



Imagine 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan: Public Comment Summary and Next Steps

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

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Imagine 2050 Public Comment Period



- Public comments for the Regional Parks and Trails Policy Chapter were accepted from **August 15 to October 7**.
- Comments accepted in multiple forms:
 - Online via engage.metrocouncil.org
 - Email
 - Mail
 - In-person (Art + Policy events and Public Hearing)
- Received more than 1,200 comments from approximately 500 organizations and individuals.
- Implementing agency comments on the draft planning handbook were accepted until Friday, October 25, 2024.

Art + Policy



- Initiative to incorporate art into the planning process to increase visibility and accessibility of Imagine 2050 and public comment period.
- Collaboration with four visual artists to create designs of each policy area (Land Use, Transportation, Water, Parks and Trails, and Housing).
- Worked with nine engagement artists to attend events across the region to attract visitors and gather comments. Some art projects include:
 - Custom flags
 - Murals
 - Sound gardens
 - Projection art

What have we heard?



Who commented?

- 14 agencies and local government units:
 - National Park Service
 - Nine out of ten implementing agencies*
 - Cities of Richfield, Hugo, Brooklyn Park, and Lakeville
- General public
- Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission, Community Development Committee

How did they comment?

- Online engagement tool, email, public hearing
 - Approximately 105 Parks-related comments including 16 emails/letters
- Over 20 Art + Policy engagement events
 - 232 flags sewn
 - 171 postcards (still being sorted)
 - 144 mural blocks painted
 - 16 Indigenous youth manifestos for the future

**While not all agencies responded during the public comment period, all agencies were engaged throughout the development of the draft policy plan*



What did we hear? part one



Key Themes for Regional Parks and Trails

Overall

- Center the Council's role in the Regional Parks and Trails System at the policy level

System Plan

- Recommendations to further refine the Cultural Landscape sub-classification.
- Varied suggestions on developing an Open Space/Natural System subclassification.
- Interest in clarifying regionally significant bridging facilities.

Recreation, Facilities, and Programming

- Continue assessing the balance between being a regional system and providing amenities for underserved communities.
- Further support for elevating the importance of Regional Trails.

Finance

- How can the Council and State increase support for the regional system as demand for parks and trails increase?

What did we hear? part two, a

Overall

- Consider “simple, infographic- type summaries at the beginning of the plan or section...” *(Agency)*
- “Appreciate the effort to slim the plan and create a handbook for practicality.” *(Agency)*
- “Continued uncertainty around the authority and jurisdiction of the Planning Handbook.” *(Agency)*

1. Overview

- “I imagine a future where getting from where you live to where you want to go... doesn’t require a car to be quick, safe or convenient.” *(Public)*
- “Your objectives are strong and comprehensive. Be sure to include the aging population in your work.” *(Public)*
- “Appreciate the acknowledgement of system growth impacting the need for additional operations and maintenance costs...” *(Agency)*

2. System Plan

- “Suggest that the Met. Council partner and consult with tribal communities in order for a landscape to be designated as a Cultural Landscape.” *(Agency)*
- “Request that the Open Space/Natural Systems subclassification... be added to the Policy Plan.” *(Agency)*
- “Upgrade data sampling in the... visitor studies so that data is representative at the individual park and trail unit.” *(Agency)*

What did we hear? part two, b

3. Natural Systems

- “More trees everywhere. More public transit.” *(Public)*
- “Request additional clarification... on how to designate a bridging facility.” *(Agency)*
- “More of our parks need to be rewilded.” *(Public)*
- “I’d love to see a large amount of expansion to the regional trail system.” *(Public)*

4. Climate Resilience

- “The Board requests that climate and natural systems research projects be reviewed and prioritized in a context that includes other research needs.” *(Agency)*
- “Met Council should be a leader in this area and provide steps for achieving goals along with working with implementing agencies.” *(Agency)*

5. Planning

- “Requests that any and all future revisions to the Planning Handbook be required to obtain approval by the Met Council.” *(Agency)*
- Met Council should be a leader in this area and provide steps for achieving goals along with working with implementing agencies. *(Agency)*
- RE: Perspectives to prioritize – “People without the ability to drive to the parks.” *(Public)*

6. System Protection

- “Local jurisdictions may benefit from additional info on the land uses that would be considered negative.” *(Agency)*
- “Recommend that the 2050 Policy Plan prioritize visual protections to maintain the region’s aesthetic and scenic qualities.” *(NPS)*

What did we hear? part two, c

7. Recreation, Facilities, and Amenities

- “Uses should be consistent with the state park system if we are going to make the comparison relevant in the eyes of Legislators.” *(Agency)*
- “Activities should not be singled out for inclusion nor elimination based on a general litmus test of regional park appropriateness included in a 1974 statute.” *(Agency)*
- “Encourage the 2050 Plan to expand its focus on alternative transportation enhancements, including pedestrian and bicycle pathways.” *(NPS)*

8. Finance

- “BIPOC-specific programming has been a tremendous success in great part due to the Council’s equity grant program...” *(Agency)*
- “Recommend consideration of establishing a dedicated (O&M) fund, particularly for long-term maintenance after restoration.” *(Agency)*
- “The plan (includes) initiatives for climatic resilience but no additional funding. These initiatives will require use of existing fund sources and may hinder park and trail improvements without additional funding.” *(Agency)*

9. Workplan

- “Council and agencies can improve coordination around marketing and supporting the park system’s potential for tourism.” *(Agency)*
- “It would be beneficial to include a climate change adaptation/mitigation goal in this section.” *(Agency)*
- “Develop a training program for staff from parks implementing agencies about indigenous land management practices.” *(AIAC)*

Section Two: System Plan

Theme

Cultural Landscape Subclassification: Suggestions to clarify the description.

Proposal

- 1. Modify Policy Plan Classification Description:** Cultural Landscapes recognize lands with significant cultural value to American Indian Tribes **and other cultural** organizations and communities.
- 2. Modify Policy Plan Section 9, Work Plan language:**

Section 9, Work Plan		
Project	Timeframe	Location in Policy Plan
4. Convene regional park implementing agencies to develop a cultural resources inventory requirement for long-range planning and continue to develop the Cultural Landscape Classification. Continue to engage American Indian Tribes and other cultural communities for guidance and direction.	2025-2026	Section 5, Action 1; Planning Handbook

“A new ‘cultural landscape’ classification acknowledges there are locations with a regional, and even statewide or national, importance and visitation, that should not have a recreational focus. We appreciate the engagement that has led to the creation of this designation and welcome the continued conversation as the details of implementing such a special feature continue to be developed.” (Agency)

“Concern around the inclusion of the word “organizations” in the description...” (Agency)

Section Two: System Plan

Theme

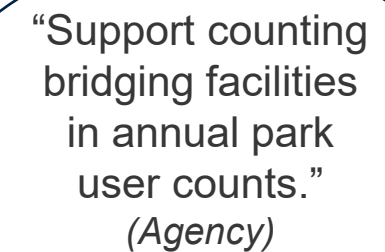
Bridging facilities: Interest in clarifying regionally significant bridging facilities.

Proposals

- 1. Policy plan classification descriptions, site attributes:** Bridging facilities may: Have a mobile element to allow outreach to extend beyond the existing boundaries of the Regional Parks and Trails System, going into communities that have been historically underserved. Mobile elements may be temporarily housed in a partner facility, such as a local park, school or non-profit organization. Mobile bridging programming must be connected to a base regional park or trail system facility and will need to articulate, track, and report their results. Participants in mobile programming events outside of a regional unit are not counted as part of the annual use estimate.
- 2. Policy plan classification descriptions, funding:** Only bridging facilities that are nested within an existing unit of the Regional Parks and Trails System may be included in the annual use estimate. ~~Not be included in the annual Regional Parks and Trails System use estimate~~ ~~If designed to meet their purpose of attracting new users and connecting them to regional parks and trails, a facility's success will be reflected in increased visitation in future annual regional park and trail use estimates.~~



“We see opportunities to partner with Three Rivers Park District to include a programmatic element in one of our facilities...” (Agency)



“Support counting bridging facilities in annual park user counts.” (Agency)

Section 7: Recreation, Facilities, and Programming

Theme

Center the **Council's role** in the Regional Parks and Trails System at the policy level

Proposals

1. Modify language in Action 1 and Action 3.

Recreation, Facilities, and Programming – Action 1: Increase equity in programs, activities, and places

The Met Council **develops supports** opportunities, programs, and spaces that strive to uplift community connections to the outdoors while counteracting barriers and harm placed on underrepresented communities.

Recreation, Facilities, and Programming – Action 3: Establish and broaden cross-sector opportunities

The Met Council **provides supports** a wide spectrum of connections and partnerships in the outdoors through recreation, arts, programming, transit, public health, education, stewardship, and community.

2. Move desired outcome examples and supporting quotes to planning handbook.

3. Move ineligible activities and facilities to a new Action 6.

“Accurately reflect the Council’s role in this action.” (Agency)

“Comments, examples, ideas, and quotes within this section are superfluous and would be better serviced in a separate document/appendices.” (Agency)

“Consider... a separate stand-alone action that focused solely on what is specifically banned in legislation” (Agency)

Section Eight: Finance

Theme

Council role in Finance: Desire in providing additional financial support for various initiatives and having the Council advocate for more state funds.

Proposal

- 1. Modify policy plan Finance policy description:** The Met Council administers, ~~and~~ provides financial oversight, and collaborates with a range of partners of the state to provide and regional funding to the ten regional park implementing agencies in support of the Regional Parks and Trails System.

“Concerns about the evolution of the financial policies away from collaboration and advocacy toward pure management.” (Agency)

“If funding does not keep up with growing demand and maintenance, the system will experience deterioration. The Regional Parks Policy Plan must set the stage for the Met Council and agencies to address this.” (Agency)

Section 9, Work Plan		
Project	Timeframe	Location in Policy Plan
8. Explore scoping and development of a system-wide Asset Preservation Plan, or similar.	2025-2028	Section 8
9. Continue to pursue Pay-Go for greater flexibility to fund a wider range of activities and programs. Pay-Go would allow funding the regional system with general taxation revenue, in addition to bonding and would still be required to live within the legislative funding cap.	2025-2028	Section 8
10. Explore changing/reducing the local match requirement for the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Program, as state rules allow.	2025-2028	Section 8
11. Continue discussion of strategic funding for the Regional Parks and Trails System	2025-2028	Section 8

Section Nine: Work Plan

Theme

Work Plan Prioritization: Interest in discussing work plan items and prioritization of implementation

Proposals

- 1. Modify introductory language:** “The following work plan summarizes specific topic areas that the Met Council intends to cover over the next several years. **These items are the result of engagement with regional park implementing agencies, Met Council committees, and others. Met Council staff propose these items as priorities to take up over the next four years.** These items will evolve and change as the Council works with regional park implementing agencies, other partners, and stakeholders on implementation, particularly as we engage with the development of the 2050 metropolitan development guide. *{This workplan will be updated as the policy conversations continue throughout the public comment period, ahead of plan adoption.}*”

“The section would benefit from a discussion of how work plan tasks were identified and prioritized, and how it is updated between the 5-year cycle of Policy Plan updates.” (Agency)

“It would be beneficial to include a climate change adaptation/mitigation goal in this section.” (Agency)

Section 9, Work Plan		
Project	Timeframe	Location in Policy Plan
13. Reconvene Climate and Natural Systems Workgroup to discuss implementation steps for Climate Policy and Actions.	2025-2028	Section 4

Now what?

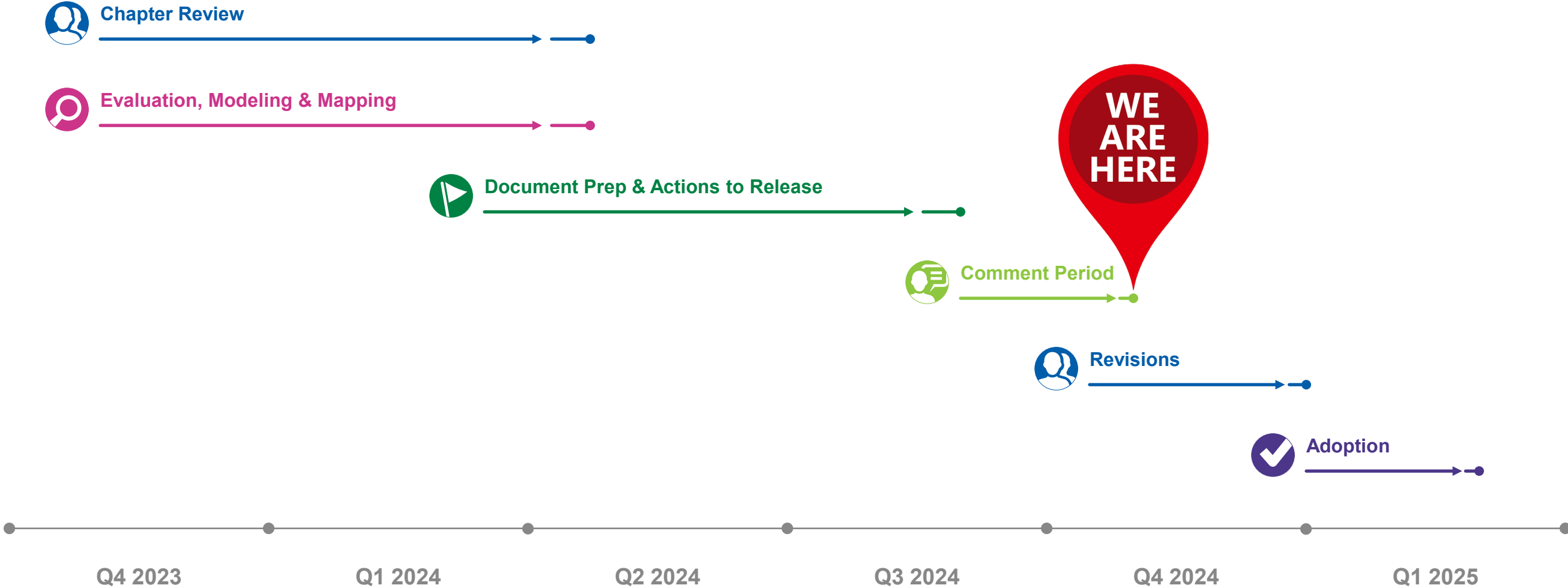


Next steps

- Council staff are continuing to process comments submitted and revise the draft policy plan and draft planning handbook.

Date/Timing	Milestone
Nov. 7, 2024	Summary of public comments received on the draft policy plan (info item)
Dec. 5, 2024	Draft final planning handbook (business item)
Jan. 9, 2025	Draft final policy plan and public comment report (business item)
Varies	Final public comment reports prepared
Feb. 12, 2025	Metropolitan Council adoption of Imagine 2050

Imagine 2050 Timeline



Questions, Discussion

- Do the key themes and comments resonate? Any surprises?
- What are your questions about the proposed changes to the policy plan?
- Other areas of advice?





Thank you

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