

# Parks and Nature Bond: Establish goals and performance measures for public access

## Why the audit is important

Voters approved Metro’s \$475 million Parks and Nature Bond in November 2019. The overarching purpose and intent was to make the region a more livable place for everyone. The bond’s guiding principles included commitments to access and equity:

- Connect more people to the land and rivers of our region.
- Invest in trails for biking and walking.
- Support community-led parks and nature projects.
- Make parks and natural areas more accessible and inclusive.
- Take care of what we have.
- Advance racial equity through bond investments.
- Serve communities through inclusive engagement, transparency, and accountability.

The purpose of the audit was to determine if Metro was prepared to increase access to nature. There were four objectives:

- Summarize and define access based on the information used to develop the bond measure.
- Determine the current state of access.
- Determine if the bond was structure to increase access.
- Identify potential opportunities to increase access.



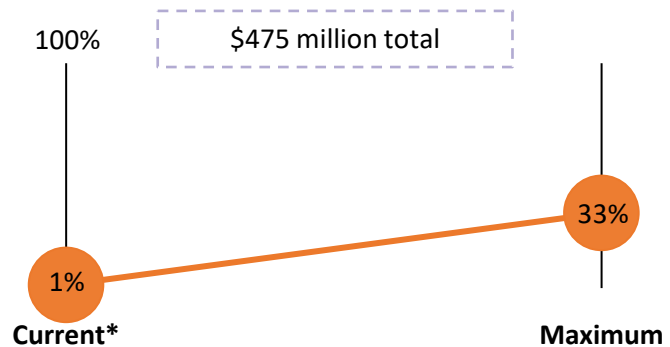
Source: Parks & Nature System Plan 2016

## What we found

The audit found lack of clarity about what specific outcomes the bond sought to accomplish related to access to nature. Access was not defined, and no specific access goals were set. The performance measurement system was underdeveloped overall, and specifically for measuring equitable access.

The bond’s role in increasing access was mainly focused on funding partners rather than investing in increased access on Metro-owned land. Local Share and three grant programs could support access to varying degrees, but it will depend on what projects are selected for funding.

**1% of Bond funds to date have been spent on new parks; 33% is the estimated maximum spending on new parks.**



Source: Auditor’s Office analysis of Parks and Nature documents

\*Current as of 01/23/2023

To meet the bond commitments, Metro may need to prioritize public access on its own land to a higher degree than it has in the past. Land purchased through previous bond measures provide opportunities to increase public access. However, the audit found limitations to accessing the land.

Travel time analysis showed some sites may not be easily accessible without a personal vehicle. Visits to eight natural areas showed some obstacles for accessing the sites. These included the availability of information online, amenities, signage, and maintenance.

## What we recommend

The audit included eight recommendations. Five were intended to ensure the bond delivers on its commitments by strengthening the performance measurement system related to public access and equitable access goals. One recommendation focused on clarifying the long-term vision for the land Metro owns. Two were targeted at using community engagement and feedback in parks and nature work.