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2025-3 JT

2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan Final Draft

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

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Imagine 2050 Process Overview



A collaborative process

- Built on the 2020 parks policy plan amendment that focused on engaging with prioritized communities
- Started policy plan work in 2022 with regional park implementing agencies, Council committees, and Met Council staff
- Held eight Agency-Council workgroups in 2023-2024 focusing on multiple topics (Strategic Funding, Recreational Activities, Trail System Coordination, etc.)
- Released 60% draft in May 2024 to agency staff for review and revision
- Public comment period and Art + Policy held in Summer and Fall of 2024

Section 1: Overview

What's New for 2050?

- Updated system facts:
 - 46 regional parks (+2)
 - 12 park reserves (no change)
 - Eight special features (no change)
 - 56 regional trails (+1) with 487 miles currently open to the public (previously 415 miles)
 - 65,339 acres protected
- Added system vision, mission, values, and objectives
- Added the state of the system (a.k.a. Existing conditions)
- Added introduction and reference to Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook



Section 2: System Plan



What's New for 2050?

- Added new policy and three actions focused on maintaining data, maps, plans, processes, research, and applications
- Modified Special Recreation Features classification to Special Features, created new Cultural Landscape sub-classification
- Updated all System Plan maps and tables defining what's eligible for regional support
- Updated the Estimated Cost to Complete the System - \$3 billion (up from \$2.1 billion in 2020)
 - Moved estimate from Finance section to align with system plan

Section 3: Natural Systems

What's New for 2050?

- Added new policy and three actions focused on identifying and protecting natural systems lands in perpetuity
- Updated and reframed “Locating and Acquisition” policy and strategies within Natural Systems policy
- Added narrative around system addition factors:
 - Natural systems foundation
 - Geographic distribution
 - Equity



Section 4: Climate Resilience



What's New for 2050?

- Added new policy and four actions that promote resilience to climate changes and outline Council commitments
- Actions prioritize climate change support through:
 - Partnership and collaboration
 - Research
 - Increased public awareness
 - Equity and environmental justice

Section 5: Planning

What's New for 2050?

- Moved details of long-range plan requirements and amendment processes to Planning Handbook
- Strengthened connection to Planning Handbook
- Clarified the types of long-range plan amendments:
 - Full amendment
 - Focused amendment
 - Administrative process for minor amendments.
- Moved existing Joint Powers Agreements strategy to Planning Handbook



Section 6: System Protection



What's New for 2050?

- Conversion language streamlined and clarified
- Moved existing Reimbursement for Contamination and Environmental Site Assessments strategies to the Grant Administration Guide
- Updated language on regional wastewater infrastructure to be consistent with Council policies and practices

Section 7: Recreation, Facilities, and Programming

What's New for 2050?

- New action to increase equity in programming activities and places
- New actions to support partnerships, outreach, collaboration, and raising awareness
- Created new, more flexible criteria for recreation activities and facilities eligibility
 - Removed static traditional activities list
- Strengthened commitment to better coordinate Regional Trail System and the Regional Bicycle Transportation Network
- New action clarifying ineligible recreational activities and facilities



Section 8: Finance



What's New for 2050?

- Reshaped Finance policy language to underscore collaboration.
- Statutory requirements come first
- Formalized Equity Grant Program commitment.
- Increased Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund cap:
 - Legacy - \$1.7 million to \$2 million
 - ENRTF - \$1.7 million to \$3 million.
- New action for Council to actively analyze regional funding budget strategy to pursue increasing funding.

Section 9: 2025-2028 Workplan

What's New for 2050?

- 17 items identified. Highlights include:
 - Continue dialogue around special feature sub-classifications: Historical landscapes and Open space/natural systems.
 - Explore establishment of Cultural Resources Inventory requirement with agencies, and in consultation with American Indian tribes and communities.
 - Create a more coordinated and integrated Regional Trail and Regional Bicycle Transportation Network system.
 - Continue strategic funding discussion that was initiated during policy planning process.



Next Steps

Key Dates

| Date/Timing | Milestone |
|---------------|---|
| Jan. 21, 2025 | Draft final policy plan, planning handbook, and public comment report (CDC business item) |
| Feb. 12, 2025 | Metropolitan Council adoption of Imagine 2050 |
| Spring 2025 | Proposed amendment to Imagine 2050 to update performance measures |



Proposed Action



That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Accept the public comment report on the Imagine 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan.
2. Adopt the Imagine 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan as part of the Regional Development Guide for the metropolitan area authorized under Minnesota Statutes 473.145



Thank you

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