

# Information Item

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Meeting Date: September 4, 2025

## Topic

Revised Slate of Outcomes 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)  
Kevin Phan, Planner (651-602-1333)  
**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 creating a targeted 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 a small set of outcomes measures.

## 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.

## Background

The Met Council continues its work on creating 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 for all policy areas.

At the September 4, 2025, Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission (MPOSC) meeting, Council Parks staff will provide an update on the process, including recent engagement with regional park implementing agencies, revisions to the slate of measures based on recent feedback, and next steps in the Imagine 2050 amendment process. The draft outcomes

measurement slate follows a proposal from Met Council Research staff and discussion with regional park implementing agencies in late 2024. The measurement slate has since been revised based on engagement with MPOSC and regional park implementing agencies, and by assessing the feasibility of certain measures.

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.

At the July 1, 2025, MPOSC meeting, Met Council Parks staff shared a draft slate of outcomes 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 and August 21 partner meetings. The draft outcomes measurement slate outlined in this information item mirrors the draft slate discussed with regional park implementing agency staff on August 21. A few highlights from the August 21 partner meeting include a shared commitment to the cross-policy measures of annual visitation counts and park acreage and trail mileage data collection. There was recognition that additional conversation and data development was needed, and these conversations will continue into the future. Council staff plan to update the draft slate as a result of the feedback provided by regional park implementing agencies and MPOSC in August and September.

Later this year, Met Council Research staff will put forward a slate of measures that reaches across Met Council's systems and policy areas, to include measures for the Regional Parks and Trails System. The adoption of the measures will result in an amendment to Imagine 2050.

These 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 related to the following measures would begin in 2026.

## Revised Outcomes Measures

The tables on the following pages represent a revised slate of Regional Parks and Trails System measures proposed to track the Council's implementation of priorities in Imagine 2050. The graphic below orients readers to key elements of the structure of the tables. One component of the table is the "Data Status", which assesses how easily a certain measure can be implemented based on four different categories. The first one is "Available", which indicates that the data required is currently available, but may require new analyses. Next, is "Within reach", which means that the data for these measures are feasible and could be added onto existing processes. The third category is "With further design", which requires additional research and evaluation to define ideas or concepts needed to operationalize a measure. Lastly, measures that are categorized as "With investment" require internal and external collaboration to design and execute. These efforts will often require a data development effort/workplan item.



## Outcomes Measures Table Orientation

Measure	Data Status	Source	Notes
Percent of Long-Range Plans that are 0-5, 6-10, 10-15, 20+ years old	Within reach*	Agency Proposed	Changed from average age of all LRPs
Possible addition/Further discussion			
Average travelshed to parks and trails decreases for overburdened communities	Within reach	Parks and Trails GIS; overburdened communities as defined by EJ section of equity chapter; travelshed calculation by MTS	

Outcome Measure Description

Indicates Modified Metric

Anticipated Level of Data Development

Specific Data Source (if possible)

Metrics that had questions or mixed reception

Green Cells Indicate New Addition

Additional Notes and Details

## Cross-Policy Measures

These measures are present in multiple policies, and their associated policies will be listed on the right-hand column of the table

Measure	Data Status	Source	Associated Policies	Notes
Visits to Regional Parks and Trails	Available	Council annual park and trail use estimates	2 – System Plan 7 – Recreation, Facilities, and Programming	Section 7 measure would compare with demographics of the region to assess reduced inequity
Park acreage and trail mileage	Available	Council annual GIS dataset	All	

### Policy 3: Natural Systems Policy

Measure	Data Status	Source	Notes
Improved water quality in regional parks and trails	Available	Priority Waters List (Healthy Habitat Scores?)	Opportunity to collaborate with Environmental Services
<b>Possible additions/Further discussion</b>			
Percent spent on natural systems*	Available	Originally Proposed Measure	Consider focus on Legacy and ENRTF sources or view this measure qualitatively

\* Highlighted text represents a modification to an existing measure

### Policy 4: Climate Resilience Policy

Measure	Data Status	Source	Notes
Metric tons of carbon sequestration per sq. kilometer compared to other regional land uses	Available	Council analysis based on USGS data	
<b>Possible additions/Further discussion</b>			
Percent increase in tree canopy (within compatible land cover)	Within Reach+	Agency Proposed	NEW addition. Could also be a dual measure for Natural Systems

Green fill represents newly added/proposed metrics

The plus (+) denotes an assumption of data availability; this was an agency-proposed measure

## Policy 5: Planning Policy

Measure	Data Status	Source	Notes
Percent of Long-Range Plans that are 0-5, 6-10, 11-19, 20+ years old*	Within reach <sup>+</sup>	Agency Proposed	Changed from average age of all LRPs
<b>Possible additions/Further discussion</b>			
Average travelshed to parks and trails decreases for overburdened communities	Within reach	Parks and Trails GIS; overburdened communities as defined by EJ section of equity chapter; travelshed calculation by MTS	NEW addition.
Share of the system's ADA accessibility	With further design	Grant/funding records, long-range plans, programs	NEW addition. Opportunity to focus on qualitative measures

\* Highlighted text represents a modification to an existing measure

The plus (+) denotes an assumption of data availability; this was an agency-proposed measure

Green fill represents newly added/proposed metrics

## Policy 6: System Protection Policy

Measure	Data Status	Source	Notes
<b>Possible additions/Further discussion</b>			
Exploring collaboration with Local Planning Assistance for a joint measure related to local comprehensive planning action <sup>^</sup>	TBD	TBD	NEW addition.
Percent of land dedicated to natural resources vs. recreation amenities	With further design <sup>+</sup>	Agency Proposed	NEW addition.

Green fill represents newly added/proposed metrics

The plus (+) denotes an assumption of data availability; this was an agency-proposed measure

<sup>^</sup> Not a proposal for a measure, but acts as a placeholder for a future measure

## Policy 7: Recreation, Facilities, and Programming Policy

Measure	Data Status	Source	Notes
The demographics of people involved in the regional parks and trails system more closely reflects that of the region	With investment	Originally Proposed Measure	“People involved” means paid staff, volunteers, and partnerships with key organizations
Additional miles of regional trails funded with Active Transportation grants*	Within reach <sup>+</sup>	Agency Proposed	Modified “percent of Council Active Transportation funding going to develop RT network” measure

\* Highlighted text represents a modification to an existing measure

The plus (+) denotes an assumption of data availability; this was an agency-proposed measure

## Policy 8: Finance Policy

Measure	Data Status	Source	Notes
Annual funding gap for operations & maintenance (O&M Funding)*	Within reach <sup>+</sup>	Agency Proposed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teased apart capital and O&amp;M</li> <li>Potentially add qualitative narrative discussing impact of shortfalls</li> </ul>
<b>Possible additions/Future discussion</b>			
Annual funding by source (local, regional, state)*	Within reach <sup>+</sup>	Agency Proposed	Was formerly “Capital improvement” measure
Equity Grant Program builds Agencies’ capacity to serve marginalized populations	Within reach	Future grantee reporting from EGP	

The plus (+) denotes an assumption of data availability; this was an agency-proposed measure

\* Highlighted text represents a modification to an existing measure