

Business Item

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Community Development Committee Meeting: February 19, 2024

Metropolitan Council: February 28, 2024

Business Item: 2024-33

System-wide, Regional Parks and Trails System 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

That the Metropolitan Council approve the Administrative Process for Minor Long-Range Plan Amendments as described in Attachment 1 of this report.

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. Amendments to long-range plans are typically driven by significant changes to the original regional park or trail long-range plan proposal including, for example, a new vision, new proposed activities or facilities, or unforeseen circumstances. Occasionally, plan amendments are done to address minor changes or proposals that have no material change to the park or trail (Attachment 2, Tables 1 and 2). For these specific instances, Council staff propose to create an administrative amendment process for certain minor long-range plan amendments (Attachment 1).

Administrative reviews of minor long-range plan amendments will be conducted by Council staff with delegated authority granted by the Met Council, and they are not required to be presented to the regular Council committees for review and approval. Amendments reviewed administratively must meet all of the relevant proposed criteria adopted by the Metropolitan Council. There may be instances when Council staff direct minor amendment proposals to the regular Council Committees, due to political sensitivity or other contextual factor. Administrative review is proposed to be completed within 15 business days once the long-range plan amendment has been deemed complete.

Council review of this administrative review program is proposed to take place after two years of its approval; then transition to the 4-year Policy Plan update cycle. CDC will be updated annually of the administrative approvals reviewed as part of this program and MPOSC will be updated more frequently.

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 and Trails 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 on park agency staff, Council Committees and staff, and results in a more up-to-date park and trail system.

Thrive Lens Analysis

The proposed administrative process for minor 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.



Attachment 1. Regional Parks and Trails Long-Range Plan Amendments Administrative Review Guidelines

Shown below are the proposed Regional Parks and Trails Administrative Review eligibility criteria.

Eligible Regional Parks and Trails Long-Range Plan Amendments must satisfy all relevant criteria below:

1. **Consistent:** Is consistent with Minn. Stat. § 473.313 requirements and be determined to be complete for review by the Council.
 - Conform to the regional systems plans.
 - Consistent with Council policies, including *Thrive MSP 2040* and parks policies.
2. **Minor in Scope:** Does not change the acquisition and/or development concept.
3. **Subject of the Amendment:**
 - a. **Corrections:** Proposes corrections to a minor mapping or design error affecting less than 1% of the unit's total acres of the administrative boundary.
 - b. **Minor Regional Trail Realignments:** Proposes regional trail implementation realignments that alter up to 1 mile of trail and are within 1 mile of the original alignment but do not alter the start and end points of the trail.
 - c. **Boundary Changes:** Proposes a boundary adjustment, public-to-public land exchange, or an acquisition long-range plan amendment that changes the administrative boundary by less than 5 acres; and the land addition/removal is valued at \$250,000 per acre, or less.
 - d. **Natural Area/Utility Council Consents:** Proposes land and/or easement conveyances for:
 - Natural area monitoring.
 - Conveys an easement for a natural area restoration, or enhancement project that affects the administrative boundary by less than 5 acres.
 - Underground utility that has no material long-range impacts to the park or trail and affects the administrative boundary by less than 1 acre.
4. **No impacts:** Does not have the potential for a cumulative or material impact to the regional park or trail's recreational opportunities, natural areas, or cultural resources.

**Please note, Council staff will consider the requirements of any Council or State funding restrictions in determining whether a proposed candidate is eligible for administrative review.*

***Amendments meeting the criteria above may still be required to have full Council review if determined necessary by Council staff.*



Attachment 2. Administrative Amendment Criteria Development

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 changes to natural area management or transportation impacts that result in no material change to the park or trail, and/or underground utility improvements (Attachment 2, 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 (Attachment 2, 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 16, 2023 and October 3, 2022 meeting ([October 2023, CDC Information Item](#), and [October 2022 CDC Information Item](#)), stating that this administrative process would help save time and money on minor 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.

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.

Draft Administrative Process Criteria Examples

In addition, the types of amendments that may be eligible include the following:

1. **Consistent:** Is consistent with Minn. Stat. § 473.313 requirements and be determined to be complete for review by the Council.
 - Conform to the regional systems plans.
 - Consistent with Council policies, including *Thrive MSP 2040* and parks policies.
2. **Minor in Scope:** Does not change the acquisition and/or development concept.
3. **Subject of the Amendment:**
 - a. **Corrections:** Proposes corrections to a minor mapping or design error affecting less than 1% of the unit's total acres of the administrative 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 and it makes up less than 1% 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 channel stabilization 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](#)).*

- b. **Minor Regional Trail Realignments:** Proposes regional trail implementation realignments that alter up to 1 mile of trail and are within 1 mile of the original alignment but do not alter the start and end points of the trail.
 - o *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 with slightly refined alignments. The alignments were clarified in the new data submitted and are consistent with their respective long-range plans.*
 - o *Washington County Alignment Example: As part of the Regional Parks and Trails System GIS Improvement Project, Washington County submitted data that showed clarified alignments for the Point Douglas Regional Trail and St. Croix Valley Regional Trail. The trail realignments adjust the proposed trailheads by less than half a mile and provide for better navigation of the future trails.*
 - c. **Boundary Changes:** Proposes a boundary adjustment, public-to-public land exchange, or an acquisition long-range plan amendment that changes the administrative boundary by less than 5 acres; and the land addition/removal is valued at \$250,000 per acre, or less.
 - o *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](#)).*
 - d. **Natural Area/Utility Council Consents:** Proposes land and/or easement conveyances for:
 - Natural area monitoring.
 - Conveys an easement for a natural area restoration, or enhancement project that affects the administrative boundary by less than 5 acres.
 - *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.*
 - Underground utility that has no material long-range impacts to the park or trail and affects the administrative boundary by less than 1 acre
4. **No impacts:** Does not have the potential for a cumulative or material impact to the regional park or trail's recreational opportunities, natural areas, or cultural resources.

**Please note, Council staff will consider the requirements of any Council or State funding restrictions in determining whether a proposed candidate is eligible for administrative review.*

***Amendments meeting the criteria above may still be required to have full Council review if determined necessary by Council staff.*



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 of 3.4-acre or <1% decrease of the administrative boundary (total regional acreage estimated at 1,884 acres). 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 to 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





Type	Business Item	Summary	Administrative Amendment Criteria
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
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%).
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 1,600 acres. The addition of 14 acres is less than 1% of that total acreage (0.875%).
Regional Trail Implementation	Dakota County, Big Rivers Regional Trail and Minnesota Greenway Regional Trail	The original alignments of both trails were shown as overlapping in their respective long-range plans.	As the Minnesota Greenway Regional Trail is implemented the trail alignment will take the place of the Big Rivers Regional Trail.
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 that adjusted the trails <.5-mile for joint use of trailheads or better navigation.
Regional Trail Implementation	Three Rivers Park District, Nine Mile Creek Regional Trail	Nine Mile Creek Regional Trail Long-Range Plan shows the alignment along Bren Road over TH 169.	The implemented trail alignment moved .5 miles of trail <.5 miles from the original alignment to use a grade-separated crossing of TH 169 along Lincoln Drive for a safer user experience.
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%).



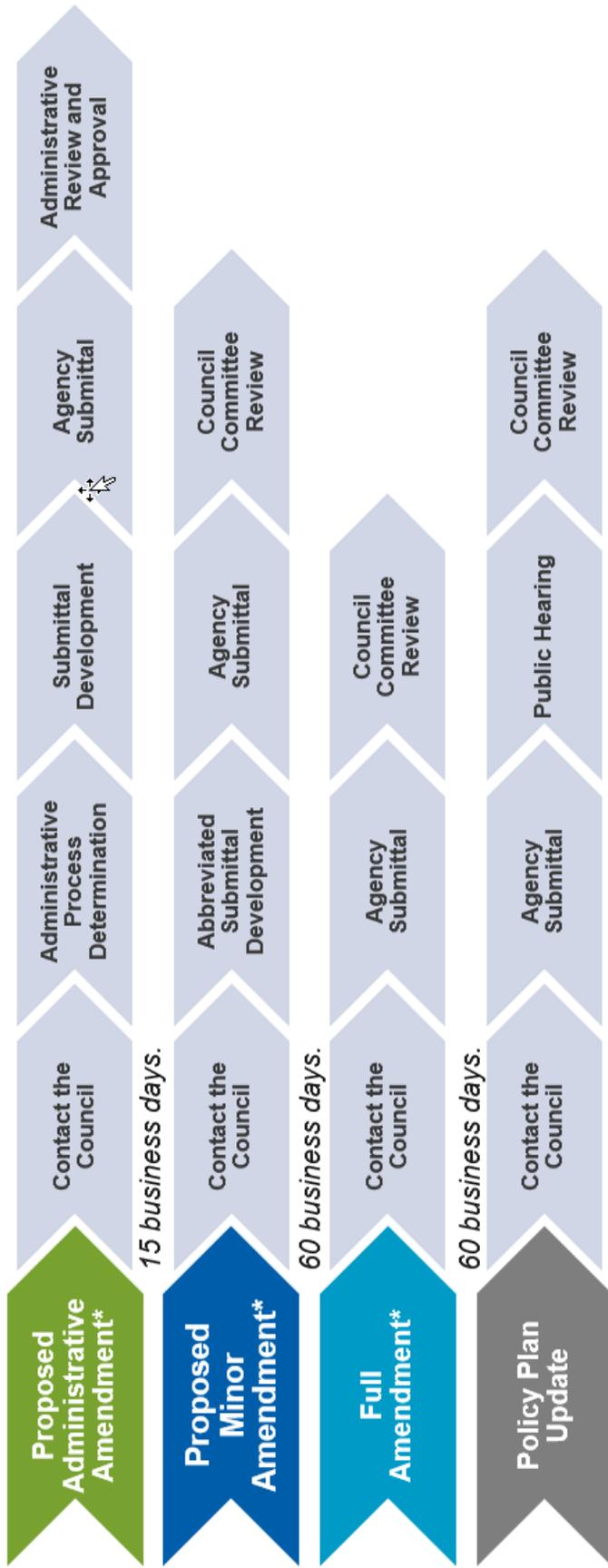
Type	Agency and Regional Park or Trail	Summary	Administrative Amendment Criteria
Boundary Adjustment	Scott County, Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park	The county road right-of-way is an inconsistent width along the southern boundary of the regional park.	GIS data notes 249 acres reported at Cedar Lake Farm 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 2,036 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	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 by <.5-mile 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>*Proposes a boundary adjustment, public-to-public land exchange, or an acquisition long-range plan amendment that changes the administrative boundary by less than 5 acres; and the land addition/removal is valued at \$250,000 per acre, or less.</p>
<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>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.



*Includes certain acquisitions long-range plan amendments