

STAFF REPORT FOR WORK SESSION

STAFF UPDATE TO COUNCIL ON THE REGIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM PLAN MAP AND THE REGIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM OF THE 2019 PARKS AND NATURE BOND MEASURE

Date: June 17, 2026

Department: Parks and Nature

Meeting Date: July 7, 2026

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Presenters: Jon Blasher, Parks and Nature Director; Robert Spurlock, Principal Regional Planner

Length: 30 minutes

ISSUE STATEMENT

This work session provides Council with a status report on the implementation of the regional trails program, including ongoing work to update the Regional Trails System Plan (RTSP) map. The status report focuses on investments funded through the 2019 Parks and Nature Bond Measure as well as progress made in coordination with local and regional partners.

ACTION REQUESTED

Staff request Council feedback on the overall direction of the RTSP map update, including modifications to the screening criteria for determining trails of regional significance. Staff also seek input on proposed adjustments to bond funding distributions to support timely project delivery. Key upcoming milestones include release of a draft RTSP map for stakeholder review in August 2026, award of additional construction funding to local partners in fall 2026, and presentation of a final RTSP map and adoption resolution in January 2027.

IDENTIFIED POLICY OUTCOMES

This work advances Council direction to maintain and expand a regionally significant trails system that improves connectivity across the metropolitan area. It also supports the effective and timely use of voter-approved bond funds while continuing to strengthen partnerships with local jurisdictions responsible for trail planning, development, and maintenance.

POLICY QUESTIONS

Key policy considerations for Council include how to prioritize updates to the RTSP map to reflect current regional needs, whether adjustments to bond funding allocations are appropriate to accelerate implementation, and what strategies should be emphasized to ensure timely completion of regionally significant trail projects.

POLICY OPTIONS FOR COUNCIL TO CONSIDER

Council may consider supporting the staff proposal to redistribute a portion of bond funds to locally led construction projects that are ready to advance, which would accelerate delivery but reduce funding available for future right-of-way acquisition. Alternatively, Council may support maintaining the original fund distribution, preserving long-term acquisition capacity but potentially slowing project delivery and expenditure of bond resources.

Similarly, Council may support the proposed modifications to the criteria for determining regionally significant trails. Or Council may support preserving the criteria in their previous version.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommend proceeding with the proposed redistribution strategy to align available funding with near-term project readiness and to ensure that bond funds are expended efficiently while advancing regionally significant trail investments.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT & FRAMING COUNCIL DISCUSSION

This effort implements Metro's Regional Framework Plan and aligns with the Regional Transportation Plan by supporting development of a coordinated regional trails network. The RTSP map, first adopted in 1992 and most recently updated in 2023, is a foundational element of this work. The current update reflects extensive engagement with partners, including 19 coordination meetings with 32 agencies and review of more than 100 proposed map changes.

While the 2019 bond trails program has made steady progress, challenges related to right-of-way acquisition and market conditions have slowed some elements of implementation. The proposed funding adjustments are intended to address these challenges and align resources with projects that can advance in the near term. All activities are consistent with existing budget allocations within the Parks and Nature Department.

BACKGROUND

Metro's Regional Framework Plan establishes policy direction for the development, management, and protection of a regional trails system. Through the RTSP, Metro coordinates with local governments to identify and implement priority trail corridors that

serve regional mobility, recreation, and conservation objectives. The 2019 Parks and Nature Bond Measure provides significant funding to implement this system through grants, planning, construction, and property acquisition. Since passage of the bond, Metro and its partners have advanced multiple projects and continue to refine the regional system through this five-year update to the RTSP. The current update and accompanying program adjustments are intended to build on this progress and ensure that investments are delivered in a timely and effective manner.

ATTACHMENTS

Materials associated with this work session include the 2023 RTSP map. This is an informational item and does not require legislation at this time.

- Is legislation required for Council action? No
- If yes, is draft legislation attached? N/A
- What other materials are you presenting today? Powerpoint presentation