



IMAGINE²⁰₅₀

2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan 60% DRAFT

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

Colin Kelly, Tracey Kinney, Kevin Phan, Amanda Lovelee,
Jenessa Carlisle, and Jessica Lee

May 2, 2024

metro council.org





Contents

Committee Advice and Timeline	2
60% Plan Overview	6
Section Seven: Finance	26
Section Eight: Recreation, Facilities, and Programming	30

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission Advice



April 4, 2024 meeting

Overall

- Recommendation to outline what items get updated in the 4-year and 10-year cycle.
- Be sure to define our terms such as “Natural Systems” and “areas not well served”
- Define what tasks are the Council’s responsibility versus the Implementing Agency’s.

Awareness

- There is a need for building more awareness of the Regional Parks and Trails System.

Finance

- The Equity Grant Program is important, and we should continue to support this effort.
- Emphasize the Council’s “Fiduciary responsibilities”

Community Development Committee Advice



April 1, 2024 meeting

Natural Systems

- When prioritizing acquisition, be sure to balance restoration efforts across the region.
- Define what “areas not well served” means for locating.

Climate

- Council members support the idea of telling a better story of the Regional Parks and Trails System and its impact on climate change and water.

Parks and Trails Planning Handbook

- Some concern about the potential lack of oversight from commissioners and council members.

Finance

- Consider the need to be financially accountable when working with Legacy and Environmental & Natural Resource Trust Fund dollars to ensure we are carrying out the system plan

Proposed Mid 2024 Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission Engagement

Timing	Proposed Topics, Focus
<p>May 2, 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft (60%) plan • Recreation, Facilities, and Programming (existing chapter 7) • Finance (existing chapter 8)
<p>June 6, 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural Systems (new, crosswalks to existing chapter 4) • Climate Resilience (new) • Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook
<p>July 11, 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System Plan (existing chapter 3) • Planning (existing chapter 5) • System Protection (existing chapter.6)
<p>August 1, 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft public comment (90%) plan • Workplan (existing chapter 9)



Marsh marigold



Wild geranium



Purple coneflower



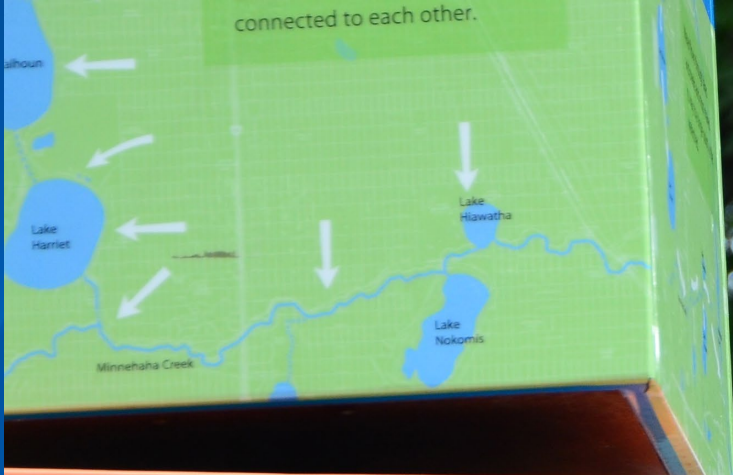
Spotted Joe Pye Weed

Schedule for Finalizing the Regional Development Guide

Timing	Milestone
August 14, 2024	Council authorizes release for public comment (MC)
August 15, 2024	Public comment draft posted
September 25, 2024	Public hearing (MC)
October 7, 2024	Comment period closes (CDC)
Varies	Final public comment reports prepared
February 12, 2025	Council adoption (MC)



Section One: Introduction



What you can do

Pick up pet waste and throw it in the trash.

A photograph showing a person's legs and feet walking two dogs on leashes on a wooden boardwalk. One dog is brown and white, and the other is white. The person is holding a black bag, presumably for pet waste.



Draft Vision, Mission, and Values

Vision

Together, growing community connections and inspiring health and healing through exceptional outdoor experiences and high-quality natural areas.

Mission

A partnership committed to an interconnected, nature-based parks and trails system, where everyone belongs.

Values

- Collaboration: Recognizing that we are one part of a broader community working together to create regional parks and trails for all. Building strong partnerships is vital to sustaining and living out our values.
- Belonging: Committed to offering processes, spaces and programming that are inclusive, welcoming, safe, and accessible to all individuals.
- Stewardship: Caring for the natural environment today and for future generations.
- Well-being: Knowing that the outdoors is vital for personal and community health.
- Adaptability: Challenging ourselves to grow, by creating a culture of innovation.
- Education: Inspiring learning about outdoor skills, culture, history, and natural systems.



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.

Draft Existing Conditions

History of Inequitable Development

The creation of the Regional Parks System occurred in 1974 and works in partnership with 10 agencies.

Regional Parks and Trails are built on Dakota land that was stolen.

Racist policies like racial covenants and redlining have created an environment where some benefit more than others.

Vital to People and Communities

Regional Parks and Trails provide communities with a space to be physically active and mentally heal.

Parks also act as a place for people to gather, presenting an opportunity to address the loneliness epidemic in the U.S.

Not all communities get to benefit equally, as BIPOC and youth experience more barriers to accessing the Regional Parks and Trails.

Climate is Changing

Minnesota's climate is already changing rapidly, resulting in warmer and wetter climate.

Climate change disproportionately impacts low-income and communities of color.

Impacts include more extreme heat in urban areas and degrading air quality across the board.

Regional Parks and Trails contribute to the region's adaptation and mitigation efforts.

The System Faces Growing Pains

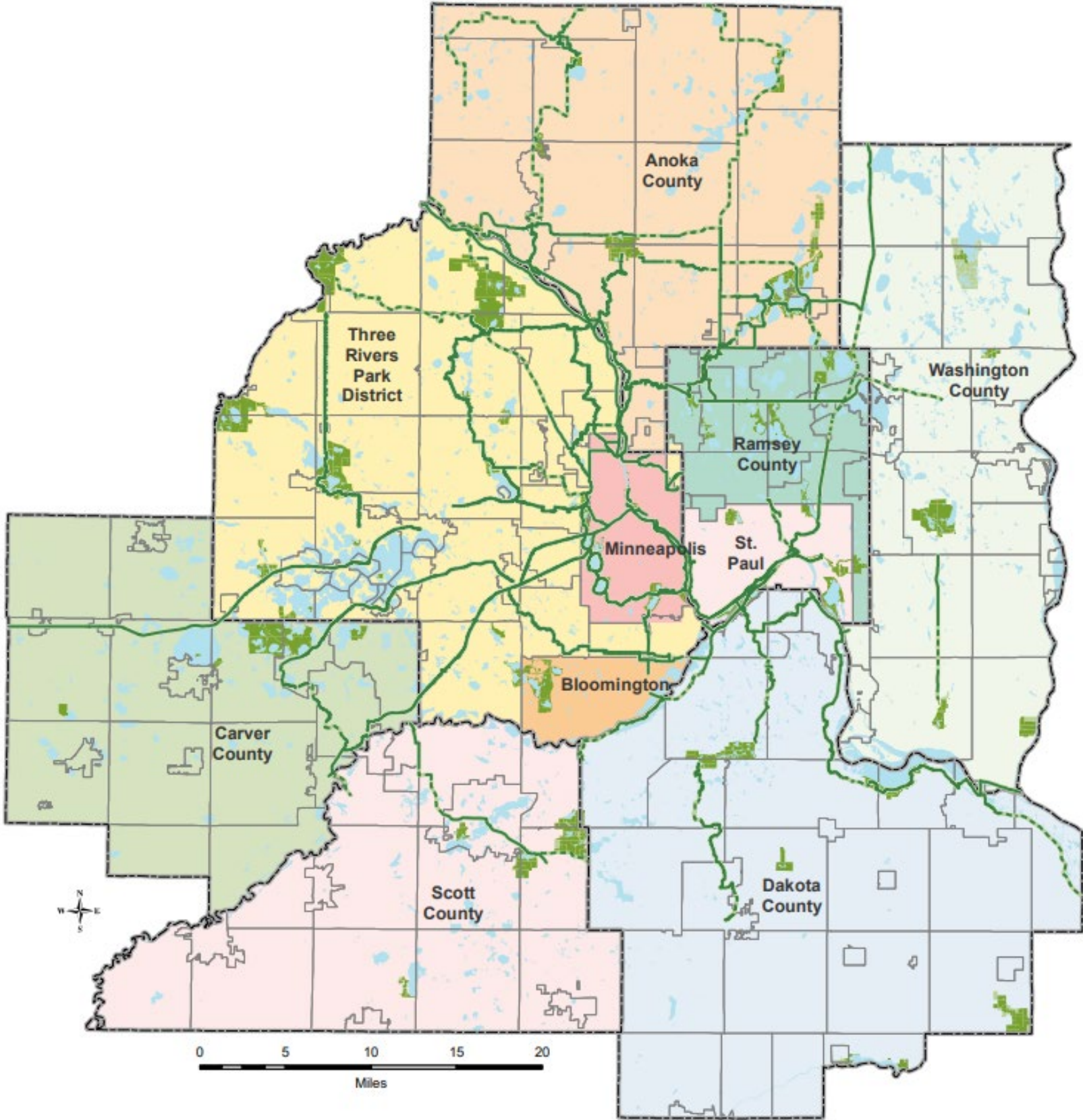
State funding has historically contributed less than intended amount.

There are large acquisition and development costs associated with completing the system.

Visitors generally want more amenities and improved maintenance.

Agencies recognize need to improve existing infrastructure while expanding access to all communities.

Section Two: System Plan



System Plan Policy and Actions

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

Action 1: Review and Update System Plan, Classifications

On the four-year Parks Policy update schedule, the Council will review and update the system plan and evaluate the regional park and trail classifications to determine what is relevant and necessary in partnership with the Regional Parks and Trails Implementing Agencies.

Action 2: Identify and conduct research

Identify and conduct research to inform park policy, funding, and operations. Study results will contribute to understanding of visitors' needs, systems additions criteria, estimated visitation, equitable use, natural systems, and emerging issues.

Action 3: Annually update map datasets

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.

System Plan Key Changes



Proposed Changes

Overall

- Add new policy and actions to describe existing system plan management, to better support the Regional Parks and Trails System.

Overview of System Plan language

- Move current System Plan Introduction to Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook (“Planning Handbook”), including overarching outdoor recreation system description, map, and table; and Figure 3-1: National, State, Local, Private, and Nonprofit Recreation Lands in the Region.

Regional Park and Trail Classifications

- Consolidate regional park and trail unit definitions and descriptions from multiple policy plan chapters into single page descriptions.
- Propose addition of two new classifications: cultural landscapes and open space/natural areas.
- Move existing Table 3-1: Classification System for Local and Regional Park Facilities to Planning Handbook
- Add implementing agency-level maps to Planning Handbook

Section Three: Natural Systems



Natural Systems Policy and Actions

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

Action 1: Locating and Acquisition Priorities

Work with Implementing Agencies to locate and acquire lands with natural features, access to water, or restoration potential for conservation, recreation, and protection.

Action 2: Equity and Geographic Balance

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

Action 3: Natural Systems Research

Provide the Regional Park and Trail Implementing Agencies with research and data that will better inform restoration and protection of Natural Systems.

Action 4: Maintenance of Natural Systems

The Council will coordinate efforts with implementing agencies and external partners to protect, restore, and maintain natural systems across the Regional Parks and Trails System.

Natural Systems Key Changes



Proposed Changes

Overall

- Create new Natural Systems Policy to identify and protect natural systems lands in perpetuity for the region.
- Reframe existing “Siting and Acquisition” policy and strategies as an action.

Existing Siting and Acquisition Policy

- Move Existing Process and Criteria Overview for System Additions, including Tables 4-1 and 4-2, to Planning Handbook

Action 1: Locating and Acquisition Priorities

- Clarify and integrate existing priorities for acquisition into new action

Action 2: Equity and Geographic Balance

- Add equitable access as a consideration for expanding the system

Action 3: Natural Systems Research

- Add Council commitment to conduct natural systems research

Action 4: Maintenance of Natural Systems

- Convene and coordinate Implementing Agencies around natural systems work

Section Four: Climate Resiliency



Climate Resilience Policy and Actions

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

Action 1: Climate Research

Council Parks staff in partnership with its ten implementing agencies will collaborate with its research team to conduct research on the Regional Parks and Trails System's role in climate change.

Action 2: Coordination of Climate Awareness

Convene Regional Park Implementing Agencies and other Council Divisions to develop strategies for increasing public awareness of the Regional Parks and Trails System's role in climate mitigation and adaptation through partnerships and storytelling.

Action 3: Citizen Science

Develop strategies to involve community members in data collection, climate work, and education regarding the Regional Parks and Trails System.

Action 4: Climate and Environmental Justice

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

Action 5: Climate Action Plan Support

Support implementing agency efforts in climate work by coordinating the implementation of their Climate Action Plans.

Action 6: Operations and Efficiency

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

Climate Resilience Key Changes

Proposed Changes

Overall

- Add new policy and actions that outline climate action and Council commitments
- Collaborate with Implementing Agencies on climate research.
- Co-develop strategies with the implementing agencies to increase public awareness of the Regional Parks and Trails System's role in climate mitigation and adaptation.
- In collaboration with the Implementing Agencies, develop strategies to encourage community members to participate in data collection, climate work and education.
- Incorporate equity into the climate change conversation by gathering diverse perspectives to help shape future climate actions.
- Support Implementing Agency efforts as they work to implement their Climate Action Plans.
- Convene operations staff among the Implementing Agencies to discuss ways to improve operational efficiency and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.



Section Five: Planning



Planning Policy and Actions

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

Action 1: Long-range plan requirements

Regional park implementing agencies are required to prepare a long-range plan for each Regional Parks and Trails System facility they own and/or operate.

Action 2: Enhanced multimodal access

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

Action 3: Cost sharing

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

Planning Key Changes



Proposed Changes

Planning Policy

- The Planning Policy section is largely unchanged.

Action 1: Long-Range Plan Requirements

- Move long-range plan requirements and amendment process to Planning Handbook

Joint Powers Agreements

- Move the existing Joint Powers Agreements strategy to the Planning Handbook

Section Six: System Protection



System Protection Policy and Actions

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.

Action 1: Local Comprehensive Plans

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.

Action 2: Conversions

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

Action 3: Telecommunication towers

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

Action 4: Placement of utilities

Regional wastewater infrastructure and other utilities on Regional Parks and Trails System lands should be placed in ways that minimize negative impacts on the regional park, park reserve, special recreation feature, or regional trail, its facilities, and its users.

System Protection Key Changes



Proposed Changes

System Protection Policy

- System Protection Policy section is largely unchanged.

Action 2: Conversions

- Move and clarify the system protection criteria to the Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook.

Existing Reimbursement for Contamination

- Remove from policy plan because this strategy was moved to the Grant Administration Guide.

Existing Environmental Site Assessments

- Remove from policy plan because this strategy was moved to the Grant Administration Guide

Action 3: Telecommunications Towers

- Move the process and criteria in the Telecommunication towers action to the Parks and Trails Planning Handbook.

Action 4: Placement of Utilities

- Clarify process and move the criteria to the Parks and Trails Planning Handbook.

Questions, Discussion, Advice

Questions:

- What do you like about the first six plan sections?
- Is there anything missing? What questions do you have?



Section Seven: Recreation, Facilities, and Programming



Recreation, Facilities, and Programming Policy and Actions

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

Action 1: Increase equity in programs, activities, and places

Develop opportunities, programs, and spaces that strive to uplift community connections to the outdoors while counteracting barriers and harm placed on underrepresented communities found in the most recent visitor study.

Action 2: Build the relationship between people and natural systems

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.

Action 3: Establish and broaden cross-sector opportunities

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

Action 4: Raise awareness of Regional Parks and Trails

Expand how we connect people to parks and trails with a deep focus on underrepresented communities through intentional outreach.

Recreation, Facilities, and Programming Key Changes



Proposed Changes

Action 1: Increase Equity

- Move “Equitable Use” to first action
- Addition of “Desired Outcome Examples” to illustrate how to carry out Action 1.
- Move process for adding New Activities, definitions for Off-Road Vehicles and Enterprise Facility Guidance to Parks and Trails Planning Handbook.
- Remove activities list and processes associated with primary and secondary activities, and propose moving and refining criteria-based eligibility for facilities and activities to Action 2.

Action 2: People and Natural Systems

- Replace activities list with criteria-based evaluation system.
- Integrate natural systems conservation alongside leisure and play

Action 3: Cross-Sector Opportunities

- Modify action to emphasize cross-sector connection opportunities

Action 4: Raising Awareness

- Add new action to emphasize importance of leveraging affinity groups to raise awareness.

Questions, Discussion, Advice

Questions:

- What do you find exciting about this Section?
- Do you have any questions or considerations?



Section Eight: Finance



Proposed Finance Changes



Overall

- Reordered content: Six actions and six statutory requirements including Capital Improvement Plan and Estimated Cost to Complete the System; replaced previous policy with new statement; removed redundant language that is already present in the Grant Administration Guide

Existing RPPP Strategy 5

- Reimbursement consideration removed, no longer legal

Action 2: Equity considerations

- Equity considerations revised to expand on the Equity Grant Program.
- Equity toolkit language proposed to be moved to the Planning Handbook.

Action 4: Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund

- Increase program cap for Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund to \$2 million for Parks and Trails Legacy Fund and \$3 million for Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

Action 6: Regional Funding Commitment

- New: The Council will actively analyze its regional funding budget strategy and pursue increasing regional funding commitment for the system whenever possible

Finance Policy and Actions

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

Action 1: Regional and State Bonds Funding Formula

Regional Parks Bonding Program Funding will be distributed based on a defined formula.

Action 2: Equity Considerations

Equity is a consideration in Regional Parks System funding and investment.

Action 3: Transit Corridors

Regional trail corridors that may be used for transit in the future are eligible for Regional Parks System funding only if it is clear the corridor will be used as a trail for at least 10 years.

Action 4: Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund

The Council will use the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund to help fund the acquisition of Regional Parks and Trails land.

Action 5: Other funding

The Council will actively seek funding opportunities from the state and other sources.

NEW: Action 6: Regional Funding Commitment

The Council will actively analyze its regional funding budget strategy and pursue increasing regional funding commitment for the system wherever possible

Finance Statutory Requirements

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

Distribution of funds

Funds will be granted only to regional park implementing agencies

Regional and State bond funds

Bond funds are used for acquisition, development, redevelopment, and natural resource restoration within the Regional Parks System units

Parks and Trails Legacy Fund

Parks and Trails Legacy Funds spending must conform to the statewide Parks and Trails Legacy Plan

Operations and Maintenance

The Council will distribute Operation and Maintenance appropriations to agencies

5 Year CIP

Cost to complete the system

Questions, Discussion, Advice

Questions:

- What do you like about the proposed Finance Section?
 - Is anything missing?
- Do you have any advice for staff?





Thank you

Colin Kelly

Planning Analyst, Regional Parks
colin.kelly@metc.state.mn.us

Tracey Kinney

Senior Planner, Regional Parks
tracey.kinney@metc.state.mn.us

Kevin Phan

Planner, Regional Parks
kevin.phan@metc.state.mn.us

Amanda Lovelee

Senior Outreach Coordinator, Regional Parks
amanda.lovelee@metc.state.mn.us

Jenessa Carlisle

Associate Outreach Coordinator,
Regional Parks
Jenessa.carlisle@metc.state.mn.us

Jessica Lee

Senior Planner, Regional Parks
jessica.lee@metc.state.mn.us

