

# Information Item

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Meeting Date: October 2, 2025

## Topic

Proposed Slate of Outcomes Measures for the Regional Parks and Trails System

<b>District(s), Member(s):</b>	All
<b>Policy/Legal Reference:</b>	2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan
<b>Staff Prepared/Presented:</b>	Colin Kelly, Planning Analyst (651-602-1361) Kevin Phan, Planner (651-602-1333)
<b>Division/Department:</b>	Community Development / Regional Parks and Trails

## Proposed Action

Information item; no action is proposed at this time.

## Background

The Met Council is nearing important milestones in its work developing an outcomes measurement program for the Council's Regional Development Guide, Imagine 2050. This measurement program will keep the Council accountable in its implementation of Imagine 2050 and track progress in all regional goals and policy areas, including Land Use, Transportation, Housing, Water, and Regional Parks and Trails.

At the Metropolitan Council's October 22, 2025, meeting, on behalf of all policy areas, Council Research (CD-Research) staff will release for public comment the Imagine 2050 Outcomes Measurement Program amendment. The public comment period is planned for October 23 through December 22, 2025, with a public hearing date of December 10, 2025.

The public comment process follows significant engagement between CD-Research, Council policy area liaisons, Regional Park Implementing Agencies, and many other key stakeholders including the Metropolitan Council, Committee of the Whole, Community Development committee, Environment Committee, and Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission (MPOSC).

At the October 2, 2025, MPOSC meeting, Council Parks and Trails staff will present the slate of outcomes measures that are planned to be released for public comment later this month. Staff will also outline the anticipated timeline of the Imagine 2050 amendment process. Council staff are seeking any final advice or suggestions from the Commission ahead of the upcoming public comment process.

This slate of outcome measures for the Regional Parks and Trails System has been refined through iterative discussions with multiple stakeholders and partners. Key milestones are highlighted below.

Proposed measures are intended to span the seven policies outlined in the 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan. Measures were also selected based on feasibility of implementation and the Council's ability to regularly track these measures.

In the fall of 2024, Council staff shared a proposed measurement slate for the Regional Parks and

Trails System. 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 Council policy team had the responsibility to put forward a meaningful measurement slate that is informed by the input of key stakeholders and partners.

At the [July 1, 2025](#), and [September 4, 2025](#), MPOSC meetings, Council Parks and Trails staff shared progressive iterations of the draft slate of measures for the Regional Parks and Trails System. Commissioners provided feedback on the draft slate and helped further refine the slate of measures.

Council staff engaged Regional Park Implementing Agencies on outcomes measures at both the July 17, 2025, and August 21, 2025, partner meetings. Highlights of the August 21 partner meeting include strong support for the cross-policy measures of annual visitation counts and park acreage and trail mileage data collection. For other measures, there was recognition that additional conversation and data development is needed.

Concurrently with Council Parks and Trails-led engagement with MPOSC and Regional Park Implementing Agencies, CD-Research staff has been engaging other Council committees and stakeholders to gather feedback on the Imagine 2050 Outcomes Measurement Program. On [September 15, 2025](#), CD-Research presented proposed measures for the Land Use, Housing, and Parks and Trails policy areas to the Community Development Committee. The proposed measurement slate for Regional Parks and Trails System, including definitions of Regional Indicators and Regional and Met Council measures, is below.

The proposed measures are intended to have a lifespan of at least 10 years, ideally 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 would begin in 2026.

## Proposed Parks and Trails System Outcome Measures for Imagine 2050

### Regional Indicators

These measures describe high-level trends about the Twin Cities metro or region. Regional indicators can provide context on whether—and to what extent—our region's trends are similar to other places and offer a sense of scale and persistence. These measures reflect the impacts of intersecting “macro” systems and require collective and sustained action to counter or advance. For that reason, it may be difficult to understand what drives change in regional indicator trends without additional analysis or data.

Regional Indicators	Policies*							Relates to another policy area	Included in regional goal measure
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Estimated visits to Regional Parks and Trails System per capita.	X					X			X
Number of lakes in the Regional Parks and Trails System delisted from the impaired waters list.		X						X	
Travelsheds by transportation mode to parks and trails.				X				X	
Annual funding gap for operations and maintenance.							X		

\*The seven policies referenced in this table correspond to the seven policies included in the Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan and described below.

## Regional and Met Council Measures

- **Regional Measures:** These measures describe how Met Council's local partners advance Imagine 2050 goals, objectives, and policies. They may capture work among local governments, regional parks implementing agencies, community organizations, or other organizations or agencies within the region. Regional measures acknowledge that the regional values, visions, and goals described in Imagine 2050 cannot be achieved alone. These measures are often derived from primary data collection efforts led by Met Council, through surveys, plan reviews, and other research methods. The development of these data, as well as their findings, further our understanding of systems change within the region.
- **Met Council Measures:** As a large organization with a diverse portfolio of work and roles within the region, Met Council measures highlight how our own grant and investment programs, services and operations, engagement practices, convening and coordinating of partners - among other actions - advance the regional goals and policy direction established in Imagine 2050. Incorporating Met Council measures in the Imagine 2050 Outcomes Measurement Program not only facilitates internal alignment and a clearer communication of our role, but it also demonstrates how the Met Council leads by example.

## Cross-Policy measure(s):

- **Net change in park acreage and trail mileage in the regional system.** (Regional measure; speaks to all policies)

## Policy 1: System Plan

Maintain a robust and current set of data, maps, plans, processes, and applications to support regional parks and trails planning.

### *Proposed measures:*

- No additional regional measures or Met Council measures identified.

## Policy 2: Natural Systems

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.

### *Proposed Measures:*

- Number of water bodies out of total water bodies in the Regional Parks and Trails System that are regularly monitored for water quality. (Regional measure)
- Miles of natural and protected shoreline in the Regional Parks and Trails System out of total shoreline miles in the region. (Regional measure)

## Policy 3: Climate Resilience

Adapt and enhance the Regional Parks and Trails System to promote resilience to climate change, including the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions.

### *Proposed Measures:*

- Metric tons of carbon sequestration in the Regional Parks and Trails System (per square km) compared to other regional land uses. (Regional measure)

## Policy 4: Planning

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.



### ***Proposed Measures:***

- No additional regional measures or Met Council measures identified.

## **Policy 5: System Protection**

Protect public investments in acquisition and development by assuring that every component in the system is able to fully carry out its designated role.

### ***Proposed Measures:***

- No additional regional measures or Met Council measures identified.

## **Policy 6: Recreation, Facilities, and Programming**

Foster a sense of belonging by providing a wide spectrum of leisure and play opportunities while connecting people, places, and the natural world.

### ***Proposed Measures:***

- Inequities in regional parks and trail visitation, by age, race/ethnicity, gender, and income level. (Regional measure)
- Demographics of Implementing Agency staff and volunteers more closely reflect that of the region (Regional measure)
- Number of regional trail miles funded by Active Transportation grants. (Met Council measure)

## **Policy 7: Finance**

The Met Council administers, provides financial oversight, and collaborates with a range of partners to fund the ten regional park implementing agencies in support of the Regional Parks and Trails System.

### ***Proposed Measures:***

No additional regional measures or Met Council measures identified.

## **Rationale**

The 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan committed the Metropolitan Council to create a small set of measures at the policy level to measure progress toward 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 outcomes measures for Imagine 2050.

## **Imagine Lens Analysis**

The development of outcomes 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 outcomes ensures that residents and stakeholders see progress on important metrics and demonstrates effective use of funding.

Outcomes measures can also help to illustrate the many benefits of the Regional Parks and Trails System. These measures are critical for communicating the value of the system to others.

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 outcomes of the Regional Parks and Trails System.