



2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan DRAFT

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

Emmett Mullin and Kevin Phan

April 4, 2024

metro council.org





Contents

Draft Regional Parks and Trails Objectives	2
Implementing Agency Feedback	3
Draft Policies and Actions	5
Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook	12
Questions, Discussion, Advice	13

Draft Parks and Trails Objectives

Foster Equity and Belonging



Connect people with community, natural, and cultural landscapes to better support their physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

Take Care of What We Have



Reinvest in existing regional parks and trails to maintain and enhance visitor experiences.

Protect and Restore



Protect and restore natural systems to safeguard the well-being of all living things.

Adapt and Mitigate



Increase the region's resilience to climate change by adapting land management practices and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Meet Future Needs



Meet the growing demand for regional parks and trails through strategic and timely land acquisition and development.

Implementing Agency Partner Advice



March 21 Implementing Agency Partner Meeting

System Plan

- Describe the role of the regional system within the larger outdoor recreation landscape.
- Create new natural resource corridor classification. Could include public and private lands.

Climate and Natural Systems

- Acquiring recreation lands is a priority.
- Highlight actions where Met Council has primary responsibility (e.g., climate action work).

Recreation, Facilities, and Programming

- Determine activity and facility eligibility through criteria, not static list.
- Move away from “Balancing people and nature” language and towards “Connecting people and nature”.

Implementing Agency Partner Advice



March 21 Implementing Agency Partner Meeting cont.

Finance

- Agencies priorities for potential increased funding of the regional system:
 - Operations and Maintenance funding (e.g., 10% of total annual expenditures).
- Increase Equity Grant Program funding.
- Increase Council match of state funds above statutory requirement, e.g. 1:1.

Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook

- Create visual diagram to explain relationship between Parks Policy Plan, proposed Parks Planning Handbook and Administrative Guide.

Section Two: System Plan

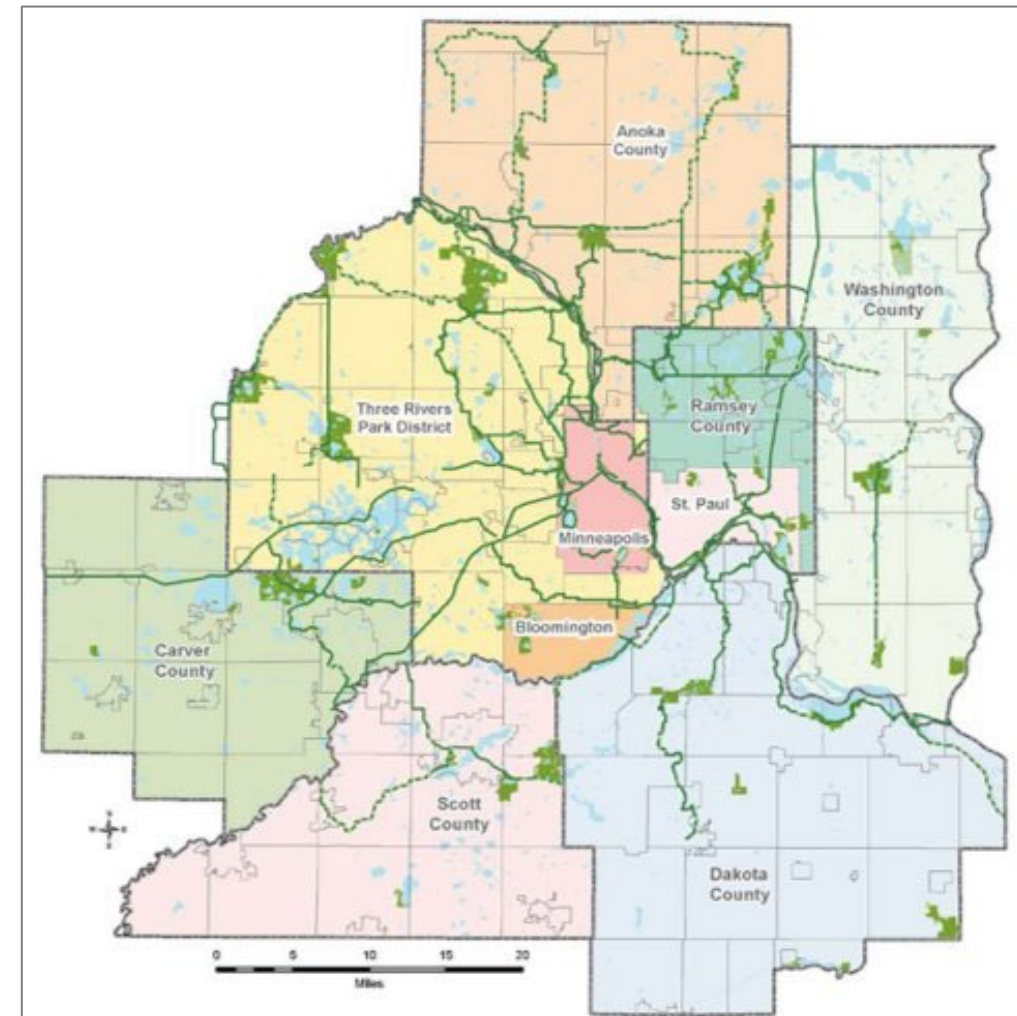
Policy: Maintain a robust and current set of data, maps, plans, processes, and applications to support regional parks and trails planning

Draft Actions

On the four-year Parks Policy update schedule, review and update the system plan and evaluate the regional park and trail classifications to determine what is relevant and necessary.

Explore quantitative and qualitative research to further define and understand current and future regional park and trail issues and needs.

Annually update map datasets to reflect the most current status of the system in coordination with the data “owners”, our ten regional park implementing agency partners.



Section Three: Climate and Natural Systems

Natural Systems Policy: Identify, protect, restore, and maintain lands with high-quality natural features, access to water, and/or restoration potential as part of the Regional Parks and Trails System

Draft Actions

Identify and acquire lands with natural features, access to water, and/or restoration potential for conservation, recreation, and protection through the use of research and data.

Identify new regional park and trail lands in areas not well served by our current system.

Assess tree canopy along all regional trail corridors and “grow shade” where it is needed.

Develop, restore, and maintain native habitat types across the Regional Parks and Trails System.

Partner with other agencies and organizations to identify, protect, restore, and maintain natural systems within regional parks and trails.

Coordinate efforts between implementing agencies to identify additional sources of funding for acquisition.



Section Three: Climate and Natural Systems *continued*

Climate Resilience Policy: Adapt and enhance the Regional Parks and Trails System to promote resilience to climate change, including the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions

Draft Actions

Inventory the level of carbon sequestration from restoration work completed and estimate the potential level of carbon sequestration of future restoration work.

Inventory greenhouse gas emissions of park agencies and department operations.

Collect data that measures the positive impact that regional parks and trails have on climate mitigation and adaptation.

Convene Implementing Agencies to increase the public's awareness of the Regional Parks and Trails System's role in climate mitigation and adaptation through partnerships and storytelling.

Develop strategies to involve community in data collection, climate work, and education regarding regional parks and trails.

Incorporate equity into the climate conversation by gathering diverse perspectives and shaping it into future actions.

Convene agencies to develop multi-jurisdictional climate action plans.

Promote further coordination between implementing agencies to improve operational efficiency and emerging strategies to adapt to climate change.

Section Four: Planning

Policy: Promote long-range planning and help provide integrated resource planning across jurisdictions

Draft Actions

Regional Park Implementing Agencies are required to prepare a long-range plan for each Regional Parks System facility they own or operate.

Promote enhanced multimodal access to regional parks, regional trails, and the transit system, where appropriate.

Joint powers agreements for Regional Parks System units are encouraged.

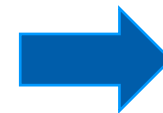
Projects may share costs if they are consistent with a Council approved long-range plan.



*Parks Planning Handbook
(LRP requirements only)*



Parks Planning Handbook



Grant Administration Guide

Section Five: System Protection

Policy: Protect public investment in acquisition and development by assuring that every component in the system is able to fully carry out its designated role as long as a need for it can be demonstrated.

Draft Actions

Local comprehensive plans may need to be changed if planned land uses would have a negative impact on current or planned regional park lands or facilities.

Conversion of ... Parks ... lands to other uses is allowed only in limited circumstances and with approval of the ... Council.

The Council will reimburse ... park implementing agencies for contamination cleanup under certain conditions

Environmental Site Assessments must be conducted for land that may be contaminated or may have abandoned wells prior to seeking regional parks funding for acquisition.

Telecommunication towers will only be allowed in regional parks or reserves if there is no alternative site and if mitigation efforts are made to minimize the impact on Regional Parks System lands and users.

Regional wastewater infrastructure and other utilities on Regional Parks System lands should be placed in ways that minimize negative impacts on the regional park, its facilities, and its users.



Grant Admin Guide



Grant Admin Guide



Pks Plng Handbook (Process)



Pks Plng Handbook (Process)

Section Six: Recreation, Facilities, and Programming

Policy: Foster a sense of belonging by providing a wide spectrum of leisure and play opportunities while balancing the needs of people, places, and the natural world.

Draft Actions

Develop opportunities, programs, and spaces that strive to uplift community connections to the outdoors while counteracting barriers and harm placed on communities of color, LGBTQ2S+ people, people with disabilities, low-income households, and teenagers.

Support the conservation and restoration of natural systems, alongside leisure, play, and creative opportunities in ways that connect people to each other and the outdoors.

Provide a wide spectrum of connections and partnerships in the outdoors through recreation, arts, programming, transit, public health, and community.

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities should be coordinated between the Regional Parks System and the transportation system.



Section Seven: Finance

Policy: Administer state and regional funding to the ten regional park implementing agencies in support of the regional parks and trails system.

Draft Actions

Strengthen equitable use and access in the regional system:

- Equity Grant Program

Parks Acquisition Opportunity Fund:

- Increase cap to \$2M for Legacy and \$3M for Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
 - Explore increasing Council match to state funds 1:1

The Council will actively seek, and support agencies in seeking, funding from other sources.

Parks Bonding: The Council will distribute the Regional Parks Bonding program funds based on the following formula:

- 70% population
- 30% non-local visits

Regional trail corridors that may be used for transit in the future are only eligible for funding if the trail will remain a regional trail for at least 10 years.

Proposed Parks and Trails Planning Handbook



What is the Parks and Trails Planning Handbook?

- Similar to the Local Planning Handbook, it would contain the procedural and contextual language that is currently in the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan.
 - Include the long-range plan requirements, amendment processes, criteria and definitions.
 - Contain more detailed, technical language from the Parks Policy, making the new Parks Policy more aspirational and visionary.
- Parks and Trails Planning Handbook will have the same authority as content within the Parks Policy.
- Requirements for how the handbook will be updated will be included within Parks Policy.
- Will be presented to Council committees prior to approval of the 2050 Parks Policy.

Questions, Discussion, Advice

Council staff began drafting proposed policies and actions within each chapter of the Regional Parks Policy Plan.

- *What do you like about these draft policies and actions?*
 - *Is anything missing?*
- *What are your concerns?*
- *Other advice or questions for staff?*





Thank you

Emmett Mullin

Manager, Regional Parks

Emmett.mullin@metc.state.mn.us

Kevin Phan

Planner, Regional Parks

kevin.phan@metc.state.mn.us

