

Minutes

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Meeting date: March 6, 2025

Time: 4:00 PM

Location: 390 Robert Street

Members present:

Chair, Tony Yarusso,
at large

Monica Dillenburg, District A

Robert Moeller, District B

Tess Bouska, District C

David Yakes, District D

Chris Suerig, District E

Cecily Harris, District F

Anthony Taylor, District G

Amanda Duerr, District H

Susan Vento, Council Liaison

= present

Call to order

A quorum being present, Chair Yarusso called the regular meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:00p.m.

Agenda approved

Commission members did not have any comments or changes to the agenda. Agenda approved.

Approval of minutes

It was moved by Yakes, seconded by Dillenburg to approve the minutes of February 6, 2025, regular meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. **Motion carried.**

Public invitation

None.

Business

2025-69: Midtown Greenway Regional Trail Long-Range Plan, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (Colin Kelly and Zoey Mauck)

Kelly and Mauck gave a presentation on the Midtown Greenway Regional Trail Long-Range Plan from the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board as outlined in the materials provided.

Harris asked if the trail is used by pedestrians. Mullin noted in the presentation where pictures show a designated walking trail.

Madeline Hudek, MPRB noted the paved section is the trail boundary and stated the grassy areas alongside the paved trail are not included within the regional trail boundary and remain under the control of Hennepin County.

Yakes asked for clarification on amenity zones. Hudek noted that they're listed on page 45 of the plan and include things like lighting, benches, and other amenities.

Dillenburg asked who pays for operations and maintenance costs on the trail. Hudek noted that operations and maintenance responsibilities are clearly delineated among the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB), the City of Minneapolis, and the Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority (HCRRA). The trail surface is mainly the responsibility of the City.

Chair Yarusso asked if the Regional Trail is eligible for regional funding. Mullin responded that if the City and HCRRA transferred ownership to MPRB, then operations and maintenance funding would be eligible for the entire corridor. Capital improvements are eligible as long as they meet all the state and regional requirements associated with the funding.

Bouska asked if more entry points will be added? She feels that additional entry points could make the trail feel safer. Hudek shared that additional entry points are being added, and several are being improved.

Taylor discussed ideas to make the area and trail feel safer.

Yakes shared that giving more people a reason to go down to the trail will make it feel safer, which in turn will bring even more people.

Taylor discussed HCRRA's interests in the trail corridor, saying that they do not want any trail improvements that would preclude or interfere with future use for possible light rail. He shared that this trail is incredibly important for human powered transportation and is heavily used.

Chair Yarusso asked about the proposed acquisition (land owned by the Met Council). Mullin discussed 5 acres next to the Martin Olav Sabo bridge and felt it may be better managed by MPRB and stated there may be an opportunity for a land exchange. Adam Arvidson, Minneapolis Parks, discussed ways the land could be used to improve the trail corridor.

It was moved by Dillenburg, seconded by Yakes, that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's Midtown Greenway Regional Trail Long-Range Plan.
2. Require MPRB, prior to initiating any construction, to send preliminary plans to the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services Interceptor Engineering Assistant Manager.

Motion carried.

Information

2025 Work Planning: Met Council Regional Parks and Trails Team (Colin Kelly)

Kelly gave a presentation on the 2025 Work Planning: Met Council Regional Parks and Trails Team, as outlined in the materials provided.

Mullin noted that this work plan is a work in progress.

Harris asked (on page 3, under culture, #8), "other cultural communities", who might that be? Mullin stated that it's to be determined but gave an example of the Latino Community.

Vento noted that the new cultural landscape classification is an opportunity to tell many histories, in a way that will enhance experiences at the parks and on the trails.

Harris asked what does RSEA stand for? Kelly responded it refers to regionally significant ecological areas.

Harris asked regarding Parks and Trails Legacy funding and if it is related to the 2040 Plan. Are their funds that could be used for these work plan priorities. Mullin stated one idea is agencies in the acquisition stage are often challenged by the \$1.7 million funding cap. He noted they are looking for ways to explore exceeding that gap. The new 2050 Regional Development Guide increases the caps but still requires an agency contribution.

Chair Yarusso asked for clarification on whether we have ever had funds expire before we could spend them? Mullin stated that we have and noted that a small amount of Environment and Natural Resources Trust Funds have been returned to LCCMR because they expired. This is highly uncommon.

Harris discussed regional trails that she would like to be looked at for more than just bikes. Mullin pointed out that we have a new trail coordinator, Zoey Mauck, that will be working on this topic, including pedestrian use.

Harris asked about the modernization program, and what that entails. Mullin explained that under the umbrella of climate and adaptation work, this 2023 funding could be part of a larger state priority. Right now it is considered one time money that can be used for things like water stations, tree canopy improvement, pavement management, and other activities and facilities.

Dillenburg discussed the order of development and implementation and discussed funding strategy to do all this work. She asked about harvesting fruit, mushrooms, etc. and asked who it would benefit. Mullin stated agencies are working on harvesting guidelines and noted the openness the agencies are working with on these plans, yet concerns remain about negative impacts harvesting could have on natural systems. There is a general belief that if done well, harvesting could be beneficial.

Chair Yarusso stated in addition to what we're proposing to do, he would like to get a better handle on how we're making progress and whether we're on track.

Taylor asked if there is something in the workplan related to winter and asked about skijoring as a winter trail use. Chair Yarusso noted that Washington County, Dakota County and Three Rivers Park District all added skijoring trails to their systems.

Jonathan Vlaming, Three Rivers Park District discussed implementing agencies getting together and working on promoting winter recreation, and referenced the Governor's recent talk about making Minnesota more attractive by making winter 'fun'.

The group discussed lobbying to get state funding for these efforts. Also, suggestions were made to reach out to sporting goods industry for help with lobbying efforts. Duerr discussed ways to bring a 'package' forward to the Legislature for funding. Vlaming suggested getting help from Greater MSP.

Reports

Chair

Chair Yarusso discussed reappointments of Council Liaisons as Sue Vento is leaving the Council. He also discussed a tree grant program available for implementing agencies, among other applicants.

Committee Members

None.

Council Liaison

Sue Vento discussed the closing of MNRRA Visitors Center and encouraged Committee Members to reach out to congress and/or White House to encourage them to save the Visitor Center. She noted this will be her last meeting with MPOSC and stated that Council Member Wendy Wulff will be replacing her.

Staff

Mullin thanked Sue Vento for her participation in this Commission. He then gave a brief Legislative update and discussed Bill deadlines coming in April.

Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 6:03 p.m.

Certification

I hereby certify that the foregoing narrative and exhibits constitute a true and accurate record of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission meeting of Month 00, 2025.

Approved this 00 day of Month 2025.



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