

MPAC Worksheet

Agenda Item Title: Regional Parks and Nature Bond: Potential Framework

Presenter: Jon Blasher or Brian Kennedy, Metro Parks and Nature

Contact for this worksheet/presentation: Craig Beebe, craig.beebe@oregonmetro.gov

Purpose/Objective

Provide an update on framework of potential bond measure to fund continued investments by Metro and partners in water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, parks and natural areas.

Action Requested/Outcome

Questions and advice regarding bond framework and next steps toward Metro Council action.

What has changed since MPAC last considered this issue/item?

Along with affordable housing and a safe, reliable transportation system, parks and nature are critical to the promise of livability Metro seeks to deliver to the region's residents – for which voters have affirmed their support through two parks and nature bonds, two levies and, most recently, the regional affordable housing bond measure.

With voters' support, Metro now manages more than 17,000 acres of parks, trails and natural areas across greater Portland, including beloved parks like Oxbow and Blue Lake, as well as lesser-known but nonetheless significant natural areas that help protect vital habitat, prevent floods and improve water quality. Metro has also provided millions of dollars to local partners to protect and maintain parks and natural areas and to provide new access for people from across the region to access nature close to home. Together, Metro and partners have made greater Portland healthier, more resilient and more prosperous.

Although much has been accomplished, there is more to do. People need places to relax and enjoy beautiful natural areas, parks and trails that are close to home and accessible to all, regardless of race, ethnicity or income. As more people come to the Portland region, it's more important than ever to protect natural areas for wildlife and people alike, especially children, people of color and families with lower incomes. And as climate change puts our communities and natural areas at risk, investing in parks and natural areas can help reduce carbon pollution, improve air quality, protect important habitat, and limit harm from flooding and extreme weather.

The region's voters last considered and approved a parks and nature bond in 2006. At the Metro Council's direction in late 2017, staff initiated a work plan to engage partners and the community in developing a potential measure that would continue our bond authority, build on existing momentum and advance new priorities. Considering regional policy and the priorities of partners and the communities, the Metro Council directed that future bond investments must advance racial equity and help make communities more resilient to climate change.

As with previous investment measures, community and partner input is playing an important role in shaping what's next. At MPAC on July 25, 2018, Metro staff presented plans for engagement with partners and the community to inform the creation of a potential bond framework, and received MPAC's feedback on priorities and issues to explore in the work.

In fall 2018, the Metro Chief Operating Officer convened a Stakeholder Table to advise staff on the development of a bond framework, and Metro staff conducted focused engagement with many key stakeholders and partners including local park providers, the Indigenous community, conservation

advocates, communities of color, and the working lands community. Staff presented the results of this engagement and Stakeholder Table process to MPAC on Nov. 14, 2018.

Through work sessions in January and February 2019, the Metro Council directed that the potential natural areas bond measure deliver the following outcomes:

- Inclusive engagement, transparency and accountability.
- Advance racial equity through bond investments.
- Protect clean water for people, fish and wildlife.
- Protect and restore culturally significant plant communities.
- Protect, connect and improve habitat for native fish and wildlife.
- Take care of what we have.
- Make parks and natural areas more accessible and inclusive.
- Connect more people to the land and rivers of our region.
- Build trails for biking and walking.
- Support community-led parks and nature projects.

The Metro Council directed that the potential bond measure renew current property tax rates at existing levels, creating a total potential investment of 400 to 450 million dollars.

The Metro Council also directed staff to further refine six program areas for capital investment, with potential allocation ranges as follows:

- Protecting and restoring natural areas and habitat: \$130-140 million
- Taking care of and completing visions for Metro parks: \$100-105 million
- Supporting local parks and nature projects: \$65-70 million
- Awarding Nature in Neighborhood capital grants to community projects: \$25-30 million
- Creating trails for walking and biking: \$40-55 million
- Advancing large-scale community visions that increase access to nature: \$40-50 million

Each program area will include criteria to advance racial equity and improve climate resiliency.

Through April, Metro will begin a broad phase of engagement with partners, the Stakeholder Table and the public to refine investment priorities, programs and processes that could be included in a final bond package. On April 10, staff will present draft priorities and programs to MPAC and receive feedback to help shape this final package.

The Metro Council is expected to review the results of this engagement and consider whether to refer the bond measure to voters in late May.

What packet material do you plan to include?

None