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## 2025-6

# Draft Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission  
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[metro council.org](http://metro council.org)



# Draft Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook Overview

## What is it?

- Complementary document to the Regional Parks and Trails Policy Chapter.
- Contains procedural and contextual language outlining Regional Parks and Trails System processes.

## Handbook Amendment Process:

- Handbook policy content will be amended every 4 years (same schedule as Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan).
  - Amendment process in partnership with Implementing Agencies and Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission.
  - Substantial updates that directly impact or necessitate implementing agency action will need Council approval.
  - Resources (e.g., webinars, plan examples, infographics) will be updated on as-needed basis or when new content becomes available.



# Sections 1 and 2: Introduction and System Plan



## What's New?

### Overall

- Moved procedural and contextual language from Policy Chapter to Planning Handbook.
- Incorporated graphics and flowcharts to visualize processes.

### Introduction

- Added contextual language describing Handbook purpose and amendment process.
- Moved research and engagement summary from Policy Chapter to Planning Handbook.

### System Plan

- Added contextual language regarding Minnesota's Outdoor Recreation System.
- Consolidated Regional Park and Trail System unit classifications into Policy Chapter one-page descriptions.
- Will add Agency-Level Maps once they become available (later 2025).

# Section 3 and 4: Natural Systems and Climate Resiliency



## What's New?

### Natural Systems

- Clarified the system additions process.
- Added graphics and language summarizing how a park search area or trail search corridor becomes operational.
- Realigned study area criteria to match Locating and Acquisition primary factors.
- Continued commitment to monitor local and non-local visitation with park agency partners.

### Climate Resiliency

- Added placeholder text for future resources and processes.

# Section 5: Planning

## What's New?

- Streamlined long-range plan requirements:
  - Created checklist for agency use
  - Reorganized plan requirements into three main categories:
    - Engagement
    - Development Concept
    - Natural Systems
- Elevated design considerations for long-range plans
- Created criteria and process for different types of long-range plan amendments:
  - Full amendment
  - Focused amendment
  - Administrative process for minor amendments.
- Modified criteria and process for boundary adjustments
- Moved language on joint powers agreements from policy plan to planning handbook



# Section 6: System Protection



## What's New?

- Added procedural and contextual language regarding Local Comprehensive Plans, Land Conversion Processes, and Telecommunication Towers Placement.
- Added process graphics and requirements for land conversion process.

# Section 7: Recreation, Facilities, and Programming

## What's New?

- Added procedural language and graphics describing the process to evaluate and add new Recreational Activities and Facilities
- Added desired outcome examples for Actions 1-4 in Section 7
- Added commitment to continue Trail System Coordination Workgroup. Some work plan highlights include:
  - Coordination with the Regional Bicycle Transportation Network (RBTN)
  - Improved wayfinding and awareness of regional trails
  - Coordinate growth of the system.



# Proposed Action



That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Establish the Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook as the administrative guide for regional parks and trails long-range planning requirements.
2. Adopt the attached Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook.
3. Authorize Council staff to make administrative changes to the Handbook over time, including additions and updates to related tools and resources.
4. Direct Council staff to bring any updates that directly impact or necessitate implementing agency action related to Sections 3, 5, 6, and 7 of the Planning Handbook to the Council for approval, aligning with any updates to the Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan.





Thank you

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