

Information Item

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Meeting Date: July 1, 2025

Topic

Draft Slate of Performance Measures for the Regional Parks and Trails System

District(s), Member(s): All
Policy/Legal Reference: 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan
Staff Prepared/Presented: Colin Kelly, Planning Analyst (651-602-1361)
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Division/Department: Community Development / Regional Parks and Trails

Proposed Action

Information item; no action is proposed at this time.

Rationale

The 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan committed the Metropolitan Council to “develop a process to create a small set of performance measures at the policy level to measure progress toward our key Regional Park and Trail System priorities” (Section 9, Table 9-1, 2025-2028 Work Plan for the 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan). This information item and the discussion that comes out of it is intended to advance the development of a small set of performance measures.

Imagine Lens Analysis

The development of performance measures for the Regional Parks and Trails System aligns closely with the Imagine 2050 Regional Core Value of Accountability. Met Council staff prioritizes being effective and achieving measurable outcomes. Measuring performance ensures that residents and stakeholders see progress on important metrics and demonstrates effective use of funding.

Performance measures can also help to illustrate the social, economic, health, and environmental benefits of the Regional Parks and Trails System. These measures are critical for communicating the value of the system to partners, legislators, and the public.

Council staff recognize that they can maximize effectiveness by partnering with others. The partnership between the Metropolitan Council and regional park implementing agencies is critical to measuring the current and future performance of the Regional Parks and Trails System.

Background

At the July 1, 2025 Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission (MPOSC) meeting, Met Council Parks staff will share a draft slate of performance measures for the Regional Parks and Trails System. These performance measures are intended to connect directly to the 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan, a chapter of the Council’s recently adopted regional development guide, Imagine 2050. This draft performance measure slate follows a proposal from Met Council

Research staff and discussion with regional park implementing agencies in the fall of 2024, as well as on on-going internal discussions throughout early 2025. Council Parks staff are seeking the Commission's feedback and advice on the draft slate of performance measures. Discussion questions include:

- What measures have the strongest alignment with the policy associated with them?
- What measures would help the Council and implementing agencies tell the most compelling stories?
 - For example, to demonstrate impact, communicate the value of the system, make the case for additional funding, build awareness, etc.
- Is anything missing from the proposed slate?

In the fall of 2024, Met Council Research staff shared a proposed measurement slate for the Regional Parks and Trails System with Met Council Parks staff. The goal of the proposal was to:

- Spark discussions that balance measures' relatability to those most impacted and our key implementation partners
- Staff capacity to undertake this work and sustain it
- Establish the priorities for Imagine 2050 implementation.

Ultimately, each policy team has the responsibility to put forward a meaningful measurement slate that has been informed by the input of key stakeholders and partners.

Later this year, Met Council Research staff will put forward a slate of performance measures that reaches across the Met Council's systems and policy areas, to include measures for the Regional Parks and Trails System. The adoption of the performance measures will result in an amendment to Imagine 2050 and the Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan chapter. Met Council Parks staff will return to MPOSC with a nearly final set of measures later this year.

These performance measures are intended to have a lifespan of at least 10 years, ideally much longer. To adequately analyze and assess system trends, it is important to gather data over a longer period of time.

It is anticipated that any new data collection related to the following performance measures would begin in 2026.

Draft Performance Measures

Each of the performance measures included in the draft slate falls into one of four levels of data development:

1. Available - Data for these measures are currently available (but may require new analyses).
2. Within reach - Data development for these measures is feasible, often building on an existing process/effort.
3. With further design - Further research/ evaluation is needed to define (or refine) the ideas or concepts needed to operationalize these measures.
4. With investment - These measures will require internal and external collaboration to design and execute, most likely a new data development effort/workplan item.

The table below indicates the level of data development for each proposed measure in the "Data status" column.

The Commission should consider the mix of data development needed to fully realize the proposed measurement slate, as more involved activities (e.g., levels 3 and 4) may require additional staff time, budget or other resources.



Measure	Data Status	Source	Cross-Policy?
Section 2: System Plan Policy <i>Maintain a robust and current set of data, maps, plans, processes, and applications to support regional parks and trails planning.</i>			
Visits to Regional Parks and Trails	Available	Originally Proposed Measure	Yes
Park acreage and trail mileage	Available	Originally Proposed Measure	Yes
Estimated cost to complete the system (acquisition costs per acre/mile, development costs per acre/mile, % of total estimate allocated to search areas, cost of delays)	Available	Originally Proposed Measure	Yes
Amenity mapping across the system	With further design*	Agency Proposed	Yes

**Data availability is only assumed since this was an agency-proposed measure*

Measure	Data Status	Source	Cross-Policy?
Section 3: Natural Systems Policy <i>Identify lands with high-quality natural features and/or with high restoration potential that are desirable for Regional Parks and Trails System activities and put these lands in a protected status so they will be available for recreational uses and preservation purposes in perpetuity.</i>			
Park acreage and trail mileage	Available	Originally Proposed Measure	Yes
Improved water quality in regional parks and trails	Available	Originally Proposed Measure	No
Acres converted from another use to natural systems (e.g. restored, managed, or enhanced)	With further design*	Agency Proposed	No
Total amount of funding used for natural system protection & restoration	Within reach	Originally Proposed Measure	Yes

**Data availability is only assumed since this was an agency-proposed measure*

Highlighted item indicates opportunity for cross-Council division collaboration

Measure	Data Status	Source	Cross-Policy?
Section 4: Climate Resiliency Policy <i>Adapt and enhance the Regional Parks and Trails System to promote resilience to climate change, including the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions.</i>			
Park acreage and trail mileage	Available	Originally Proposed Measure	Yes
Metric tons of carbon sequestration per sq. km. for system acquisitions (actual or potential with restoration)	Available	Originally Proposed Measure	No
Metric tons of carbon stock per square kilometer for system acquisitions (actual or potential with restoration)	Available	Originally Proposed Measure	No
Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of system operations decrease	Within reach	Originally Proposed Measure	No
Monitor building energy use/CO2 emissions over time	With investment*	Agency Proposed	No
Number of electric vehicles per implementing agency	With further design*	Agency Proposed	No
Number of environmental education programs conducted	With further design*	Agency Proposed	No
Total amount of funding used for natural system protection or restoration	Within reach	Originally Proposed Measure	Yes

**Data availability is only assumed since this was an agency-proposed measure*



Measure	Data Status	Source	Cross-Policy?
Section 5: Planning Policy <i>Promote long-range planning and help provide integrated resource management across jurisdictions in order to create a seamless system that connects everyone to the outdoors.</i>			
Average age of all long-range plans	Within reach*	Agency Proposed	No
Measure of how planning process ensures equitable development (e.g. measuring engagement during Council & Agency planning efforts)	With investment*	Agency Proposed	No
Transit connections to Parks	With investment*	Agency Proposed	No

**Data availability is only assumed since this was an agency-proposed measure*

Highlighted items indicate Council opportunity for cross-divisional collaboration

Measure	Data Status	Source	Cross-Policy?
Section 6: System Protection Policy <i>Protect public investments in acquisition and development by assuring that every component in the system is able to fully carry out its designated role.</i>			
Acres negatively impacted by conversion and utilities (annual)	With further design*	Agency Proposed	No
Dollar amount dedicated to land restoration (or percent of land dedicated to natural areas vs. recreation)	With investment*	Agency Proposed	No

**Data availability is only assumed since this was an agency-proposed measure*



Measure	Data Status	Source	Cross-Policy?
Section 7: Recreation, Facilities, and Programming Policy <i>Foster a sense of belonging by providing a wide spectrum of leisure and play opportunities while connecting people, places, and the natural world.</i>			
The demographics of people involved in the regional parks and trails system more closely reflects that of the region	With investment	Originally Proposed Measure	No
Percent of Council active transportation funding going to develop/redevelop regional trail network	Within reach*	Agency Proposed	No
Equity programming (e.g. programming that focuses on specific equity groups)	Within reach*	Agency Proposed	No
Reduced inequities in visitation	Available	Originally Proposed Measure	No
Equity Grant Program builds Agencies' capacity to serve prioritized populations	Within reach	Originally Proposed Measure	Yes
Amenity mapping across the system	With investment*	Agency Proposed	Yes

**Data availability is only assumed since this was an agency-proposed measure*

Measure	Data Status	Source	Cross-Policy?
Policy 8: Finance Policy <i>The Met Council administers, provides financial oversight, and collaborates with a range of partners to fund the 10 regional park implementing agencies in support of the Regional Parks and Trails System.</i>			
Equity Grant Program builds Agencies' capacity to serve prioritized populations	Within reach	Originally Proposed Measure	Yes
Total amount of funding used for natural system protection & restoration	Within reach	Originally Proposed Measure	Yes
Annual funding gap in capital and maintenance/operations	Within reach*	Agency Proposed	No
Capital improvement (balance in use of funds, balance of funding sources, shortfalls in funding, what uses do shortfalls impact)	Available	Originally Proposed Measure	No

**Data availability is only assumed since this was an agency-proposed measure*

