

2026 Work Planning: Met Council Regional Parks and Trails Team

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission meeting

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

March 5, 2026

2025 Work Plan for the 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan, part 1

Accountability and Research

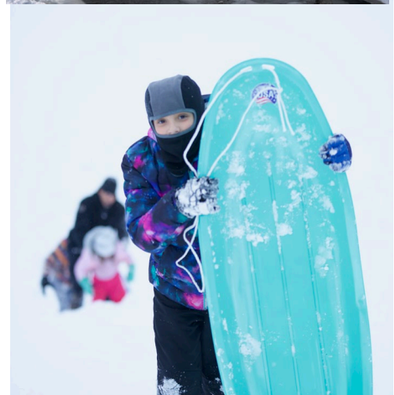
1. Develop a process to create a small set of performance measures at the Policy level to measure progress toward our key Regional Parks and Trails System priorities.
2. Implement the 2025 Regional Parks and Trails System Visitor Study.
3. Explore expanding cost-effective research approaches, including forecasting tools, that provide implementing agencies with the management information at the park and trail unit level.

Protection and Restoration

4. Explore establishment of a Special Feature – Historical Landscape subclassification.
5. Explore the establishment of a Special Features – Open Space/Natural Systems subclassification in consultation with the Council's Natural Systems workgroup. This effort includes renewal of the Regionally Significant Ecological Area dataset.
6. Reconvene Climate and Natural Systems Workgroup to discuss implementation steps for Climate Resilience Policy and Actions.







2025 Work Plan for the 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan, part 2



Culture

7. Develop a cultural resources inventory requirement for long-range planning in partnership with key stakeholders.
8. Continue to develop and refine the Cultural Landscape Classification, in coordination with American Indian Tribes, other cultural communities, and regional park implementing agencies.
9. Develop an inventory of and guidelines for harvestable fruits, mushrooms, and other plants in partnership with regional park implementing agencies, American Indian groups, and other partners and interested stakeholders.
10. As part of a broader Council effort, develop a training program and learning opportunities for Council and regional park implementing agency staff to explore indigenous land management practices and other related topics.

Trails

11. Continue to convene a trail coordination workgroup, supporting the development of a more coordinated, integrated, and connected regional trails system and Regional Bicycle Transportation Network.
12. Create regional guidelines for e-bike use on regional trails.

2025 Work Plan for the 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan, part 3

Trails *continued*

13. Explore systemwide wayfinding and signage minimum requirements. Create regional guidelines for e-bike use on regional trails.

Finance

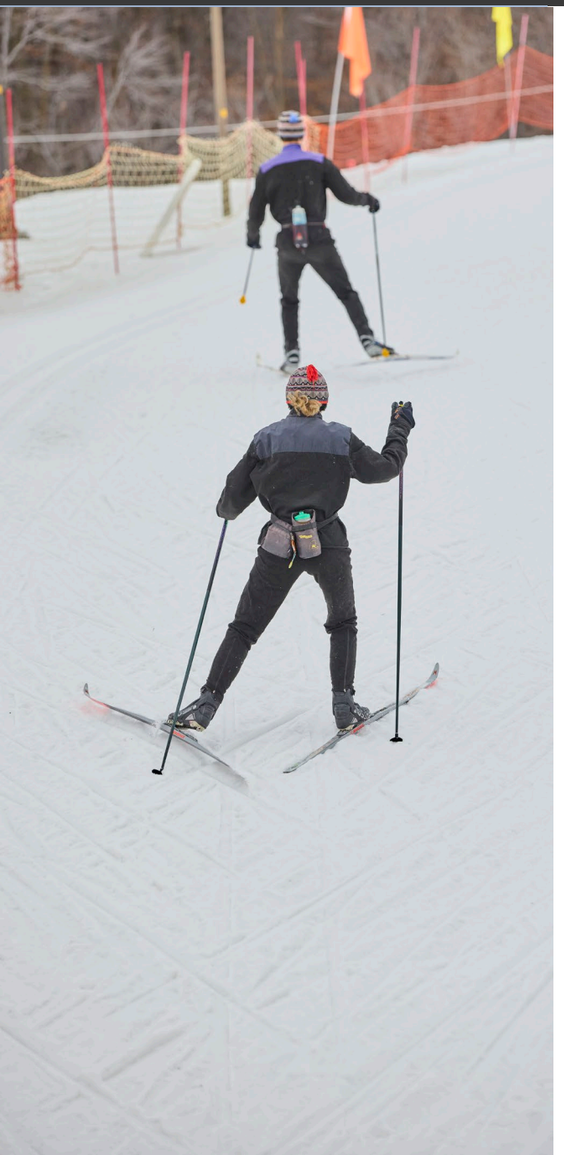
14. Explore scoping and development of a systemwide Asset Preservation Plan, or similar.
15. Continue to pursue Pay-Go for greater flexibility to fund a wider range of activities, facilities, and programs. Pay-Go would provide an additional tool for funding the regional system.
16. Explore changing/reducing the local match requirement for the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Program, as state rules allow.
17. Continue discussion of strategic funding for the Regional Parks and Trails System, with a goal to better meet the needs of this growing system.







Draft 2026 Council Parks and Trails Team Work Plan, part 1



Department Management

- Oversee and support the Metropolitan Parks Act
- ★ Oversee Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan Implementation
- Collaboration Among Partners, including support for Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission, Regional Park Implementing Agencies, and Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee
- ★ 2026 Legislative Coordination

Ambassador and Art+Policy

- ★ **Regional Parks and Trails System Map update**
- **Minnesota Parks Artist in Residence program (MNPAiR) 2.0**
- Convene Outreach coordination group
- ★ Imagine 2050 Impact Report: Art+Policy
- Adventure Guide update
- Water Party 2.0
- Land Acknowledgement Art with American Indian Advisory Council
- Metro Transit Art Partnership, including bus stop project
- Washington County Art Project

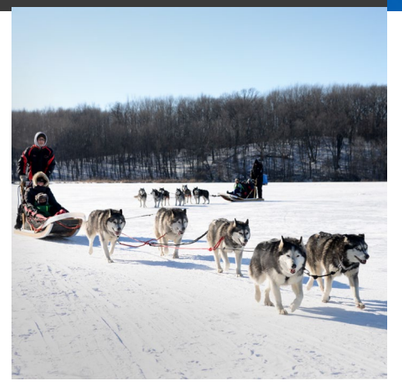
Draft 2026 Council Parks and Trails Team Work Plan, part 2

Finance

- **Regional Park and Trail grant reviews (Parks and Trails Legacy, Bonding)**
- **Regional Parks Operations and Maintenance Allocations**
- Continue Strategic Funding discussion with Council leadership and Implementing Agencies
- ★ Coordinate, implement Equity Grant Program for 2026-27
- Ongoing Programs – maintain and build support for:
  - Parks Acquisition Opportunity Fund
  - Parks and Trails Legacy Fund
  - Operations and Maintenance Program
  - Bonding
  - Equity Grant Program
  - Modernization Program
  - Tree Planting

Planning

- **Regional Park and Trail Long-Range Plan, Plan Amendment reviews**
- **Annual report on administrative review of long-range plan amendments**
- **System additions process scoping**
- Review comp plan amendments, EAWs, EISs, and AUARs
- Modernizing Mapping project – Annual update and on-board new staff
- ★ Continue convening Climate and Natural Systems and Trail System Coordination workgroups.
- ★ Continue implementing American Indian Advisory Council commitments and related work.
- Continue developing Cultural Landscape subclassification.





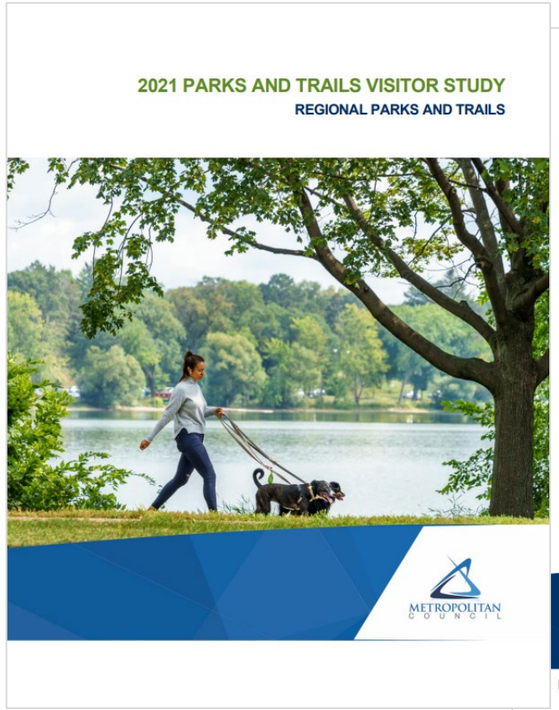


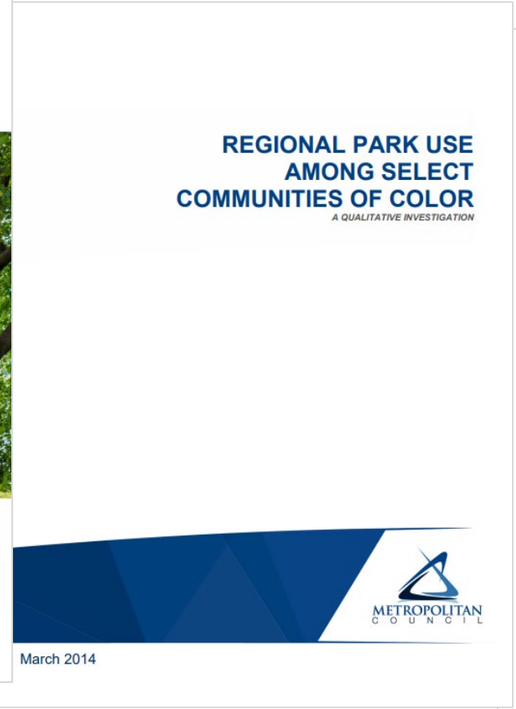
Draft 2026 Council Parks and Trails Team Work Plan, part 3

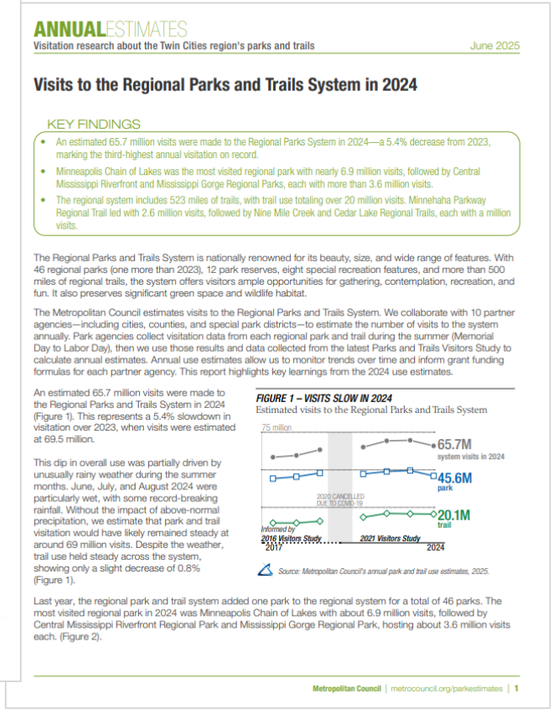


Research

- **2026 Regional Parks Visitor Study**
- **Update communities of color in regional parks research**
- Coordinate, prepare, and share regional park and trail use estimates.







Questions, Discussion

- Which work plan items are you most excited about?
- Are there other items we should consider adding to the Regional Parks and Trails Team’s 2026 work plan?
- Which items do you see as the highest priorities?





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