

Information Item

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Meeting Date: October 3, 2024

Topic

Draft Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook

District(s), Member(s):	All
Policy/Legal Reference:	Minn. Stats. §§ 473.145 and 473.147
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Colin Kelly, Planning Analyst (651-602-1361) Tracey Kinney, Planning Analyst (651-602-1029) Kevin Phan, Planner (651-602-1345)
Division/Department:	Community Development / Regional Parks

Proposed Action

Information item; no action is proposed at this time.

Background

The Metropolitan Council is nearing an important milestone in its work on the 2050 regional development guide, *Imagine 2050*. On October 7, 2024, the public comment period closes for the draft *Imagine 2050* plan. Like the current regional development guide, *Thrive MSP 2040*, *Imagine 2050* will help foster efficient and economic growth for a prosperous metropolitan region. *Imagine 2050* will include each of the Council's system and policy plans, including regional parks and trails, transportation, water resources, and housing.

As part of the planned integration of the regional parks and trails policy plan into *Imagine 2050*, Met Council staff reviewed existing and proposed content to ensure it is fundamentally oriented to *Imagine 2050*'s objectives, policies, and actions. Content that is predominately contextual, procedural, or includes more detailed requirements is proposed to be moved into the draft Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook (draft planning handbook). Council staff shared an overview of the draft 60% planning handbook with MPOSC at the June meeting.

Since the June MPOSC meeting, the draft planning handbook was further developed based on comments from MPOSC, Community Development Committee (CDC), and the regional parks implementing agencies. The main changes to the draft planning handbook are predominately refinements of existing content with the proposed addition of boundary adjustment criteria for regional trails (Section 5: Planning).

At the October 3, 2024, Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission (MPOSC) meeting, Council staff will again focus on the draft planning handbook and share:

- A summary of advice on the draft planning handbook from recent Council committee and Regional Park Implementing Agency director's meetings.
- An overview of the draft Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook.
- A discussion on proposed regional trail boundary adjustment criteria.

Council staff seek the Commission's feedback and advice, especially related to the draft planning

handbook.

While the focus of the October MPOSC meeting will be on the draft planning handbook, work continues on the draft Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan (draft policy plan). Following the public comment period for *Imagine 2050*, Council staff will prepare a public comment report and refine draft policy plan content as appropriate. Council staff will return to MPOSC with a high-level summary of public comments received on November 7, 2024 (information item); a draft final planning handbook on December 5, 2024 (information item); and a draft final Regional parks and trails policy plan chapter on January 9, 2025 (business item). *Imagine 2050* is proposed for adoption on February 12, 2025 (Table 1).

Table 1: Schedule for finalizing planning handbook, parks and trails policy, and Imagine 2050

Date/Timing	Milestone
October 3, 2024	90% draft Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook (information item)
October 7, 2024	Public comment period closes
November 7, 2024	High-level summary of public comments received on the draft Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan (information item)
December 5, 2024	Draft final Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook (information item)
January 9, 2025	Draft final Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan (business item)
Varies	Final public comment reports prepared
February 12, 2025	Metropolitan Council adoption of Imagine 2050

The draft policy plan is the result of numerous discussions with regional park implementing agencies, the Metropolitan Council’s Committee of the Whole, CDC and MPOSC, as well as extensive outreach to prioritized communities. Engagement with MPOSC on the 2050 regional development guide began in August 2022, with focused discussions on updating the *Regional Parks Policy Plan* beginning in October 2022. A summary of the engagement appears in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of Regional Development Guide engagement with Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

Date	Focus
October 6, 2022	Regional vision, values, and goals; kick-off the Regional Parks Policy Plan update process; gather input on key topics and issues to inform policy plan workgroups
March 2, 2023	Council-endorsed regional values and vision statements; Regional Parks Policy Plan project timeline; proposal for regional park implementing agency-Council policy plan workgroups.
April 6, 2023	Small group activities focused on developing vision, mission, and values for the regional parks and trails system.
June 1, 2023	Developing shared regional goals and policy area objectives
August 3, 2023	Regional goals; regional parks and trails system vision, mission, and values; the development of a community, stakeholder and public engagement plan; launch of two more policy plan workgroups
November 2, 2023	Outcomes of policy plan workgroups; draft regional parks and trails objectives; preview remaining policy plan workgroups



January 4, 2024	Proposal for engaging MPOSC in early 2024, schedule for finalizing the Regional Development Guide, revised set of draft parks objectives
February 1, 2024	Revised set of draft parks objectives, subset of the draft objectives surrounding the Climate and Natural Systems topic, local forecasts
March 7, 2024	Revised draft regional parks and trails objectives; emerging ideas on policies and actions; background information on the existing Regional Parks Policy Plan and how components of it may change going forward
April 4, 2024	Revised regional parks and trails objectives; emerging ideas on regional parks and trails policies and actions; emerging thinking on a Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook
May 2, 2024	Overview of the draft 60% Regional Parks and Trails Plan; deeper dives into section 7 (Recreation, Facilities, and Programming) and section 8 (Finance)
June 6, 2024	Overview of the draft Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook; deeper dives into section 3(Natural Systems) and section 4 (Climate Resilience)
July 11, 2024	Deeper dives into section 2 (System plan), section 5 (Planning), and section 6 (System protection), and associated content in the draft planning handbook
August 1, 2024	Overview of the public comment (90%) draft of the 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan, with a particular focus on new and different elements of the draft 2050 plan

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). Completion of the policy plan update, as an integrated part of *Imagine 2050*, is expected in early 2025.

