.

The submittal requirements for the proposed administrative amendment process would require agencies to submit a brief memo that describes the request and relevant responses to the Policy Plan's Chapter 5, Strategy 1: Long-range Plan requirements. Depending on the specific request, Council staff, in consultation with Agency staff, will determine the number of required content areas to be included in the Agency proposal (Attachment 2).

In addition to the regional park and trail long-range plan amendments that the Council has considered over the past five years, Council staff considered park and trail plan amendment needs that were generated as an outcome of the Regional Parks and Trails System IS Improvement Project (this project is also a work in progress). The following draft administrative process criteria would serve as a Council Staff reference list for determining minor administrative amendment requests.

Draft Administrative Process Criteria

The proposed administrative amendment must conform to regional system plans, be consistent with Council policies and plans, and must not change the acquisition and/or development concept. In addition, the types of amendments that may be eligible include the following:

- Corrections to a minor mapping or design error that does not have a material impact on the planned park or trail boundary.
 - *Mapping Correction Example: Scott County added 7-acres of parkland to the Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve boundary that was inadvertently omitted at the time of mapping. This was a mapping correction of 7 acres or a less than 1% increase of the administrative boundary (total park acreage is 2,545 acres) ([2019-228](#)).*
 - *Design Correction Example: Three Rivers Park District discovered a minor error in the project design after the Cleary Lake Regional Park Long-Range Plan Amendment and Land Conversion was approved by the Council. The correction required an additional 0.09 acres of land or <1% of the administrative boundary (total park acreage is 1,186 acres) to be added to the original project ([2022-55](#)).*
- Regional trail implementation that alters the alignment but does not alter the start and end points.



- *Dakota County Alignment Example: As part of the Regional Parks and Trails System GIS Improvement Project, Dakota County submitted data that showed the Big Rivers Regional Trail and Minnesota Greenway Regional Trail alignment refined. The alignments were clarified in the new data submitted because the original alignments were shown as overlapping in their respective long-range plans.*
- Boundary adjustments, public-to-public land exchanges, or acquisition long-range plan amendments that change the administrative boundary by less than 5 acres or 2% of the unit's total acreage, whichever is more; and land additions/removals are valued at less than \$100,000.
 - *Anoka County Land Exchange: Anoka County sold 0.3 acres of Mississippi River Regional Trail corridor land valued at \$36,900 from the Minneapolis Water Works in exchange for 0.3 acres of replacement parkland valued at \$33,500 within Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park. This public-to-public agency transaction included replacement land with Mississippi River shoreline which was of equal or better quality for both recreation and natural resources. ([2021-222](#)).*
- Land and/or easement conveyances for a natural area monitoring, restoration, or enhancement project; or an underground utility improvement that does not have a material impact on above-ground recreational opportunities, natural areas, or cultural resources.
 - *Washington County Example: Washington County provided a 3.4-acre easement to Carnelian Marine St. Croix Watershed District within Big Marine Park Reserve ([2023-101](#)). The easement is for the construction of stormwater management features to improve lake water quality and road water runoff mitigation.*

While an amendment may fall into one of the above categories, the Council may determine that there are substantial effects related to the proposed amendment that require the review of the advisory committees and governing body of the Council.

Rationale

The *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*, Planning Chapter 5, Strategy 1 long-range plan requirements states that long-range plans prepared by the regional park implementing agencies are critical to defining the specifics of acquisition, development, and operation of regional facilities. Updated long range plans are important to Regional Parks System planning, funding, and investment decisions. The proposed administrative process for minor, routine amendments will result in a more efficient review system that reduces administrative burden and results in more up-to-date park and trail long-range plans.

Thrive Lens Analysis

The proposed administrative process for minor, routine amendments seeks to advance the *Thrive MSP 2040* outcome of Stewardship by responsibly managing the region's natural and financial resources. The proposed administrative process also advances the *Thrive MSP 2040* outcome of accountability by improving the services that the Council provides to the ten Regional Parks Implementing Agency partners.



Table 1. Administrative Amendment Candidates

Type	Business Item	Summary	Administrative Amendment Criteria
Consent to Easement	Big Marine Park Reserve Long-Range Plan Amendment and Council Consent to Drainage Easement, Washington County (2023-101)	Washington County provided a 3.4-acre easement to Carnelian Marine St. Croix Watershed District to construct stormwater management features for improved lake water quality and road water runoff mitigation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public-to-public agency transaction Natural area management conveyance No material impacts to recreational lands or natural resources
Land Exchange /Long-range Plan Amendment	Mississippi West Regional Park Long-Range Plan Amendment and Land Conversion, Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve Acquisition Long-Range Plan Amendment, Anoka County (2022-215)	Anoka County transferred 3.65 acres of land valued at \$56,600 within the Mississippi West Regional Park to the Anoka County Highway Department in exchange for adding 33 acres of land valued at \$60,000 to Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve for the Highway 10 and railroad overpasses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public-to-public agency transaction Removal of 3.65-acre or <2% decrease of the administrative boundary (total regional acreage estimated at 271 acres).
Land Exchange /Long-Range Plan Amendment	Cleary Lake Regional Park Long-Range Plan Amendment and Land Conversion, Three Rivers Park District (2022-55)	A minor correction was needed in the project design after it was approved by the Council. The correction required an additional 0.09 acres of land be added to the original project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing Council approval for the same project Design correction of 0.09-acre or <1% of the administrative boundary (total park acreage is 1,186 acres). Public-to-public agency transfer
Consent to Easement	Three Rivers Park District request for consent to easement, Carver Park Reserve, Three Rivers Park (2021-264)	Three Rivers requested a Council consent to easement for Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR) groundwater monitoring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public-to-public agency transaction Natural resource monitoring conveyance No material impacts to recreational lands or natural resources



Type	Business Item	Summary	Administrative Amendment Criteria
Land Exchange/ Acquisition Long-range Plan Amendment	Anoka County's Mississippi River Regional Trail Long-Range Plan Amendment and Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park Acquisition Long-Range Plan Amendment (2021-222)	Anoka County sold 0.3 acres valued at \$36,900 of parkland to Minneapolis Water Works in exchange for 0.3 acres valued at \$33,500 of replacement trail corridor land. The replacement land included Mississippi River shoreline.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land removal for land replacement equally valuable exchange Public-to-public agency transaction The replacement land was of equal or better quality for both recreation and natural resources.
Acquisition Master Plan and Boundary Adjustment	Scott County's Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve Acquisition Long-Range Plan Amendment and Boundary Adjustment (2019-228)	Scott County added 7-acres of parkland to the boundary that was inadvertently omitted at the time of mapping. Also, Scott County removed a 145-acre inholding as it was purchased by the Department of Natural Resources for the Ney Wildlife Management Area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mapping correction of 7 acres or a <1% increase of the administrative boundary (total park acreage is 2,545 acres). Public-to-public agency transaction Inholding will remain in a protected conservation status.
Consent to Easement	Three Rivers Park District's Consent to Easements, Carver and Murphy Hanrehan Park Reserves (2017-197)	Three Rivers requested two Council consents to easement for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for groundwater monitoring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public-to-public agency transaction Natural resource monitoring conveyance

Table 2. Regional Parks and Trail System GIS Improvement Project - Administrative Amendment Candidates

Type	Agency and Regional Park or Trail	Summary	Administrative Amendment Criteria
Boundary Adjustment	Anoka County, Lake George Regional Park	The 1981 long-range plan includes one parcel addition and one parcel subtraction.	GIS data notes 260 acres reported at Lake George Regional Park. This is a 1.67-acre change that is less than 1% of that total acreage (0.642%).





Type	Agency and Regional Park or Trail	Summary	Administrative Amendment Criteria
Boundary Adjustment	Anoka County, Bunker Hills Regional Park	The 2017 long-range plan includes one parcel addition southwest of the regional park.	The 2017 long-range plan amendment indicates that the regional park is approximately 1600 acres. The addition of 14 acres is less than 1% of that total acreage (0.875%).
Boundary Adjustment	Scott County, Spring Lake Regional Park	Added two trail spurs on the north and southeast corners of the park to connect with local trails.	GIS data notes 375 acres reported at Spring Lake Regional Park. This is an addition of .1 acre is less than 1% of that total acreage (0.026%).
Boundary Adjustment	Scott County, Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park	The county road right-of-way is an inconsistent width along the southern boundary of the regional park.	GIS data notes 249 acres reported at Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park. This is an addition of 1 acre is less than 1% of that total acreage (0.4%).
Boundary Adjustment	Washington County, Lake Elmo Park Reserve	The road right-of-way is within the park boundary,	GIS data notes 2036 acres reported at Lake Elmo Park Reserve. This is an addition of less than 20 acres which is less than 1% of that total acreage (0.98%).
Regional Trail Implementation	Dakota County, Big Rivers Regional Trail/Minnesota Greenway Regional Trail	The long-range plan shows both trails overlapping. The GIS differentiates the alignments since being built.	Implemented trail alignments for Big Rivers Regional Trail and Minnesota Greenway Regional Trails need clarity since alignments have been clarified in the field.
Regional Trail Implementation	Three Rivers Park District, Bassett Creek Regional Trail	The Bassett Creek Regional Trail segment between Zachery Lane and French Regional Park now extends to the park to share the trailhead.	The implemented trail alignments for Bassett Creek and Medicine Lake Regional Trails need clarity since the alignments may be swapped or overlap for joint use of trailheads or better navigation.

Type	Agency and Regional Park or Trail	Summary	Administrative Amendment Criteria
Regional Trail Implementation	Washington County, Point Douglas Regional Trail and St. Croix Valley Regional Trail	Point Douglas Regional Trail Long-Range Plan has the trail alignment extending more north.	Implemented trail alignments for the Point Douglas Regional Trail and St. Croix Valley Regional Trails adjusted the trailheads for better navigation.



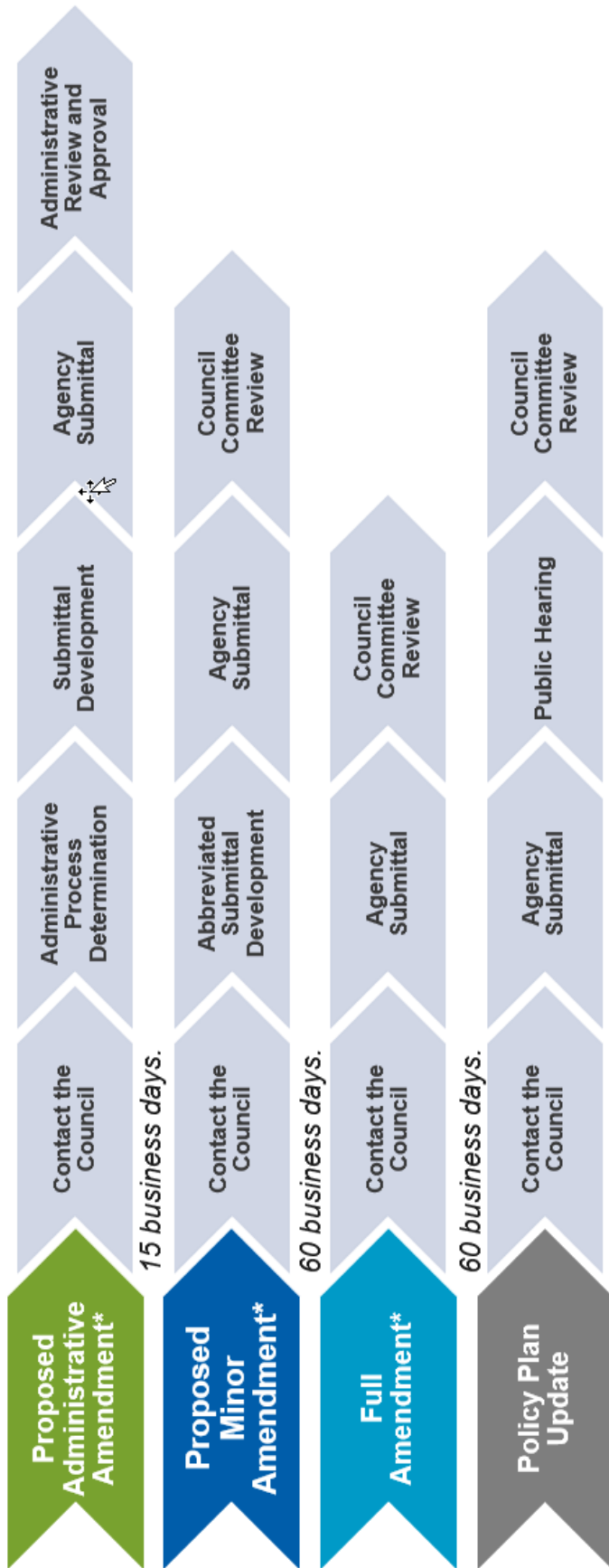


<p>Proposed Administrative Amendment Process</p>	<p>Administrative review and approval: Proposal for certain minor amendments to clarify corrections, trail implementation, Council consents to easements, or boundary adjustments* .</p> <p>Proposed boundary adjustments*, public-to-public land exchanges, or acquisition long-range plan amendments with land additions/removals that are less than \$100,000. (whichever is greater):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Affect less than a total of 5 acres 2. Affect less than 2% of the area within the administrative boundary
<p>Proposed Minor Long-Range Plan Amendment*</p>	<p>Abbreviated plan requirement process for Council Committee Review: Proposal for all other minor (focused) amendments, acquisition long-range plan amendments, or name changes.</p> <p>Proposed minor amendments criteria (whichever is greater):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Affect less than a total of 50 acres 2. Affect less than 10% of the area within the administrative boundary
<p>Full Amendment</p>	<p>Amendment requirement process for Council Committee Review: Significant changes, acquisition long-range plans, minor boundary adjustments, and name changes.</p> <p>Minor boundary adjustments criteria (whichever is greater):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Affect less than a total of 100 acres 2. Affect less than 20% of the area within the administrative boundary
<p>Policy Plan Update Amendments</p>	<p>Updates that occur with a public hearing: Major boundary adjustments, name changes, search corridor alignment changes, trail extensions ,and system additions.</p>

*The proposed minor long-range plan amendment will be developed as part of the 2050 RPPP Update process.



Attachment 2. Amendment Process Range



*Includes certain acquisitions long-range plan amendments