

## UPDATE AND NEXT STEPS FOR 2019 PARKS AND NATURE BOND REFINEMENT AND BOND EVALUATION OUTCOMES PROJECT

---

Date: September 16, 2021  
Department: Parks and Nature  
Meeting Date: October 12, 2021

Prepared by: Beth Cohen  
Presenters: Jon Blasher, MG Devereux,  
Steve Patty, Dialogues in Action

---

### **ISSUE STATEMENT**

On November 5, 2019, Greater Portland voters overwhelmingly approved a \$475 million Metro parks and nature bond measure.

The bond refinement process involves turning the bond language into programs ready to invest in the region's parks, trails and natural areas. Since bond refinement launched in 2020 in the midst of the global pandemic, staff and partners have launched the local share program, prioritized scoping and design for priority health, safety and accessibility improvements at Metro parks and established an independent oversight committee. At the October 5 work session, Parks and Nature staff will provide an update on the status of bond refinement and preview upcoming decision points for the Metro Council.

As part of bond refinement, the Metro Council has also directed staff to build tools that evaluate the progress of work in meeting the bond's desired outcomes. At the October 5 work session, Parks and Nature staff will share for Council's consideration and direction an initial framework to evaluate impact for the 2019 parks and nature bond.

### **ACTION REQUESTED**

Provide feedback and ask questions on the bond refinement timeline and upcoming Council touch points. Affirm and provide initial direction on the bond evaluation outcomes project so the work of finalizing an impact framework can continue this fall.

### **IDENTIFIED POLICY OUTCOMES**

The Metro Council articulated three criteria to guide bond expenditures: racial equity, climate resilience and community engagement. Each of the six program areas is required to demonstrate how projects satisfy the community engagement and racial equity criteria. Additionally, each project funded by the bond must demonstrate how it has satisfied at least one of the climate resilience criterion.

The bond evaluation outcomes project will develop an impact framework to provide a foundation for evaluation of whether the bond implementation actions are meeting the Council's intended outcomes captured in the bond resolution. The first phase of this

process involves fleshing out the existing bond language around desired outcomes that each program area would be responsible for showing progress toward.

Pending the Metro Council's approval of this framework, future phases of this project will focus on prioritizing metrics for evaluating progress for each bond program area.

## **POLICY QUESTION(S)**

How does the information provided on bond refinement and anticipated milestones for Council direction align with Council's expectations? What is missing?

How does the approach to developing a framework to evaluate bond impact align with the Metro Council's expectations? What is missing or needs to be adjusted?

## **STRATEGIC CONTEXT & FRAMING COUNCIL DISCUSSION**

*Centering bond criteria during bond refinement*—Voters chose to focus the bond so it would prioritize projects and needs identified by people of color, Indigenous people, people with varying abilities and other groups who have not been served equitably by past investments. Bond refinement is designed to uphold this value by meaningfully engaging with these communities early and often and conducting meaningful community engagement in ways that actually shape these processes and programs. Previous bond measures in 1995 and 2006 also went through similarly involved refinement processes.

The bond evaluation outcomes work is built on the bond criteria and principles, which reflect community feedback collected during the bond development process. In addition, staff are planning to share the eventual evaluation impact framework and discuss potential metrics with community partners including, but not limited, to the Natural Areas and Capital Program Performance Oversight Committee.

*Alignment with agency-wide goals and initiatives*—Parks and Nature staff continue to collaborate with the Regional Investment Strategy and other agency initiatives to ensure agency priorities are advanced through bond refinement. The parks and nature bond is implementing a 20 percent COBID utilization floor across the bond, matching established goals in the 2018 housing bond. Similarly, the bond funded capital projects will implement Metro's adopted Construction Career Pathways framework. Both COBID utilization and Construction Careers further Metro's racial equity goals. In addition, the bond evaluation outcomes project can align with and help inform the agency-wide impact evaluation effort.

*Building shared outcomes across Parks and Nature investment measures*—Metro's Parks and Nature department reports annually to the Metro Council and the public on voter approved investments in the regions' parks, trails and natural areas. The bond evaluation outcomes project leverages this existing experience within the department by allowing for more coordinated reporting across the bond and the parks and nature local option levy.

*Looking ahead to metrics identification and data collection*—The bond evaluation framework is designed to delineate connections between community-wide outcomes and the activities within Metro’s own sphere of control that can be measured. While the impact framework will articulate primary and indirect impacts, staff may only be able to measure the primary impacts of the work, not the broadest population outcomes.

In addition, the next phase of the evaluation outcomes project will involve prioritizing metrics for data collection, which may prompt discussions about cost and feasibility for a range of data collection tools. At the October 5 work session, staff will provide an illustrative list of potential metrics to demonstrate how impacts could be measured and continue to seek direction from the Metro Council on metrics to prioritize into next year.

## **BACKGROUND**

In early 2020, Parks and Nature staff presented a work plan for refinement of the six programs in the bond—local share, take care of Metro parks, protect and restore land, walking and biking trails, capital grants and large scale community visions.

Since then, the local share program is ready to support priority projects in communities across the region and Metro staff are advancing essential infrastructure investments at Metro parks through the take care of Metro parks program. Parks and Nature staff have been building to fall engagements on priorities for acquiring land and filling in gaps in the regional trail network, which will be finalized by Council approval in early 2022. Following Council direction to be efficient with bond funds, up to \$20 million in grants for trails will be allocated in 2022 through the Regional Flexible Funds allocation process. Finally, Parks and Nature staff are working on initial allocation phases of the capital grants and large scale community visions programs to share for Council direction this fall.

Parks and Nature staff continue to provide regular updates on the bond refinement work to the Metro Council through the bond refinement Council liaisons and to the public through bond refinement newsletters and other updates. At the October 5 work session, Parks and Nature staff will highlight upcoming points for Council direction this fall and winter.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

[For work session:]

- Is legislation required for Council action? ☐ Yes   x ☐ No
- If yes, is draft legislation attached? ☐ Yes   ☐ No
- What other materials are you presenting today?