



# Dakota County

## Physical Development Committee of the Whole

### Agenda

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Tuesday, January 13, 2026

9:00 AM

Conference Room 3A, Administration Center, Hastings

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If you wish to speak to an agenda item or an item not on the agenda, please notify the Clerk to the Board via email at [CountyAdmin@co.dakota.mn.us](mailto:CountyAdmin@co.dakota.mn.us). Commissioners may participate in the meeting by interactive technology.

#### 1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Note: Any action taken by this Committee of the Whole constitutes a recommendation to the County Board.

#### 2. Audience

Anyone in the audience wishing to address the Committee on an item not on the Agenda or an item on the Consent Agenda may send comments to [CountyAdmin@co.dakota.mn.us](mailto:CountyAdmin@co.dakota.mn.us) and instructions will be given to participate during the meeting. Verbal comments are limited to five minutes.

#### 3. Approval of Agenda (Additions/Corrections/Deletions)

##### 3.1 Approval of Agenda (Additions/Corrections/Deletions)

#### 4. Consent Agenda

##### 4.1 Approval Of Minutes Of Meeting Held On December 2, 2025

##### 4.2 *Physical Development Administration - Approval Of Joint Powers Agreements With Cities And Delegation Of Authority For Contracting And Right Of Way Acquisition To Accomplish 2026 Transportation, Parks, and Facilities Capital Improvement Projects*

#### 5. Regular Agenda

##### 5.1 *Transportation - Discussion On Regional Solicitation For Metropolitan Council Transportation Advisory Board*

##### 5.2 *Parks - Review Draft Objectives And Strategies For Parks Natural Systems Plan*

#### 6. Physical Development Director's Report

**7. Future Agenda Items**

**8. Adjournment**

**8.1 Adjournment**

**For more information please call 952-891-7000.**

**Physical Development agendas are available online at**

**<https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/Government/BoardMeetings/Pages/default.aspx>**

**Public Comment can be sent to [CountyAdmin@co.dakota.mn.us](mailto:CountyAdmin@co.dakota.mn.us)**



# Physical Development Committee of the Whole

## Request for Board Action

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**Item Number:** DC-5156

**Agenda #:** 3.1

**Meeting Date:** 1/13/2026

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Approval of Agenda (Additions/Corrections/Deletions)



# Physical Development Committee of the Whole

## Request for Board Action

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**Item Number:** DC-5157

**Agenda #:** 4.1

**Meeting Date:** 1/13/2026

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Approval Of Minutes Of Meeting Held On December 2, 2025



# Dakota County

## Physical Development Committee of the Whole

### Minutes

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Tuesday, December 2, 2025

1:00 PM

Conference Room 3A, Administration  
Center, Hastings

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#### 1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Due to Commissioner Holberg's absence, Commissioner Slavik chaired the meeting.

The meeting was called to order at 1:01 p.m. by Commissioner Slavik.

<b>Present</b>	Commissioner Mike Slavik Commissioner Joe Atkins Commissioner Laurie Halverson Commissioner William Droste Commissioner Liz Workman Commissioner Mary Hamann-Roland
<b>Absent</b>	Chairperson Mary Liz Holberg

Also in attendance were Heidi Welsch, County Manager; Tom Donely, First Assistant County Attorney; Georg Fischer, Physical Development Division Director; Liz Hansen, Administrative Coordinator.

The audio recording of this meeting is available upon request.

#### 2. Audience

Commissioner Slavik asked if there was anyone in the audience that wished to address the Physical Development Committee of the Whole on an item not on the agenda or an item on the consent agenda. No one came forward and no comments were submitted to CountyAdmin@co.dakota.mn.us.

#### 3. Approval of Agenda (Additions/Corrections/Deletions)

##### 3.1 Approval of Agenda (Additions/Corrections/Deletions)

Motion: Mary Hamann-Roland

Second: Laurie Halverson

Ayes: 6

#### 4. Consent Agenda

##### 4.1 Approval Of Minutes Of Meeting Held On November 6, 2025

Motion: Liz Workman

Second: Mary Hamann-Roland

Ayes: 6

## 5. Regular Agenda

### 5.1 Approval Of 2026 Planning Commission Work Plan

Motion: Joe Atkins

Second: Mary Hamann-Roland

Kurt Chatfield, Planning Manager, presented the topic and answered questions. Barry Graham, Planning Commissioner and Vice Chair of the Planning Commission, also addressed the committee to highlight the importance of community input and active participation.

Staff provided an overview of the plans recommended for review by the Planning Commission in 2026 and the planned schedule of six meetings over the course of the year. The meeting frequency is a result of previous years, when many of the 12 scheduled meetings were cancelled due to a lack of topics or a lack of a quorum. The reduced frequency of meetings will ensure that Planning Commissioners' insights and input will be focused on the most important and impactful items. If additional time is required to ensure a thorough review of the identified plans, additional meetings can be added during the year.

WHEREAS, Dakota County Ordinance No. 118 establishes the powers and duties of the Planning Commission to make recommendations on plans, policies, and programs, as directed by the County Board; and

WHEREAS, County Policy No. 1015 provides direction regarding citizen advisory committees and states that the Planning Commission is required to consult annually with the County Board to seek concurrence regarding the topics they will study or on which they will advise the County Board; and

WHEREAS, the County Board has identified topics for 2026, including the preparation of plans for natural resources, parks, greenways, and transportation; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission's 2026 Work Plan is consistent with County Board projects.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Dakota County Board of Commissioners hereby approves the Planning Commission's 2026 Work Plan as presented to the Physical Development Committee of the Whole on December 2, 2025.

This item was approved and recommended for action by the Board of Commissioners on 12/16/2025.

Ayes: 6

**5.2 Approval Of Right Of Way Acquisition And Authorization To Initiate Quick-Take  
Condemnation For Regional Trail Easement For Veterans Memorial Greenway  
In Cities Of Eagan And Inver Grove Heights, County Project P00147**

Motion: Liz Workman

Second: Joe Atkins

Tony Wotzka, Greenways Manager, and Eddie Buell, Real Estate Supervisor, presented this topic and responded to questions.

The preferred alignment by the City of Eagan remains the original adopted alignment along the Xcel Energy Easement in the back yards of the three parcels. Any changes to the adopted alignment would require City and Met Council approval. Information related to a potential alternative alignment along Atlantic Hills Drive was provided to each of the property owners. Ongoing discussions with the three remaining property owners have not yet yielded any final agreements.

In order to move this project along, staff requested approval to initiate a quick-take condemnation for this project. Staff will continue to negotiate with the landowners to try to come to an agreement before formal condemnation proceedings occur.

WHEREAS, by Resolution No. 08-162 (April 4, 2008), the Dakota County Board adopted the Dakota County Park System Plan that establishes a vision for a 200-mile network of connected greenway trails to provide safe and efficient multi-modal transportation across the region, along with high-quality recreational and educational opportunities which harmonize with natural resource preservation; and

WHEREAS, as part of this vision, by Resolution No. 17-493 (September 26, 2017), the Dakota County Board of Commissioners approved the Rich Valley Regional Greenway Master Plan, now known as the Veterans Memorial Greenway Master Plan, to honor Dakota County's more than 25,000 veterans; and

WHEREAS, consistent with the above-stated policies, Dakota County is proceeding with the Veterans Memorial Greenway County Project (CP) P00147, to construct approximately five miles of regional trail, including interpretive nodes placed along the trail that honor and recognize the sacrifice made by veterans and provide a place for healing and sharing their stories through interpretative elements; and

WHEREAS, Dakota County is the lead agency for design, construction administration, and right of way acquisition for the Project; and

WHEREAS, construction is proposed to begin in 2026, and the project is being partially funded with federal funds, which require the timely acquisition of right of

way for the authorization of project bidding; and

WHEREAS, the County Board previously authorized acquisition of right of way for Parcels 3, 4, and 5 through direct negotiation by Resolution No. 24-594 (December 3, 2024); and

WHEREAS, negotiations have not resulted in acquisition agreements for Parcels 3, 4, and 5; and

WHEREAS, in order to maintain the project schedule and comply with funding requirements, Dakota County must proceed with quick-take condemnation to acquire the required easements.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Dakota County Board of Commissioners hereby authorizes the County Attorney's Office to initiate quick-take condemnation of the following parcels:

20-58500-04-070 - Jacquelynne and Scott Baker - Parcel 3

A permanent easement for greenway purposes over, under, and across the north 60.27 feet of Lot 16, Block 1, Lakeside Estates, according to the recorded plat thereof, Dakota County, Minnesota.

Said greenway easement contains approximately 6,026 square feet.

10-44300-01-170 - Robert Snyder - Parcel 4

A temporary easement for greenway purposes over, under, and across the south 15.00 feet of the north 75.27 feet of Lot 17, Block 1, Lakeside Estates, according to the recorded plat thereof, Dakota County, Minnesota.

A permanent easement for greenway purposes over, under, and across the north 60.27 feet of Lot 17, Block 1, Lakeside Estates, according to the recorded plat thereof, Dakota County, Minnesota.

Said temporary easement contains approximately 1,506 square feet.  
Said greenway easement contains approximately 6,054 square feet.

10-44300-01-180 - Nicole Medin - Parcel 5

A temporary easement for greenway purposes over, under, and across the south 15.00 feet of the north 75.27 feet of Lot 18, Block 1, Lakeside Estates, according to the recorded plat thereof, Dakota County, Minnesota.

A permanent easement for greenway purposes over, under, and across the north 60.27 feet of Lot 18, Block 1, Lakeside Estates, according to the

recorded plat thereof, Dakota County, Minnesota.

Said temporary easement contains approximately 1,501 square feet.

Said greenway easement contains approximately 6,023 square feet.

This item was approved and recommended for action by the Board of Commissioners on 12/16/2025.

Ayes: 5

Commissioner Atkins, Commissioner Halverson, Commissioner Droste, Commissioner Workman, and Commissioner Hamann-Roland

Nay: 1

Commissioner Slavik

**5.3 Update And Direction On County State Aid Highway 54 Expansion In Ravenna Township, County Project 54-011**

John Sass, Project Manager, presented an item addressing the committee's questions.

Staff and Commissioners discussed the costs, benefits, and impacts of adding a trail to the County Road 54 and Mississippi River Greenway Extension Project. Four alternatives were discussed, including the road project without a trail, the road project with a paved trail, the road project with grading for a trail, and the road project with a trail planned in the future. This stretch of County State Aid Highway 54 has experienced over 200 crashes in the past 10 years. Three miles lack adequate shoulders, most intersections lack turn lanes, and eight curves do not meet current design standards. Adding the trail would enhance corridor safety, improve multimodal access, boost recreation, and provide a connection to Prairie Island and the regional trail network. Additional right-of-way for the trail is estimated to cost \$500K, and the additional cost to pave the trail is estimated at \$1.3M.

Staff were directed to proceed with developing the project to include a paved trail and to continue to explore options for external funding for this project. One commissioner stressed trying to keep the trail within a 110-foot right-of-way whenever possible to avoid extra costs and impacts on private property.

Information only; no action requested.

**6. Physical Development Director's Report**

Mr. Fischer, Physical Development Director, provided a written update to the committee, highlighting the environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Nelson mine near Spring Lake Park Reserve. The city approved the EIS despite receiving comments from organizations such as Dakota County, Metropolitan Council, Department of Natural Resources, and the Army Corps of Engineers indicating that the document did not sufficiently address their concerns. The Metropolitan Council is considering challenging the sufficiency of the document. The DNR has indicated that they plan to address the issues they identified with the EIS through permitting instead of contesting the EIS. Key issues for Dakota County include noise, lighting,

and 24-hour operations. Based on the discussion, staff will continue discussions with the Metropolitan Council and will bring a resolution to support challenging the sufficiency of the EIS on December 16, 2025, if the Metropolitan Council decides to move forward with a challenge.

## 7. Future Agenda Items

Chair, Commissioner Mike Slavik, asked the Committee if anyone had a topic they would like to hear more about at an upcoming Physical Development Committee of the Whole. No Commissioners requested topics for future meetings at this time.

## 8. Adjournment

### 8.1 Adjournment

Motion: Joe Atkins

Second: Mary Hamann-Roland

On a motion by Commissioner Joe Atkins, seconded by Commissioner Mary Hamann-Roland, the meeting was adjourned at 2:04 p.m.

Ayes: 6

Respectfully submitted,  
Liz Hansen  
Administrative Coordinator



# Physical Development Committee of the Whole

## Request for Board Action

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Item Number: DC-5136

Agenda #: 4.2

Meeting Date: 1/13/2026

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**DEPARTMENT:** Physical Development Administration

**FILE TYPE:** Consent Action

### **TITLE**

**Approval Of Joint Powers Agreements With Cities And Delegation Of Authority For Contracting And Right Of Way Acquisition To Accomplish 2026 Transportation, Parks, and Facilities Capital Improvement Projects**

### **PURPOSE/ACTION REQUESTED**

Approve joint powers agreements (JPAs) and authorize awards to construction contracts necessary to accomplish 2026 Transportation, Parks, and Facilities Capital Improvement Program (CIP) projects to County Manager or designee. Grant power to approve and authorize the Real Estate Office (REO) to make first offers, based on appraised value, for any acquisitions needed for the 2026 Transportation Capital Improvement Program (CIP) projects through delegated designee.

### **SUMMARY**

To provide safe and efficient transportation in Dakota County, Transportation, Parks, and Facilities Department staff regularly requests County Board (Board) approval for actions required to deliver projects in the adopted 2026 Transportation, Park, and Facilities CIP. Staff is requesting advanced approval and delegation of authority to the County Manager or designee for construction contract awards under certain circumstances. The requested action will streamline these administrative activities required to move projects forward and allow efficient timelines.

JPAs are typically standard agreements required for most CIP projects. In most cases, these agreements adhere to adopted County policies and have consistent language. JPAs proposed for advanced approval are for projects included in the adopted Transportation, Parks, and Facilities CIP and will adhere to specific criteria, including maintenance and operational responsibilities associated with the planning, design, and construction of projects consistent with County policies; be subject to the availability of funding identified in the CIP; and be subject to the County's Attorney's Office as to form.

Staff requests the delegation of authority to the County Manager or designee to award construction contracts to the lowest responsible bidder for projects identified for construction in the adopted 2026 Transportation, Parks, and Facilities CIP, consistent with County Policies and provided sufficient funds are available for the contract. Any awards that require the rejection of bids will be brought to the Board for action.

Periodic project updates and approvals will continue to be presented to the Board consistent with current practice. This authorization would not alter the current Board process for adopting projects in the CIP each year or the process for obtaining Board approval for professional services contracts,

study recommendations, property valuations, authority to initiate quick-take condemnation, and right of way settlements.

Dakota County Transportation has identified the projects that will move to the right of way acquisition process in 2026. Prior to Transportation proceeding with the construction of approved CIP projects, the County must acquire permanent and temporary easements, and occasionally, fee title. Independent professional appraisers are hired to determine the fair market value or minimum damage of these acquisitions to ensure the property owner receives just compensation. A second appraiser reviews the initial appraisal to verify that the appraisal meets all professional standards and requirements. The appraisal is then finalized and certified. First offers are then made to the property owner based on these reports.

In 2025, the Board approved the Real Estate Office practice to send out offers as soon as the valuation reports have been finalized and certified (CB Resolution #25-052/January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2025). Staff will return to the Board with any recommendations when to utilize eminent domain. This practice allows for more time to work with property owners with the potential to settle parcels without the need for condemnation.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff requests advanced approval of JPAs with cities and authorization to award construction contracts to the lowest responsive bidder as necessary to accomplish 2026 Transportation, Parks, and Facilities CIP projects consistent with County policies, subject to the availability of funding identified in the CIP and subject to the County's Attorney's Office as to form.

Staff recommends the approval and authorization to make first offers, based on appraised value, for any acquisitions needed for the 2026 Transportation CIP projects.

### **EXPLANATION OF FISCAL/FTE IMPACTS**

The County Board approved the 2026 CIP on December 16, 2025, which includes funds for right of way acquisition. Reducing the number of parcels listed in quick-take petitions will lower the overall cost of acquisitions and positively affect project budgets. Financial reports regarding the status of construction contracts are presented quarterly at the General Government and Policy (GGP) meeting.

None       Current budget       Other  
 Amendment Requested       New FTE(s) requested

### **RESOLUTION**

WHEREAS, the Dakota County Physical Development Administration Department regularly requests County Board approval for actions required to deliver projects in the adopted Capital Improvement Program (CIP); and

WHEREAS, joint powers agreements with Cities and cost-share agreements with the Minnesota Department of Transportation and other agencies are standard agreements needed on projects in the CIP that adhere to County policies and have consistent language; and

WHEREAS, awarding construction contracts to the lowest responsible bidder is a regular consent action item brought forward to the Board for projects in the CIP; and

WHEREAS, any awards not to the low bidder or require the rejection of bids will be brought to the County Board for action; and

WHEREAS, this resolution does not alter the Board process for adopting projects in the CIP each year or the process for obtaining Board approval for professional services contracts, study recommendations, appraisals, and right of way settlements; and

WHEREAS, quarterly reports on all contracts and project updates would continue to be presented by Finance to the Board; and

WHEREAS, staff will provide the Board with a detailed list of authorized projects, including budget reference information, and provide periodic updates on executed and construction contract awards; and

WHEREAS, to provide a safe and efficient transportation system, Dakota County is proceeding with projects included in the 2026 Transportation CIP; and

WHEREAS, Dakota County is the lead agency for right of way acquisition necessary in 2026 for construction to begin in 2027; and

WHEREAS, the acquisition of property interests, such as fee title and temporary and permanent easements, from private property parcels identified in Dakota County 2026 Transportation CIP projects by the County is necessary to deliver and construct the projects during the programmed year; and

WHEREAS, all valuations of the property interests to be acquired are based upon independent valuation reports; and

WHEREAS, delegation of authority to approve appraisals of value and all first offers being made to the property owners by the Director of Physical Development or their designee will allow for more time for property owners to review the County's offers and resolved the acquisitions before eminent domain may be necessary; and

WHEREAS, in the event that timely acquisition by direct negotiation of all required parcels does not appear possible, staff will seek County Board authorization for the County Attorney's Office to initiate quick-take condemnation of the remaining unsettled parcels; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Dakota County Board of Commissioners delegates authority to the Director of Physical Development or their designee to enter into joint powers agreements with cities and the appropriate Department Director or designee to award construction contracts to the lowest responsible bidder, consistent with County Policies, provided sufficient funds are available for the following projects:

Transportation:

County Project (CP) 04-018: CSAH 4 from County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 63 to Smith Ave Trail Gap in West St. Paul  
CP 05-058: CSAH 5 at Southcross Signal Reconstruction in Burnsville

CP 5-060: CSAH 5 at Kenyon Ave in Lakeville  
CP 9-065: CSAH 9 from 208th Street to CSAH 50 (Kenwood Trl) in Lakeville  
CP 9-067: CSAH 9 from CSAH 70 (215th St) to South of 210th St in Lakeville  
CP 9-069: CSAH 9 at Glacier Way in Lakeville  
CP 11-033: CSAH 11 at I-35E Interchange Ramp Improvements in Burnsville and Apple Valley  
CP 14-035: CSAH 14 from 20th Ave to 3rd Ave in South St. Paul  
CP 23-088: CSAH 23 from CSAH 9 (179th Street) to CSAH 42 (150th Street) in Apple Valley and Lakeville  
CP 26-060: CSAH 26 from Trunk Highway (TH) 3 to CSAH 73 Reconstruction in Inver Grove Heights  
CP 26-068: CSAH 26 from CSAH 73 to Cahill Ave Trail Gap and Reclamation in Inver Grove Heights  
CP 28-069: CSAH 28 (80<sup>th</sup> Street) Trail Gap in Inver Grove Heights  
CP 31-113: CSAH 31 at CSAH 50 (W Junction) in Farmington  
CP 31-115: CSAH 31 from CSAH 74 (Ash St) to CSAH 50 (212<sup>th</sup> St) in Farmington  
CP 31-118: CSAH 31 at Upper 147<sup>th</sup> Street Access Restriction in Apple Valley  
CP 31-119: CSAH 31 from 144th Street to Corporate Center Dr in Apple Valley and Eagan  
CP 31-124: CSAH 31 at Crestridge Ln in Eagan  
CP 31-125: CSAH 31 at CSAH 46 (160th Street) in Apple Valley and Lakeville  
CP 31-126: CSAH 31 at Wescott Rd/Kings Wood Pond Rd in Eagan  
CP 32-093: CSAH 32 from Johnny Cake Ridge Road to CSAH 31 (Pilot Knob Rd) in Eagan  
CP 33-019: CSAH 33 from 140th St/Connemara Trl to CSAH 31 (Pilot Knob Rd) in Apple Valley and Rosemount  
CP 38-061: CSAH 38 from CSAH 5 to Aldrich Ave in Burnsville  
CP 38-068: CSAH 38 from Garden View Dr to Hanover Ave; W of Diamond Path in Apple Valley  
CP 42-161: CSAH 42 from Lock Blvd to Vermillion Street Overlay and Trail Construction in Hastings  
CP 42-163: CSAH 42 from Redwood Dr to 147<sup>th</sup> Street Reconstruction in Apple Valley  
CP 42-167: CSAH 42 from CSAH 5 to Nicollet Ave in Burnsville  
CP 42-170: CSAH 42 at Trunk Highway 3 in Rosemount  
CP 42-172: CSAH 42 from Cedar to Pilot Knob Federal Overlay in Apple Valley  
CP 42-173: CSAH 42 from CSAH 33 (Diamond Path) to TH 3 in Apple Valley and Rosemount  
CP 42-174: CSAH 42 at TH 52 Interchange Improvements in Rosemount  
CP 42-177: CSAH 42 at Garrett Ave and At Pilot Knob Road Signal Replacement in Apple Valley  
CP 42-179: CSAH 42 from West of Business Pkwy to Auburn Ave in Rosemount  
CP 43-057: CSAH 43 from Keefe St to TH 55 in Eagan  
CP 43-059: CSAH 43 at Northview Park Rd in Eagan  
CP 47-047: CSAH 47 from North of CSAH 86 to TH 50 Reconstruction in Castle Rock Twp and Hampton Twp  
CP 50-033: CSAH 50 at I-35 Interchange in Lakeville  
CP 50-038: CSAH 50 at CSAH 60 in Lakeville  
CP 54-011: CSAH 54 from 18<sup>th</sup> Street to CSAH 68 in Hastings and Ravenna Township  
CP 56-014: CSAH 56 Corridor Pedestrian Improvements in Inver Grove Heights  
CP 60-029: CSAH 60 at Orchard Trail in Lakeville  
CP 63-033: CSAH 63 from Marie Ave to TH 149 Reconstruction in Mendota Heights and West St. Paul  
CP 64-027: County Road 64 (Flagstaff Ave) from 200<sup>th</sup> Street to 195<sup>th</sup> Street in Farmington  
CP 74-011: CSAH 74 from CSAH 31 (Denmark Ave) to Honeysuckle Ln in Farmington

CP 86-043: CSAH 86 at TH 56 Roundabout in Randolph Township  
CP 86-044: CSAH 86 at TH 3 Roundabout in Castle Rock Township  
CP 91-030: CSAH 91 from 675' South of Nicolai Ave to TH 61 Reconstruction in Miesville  
Paved Highway Surfaces  
Gravel Highway Surface  
Gravel Highway Surface - Repairs  
Crack Seal  
Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities  
Retaining Wall Maintenance  
Traffic Safety & Operations - Pavement Markings  
Storm Sewer System Maintenance  
Signal Revisions/Communications  
Traffic Signal - New/Replacement  
Trail Gap Setaside

Parks:

2000230: Greenway Preservation  
2000236: Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Long-Range Plan Improvements  
P00147: Veterans Memorial Greenway  
River to River Greenway: TH 149 Crossing and trail improvements south of Marie  
Countywide Greenway and Park Wayfinding Installation  
Lebanon Hills Greenway: Lebanon Hills Regional Park to Dodd Road  
Lake Marion Greenway: Lakeville - Ritter Farm Park to Holyoke  
Lebanon Hills Regional Park: Sustainable Trail Improvements  
Whitetail Woods Regional Park: Stage and Shade Improvements  
Lake Byllesby Regional Park Turbine Exhibit and Road and Trail realignment

Facilities:

Roof Replacement Program  
Window Replacement Program  
Law Enforcement Center Housing Unit Fixture Replacement  
Boiler Replacement Program  
Chiller Replacement Program  
Air Cooled Condenser Replacement Program  
HVAC, Pumps, and Fans Replacement Program  
Cabinet Unit Heater Replacement Program  
Empire Maintenance Facility Geothermal Heat Pump Replacement  
Judicial Service Center and Western Service Center Fire Pump Replacement  
Countywide Life Safety Enhancement Program  
Generator, ATS, Main Electrical, and MCC Replacement Program  
Uninterruptible Power Supply Replacement Program  
Miscellaneous Projects  
Accessibility Barrier Removal Program  
Exterior Building Envelope Maintenance Program  
Exterior Door Replacement Program  
Water Heater Replacement Program  
Sanitary Waste Pump Replacements  
Air Handling Unit Replacement Program

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Make-Up Air Unit Replacements  
HVAC Controls/Automation System Replacements  
Electrical Service Gear Replacement Program  
Flooring Replacement Program  
Parking Lots Pavement Program  
Energy Efficiency Program

; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Dakota County Board of Commissioners hereby authorizes the Director of Physical Development or their designee to approve appraisals of value and to make initial offers based on appraised value for any right of way acquisitions needed for the following 2026 Transportation Capital Improvement Program projects:

Real Estate Office Right of Way Acquisitions:

CP 23-088: Mill and overlay CSAH 23 (Cedar Ave) from CSAH 9 (179th St) to CSAH 42 (150th St) in Apple Valley and Lakeville  
CP 28-079: Signal replacement at CSAH 28 (Yankee Doodle Ave) and Denmark Ave in Eagan  
CP 31-115: Roadway reconstruction CSAH 31 (Denmark Ave) from CSAH 74 (220th St) to CSAH 50 (212th St) in Farmington  
CP 31-124: Intersection improvements at CSAH 31 (Pilot Knob Rd) and Crestridge Ln in Eagan  
CP 31-125: Signal replacement at CSAH 31 (Pilot Knob Rd) and CSAH 46 (160th St W) in Apple Valley and Lakeville  
CP 31-126: Signal replacement at CSAH 31 (Pilot Knob Rd) and Wescott Rd/Kings Wood Pond Rd in Eagan  
CP 38-061: Intersection improvements at CSAH 38 (McAndrews Rd) and Burnhaven Dr and trail gap study from CSAH 5 to Burnhaven Dr in Burnsville  
CP 38-068: Retaining wall replacement along CSAH 38 (McAndrews Rd) between Hannover Ave and Gardenview Dr in Apple Valley  
CP 42-173: Mill and overlay CSAH 42 (150th St) from CSAH 33 (Diamond Path) to TH 3 in Apple Valley and Rosemount  
CP 42-175: Pedestrian underpass of CSAH 42 (145th Street), approximately 900 feet east of County Road (CR) 73 (Akron Avenue) in Rosemount  
CP 42-183: Signal replacement at CSAH 42 (150<sup>th</sup> St W) and Galaxie Ave in Apple Valley  
CP 42-184: Signal replacement at CSAH 42 (150<sup>th</sup> St W) and Pennock Ave in Apple Valley  
CP 43-057: Construction of a multi use trail along the east side of CSAH 43 (Lexington Ave) between Keefe St and TH 55 in Eagan  
CP 43-059: Roundabout at CSAH 43 (Lexington Ave) and Northview Park Rd in Eagan  
CP 46-064: Signal replacement at CSAH 46 (160<sup>th</sup> St W) and Galaxie Ave in Apple Valley and Lakeville  
CP 46-065: Signal replacement at CSAH 46 (160th St W) and Foliage Ave in Apple Valley and Lakeville  
CP 47-048: Roadway reconstruction on CSAH 47 (Northfield Blvd) from TH 3 to south of CSAH 86 (280th St) in Waterford Township, Sciota Township, and Castle Rock Township  
CP 50-033: Reconstruction of the interchange at I 35 and CSAH 50 in Lakeville  
CP 50-038: Roundabout at CSAH 50 (Kenwood Trail) and CSAH 60 (185<sup>th</sup> St) in Lakeville  
CP 60-029: New signal system at CSAH 60 (185<sup>th</sup> St) and Orchard Trail in Lakeville

CP 74-011: Roadway reconstruction CSAH 74 (220th St) from CSAH 31 (Denmark Ave) to Honeysuckle Lane in Farmington

CP 99-013: Expansion of CSAH 46 from TH 3 to 1,300 feet east of CR 48 in Rosemount, Coates, and Empire Township from two lanes to a four lane divided section

None.

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## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment: Presentation Slides

## **BOARD GOALS**

- Thriving People       A Healthy Environment with Quality Natural Resources
- A Successful Place for Business and Jobs       Excellence in Public Service

## **CONTACT**

Department Head: Erin Stwora

Author: Erin Stwora



**Approval Of Joint Powers Agreements With Cities And Delegation Of Authority For Contracting And Right Of Way Acquisition To Accomplish 2026 Transportation, Parks, and Facilities Capital Improvement Projects**

Dakota County Physical Development Committee  
January 13, 2026

Erin Stwora, Deputy Director  
Eddie Buell, Real Estate Supervisor  
Physical Development Division

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## Introduction/Overview



- Standard approval process/documents
- Subject to low construction bid award/standard procedures
- Delegate authority to County Manager
- Must be within approved budget
- Benefits
  - Streamlines administrative activities
  - Flexibility in project schedules
  - Staff time savings
  - Fewer County Board items

2

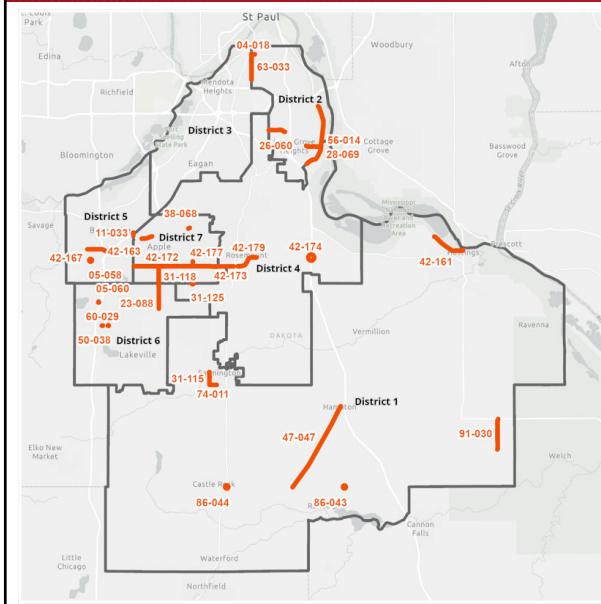
## 2026 Projects



- Project list includes:
  - Construction contract awards
    - Highway projects
    - Highway surfacing
    - Pedestrian safety & trail gaps
    - Traffic signals
    - Township bridges
    - Maintenance

3

## Transportation CIP Projects – Construction Contracts - 2026



## Map of Transportation CIP Projects for 2026 Construction Contracts

(Please refer to RBA attachment for project descriptions)

### Project List:

04-018, 05-058, 05-060, 11-033, 23-088, 26-060, 28-069, 31-115, 31-118, 31-125, 38-068, 42-161, 42-163, 42-167, 42-172, 42-173, 42-174, 42-177, 42-179, 47-047, 50-038, 56-014, 60-029, 63-033, 74-011, 86-043, 86-044, 91-030

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Transportation CIP Projects

Construction - Preservation and Small Projects

*Dakota*  
COUNTY

- Preservation of Paved Highway Surfaces
- Preservation of Gravel Highway Surfaces
- Gravel Highway Surface - Repairs
- Crack Seal
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities
- Retaining Wall Maintenance
- Traffic Safety & Operations – Pavement Markings
- Storm Sewer System Maintenance
- Signal Revisions/Communications
- Traffic Signal - New/Replacement
- Trail Gap Setaside

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*Dakota*  
COUNTY

## Parks CIP Projects

**Map of Parks CIP Projects for 2026**  
(Please refer to RBA attachment for project descriptions)

**Project List:**

- River to River Greenway, Lebanon Hills Greenway, Lake Marion Greenway, Greenway Preservation, Greenway & Park Wayfinding, Lebanon Hills Regional Park, Whitetail Woods Regional Park, Lake Byllesby Regional Park, P00147, 2000236

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## Facilities CIP Projects



Roof Replacement Program	Miscellaneous Projects
Window Replacement Program	Accessibility Barrier Removal Program
Law Enforcement Center Housing Unit Fixture Replacement	Exterior Building Envelope Maintenance Program
Boiler Replacement Program	Exterior Door Replacement Program
Chiller Replacement Program	Water Heater Replacement Program
Air Cooled Condenser Replacement Program	Sanitary Waste Pump Replacements
HVAC, Pumps, and Fans Replacement Program	Air Handling Unit Replacement Program
Cabinet Unit Heater Replacement Program	Make-Up Air Unit Replacements
Empire Maintenance Facility Geothermal Heat Pump Replacement	HVAC Controls/Automation System Replacements
JSC and WSC Fire Pump Replacement	Electrical Service Gear Replacement Program
Countywide Life Safety Enhancement Program	Flooring Replacement Program
Generator, ATS, Main Electrical and MCC Replacement Program	Uninterruptible Power Supply Replacement Program
Parking Lots Pavement Program	Energy Efficiency Program

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## Facilities Miscellaneous CIP Projects

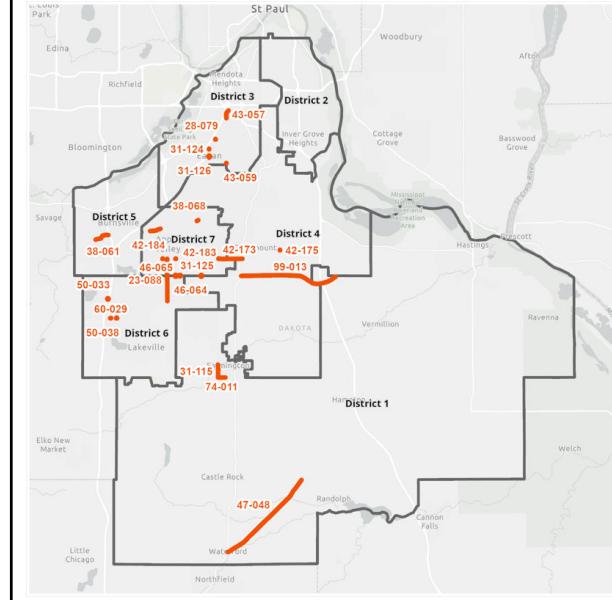


- Annual Allocation of Funds for Misc. Projects
  - Department Requests
  - Minor Changes
  - Other Projects that don't meet minimum requirements to be included as a separate projects in the CIP process

This funding allows timely completion of projects that focus upon productivity and safe working environments.

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## Transportation CIP Projects - Approval Authority Request Right-of-Way Acquisitions - 2026



### Map of Transportation CIP Projects for 2026 ROW

(Please refer to RBA attachment for project descriptions)

#### Project List:

04-018, 23-088, 28-079, 31-115, 31-124, 31-125, 31-126, 38-061, 38-068, 42-173, 42-175, 42-183, 42-184, 43-057, 43-059, 46-064, 46-065, 47-048, 50-033, 50-038, 60-029, 63-033, 74-011, 99-013

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## County Board Review



### Physical Development Committee and/or County Board actions:

- Projects not specifically mentioned in this action
- Joint Powers Agreements
- Professional service contracts
- Budget amendments
- Study recommendations
- Traffic control changes
- Right of way offers
- Periodic project/construction updates
- JPA and contract updates in Physical Development Division update

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## Request



- Approval And Authorization To Award Construction Contracts To Accomplish 2026 Transportation, Parks, And Facilities Capital Improvement Projects
- Approval And Authorization To Enter Into Joint Powers Agreements With Cities And To Award Construction Contracts To The Lowest Responsible Bidder, Consistent With County Policies, To Accomplish 2026 Transportation, Parks, And Facilities Capital Improvement Projects
- Approval And Authorization To Make First Offers, Based On Appraised Value, For Any Acquisitions Needed For The 2026 Transportation Capital Improvement Program (CIP) projects.

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## Discussion



Questions?

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# Physical Development Committee of the Whole

## Request for Board Action

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**Item Number:** DC-5060

**Agenda #:** 5.1

**Meeting Date:** 1/13/2026

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**DEPARTMENT:** Transportation

**FILE TYPE:** Regular Information

### **TITLE**

### **Discussion On Regional Solicitation For Metropolitan Council Transportation Advisory Board**

### **PURPOSE/ACTION REQUESTED**

Discuss the Regional Solicitation proposed changes and recommendations for the Transportation Advisory Board's consideration in January 2026.

### **SUMMARY**

The Metropolitan Council is evaluating and redesigning the entire Regional Solicitation program and process for selecting projects for federal transportation funding in the seven-county metro region. The revised Regional Solicitation program will align with the 2050 Transportation Policy Plan which guides and informs investment over the next 25 years.

Action items under consideration at the January 2026 Metropolitan Council Transportation Advisory Board include application criteria, scoring and releasing the solicitation package to the general public for comments. Staff requests direction and feedback on the proposed changes.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Information only: no action requested

### **EXPLANATION OF FISCAL/FTE IMPACTS**

None.

None       Current budget       Other  
 Amendment Requested       New FTE(s) requested

### **RESOLUTION**

Information only; no action requested

### **PREVIOUS BOARD ACTION**

None

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment: Regional Solicitation Summary

Attachment: Presentation Slides

### **BOARD GOALS**

Thriving People       A Healthy Environment with Quality Natural Resources  
 A Successful Place for Business and Jobs       Excellence in Public Service

## CONTACT

Department Head: Erin Laberee

Author: Erin Laberee

# INTRODUCTION: REGIONAL SOLICITATION FOR TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

The Regional Solicitation is a project selection process to award federal and regional transportation funding to projects that meet regional transportation needs. The solicitation is part of the Metropolitan Council's federally required continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative transportation planning process for the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. The funding program and related rules and requirements are established by the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) and administered locally through collaboration with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT).

The online application can be accessed at: <https://metrocouncil.org/Transportation/Planning-2/Transportation-Funding/Regional-Solicitation.aspx>

## Federal Program Overview

As authorized by the most recent federal surface transportation funding act, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), projects will be selected for funding as part of four federal programs: Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP), the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program, Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) Program, and the Carbon Reduction Program (CRP). It is assumed that federal funding will continue to be available in 2030 and 2031, but these funding years are outside of the expiration of IIJA. Funding levels, programs, and eligibility may change with a new federal surface transportation program, and the Regional Solicitation will need to adjust accordingly.

## Active Transportation Regional Sales Tax Overview

In 2023, the Minnesota Legislature approved a new regional sales tax for the seven-county region to support various transportation improvements. A portion of this new sales tax was established to provide a dedicated funding source to be distributed by the TAB for active transportation investments in the region. This new source of funding is expected to provide \$20 million to \$24 million annually for active transportation initiatives. A working group of TAB and technical members was established to provide policy recommendations for the 2026 Solicitation. The legislation includes the following criteria and prioritization of projects that are required to be considered and included in the solicitation:

1. The project's inclusion in a municipal or regional nonmotorized transportation system plan.
2. The extent to which policies or practices of the political subdivision encourage and promote complete streets planning, design and construction;
3. The extent to which the project supports connections between communities and to key destinations within a community;
4. Identified barriers or deficiencies in the nonmotorized transportation system;
5. Identified safety or health benefits;
6. Geographic equity in project benefits, with an emphasis on communities that are historically and currently underrepresented in local or regional planning; and
7. The ability of a grantee to maintain the active transportation infrastructure following project completion.

## Changes for the 2026 Funding Cycle

The Regional Solicitation process was redesigned following the 2024 funding cycle as part of a two-year effort called the Regional Solicitation Evaluation. The evaluation examined every aspect of the Solicitation to closely align funding decisions to the policy direction in Imagine 2050 and the 2050

Transportation Policy Plan (TPP). The evaluation included 25 listening sessions across the region, public outreach and surveys, policy and technical work groups, including over 100 technical stakeholders as part of seven special issue working groups. For the 2026 cycle, this process resulted in new funding categories, as well as in the integration of categories to award Regional Active Transportation Sales Tax funding to eligible projects.

## **Regional Solicitation Structure**

The Regional Solicitation is structured around Imagine 2050 goals, funding categories, and other project selection processes that are connected to regional policy in the 2050 Transportation Policy Plan. This structure creates a basis for establishing funding availability by goals and funding categories, funding targets, and minimum and maximum project awards by category.

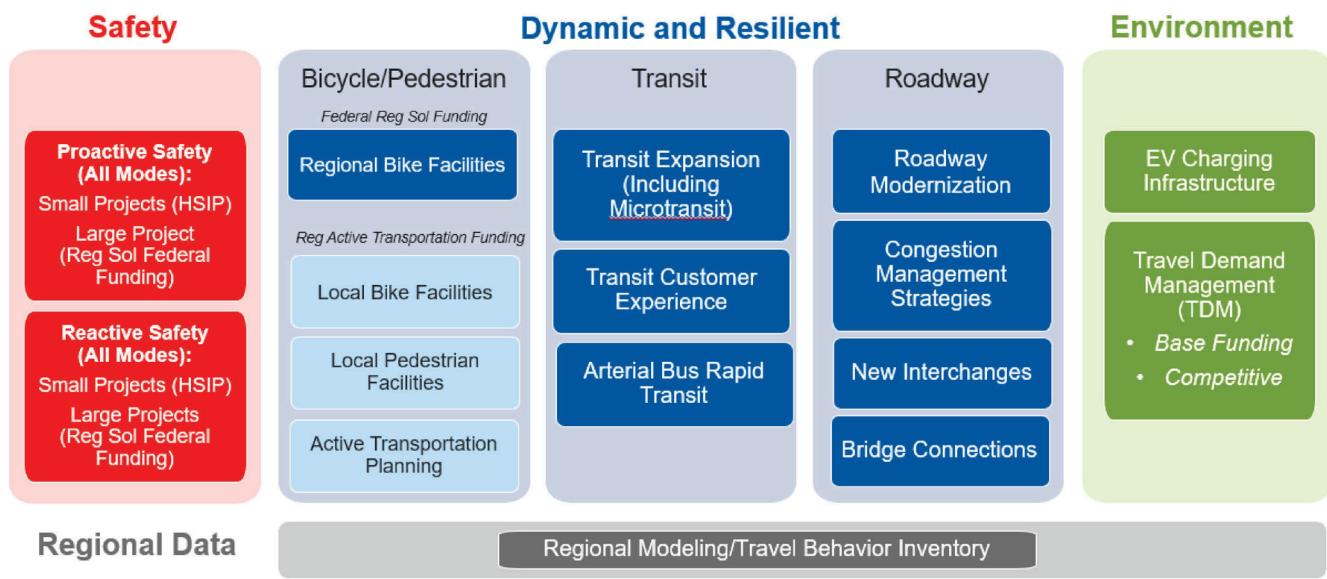
### ***Funding Categories***

As depicted in Figure 1, the funding categories are grouped into three of the five regional goals outlined in Imagine 2050:

1. Our communities are healthy and safe
2. Our region is dynamic and resilient
3. We lead on addressing climate change

Each of these regional goals includes separate funding categories as shown in Figure 1. Applicants for the Regional Solicitation will select the appropriate funding category for their proposed projects based on the guidance for each funding category. For instance, a roadway reconstruction project that includes a new sidewalk would apply under the Roadway Modernization funding category because that category is intended to fund roadway projects that include multimodal elements. While sidewalks are eligible under the Local Pedestrian Facilities category, that category is not intended to fund general improvements to the roadway. If the project sponsor wants to only submit the sidewalk portion of the project, then Local Pedestrian Facilities would be the appropriate funding category. The same project elements can only be submitted and scored in one funding category. If an applicant submits a project in the incorrect funding category, the application may be disqualified. It is advised that applicants contact Metropolitan Council staff prior to submission if there are any questions about which funding category is the most appropriate for their project.

**Figure 1: Funding Categories**



The goal area, Our Region is Equitable and Inclusive, is being proposed as a scoring measure called Community Considerations.

### Connection to the Regional Policy

One of the main updates to the 2026 Regional Solicitation process is the development of new funding categories and evaluation criteria to align with the 2050 TPP. The TPP is the region's long-range transportation plan, which was developed to meet federal requirements, reflect regional goals, and implement the transportation objectives and policies established in Imagine 2050, the regional development guide. It is useful to understand the intent behind both Imagine 2050 and the 2050 TPP to ensure that all projects funded through the Regional Solicitation meet these regional goals. These funds are intended to implement the region's transportation plan.

Table 1 illustrates the primary goals, objectives, and policies that link each Regional Solicitation funding category to regional policy. Each category may address additional goals, objectives and policies through the inclusion of additional evaluation criteria. There were two goal areas out of the five in Imagine 2050 that are not reflected as funding categories in Table 1. The goal of "Our region is equitable and inclusive" is not reflected as a standalone project category but instead is incorporated as scoring criteria for every funding category. The goal "We protect and restore natural systems" is also reflected as a scoring criterion (only in the Roadway Modernization, Congestion Management Strategies, New Interchanges, and Bridge Connections applications) and is not a funding category. These approaches may be revisited in the 2028 funding cycle pending any federal eligibility and program changes with a new federal surface transportation bill.

Projects funded through the Regional Solicitation do not need to be specifically named in the TPP because they must prove consistency with regional goals and policies when they pass the qualifying review step of the Regional Solicitation process. In addition, the scoring measures directly connect to the 2050 TPP so projects are more likely to be funded if they advance the 2050 TPP. Regionally significant projects (e.g., arterial bus rapid transit or new interchanges) may be amended into the TPP after selection if they are not already listed in the document.

**Table 1: Regional Solicitation Connection to Regional Policy**

Funding Categories	Imagine 2050 Primary Goal	Primary TPP Objectives or Policies
<b>Proactive Safety</b> <b>Reactive Safety</b>	Our communities are healthy and safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries from traffic crashes and incidents on the transportation system by 2050 using the <i>Safe System Approach</i>.</li> <li>Emphasize and prioritize the safety of people outside of vehicles in the transportation right-of-way.</li> </ul>
<b>Regional Bicycle Facilities</b> <b>Local Bicycle Facilities,</b> <b>Local Pedestrian Facilities</b> <b>Active Transportation Planning</b>	Our region is dynamic and resilient.  Our communities are healthy and safe;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People have better travel options beyond driving alone to meet their daily needs, with a focus on improving travel times, reliability, directness, and affordability.</li> <li>People do not die or face life-changing injuries when using any form of transportation.</li> <li>People can increase physical activity with more opportunities to walk, roll, or bike.</li> </ul>
<b>Transit Expansion</b> <b>Transit Customer Experience</b>	Our region is dynamic and resilient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People have better travel options beyond driving alone to meet their daily needs, with a focus on improving travel times, reliability, directness, and affordability.</li> <li>People have more predictable travel times when traveling on highways, with a focus on reducing excessive delays.</li> </ul>
<b>Roadway Modernization</b>	Our region is dynamic and resilient  Our communities are healthy and safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People do not die or face life-changing injuries when using any form of transportation.</li> <li>People have better travel options beyond driving alone to meet their daily needs, with a focus on improving travel times, reliability, directness, and affordability.</li> <li>People and businesses can rely on predictable and cost-effective movement of freight and goods.</li> <li>The region's transportation system protects, restores, and enhances natural systems (air, water, vegetation, and habitat quality).</li> </ul>

Funding Categories	Imagine 2050 Primary Goal	Primary TPP Objectives or Policies
<b>Congestion Management Strategies</b>  <b>New Interchanges</b>	Our region is dynamic and resilient  Our communities are healthy and safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People do not die or face life-changing injuries when using any form of transportation.</li> <li>• People have more predictable travel times when traveling on highways, with a focus on reducing excessive delays.</li> <li>• People and businesses can rely on predictable and cost-effective movement of freight and goods.</li> <li>• The region's transportation system protects, restores, and enhances natural systems (air, water, vegetation, and habitat quality).</li> </ul>
	Our region is dynamic and resilient  Our communities are healthy and safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People and businesses trust that transportation infrastructure and services will withstand and recover quickly from natural and human-caused disruptions.</li> <li>• People have better travel options beyond driving alone to meet their daily needs, with a focus on improving travel times, reliability, directness, and affordability.</li> <li>• People do not die or face life-changing injuries when using any form of transportation.</li> <li>• People and businesses can rely on predictable and cost-effective movement of freight and goods.</li> <li>• The region's transportation system protects, restores, and enhances natural systems (air, water, vegetation, and habitat quality).</li> </ul>
<b>EV Charging Infrastructure</b>	We lead on addressing climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The region's transportation system minimizes its greenhouse gas emissions.</li> <li>• People have more reliable access to zero emissions vehicle infrastructure.</li> </ul>
<b>Travel Demand Management (TDM)</b>	We lead on addressing climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The region's transportation system minimizes its greenhouse gas emissions.</li> <li>• By 2050, the region reduces vehicle miles traveled by 20 percent per capita below 2019 levels.</li> <li>• Use travel demand management (TDM) to plan, fund, and promote multimodal travel options and alternatives to driving alone.</li> </ul>

## *Other Project Selection Processes*

There are several project types that are selected with these funds in processes different than using an application to score and rank projects. Information may still be collected on these categories to contribute to evaluation results and there may still be rules applied to these categories, such as minimum and maximum awards.

- **Arterial bus rapid transit** projects are selected for funding by TAB based on regional planning processes that evaluate and prioritize similar projects from a single applicant, Metro Transit. Metro Transit regularly updates their evaluation of arterial bus rapid transit priorities (approximately every 5 years) and presents the priorities to TAB for review and comment. These priorities are also formalized in the TPP through an amendment. The evaluation process includes robust community engagement and stakeholder input and coordination. Metro Transit will provide a recommended arterial bus rapid transit line to TAB for consideration and final selection that will also include requested performance metrics such as new anticipated transit ridership.
- **Travel demand management (TDM) base funding** is a funding amount established to sustain a base-level of funding for ongoing TDM activities delivered by a set of regional TDM partners that include Commuter Programs and transportation management organizations (TMOs). These partners have a long history of providing valuable TDM services in key regional markets and sustaining the program is an important foundational component of being able to expand to new markets through the TDM funding category. The TDM base funding will be evaluated by Council staff and TDM stakeholders with every Regional Solicitation. Commuter Programs and the TMOs will submit a workplan for each two-year funding cycle that will be vetted by the Regional TDM Program Manager through the regional TDM advisory process. A recommendation will then be provided to TAB for their consideration and final selection.
- **Regional Model and Travel Behavior Inventory (TBI)** is funding in order to support the data needs of project implementation for local and regional projects. This funding ties directly to the TPP's overarching policy to "maintain a robust and current set of data, maps, plans, processes, and applications to support regional transportation planning." The program is evaluated every 10 years to establish a funding program recommendation from TAB in partnership with commitments from MnDOT and Met Council to provide transportation planning funds. The Council will submit a workplan and funding request for each two-year funding cycle that will be vetted by the Regional Travel Forecasting Committee. A recommendation will then be provided to TAB prior for their consideration and final selection.
- **Community Considerations Funding Priority:** Projects receiving a high score on each of the three measures, if any, will be considered for funding priority. Up to one (1) project from each solicitation round that was not otherwise selected for funding will be recommended for full funding in either the Roadway, Bike/Ped, Transit, or Environment categories.

These project selection processes can be reviewed and changed to accommodate new approaches every two years with adoption of the Regional Solicitation, at the discretion of TAB and the Met Council.

## *Funding Availability and Targets and Minimum and Maximum Project Awards*

A total of approximately \$250 million in federal funds is anticipated to be available in this solicitation for program years 2030 and 2031. As shown in Table 2, funding targets have been approved by TAB to give applicants an understanding of the general funding levels based on historic funding levels. TAB reserves the right to adjust these funding levels depending on the amount and quality of projects submitted, especially as this is the first Regional Solicitation under a new structure. It is expected that funding options will be discussed by TAB that are both above and below the target funding levels.

**Table 2: Federal Funding Targets**

Categories	Funding Target	Percent of Total
<b>Safety (two funding categories)</b>	\$30 million	12%
<b>Bicycle/Pedestrian (one funding category)</b>	\$35 million	14%
<b>Transit (two funding categories)</b>	\$60 million	24%
<b>Roadway (four funding categories)</b>	\$110 million	44%
<b>Environment (two funding categories)</b>	\$15 million	6%
<b>Total Federal</b>	<b>\$250 million</b>	<b>100%</b>

Amounts shown assume that some level of over programming will occur beyond \$250M, but TAB will determine the exact amount as part of project selection. Included in this overprogramming will be the approximately \$1.5 million for regional modeling and the travel behavior inventory. In addition, project selection for the EV Charging funding category (under Environment) will not occur until the 2028 funding cycle, closer to project implementation.

In addition, TAB approved a target of \$50 million in Regional Active Transportation Sales Tax funding to be awarded to projects in the Local Bicycle Facilities, Local Pedestrian Facilities and Active Transportation categories. Two million of this \$50 million will be the target for Active Transportation Planning.

**Table 3: Active Transportation Funding Targets**

Categories	Funding Target	Percent of Total
<b>Local Bicycle and Pedestrian Projects (two funding categories)</b>	\$48 million	96%
<b>Active Transportation Planning (one funding category)</b>	\$2 million	4%
<b>Total Active Transportation</b>	<b>\$50 million</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 4 shows the minimum and maximum awards by funding category.

**Table 4: Regional Solicitation Funding Category Minimums and Maximums**

Funding Category	Minimum Funding Award	Maximum Funding Award
<b>Safety</b>		
Proactive/Reactive Safety	\$2,000,000	\$7,000,000
<b>Roadway</b>		
Congestion Management Strategies – At-Grade Projects	\$1,000,000	\$10,000,000
New Interchanges	\$1,000,000	\$20,000,000
Roadway Modernization	\$1,000,000	\$10,000,000
Bridge Connections	\$1,000,000	\$7,000,000
<b>Transit</b>		
Transit Expansion	\$500,000	\$10,000,000
Transit Customer Experience	\$500,000	\$10,000,000
<b>Bicycle/Pedestrian</b>		
Regional Bike Facilities	\$1,000,000	\$5,500,000
Local Bike Facilities (Local Funding)	\$150,000	\$3,500,000
Local Pedestrian Facilities (Local Funding)	\$150,000	\$2,500,000
Active Transportation Planning (Local Funding)	N/A	\$200,000

Environment		
EV Charging Infrastructure (project selection in 2028)	\$500,000	\$2,000,000
TDM (Competitive)	\$100,000	\$750,000

**Table 5: Additional Funding Category Funding Amounts**

Funding Category	Expected Funding Amount
Arterial BRT	\$30,000,000 minimum
TDM Base Funding	\$5,800,000
Regional Travel Behavior Inventory	\$1,500,000

Definitions, examples, and scoring overviews of each of the funding categories are included at the end of this document.

## General Process and Rules

### *Application Process*

1. Projects may apply for Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funding in addition to the Regional Solicitation/Active Transportation Solicitations. However, applicants may not submit the same project for multiple categories within the Regional Solicitation/Active Transportation Solicitations. Instead, applicants should select the application category that best aligns with the primary objectives of the project. Each project submitted should be unique and not have overlapping project elements with another project submitted by the same agency. Projects can only be awarded funds from one of the three programs (i.e., HSIP, Regional Solicitation, and Active Transportation) for the same or overlapping project elements.
2. The applicant must complete the qualifying requirements questionnaire to show that the project meets all of the qualifying requirements of the appropriate funding category to be eligible to be scored and ranked against other projects.
3. The applicant must respond directly to each scoring measure in order for its application to be scored and receive points. Projects are scored based on how well the response meets the requirements of the measures and, in some cases, how well the responses compare to those of other qualified applications in the same project funding category.
4. Project applicants may “bundle” two or more projects together, but they must either be:
  - Projects located along the same corridor or travelshed (e.g., filling multiple trail gaps along a trail corridor or projects at stops/stations along a transit route)
  - Similar improvements within a defined neighborhood or downtown area (e.g., adding benches along the sidewalks in a downtown area, improving curb ramps across a corridor/small area)

The bundling of independent projects that are not related to one another as described above is not allowed. For eligible bundled projects, when scoring in multiple locations, an average will be used for geographically based measures. Applicants are encouraged to contact Joe Barbeau at [Joseph.barbeau@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:Joseph.barbeau@metc.state.mn.us) if they have questions regarding project bundling.

## ***Scoring and Project Selection***

1. Metropolitan Scoring committees made up of members of the TAC F&P Committee or other technical staff will evaluate the applications and prepare a ranked list of projects for each funding category based on a total score of all the measures. The Committee will forward the ranked list of projects with funding options to TAC and TAB. TAB may develop its own funding options as well. TAB will then approve a list of projects, and the Metropolitan Council will concur on the Regional Solicitation projects. TAB later recommends the Regional Solicitation projects as part of the region's draft TIP and the Metropolitan Council approves it.
2. Scoring committees should use a tiebreaker to sort the ranking of two or more projects with the same score (all scores in each measure will be rounded to the nearest whole integer). For the 2026 Regional Solicitation, ties will be broken within funding categories by favoring the higher-scoring project in the highest-weighted criterion. If that score is tied, the tiebreaker will move down to the next-highest-weighted criterion until there is no tie. In any instance in which a tied score is between two projects with the same sponsor in the same funding category, that sponsor can select which project is ranked higher.
3. Scoring committees have the option to recommend a deviation from the approved scoring guidance if a rationale for the deviation is provided to the TAC Funding and Programming Committee for its consideration.
4. Applicants will have an opportunity to appeal scores on their submittals only at a TAC Funding and Programming Committee meeting. Scoring appeals are limited to quantitative errors or mistakes. The scores given on qualitative responses cannot be appealed.
5. TAB will not fund more than one project in the same funding category that is immediately adjacent to another submitted project on the same corridor (only applies to two separate applications selected in the same solicitation). For example, an applicant cannot break up the project into two separate applications to increase its funding award in the same solicitation cycle.
6. A map of the selected projects will be distributed to the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) so that project sponsors will have ample time to coordinate on projects that potentially impact culturally sensitive land. Additional coordination between the MPO and Tribal Nations is occurring in other areas of the MPO's work.
7. At least one project will be funded from each of the five eligible functional classifications: Minor arterial augmenters, connectors, expanders, and relievers, as well as other principal arterials (i.e., non-freeway facilities).
8. Within the Transit modal category, there is an Arterial Bus Rapid Transit Project category, which will be funded for a minimum of \$30 million. TAB may choose to allocate more than the minimum for that category, in which case the additional funding will come from other Transit funding categories. There is also a New Market guarantee to ensure that at least one Transit Expansion or Modernization project is funded that serves areas outside of Transit Market Area 1 and 2 from the Transportation Policy Plan for at least one end of the project.

## **Funding Schedule**

1. Most projects selected to receive federal funding through this solicitation will be programmed in the regional TIP in program years 2030 and 2031. There may be a small amount of federal funding in earlier years that will also become available. The Active Transportation funds do not need to be programmed into the TIP, as these projects do not receive federal funding. Active Transportation projects may be initiated in years 2027, 2028, and 2029.

**A project will be removed from the program if it does not meet its program year.** The program year aligns with the state fiscal year. For example, if the project is programmed for 2030 in the TIP, the project program year begins July 1, 2029, and ends June 30, 2030. Most projects selected from this solicitation will be programmed in FY 2030 and 2031. The [Regional Program Year Policy](#) outlines the process to request a one-time program year extension.

## **Cost and Funding**

1. The fundable amount of a project is based on the original submittal. TAB must approve any significant change in the scope or cost of an approved project as described in TAB's [Scope Change Policy](#).

For all projects, sponsors must incur the cost of the project prior to repayment. Costs become eligible for reimbursement only after a project has been approved by MnDOT State-Aid and the appropriate USDOT modal agency. For Active Transportation regional sales tax funded projects, project costs are eligible for reimbursement only after the project has been approved by Met Council grants staff.

## **Roadway Lane Expansion or New Interchange Requirements**

1. Projects on the Minnesota trunk highway system that have a total cost (including design and engineering and right-of-way costs) greater than \$15 million and are either new interchange projects or add 2,500 feet of lane miles or more are required to perform a transportation greenhouse gas emissions impact assessment per MN Statutes 161.1781. This law requires a greenhouse gas impact assessment of the project and development of an offset plan before inclusion in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The assessment and offset plan will need to be reviewed by the Metropolitan Council and Transportation Greenhouse Gas Emissions Impact Assessment Technical Advisory Committee. The Minnesota Commissioner of Transportation will approve the project to be included in the TIP.
2. Prior to Regional Solicitation application submittal, project proposers will need to determine project emissions impacts and identify vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and emissions offsets. Then, the TAB will add in offsets generated from other selected Regional Solicitation and Active Transportation projects. The combined local and regional offsets will form the basis of the total offset plan to be reviewed by the Metropolitan Council and certified by MnDOT and its Technical Advisory Committee at least 90 days prior to the project entering the draft TIP. Project sponsors are encouraged to contact Met Council and MnDOT staff several months before the Regional Solicitation application deadline.
3. Roadway lane expansion projects on any system (city, county, or MnDOT) of greater than one mile are required to follow the Congestion Management Process (CMP) Handbook process for identifying potential congestion solutions and submit materials to Metropolitan Council staff prior to the application deadline. For the 2026 Solicitation, the Metropolitan Council has an on-call consultant who can assist applicants with going through the CMP Handbook.

## *Transit Projects*

1. Applicants for transit projects should be aware of the schedule and associated time lag for receiving federal funds for transit vehicle and transit operating projects. Applicants are encouraged to contact Heather Giesel at the Metropolitan Council [Heather.giesel@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:Heather.giesel@metc.state.mn.us) for more details on selecting a preferred program year as part of the application given this time lag.
2. Transit projects will be given an opportunity to have their ridership projections reviewed by Metropolitan Council staff prior to submittal to determine whether the scoring methodology is sound. Any applicant wanting to have an optional review should submit draft ridership information to the TAB Coordinator two weeks prior to the application deadline.

## **Project Schedule DRAFT**

Council approves release of Regional Solicitation	Spring 2026
Online Applications available	Spring 2026
Virtual Workshop – overview of 2026 Regional Solicitation	Spring 2026
Virtual Software/Mapping Application Training	Spring 2026
Application Deadline	Spring 2026
Scoring Committees Meet	Summer 2026
Scoring Appeals Deadline	Late Summer 2026
TAB Selection of Projects	Late 2026

## **Technical Assistance Contacts**

Table 6 provides contacts for technical assistance in providing necessary data in order to address various prioritizing criteria. Before contacting any technical expert below, please use existing local sources. Local experts in many cases are the appropriate contact for much of the data needed to respond to measures. In some instances, it may take five or more workdays to provide the requested data. Please request data as soon as possible.

To request special accommodation for submitting Regional Solicitation applications, please email [webteam@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:webteam@metc.state.mn.us).



## Physical Development Committee

Discuss Regional Solicitation For  
Metropolitan Council Transportation  
Advisory Board

**Erin Laberee**

Transportation Director/County Engineer

January 13, 2026

1

## MetCouncil Technical Advisory Board



### Previous Actions

1. Approve application categories
2. Approve minimum/maximum awards
3. Approve category funding targets
4. Approve qualifying requirements

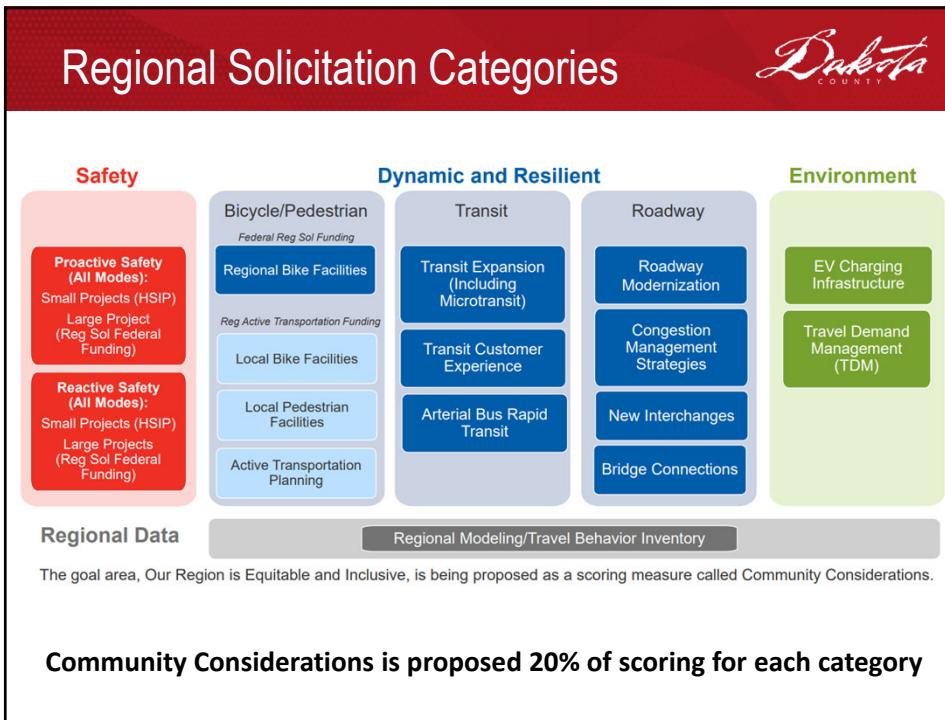
} November TAB

### Upcoming Actions

1. Approve application criteria, measures, and scoring guidance
2. Approve score weighting
3. Approve overall solicitation package and release for public comments

} January TAB

2



3

## Funding Targets

Table 4: Regional Solicitation Funding Category Minimums and Maximums		
Funding Category	Minimum Funding Award	Maximum Funding Award
<b>Safety</b>		
Proactive/Reactive Safety	\$2,000,000	\$7,000,000
<b>Roadway</b>		
Congestion Management Strategies – At-Grade Projects	\$1,000,000	\$10,000,000
New Interchanges	\$1,000,000	\$20,000,000
Roadway Modernization	\$1,000,000	\$10,000,000
Bridge Connections	\$1,000,000	\$7,000,000
<b>Transit</b>		
Transit Expansion	\$500,000	\$10,000,000
Transit Customer Experience	\$500,000	\$10,000,000
<b>Bicycle/Pedestrian</b>		
Regional Bike Facilities	\$1,000,000	\$5,500,000
Local Bike Facilities (Local Funding)	\$150,000	\$3,500,000
Local Pedestrian Facilities (Local Funding)	\$150,000	\$2,500,000
Active Transportation Planning (Local Funding)	N/A	\$200,000
<b>Environment</b>		
EV Charging Infrastructure (project selection in 2028)	\$500,000	\$2,000,000
TDM (Competitive)	\$100,000	\$750,000

4

## Community Considerations



### 3 Proposed Measures



1. **Community Data and Context**
  - Strong applications show a clear, nuanced understanding of the community.
2. **Community Need and Future Engagement**
  - Strong applications show how community needs were identified and future engagement is planned.
3. **Community Benefits**
  - Strong applications deliver meaningful benefits to nearby communities and reduce harms.

#### Scoring Details

- 5 ratings: Low, Medium-Low, Medium, Medium-High, High ratings, on 3 measures
- High ratings are a high bar - only those applications documenting full use of best practices
- Annual training required for scorers and available to all agency staff

5

## Safety Categories



### Proposed Weighting

Criteria and Measures	Proactive	Reactive
Connection to Existing Planning Efforts	30%	20%
Expected Reduction/System Risk Reduction in Fatal or Serious Injury Crashes (5-year)	15%	35%
Fatal and Serious Injury Crash History (10-year)	15%	5%
Improvements for People Outside of Vehicles	25%	20%
Community Considerations	15%	20%
Total	100%	100%

(Policy Work Group Recommendations in Red)

6

## Safety Categories



**Funding Priority** = provide funding to those projects scoring High-High-High on the Community Considerations measures, and that are not otherwise funded under a proposed funding option

- Substitutes for not having a separate application category for this regional Goal
- Very difficult to achieve; Community Considerations scoring committee (includes all scorers) will agree and recommend
- Substitutes for bonus points as used in previous Solicitation design
- Meant to reward projects with very high community alignment and focus but that might otherwise be small in nature, unable to achieve high scoring under technical 80% of scoring
- No more than one priority project total for the entire solicitation
- No priority project from the Safety categories

7

## Bicycle/Pedestrian Categories



### Proposed Weighting

Criteria and Measures	Regional Bike	Local Bike	Local Ped	AT Planning
Regional Bicycle Priorities	30%			
Connection to Key Destinations*	10%	30%	30%	
Context Sensitive Design	20%			
Safety*	20%	20%	20%	30%
Complete Streets*		5%	5%	
Identified Gaps, Barriers, or Deficiencies*		25%	25%	
Proposed Project Description				50%
Community Considerations*	20%	20%	20%	20%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

\* Direct connection to legislative requirements

8

## Transit Categories



### Proposed Weighting:

Criteria and Measures	Expansion	Customer Experience
Service/Facility Provided Must be Effective for Transit Market Area	30%	
New Ridership/Ridership Affected	20%	20%
New Coverage	10%	
Connections to Key Destinations	10%	
Transit Needs-based Determination	10%	
Existing Transit Service		15%
Access to Transit Facilities		15%
Safety and Security		15%
Customer Comfort and Ease of Use		15%
Community Considerations	20%	20%
Total	100%	100%

9

## Roadway Categories



### Proposed Weighting:

Criteria and Measures	Modernization	Congestion Management	New Interchanges	Bridge Connections
Multimodal/Complete Streets Connections	40%	10%	10%	15%
Safety	30%	20%	30%	10%
Freight	5%	5%	5%	5%
Natural Systems Protection and Restoration	5%	5%	5%	5%
Anticipated Delay Reduction		15%	10%	
Regional Priorities		25%	20%	
System Resilience				45%
Community Considerations	20%	20%	20%	20%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

10

## Environment Categories/Traffic Demand Management



### Proposed Weighting:

Criteria and Measures	TDM
Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Reduction	30%
Connection to Jobs, Educations, and Opportunity/Destinations	25%
Project Effectiveness Evaluation	20%
Innovation	5%
Community Considerations	20%
Total	100%

11

## Discussion



### Upcoming Actions

1. Approve application criteria, measures, and scoring guidance
2. Approve score weighting
3. Approve overall solicitation package and release for public comments

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# Physical Development Committee of the Whole

## Request for Board Action

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**Item Number:** DC-5180

**Agenda #:** 5.2

**Meeting Date:** 1/13/2026

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**DEPARTMENT:** Parks

**FILE TYPE:** Regular Information

### **TITLE**

#### **Review Draft Objectives And Strategies For Parks Natural Systems Plan**

### **PURPOSE/ACTION REQUESTED**

Receive and review draft objectives and strategies for the Parks Natural Systems Plan

### **SUMMARY**

Dakota County adopted a Natural Resources Management System Plan

<https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/parks/About/ResourcePlans/Documents/NaturalResourcesManagementReport.pdf> for its Parks in 2017, which addressed the Park System (parks, greenways, and park conservation areas) and private natural area easements. In 2020, Dakota County updated its Farmland and Natural Areas Protection Plan as a more targeted County Land Conservation Plan

<https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/Environment/LandConservation/Plan/Documents/LandConservationPlan.pdf>

With the completion of the 2050 Parks Vision Plan, staff is combining the NRMSP and the LCP into a unified operational plan called the Natural Systems Plan (NSP).

The NSP will serve as a bridge between the high-level goals of the 2050 Vision Plan (Attachment: 2050 Vision Plan Goals and Strategies Related to Land Protection and Natural Systems Stewardship) and the site-specific recommendations included in individual park and greenway Natural Resource Management Plans (NRMPs). It is intended to be clear enough to guide work for the next five to 10 years but have the flexibility to respond to changes and new opportunities.

Staff has been merging the “action portions,” i.e., goals, objectives, and strategies, of the NRMSP and the LCP into the new NSP (Attachment: NSP Draft Objectives and Strategies). Because the Land Conservation Plan is relatively new, fewer changes are being recommended. The NRMSP is older and includes only goals, requiring updating and the build-out of strategies. The Vision Plan goals provide overarching guidance for the new plan. Additionally, the 2050 Vision Plan identified new goals related to natural resources that were not reflected in the NRMSP or LCP. The attached draft objectives, strategies, and tactics reflect updated content and incorporation of new elements from the 2050 Vision Plan for two new chapters of the NSP: “Land Protection” and “Natural Systems Stewardship.”

Next steps will include the build-out of the implementation section of the NSP to address targets, priorities, and timeframes, metrics, budget and Capital Improvement Program, funding sources, partnerships, and outreach. Targeted stakeholder engagement will be held on any areas of substantive change. A draft plan document is anticipated for early in the second quarter of 2026.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Information only: no action requested.

**EXPLANATION OF FISCAL/FTE IMPACTS**

No direct fiscal impact for the NSP plan development. The fiscal impact for projects implemented per the plan's direction will be brought to the board on an annual basis through the Parks CIP.

None       Current budget       Other  
 Amendment Requested       New FTE(s) requested

**RESOLUTION**

Information only: no action requested.

**PREVIOUS BOARD ACTION**

None.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment: 2050 Vision Plan Goals and Strategies Related to Land Protection and Natural Systems Stewardship

Attachment: NSP Draft Objectives and Strategies

Attachment: Presentation Slides

**BOARD GOALS**

Thriving People       A Healthy Environment with Quality Natural Resources  
 A Successful Place for Business and Jobs       Excellence in Public Service

**CONTACT**

Department Head: Niki Geisler

Author: Mary Jackson

## Related 2050 Vision Plan Goals and Strategies

The following goals and associated strategies provide current guidance on the County's role in protecting land and stewardship of natural systems.

### **Goal A: Nurture the reciprocal relationship between people and nature.**

Strategy 2. Maintain impactful land conservation, visitor services, and natural resource management plans as budgeting, capital implementation, and operating tools.

Strategy 3. Commit to systematic care, management, and enhancement of lands across the system.

Strategy 4. Exemplify sustainability and innovation in design, implementation, and maintenance practices.

### **Goal E: Expand environmental stewardship through outdoor programs, learning, and volunteerism.**

Strategy 1. Offer year-round program and volunteer opportunities for all ages, abilities, and skill levels.

Strategy 2. Partner with cities, schools, libraries, watershed organizations, and other organizations to advance environmental learning.

Strategy 3. Provide community outreach and education that inspires environmental awareness and understanding.

Strategy 4. Encourage volunteerism to restore natural resources and build a conservation ethos.

### **Goal G: Strengthen partnerships with Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities for the protection of lands and traditions.**

Strategy 6. Employ Indigenous experts for teaching and planning and apply Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) that stewards healthy water and land.

### **Goal H: Locate new park units close to people or to protect natural areas and recreational assets.**

Strategy 5. Protect park land and greenway corridors ahead of development pressure.

Strategy 7. Employ land protection tools to conserve shorelines, springsheds, and sensitive landscapes.

Strategy 8. Work with partners to protect regionally important private recreational lands if they are threatened.

### **Goal I: Lead and support on ecological stewardship and climate resilience.**

Strategy 1. Develop and maintain a systemwide approach to identify, protect, connect, improve, and manage landscapes. Regularly update this approach based on data and best practices and integrate into long-range plans.

Strategy 2. Develop climate adaptation and mitigation strategies and resilient restoration practices.

Strategy 3. Continually innovate to reduce environmental impacts of park development, programming, and operations.

Strategy 4. Prioritize habitat in environmentally sensitive areas.

Strategy 5. Be a cooperative platform, providing technical support to others' protection efforts.

Strategy 6. Reduce the park system's carbon footprint.

Strategy 7. Use preliminary Conservation Focus Areas (CFAs) as a framework for protecting and connecting natural areas and habitat.

Strategy 8. Continually assess new environmental threats and plan for responsive actions.

Strategy 9. Assess cumulative effects and impacts on natural systems when planning new development and improvements in parks, greenways, and conservation areas. Minimize, mitigate, or prevent impacts.

Strategy 10. Develop a process and criteria for identifying and designating resource-sensitive areas where special management or limited access may be needed to protect resources or sites.

#### **Goal J: Protect, improve, and manage the natural resources of Dakota County.**

Strategy 1. Use Conservation Focus Areas (CFAs) as a landowner discussion framework for protecting and connecting natural areas.

To prioritize, protect, and restore surface/ground waters and reduce flooding.

To protect critical habitat on public and private lands.

To provide compatible and appropriate outdoor recreation activities.

Strategy 2. Partner with the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization, the Lower Mississippi River Watershed Management Organization (WMO), the North Cannon River WMO, the Black Dog WMO, the Eagan-Inver Grove Heights WMO, the Lower Minnesota River WMO, and others to promote, incentivize, and implement water management and soil health practices in agricultural areas.

Strategy 3. Protect and restore critical infiltration areas outside CFAs identified by the County Groundwater Plan and in watersheds to protect cold water trout streams.

Strategy 4. Develop and implement a Pollinator Habitat Network.

Strategy 5. Provide timely Land Conservation Program information to public and private partners.

Strategy 6. Implement the Dakota County Land Conservation Plan and support implementation of the Dakota County Ground Water Plan in collaboration with other Dakota County departments.

Strategy 7. Restore and manage natural spaces to support and nurture wildlife and plant communities.

#### **Goal L: Seek and sustain values-based and mission-driven partnerships.**

Strategy 1. Expand strategic partnerships with cities, watershed organizations, nature based nonprofits, and other agencies, nonprofits and organizations to provide nature-based recreation, restoration, and other services to avoid duplication and enhance service levels.

Strategy 5. Partner with state and federal agencies to improve parks/sites with state and federal significance.

Strategy 6. Partner with private land owners on conservation and land management.

Strategy 7. Maximize interdepartmental partnerships for stacked benefits.

#### **Goal M: Care for the system through sustainable and innovative funding.**

Strategy 1. Identify and allocate consistent and dedicated funding for operations and maintenance.

Strategy 4. Seek out grants, legislative funding, and sources of private funding.

Strategy 5. Explore revenue capture such as:

Carbon offset credits.

Donor giving and stewardship programs that align with the County gift policy and incorporate a financial assistance program to increase philanthropic interest.

Vendors and public/private partnerships.

Strategy 6. Infuse the budgeting process with metrics that illustrate the balance between capital investments, programming costs, operational demands, and revenue streams.

Strategy 7. Evaluate organizational structural changes that would consolidate the full scope of parks, greenways, and natural systems operations either continuing as a department within Dakota County or as an autonomous park district.

Strategy 8. Explore the possibility of a voter-approved bond referendum to fund parks, greenways, and natural system projects.

**Goal N: Invest in a thriving parks workforce that represents the communities served.**

Strategy 2. Collaborate with schools and professional organizations to elevate park and natural resource career pathways.

Strategy 3. Maintain an organizational structure and culture that provides opportunities for career growth and fulfillment.

Strategy 4. Invest in innovative recruitment and retention strategies.

Strategy 5. Identify and implement adequate staffing levels to operate and maintain amenities and services and adjust growth accordingly.

Strategy 6. Invest in staff training and development to deepen cultural competencies.

Strategy 7. Invest in youth programs, outdoor education, mentorship, and training that supports pathways to outdoor careers and future workforce diversity.

# Land Protection and Natural Systems Plan: Draft Objectives, Strategies, and Tactics

## Framework

Goals and strategies from the **2050 Parks Vision Plan** provide overarching guidance. The Natural Systems Plan will include objectives, strategies, and tactics from the existing Parks Natural Resources System Plan (2017) and the Land Conservation Plan (2020), as well as new content to build out a comprehensive framework to guide work over the next 10 years.

## Working Definitions

Question	If the answer is “yes,” it’s likely a...	Example
Does it describe <i>what success looks like</i> in measurable terms?	<b>Objective</b>	“Increase pollinator habitat acreage by 15%.”
Does it describe <i>how you intend to achieve</i> that success, in broad strokes?	<b>Strategy</b>	“Focus habitat restoration near existing high-quality prairies to expand connectivity.”
Does it describe a <i>specific action, tool, or step</i> to carry out the strategy?	<b>Tactic</b>	“Seed 10 acres adjacent to Prairie Preserve with native grasses and forbs.”

## Land Protection

Goals, strategies, and tactics pertaining to land protection from the Land Conservation Plan were largely retained and reformatted as objectives, strategies, and tactics (displayed as I. *objective*, A. *strategy*, and 1. *tactic*). Minor updates to wording were made.

These actions form the foundation of the Land Protection Chapter. Content from the Land Conservation Plan that relates more to stewardship and management was moved to the Natural Systems Stewardship chapter.

- I. **Prioritize ecologically important areas for protection.**
  - A. Use County Park and Greenway Plans, and Conservation Focus Areas (CFAs) as a framework for protecting and connecting natural areas and habitat.
    1. Refine and periodically update acquisition project evaluation criteria and weighting for different classifications (surface water, wetland and adjacent habitat, upland and mixed upland habitat) to prioritize potential land protection projects.
    2. Conduct landowner outreach within prioritized CFAs to effectively inform and engage landowners.
    3. Create detailed, baseline information profiles for each CFA to document natural resource attributes, quality, needs, and opportunities with evolving updates.

4. Prioritize identified wetland basins for landowner outreach and further hydrological analysis and cost estimates.
5. Use a range of voluntary land protection methods, such as fee title and easement acquisition and land registry.
6. Protect representative, high-quality native communities (wetlands, grasslands and forests) within the County.
7. Establish a technical advisory group to evaluate and develop recommendations for the use of property tax modifications as conservation incentives.
8. Review CFA boundaries every five years and revise as needed, based on new information.
9. Define and periodically reevaluate Greenway Corridor widths (100 ft Urban, 200ft Suburban, or 300 ft Rural contexts) beyond County easements to:
  - a. Prioritize partnership work with landowners on native habitat buffers and restoration priorities for connecting habitat corridors along Greenway Trails and
  - b. incentivize larger restoration efforts on non-County public lands.

**B. Expand strategic partnerships with agencies and organizations.**

1. Continue implementing the City-County Conservation Collaborative for natural resource planning, protection, and management.
2. Assist townships with natural resource planning, protection and management in preparation for 2050 comprehensive planning.

**II. Protect and enhance water quality and quantity.**

**A. Use preliminary CFAs to identify, prioritize, protect, and restore wetland basins, shoreland, headwaters, and groundwater recharge areas to improve water quality and supply and to reduce flooding.**

1. Review and revise evaluation criteria and weighting as needed to prioritize potential protection and restoration projects.
2. Conduct landowner outreach within prioritized CFAs to effectively inform and engage landowners.
3. Use a range of voluntary land protection methods, such as fee title and easement acquisition and explore options for long-term agreements.

**B. Protect and restore critical infiltration areas outside CFAs identified in the County Groundwater Plan.**

1. Establish evaluation criteria and weighting to prioritize potential protection and restoration projects.
2. Conduct landowner outreach in other important areas to inform and engage landowners and initiate wetland restoration.
3. Use a range of voluntary land protection methods, such as fee title and permanent or temporary easements.

**III. Use CFAs as a framework for restoring and sustaining biodiversity.**

**A. Use CFAs to identify and prioritize habitat protection for rare, declining, and special concern species on public lands.**

1. Identify and inventory areas of existing high biodiversity and high restoration potential.

2. Develop baseline biodiversity data, goals, priorities, and monitoring protocols for the County and each CFA.
- B. Use CFAs to identify and protect habitat for rare, declining, and special concern species on private lands.
  1. Prioritize biodiversity in CFA protection and restoration criteria, weighting, and implementation.

**IV. Inform and engage the public in natural resource protection and management.**

- A. Provide timely and relevant Land Conservation Program information.
  1. Update the Land Conservation Communication Plan to provide a wide variety of information and stories to the general public throughout the year.
  2. Develop a collaborative, countywide, web-based network and interactive map to share natural resource information with the general public.
  3. Provide environmental assessments for interested landowners.
  4. Provide regular program updates and information to property owners with County easements information and two-way communication opportunities for participating landowners.
- B. Work with partners to engage the public through in-person conservation events and activities.
  1. Facilitate volunteer opportunities in partnership with other agencies and organizations (e.g., BioBlitz, seed collection, invasive species control, and vegetation and wildlife monitoring).
  2. Provide programs, workshops, and tours.

**V. Enhance nature-based recreational access to conservation lands.**

- A. Add new publicly accessible recreational lands within CFAs.
  1. Work with landowners and partners to add and/or expand publicly accessible land within each CFA.
  2. Inventory and select multiple countywide locations for the public to experience high quality, representative wetland, grassland and forest communities.
  3. Recreational amenities in conservation lands should be passive in nature and require minimal operations and maintenance, defined with a new minimum amenity package (to be developed). NEW
- B. Restore, enhance, and maintain non-County land used for outdoor recreation
  1. Partner with other public entities to increase restoration, enhancement, and long-term management of natural resources on non-County public lands.
  2. Work with partners to provide natural resource information for outdoor recreation participants through multiple venues and methods. Work with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to provide more public amenities (kiosks, benches, trails) on state Wildlife and Aquatic Management Areas.

## **Natural Systems Stewardship**

The 2017 Natural Resources Management System Plan (NRMSP) included goals for vegetation, water, wildlife, greenways and conservation easements but did not identify supporting strategies or tactics. New objectives, strategies and tactics were developed, incorporating the goals from the previous plan and building out from the 2050 Vision Plan goals.

Selected content from the Land Conservation Plan was also incorporated into this Natural Systems Stewardship chapter.

**I. Manage natural systems on protected lands in a comprehensive and sustainable manner. (new) (based on concept of adaptive management cycle, drawn from NRMSMP)**

**A. Invest:** Commit to natural systems restoration and perpetual maintenance.

1. Periodically review restoration target acreages with Board requests for funding and staff resources to improve the long-term integrity of natural systems, increasing resources as the system grows.
2. To protect the ecological and financial investment in the acres restored, secure stable funding for long-term adaptive management.
3. Build and sustain partnerships with other public agencies, organizations, and individuals (cities, SWCD, state, federal, tribes, non-profit organizations, landowners, volunteers, community members).

4. Continue requiring ongoing restoration, management and maintenance activities as part of land protection easement agreements.
5. Explore options for using a private funding entity to secure and disburse private funds for natural resource restoration and maintenance on protected private lands.



**B. Plan:** Develop a coordinated, science-based framework that guides natural resources management across all parks, greenways and easements.

1. Base management plans in sound ecological science incorporating goals that align with site ecology, planned site uses, available resources, and projected climate change effects. Make reasonable plans to avoid conflicts between site use and ecological needs.
2. Designate selected areas within the park system that have higher natural resource quality, unique habitat value, restored areas, or areas with sensitive cultural resources as places where the priority use and management will be to protect, improve and maintain resource integrity. Limit recreational use and access in areas with the most sensitive resources on a temporary or permanent basis. (new)
3. Identify and adhere to standards for desired restoration outcomes that reflect ecological context, intensity of site uses, and potential climate impacts.
4. Develop individual and prioritized natural resource management plans (NRMP) for each park, greenway, and easement being managed, and update plans regularly.
5. Integrate priorities across individual NRMPs into system-wide priorities.
6. Engage partners, landowners, stakeholders, and experts in scoping and planning initiatives.
7. Apply the CFA framework and data from individual NRMPs to establish criteria and weighting for project prioritization, ensuring site-level priorities integrate into a coordinated, system-wide strategy.

8. Identify a consistent and secure, long term funding source for natural resource work. (new)
9. Develop a streamlined, clearly defined staffing structure that focuses on system priorities, enhances efficiency, supports staff development, and aligns with organizational needs.

**C. Implement:** Implement plans in accordance with the principles of natural systems management and the 2050 Vision Plan.

1. Base plan implementation in sound ecological science and established priorities for the system.
2. Develop workplans that adhere to the Adaptive Management principle of maintaining flexibility to address emerging issues and opportunities.
3. Continue implementing the City-County Conservation Collaborative to increase natural resource management within ecologically significant city lands using shared and leveraged resources.

**D. Monitor:** Utilize a coordinated, science-based framework to monitor work progress and natural system change over time.

1. Monitor vegetation, water and wildlife to track natural system change using a well-designed system that can be sustained over time.
2. Use disease monitoring and Invasive Species Early Detection monitoring protocols to track and respond to emergent issues.

**E. Adapt:** Learn from project outcomes and monitoring results and adjust implementation strategies accordingly.

1. Refine and improve management approaches based on adaptive management principles and lessons learned.
2. Create opportunities to test new resource management approaches.
3. Incorporate flexibility in plans to account for unforeseen changes and opportunities.
4. Continually revisit and refine programs, including cost share funding formulae.

**II. Manage natural systems to mitigate and improve resilience to the impacts of a changing climate. (new) (from 2050 Vision Plan)**

**A. Strengthen ecosystem diversity and health to withstand climate impacts.**

1. Maintain and restore diverse natural communities that can better withstand extreme temperatures, severe storm events, drought, and the influx of new pests and diseases from other climate zones.
2. Increase species diversity as a critical element of climate resilience.

**B. Use adaptive, science-based practices to prepare for future conditions.**

1. When supported by science, explore the use of assisted migration methods to carefully introduce selected species that are native to warmer climate zones.
2. Apply emerging research to anticipate and manage ecological changes linked to climate trends.

**C. Increase carbon sequestration within the system and in other areas of opportunity.**

1. Restore diverse native communities that sequester carbon, including grasslands and woodlands.
2. Maintain the health of native communities to reduce loss of sequestration capacity.

3. Work with and advise other County departments and partners to increase ecologically appropriate and diverse tree and vegetative plantings as a cooling and carbon sequestration mechanism in targeted locations.

**D. Reduce the carbon footprint of management activities.**

1. Reduce emissions from restoration and maintenance work through practices such as using biochar in lieu of burning wood.
2. Transition maintenance equipment and operations toward electric or low-emission alternatives.

**III. Improve ecological quality in County Parks, on other public lands and permanently protected private lands. (new) (incorporates NRMSP and LCP content)**

**A. Restore, enhance, and maintain natural systems on County-owned public lands. (formerly the NRMSP vegetation goals)**

1. Enhance ecological functioning in targeted restorations with the addition of selected native species. (new)
2. Propagate local native ecotypes for vegetation restoration projects (new)

**B. Restore, enhance, and maintain natural resources on non-County public lands. (from Land Conservation Plan)**

1. Use the CFA framework to develop criteria and weighting for prioritizing potential natural resource management projects within CFAs.
2. Review funding formulas for restoration projects on public lands within and outside of CFAs.

**C. Restore, enhance, and maintain natural resources on protected private lands. (from Land Conservation Plan)**

1. Provide new incentives for improved natural resource management on protected and non-protected private lands.

**D. Identify natural system management gaps not addressed through County lands, other public protected lands, and permanently protected private lands. (from Land Conservation Plan)**

1. Consider refinements to the Conservation Focus Areas as new opportunities arise for stewardship of sensitive natural resource lands.
2. Consider opportunities to assist other private property managers in managing natural systems on their lands.

**IV. Manage permanently protected land to improve surface and groundwater quality. (modified from NRMSP water goals)**

**A. Support partner efforts to address surface water impairments in County Parks based on lakes study and collected data. (Adapted from NRMSP water goals)**

1. Support partner efforts to address the most significant aquatic invasive species (AIS) and the most significant wetland invasive species.
2. Support partner efforts to install stormwater best practices at priority locations in park watersheds outside of park boundaries to address impairments.

**B. Use a range of natural resource management techniques within and outside of CFAs to restore, enhance and maintain lands for improved water quality, infiltration and storage to reduce flooding and provide wildlife habitat benefits. (from Land Conservation Plan)**

**C.** Partner with the SWCD and watershed organizations to promote, incentivize and implement water quality and quantity management and soil health practices in agricultural use areas within or outside of CFAs (e.g., functional buffers, perennial vegetation on critical recharge areas, erosion control, wetland restoration, water retention basins). *(from Land Conservation Plan)*

1. Review existing programs to determine if there are gaps or new opportunities and develop and implementation plan.
2. Secure new cost-share funding for best management practice (BMP) implementation.
3. Promote awareness of BMP opportunities among landowners and operators.
4. Leverage financial and staff resources to implement projects on protected lands.

**V. Manage habitat to sustain native and rare species, increase biodiversity, and enhance ecosystem health on permanently protected lands. *(Adapted and expanded from NRMSWP wildlife goals)***

**A.** Monitor and manage wildlife populations to sustain ecological balance and support adaptive management.

1. Monitor selected resident and migratory species (both short- and long-term) to track progress, evaluate ecosystem health, and inform management priorities.
2. Control overabundant species that negatively impact natural systems. (new)
3. Seek opportunities for the reintroduction of appropriate native species in coordination with regional and state partners.
4. Manage the Spring Lake Park Reserve Bison herd to sustain their health and provide ecological and cultural benefits within their range. (new)

**B.** Enhance habitat connectivity and wildlife movement across the landscape. (new)

1. Enhance wildlife movement corridors in greenways, parks, and adjacent lands to maintain population genetic diversity and resilience.
2. Partner with the MN DNR, adjacent jurisdictions, and others on regional wildlife habitat and connectivity. (new)
3. Identify and remove barriers to wildlife movement, prioritizing locations with high ecological or connectivity value.

**VI. Expand capacity for natural systems management by building and sustaining effective partnerships and supporting the efforts of others. *(from Vision Plan)***

**A.** Build enduring partnerships to share expertise and resources.

1. Create and foster long-term partnerships with County departments, cities, tribes, state and federal agencies, and organizations to manage natural systems using a coordinated, systems-based approach.
2. Engage and learn from Indigenous partners and experts in Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) to inform management practices.
3. Explore co-management opportunities for areas that contain significant cultural resources.
4. Strengthen and expand collaborative initiatives such as the City-County Conservation Collaborative and the Greenway Collaborative.
5. Partner with transportation agencies and utilities to improve pollinator habitat within right-of-way and corridors.

**B.** Increase the capacity of others to manage natural systems.

1. Provide technical assistance, training, and educational resources for public and private landowners.
  - a. Support volunteer training, coordination, and ongoing engagement in restoration and monitoring.
  - b. Work with educational institutions, training programs, and organizations to build the natural systems management workforce.
  - c. Evaluate and implement mechanisms—such as technical assistance, incentives, or cooperative programs—to help private landowners, corporations, and institutions manage land for ecological benefit.
- C. Promote stewardship through outreach and education.
  1. Promote County parks as living classrooms and demonstration sites for restoration and stewardship best practices.
  2. Share knowledge and lessons learned from County projects to inspire and inform partner and community stewardship efforts.



## Update on the Dakota County Land Protection and Natural Systems Plan

Tom Lewanski - Dakota County Parks  
Mary Jackson - Office of Planning

Physical Development Committee Division Meeting  
January 13, 2026

1

### Overview



- Purpose
- Progress to date on land protection and natural resource plans
- Proposed revisions to Natural Systems Plan objectives and strategies
- Next Steps

2

## Purpose



Combine the 2017 Parks Natural Resources Management System Plan (NRMSP) with the 2020 Dakota County Land Conservation Plan (LCP) to:

- Build from the 2050 Parks Vision Plan
- Update objectives, strategies, priorities, targets, and timeframes
- Streamline content

3

## NRMSP to Date



Dakota County  
Natural Resource Management System Plan  
May 2017



### 2017 NRMSP

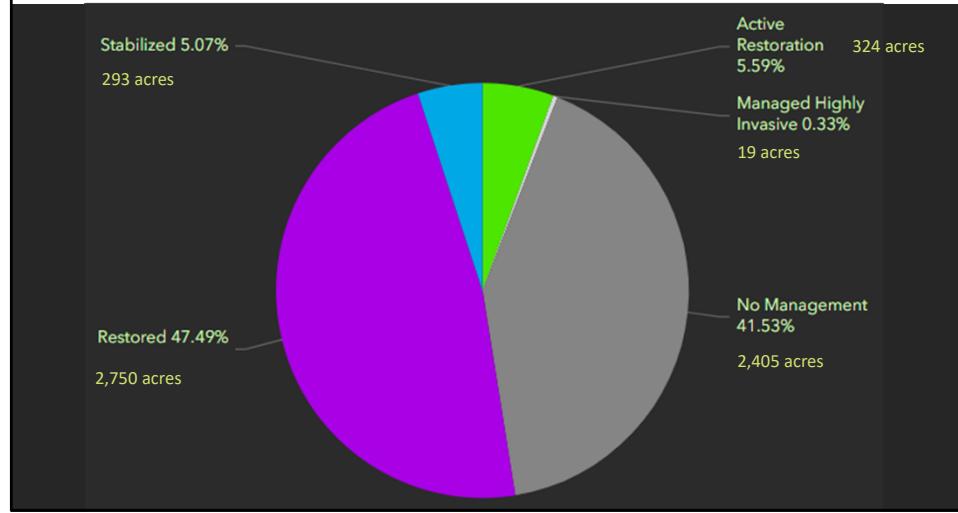
- Increased investment in Parks natural resources
- Guided restoration of half of the Park System to-date

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## NRMSP to Date



### Current Status: Parks, Greenways, Natural Area Easements, and Selected Service Centers and Libraries



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## NRMSP to Date



### Highlights: Wildlife

- Bison Reintroduction
- Cliff Road Wildlife Tunnel
- Saw-Whet Owl Banding



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## NRMSP to Date



### Highlights: Plants

- Rare species discovered or rediscovered



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## NRMSP to Date



### Highlights:

- Active volunteer participation
- Greenhouse for propagation
- New partnerships

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# Land Conservation Plan



**Land Conservation Plan  
for Dakota County**



Adopted on November 17, 2020



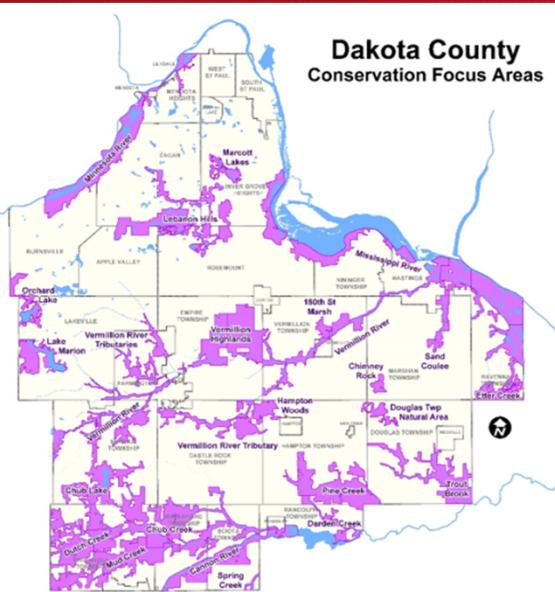
**2020 LCP**

- Prioritized land protection within Conservation Focus Areas (CFAs)
- Guides the County Land Protection program

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# Land Conservation Plan





**Dakota County  
Conservation Focus Areas**

- 74,863 acres are in CFAs
- More than 10,000 acres have been protected by the Land Conservation Program

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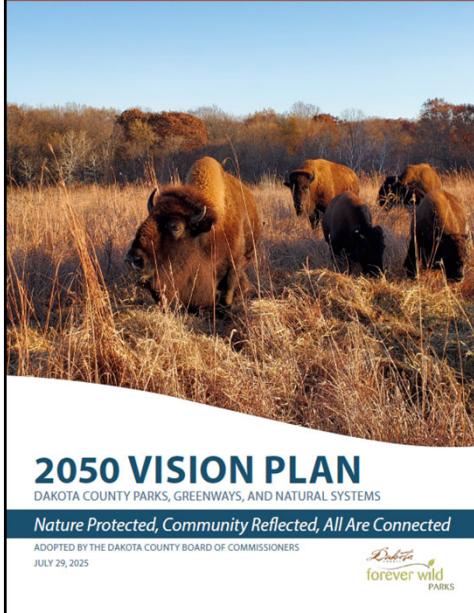
## Land Conservation Plan to-Date



- 10 Natural Area easements acquired since 2020 update, protecting 243 acres
- 3 County Park Conservation Area acquisitions, 188 acres

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## New County Board Direction



### 2050 Parks Vision Plan

- Updated the Parks vision with emphasis on the interconnectedness of nature and people
- 15 Goals, including natural systems stewardship and land protection

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## New County Board Direction



### 2050 Vision Plan Areas to Incorporate:

- New protection and resource goals
- Outreach and partnerships
- New park search areas
- Climate mitigation and resilience
- Engagement of Tribal communities in traditional ecological knowledge
- Supporting natural resource career pathways
- Seeking permanent funding for natural systems stewardship

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## Project Approach



Merge the LCP and NRMS into one document with  
Land Protection and Natural Systems Stewardship  
sections

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## Draft Objectives



### Land Protection Chapter

LCP Goals become objectives (mostly unchanged)

1. Prioritize ecologically important areas for protection.
2. Protect and enhance water quality and quantity.
3. *Natural resource quality is improved and sustained.* (moved to stewardship section)
4. Use CFAs as a framework for restoring and sustaining biodiversity.
5. Inform and engage the public in natural resource protection and management.
6. Enhance nature-based recreational access to conservation lands.

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## Draft Objectives



### Natural Systems Stewardship Chapter

Objectives restructured  
from NRMSP

1. Manage natural systems on protected lands in a comprehensive and sustainable manner



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## Draft Objectives



### Natural Systems Stewardship Chapter

2. Manage systems to improve resilience to the impacts of a changing climate.
3. Improve ecological quality in County Parks, on other public lands and permanently protected private lands.

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## Draft Objectives



### Natural Systems Stewardship Chapter

4. Manage permanently protected land to improve surface and groundwater quality.
5. Manage habitat to sustain native and rare species, increase biodiversity, and enhance ecosystem health on permanently protected lands

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## Draft Objectives



### Natural Systems Stewardship Chapter

6. Expand capacity for natural systems management by building and sustaining effective partnerships and supporting the efforts of others.

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## Next Steps



1. Stakeholder Engagement
2. Build Out Priorities and Targets
3. Draft Plan
4. Planning Commission

Draft document in second quarter of 2026

20

## Next Steps

Dakota  
COUNTY



Questions?

21

Dakota  
COUNTY



Thank you

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# Physical Development Committee of the Whole

## Request for Board Action

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**Item Number:** DC-5158

**Agenda #:** 8.1

**Meeting Date:** 1/13/2026

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Adjournment