

Information Item

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Meeting Date: May 2, 2024

Topic

2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan, 60% Plan

District(s), Member(s): All

Policy/Legal Reference: Minn. Stats. §§ 473.145 and 473.147

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Division/Department: Community Development / Regional Parks

Proposed Action

Information item; no action is proposed at this time.

Background

The Council continues its work on developing the 2050 Regional Development Guide, *Imagine 2050*. The current Regional Development Guide, *Thrive MSP 2040*, along with the Council's system and policy plans, help guide the orderly growth and development of the Twin Cities metropolitan region. The four policy plans include the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*, the *2040 Transportation Policy Plan*, the *2040 Water Resources Policy Plan*, and the *2040 Housing Policy Plan*.

At the May 2, 2024, Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission (MPOSC) meeting, Council staff will facilitate a conversation about the following items:

- Proposed changes to the Regional Parks and Trails Policy chapter – Summary of Changes (Attachment 1).
- High-level overview of the draft 60% Regional Parks and Trails chapter (formerly the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*) (Attachment 2)
- A deeper look into the Recreation, Facilities, and Programming, and Finance sections of the chapter.

The draft 60% Regional Parks and Trails chapter is the result of numerous discussions with Regional Park Implementing Agencies, the Metropolitan Council's Committee of the Whole, Community Development Committee, and the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission, as well as extensive outreach to prioritized communities.

Additionally, Council staff are carefully reviewing the existing Regional Parks Policy Plan content to

ensure it is fundamentally oriented to objectives, policies, and actions. Content that is contextual, procedural, or includes more detailed requirements, is proposed to be moved into a Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook. Staff will share emerging thinking about this proposal with MPOSC at the upcoming June meeting (Table 1).

Moving beyond the 60% Draft, Council staff will continue to revise and refine regional parks and trails objectives, policies, and actions, as well as the proposed Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook, as a result of this and future discussions with Regional Park Implementing Agencies, Council committees, and others.

The May 2, 2024, MPOSC meeting continues a series of focused discussions on the Regional Parks Policy Plan that began last spring. At the most recent MPOSC meeting, on April 2, 2024, Council staff shared feedback from Regional Park Implementing Agencies, MPOSC, and the Committee of the Whole. These discussions have resulted in key takeaways that helped Council staff further refine and shape the draft policies and actions.

At the March 2023 MPOSC meeting, staff shared Council-endorsed values and vision statements for the Regional Development Guide. Staff also shared a summary of the Regional Parks Policy Plan update work to-date, including a project timeline and a plan for working directly with Regional Park Implementing Agencies via a series of workgroups.

At the April 2023 MPOSC meeting, Council staff led small group activities focused on developing vision, mission, and value statements for the regional parks and trails system. An Implementing Agency-Council workgroup continued this work.

In June 2023, Council staff sought MPOSC's advice on developing shared regional goals and policy area objectives. Policy area objectives connect regional goals to policies and actions.

In August 2023, Council staff sought MPOSC's feedback and advice on community engagement activities, and regional parks and trails system vision, mission, and values. Staff also shared updates on regional goals and the launch of two additional parks policy plan workgroups.

In November 2023, Council staff shared outcomes of the most recent Agency-Council workgroups and draft regional parks and trails objectives. MPOSC provided feedback and advice on draft parks objectives.

At the January 4, 2024, meeting, Council staff shared a proposal for engaging MPOSC for the first five months of 2024 and sought advice on a revised set of draft parks objectives.

At the February 1, 2024, meeting, Council staff shared a revised set of draft parks objectives based on the input of MPOSC and Regional Park Implementing Agencies. Again, MPOSC provided advice on priorities to achieve draft parks objectives.

Minnesota law requires the Council to conduct a comprehensive review of the Regional Parks Policy Plan at least every four years (Minnesota Statutes, section 473.147). The policy plan was last updated in December 2020. Completion of the policy plan update, as an integrated part of *Imagine 2050*, is expected in late 2024 or early 2025.



Table 1: Proposed Summer 2024 Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission Engagement

Timing	Proposed Topics, Focus
June 6, 2024	<p>Imagine 2050: Content further developed.</p> <p>Focus: Climate Adaptation and Mitigation, Natural Systems (existing Chapter 4), and Parks Planning Handbook</p>
July 11, 2024 (date changed from July 4)	<p>Imagine 2050: Content further developed.</p> <p>Focus: System Plan (existing Chapter 3), Long-Range Planning (existing Chapter 5), and System Protection (existing Chapter 6)</p>
August 1, 2024	<p>Imagine 2050: Public Comment Draft Parks and Trails System Chapter</p> <p>Focus: Workplan (existing Chapter 9)</p>



Attachment 1. Regional Parks and Trails Policy Chapter – Summary of Changes

This Summary of Changes provides an overview of the significant revisions proposed as part of the *2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan*, which is considered a chapter of the Regional Development Guide, *Imagine 2050*. This summary should be used to help navigate the draft Regional Parks and Trails Policy Chapter. This update includes:

- Regional Parks and Trails Objectives that align with *Imagine 2050*
- New or updated policies and actions for the following sections:
 - System Plan
 - Natural Systems
 - Climate Resilience
 - Recreation, Facilities, and Programming
 - Finance
- Two new regional parks and trails classifications including the Cultural Landscapes and Open Space/Natural Areas.
- The development of a Regional Parks and Trails Handbook that includes process and criteria content.

Overall, 60% Draft – 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan

Location in 2040 RPPP	Summary of Changes
Overall	Propose updating the terms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Master” plan to “long-range” plan • Regional Parks System to Regional Parks <u>and Trails</u> System • Natural Resources to Natural Systems • <i>Thrive 2040</i> to <i>Imagine 2050</i> • <i>Regional Parks Policy Plan</i> to <i>Regional Parks and Trails Chapter</i> • “Siting” and Acquisition to “Locating” and Acquisition • Resident to visitor
Introductory Material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Propose removal of introductory material from the Regional Parks Policy Plan. This content will be integrated into the overarching Regional Development Guide, <i>Imagine 2050</i>. It includes Regional Vision, Values, Regional Growth and Demographics, Community Designations, etc.

Section 1: Overview of the Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan

Location in Draft	Summary of Changes
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Propose addition of Regional Parks and Trails System Vision, Mission, Values, and Objectives. • Propose addition of expanded Regional Parks and Trails System Existing Conditions section. • Propose update and expansion of Regional Parks and Trails System Research and Engagement Summary. • Propose inclusion of “Words matter: Changing how we refer to regional park and trail plans” section.



Section 2: System Plan Policy and Actions

Section Header	Summary of Changes
Overall	Propose adding new policy and actions to describe existing system plan management, to better support the Regional Parks and Trails System.
Overview of System Plan language	Propose to move current System Plan Introduction to Parks and Trails Planning Handbook: Overarching outdoor recreation system description, map, and table. Figure 3-1: National, Federal, State, Local, Private, and Nonprofit Recreation Lands in the Region.
Regional Park and Trail Classifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Propose consolidation of regional park and trail unit definitions and descriptions into single page descriptions, drawing from content in the <i>2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan's</i> chapters 2, 3, 4, and 7. 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 Policy and Actions

Section Header	Summary of Changes
Overall	Create new Natural Systems Policy to identify and protect natural systems lands in perpetuity for the region.
Overall	Propose reframing existing "Siting and Acquisition" policy and strategies as an Action underneath Natural Systems Policy.
Existing Siting and Acquisition Policy	Propose to move content to Parks and Trails Planning Handbook: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing Process and Criteria Overview for System Additions Existing Table 4-1: Regional Parks System General Criteria Existing Table 4-2: Regional Parks System: Regional Trails Criteria
Action 1: Locating and Acquisition Priorities	Proposal to clarify and integrate existing priorities for acquisition into new action.
Action 2: Equity and Geographic Balance	Proposal to add equitable access as a consideration for expanding the system, ensuring the system is geographically balanced.
Action 3: Natural Systems Research	Added a Council commitment to conduct natural systems research to provide implementing agencies with better information to inform our collective work.
Action 4: Maintenance of Natural Systems	The Council commits to convening and coordinating the Regional Park Implementing Agency partners around natural systems work.



Section Four: Climate Resilience Policy and Actions

Section Header	Summary of Changes
Overall	Propose to add new policy and actions that outline climate action and Council commitments.
Action 1: Climate Research	Propose collaborating with Regional Park Implementing agencies on climate research.
Action 2: Climate Awareness	Propose co-developing strategies with the implementing agencies to increase public awareness of the Regional Parks and Trails System's role in climate mitigation and adaptation.
Action 3: Citizen Science	In collaboration with the Regional Park Implementing Agencies, propose development strategies to encourage community members to participate in data collection, climate work and education.
Action 4: Climate and Environmental Justice	Propose to incorporate equity into the climate change conversation by gathering diverse perspectives to help shape future climate actions.
Action 5: Climate Action Plan Support	Propose supporting Regional Park Implementing Agency efforts as they work to implement their Climate Action Plans.
Action 6 Operations and Efficiency	Propose convening of operations staff among the Regional Park Implementing Agencies to discuss ways to improve operational efficiency and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.

Section Five: Planning Policy and Actions

Section Header	Summary of Changes
Planning Policy	Largely the Planning Policy section was not changed.
Action 1: Long-Range Plan Requirements	Propose to move long-range plan requirements and amendment processes to Parks and Trails Planning Handbook.
Joint Powers Agreements	Propose to move the existing Joint Powers Agreements to the Planning Handbook.

Section Six: System Protection Policy and Actions

Section Header	Summary of Changes
System Protection Policy	Largely the System Protection Policy section was not changed.
Action 2: Conversions	Propose moving and clarifying the system protection criteria to the Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook.
Existing Reimburse. for Contam.	Propose removing from policy plan because this strategy was moved to the Grant Administration Guide.
Existing Env't'l Site Assessments	Propose removing from policy plan because this strategy was moved to the Grant Administration Guide.



Action 3: Telecomm. Towers	Propose moving the process and criteria in the Telecommunication towers action to the Parks and Trails Planning Handbook.
Action 4: Placement of Utilities	Propose clarifying process and moving the criteria to the Parks and Trails Planning Handbook.

Section Seven: Recreation, Facilities, and Programming Policy and Actions

Section Header	Summary of Changes
Action 1: Increase Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Propose to move “Equitable Use” to first action. Propose addition of “Desired Outcome Examples to illustrate how to carry out Action 1. Propose to move the following to Parks and Trails Planning Handbook <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process for adding New Activities. Definition for Off-Road Vehicles and Enterprise Facility Guidance Propose removing 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 (below).
Action 2: People and Natural Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Propose replacing activities list with criteria-based evaluation system. Propose integrating natural systems conservation alongside leisure and play.
Action 3: Cross-Sector Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Propose modifications to emphasize cross-sector connection opportunities to the Regional Parks and Trails System.
Action 4: Raising Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Propose adding new action to emphasize the importance of leveraging affinity groups to raise awareness.

Section 8: Finance Policy and Actions

Section Header	Summary of Changes
Overall	Reordered content: Six actions and six statutory requirements including the Capital Improvement Plan and Estimated Cost to Complete the System. Replaced previous policy statement with new. Removed redundant language that is present in the Grant Administration Guide.
Exist. 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: PAOF	Increased 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	The Council will actively analyze its regional funding budget strategy and pursue increasing regional funding commitment for the system wherever possible



Section Nine: 2025-2028 Workplan

Summary of Changes	
Add the following to the 2025-2028 workplan:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore transferring budgeted bond match to other grant programs if the state authorizes less bonding. • Explore scoping and developing a system-wide Asset Preservation Plan. • Continue to pursue Pay-Go. • Explore changing/reducing the local match requirement for the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Program, as state rules allow. 	

Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook

RPPP Chapter Header*	Summary of Changes
Chapter 3	Propose to move content to Parks and Trails Planning Handbook: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overarching outdoor recreation system description, map, and table. • Figure 3-1: National, Federal, and State Recreation Lands in the Region. • Implementing agency-level maps
Chapter 4	Proposal to move Park and Trails systems addition criteria to the Planning Handbook.
Chapter 5	Proposal to move long-range plan requirements and amendment processes.
Chapter 6	Propose to move or clarify content in the Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land Conversions: move criteria. • Strategy 5: Telecommunication towers to the Parks: move process and criteria. • Strategy 6: Placement of utilities: clarify process and move criteria. Proposed to move content to the Grant Administration Guide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System Protection Strategy 3: Reimbursement for contamination • System Protection Strategy 4: Environmental Site Assessments
Chapter 7	Proposal to move activity evaluation process and definitions for Off-Road Vehicles and Enterprise Facility Guidance.
Chapter 8	Proposal to move equity toolkit information to the Parks and Trails Planning Handbook

* This column references existing chapters in the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan

