



#### Executive Committee

**Chair** - Ben Anderson, Stearns County  
**Vice Chair** - Gina Hugo, Sherburne County  
**Treasurer** - Tom Salkowski, Individual Member  
**Communications/Secretary** - Brad Harrington, Wright Co.  
**Past Chair** - Mike Nigbur, Rochester

#### Representatives

**District 1** - Sarah Clochetto, St. Louis & Lake Cos. Railroad Authority  
**District 2** - Shannon Mortenson, Warren  
**District 3** - Kevin Fellbaum, Otter Tail County  
**District 4** - Joe Tart, Chisago County  
**District 5** - Scott Wold, Redwood County  
**District 6** - Karlin Ziegler, Olmsted County

February 13, 2023

Senator Fuong Hawj  
3231 Minnesota Senate Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Senator Hawj and members of the committee:

On behalf of the more than 135 cities, counties, businesses, non-profits, and individuals that comprise the Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails (GMPT) organization, we are writing to both praise and express concern regarding portions of S.F.442.

From a big picture standpoint, we're excited that the LCCMR bill is moving forward for early passage. One of GMPT's top priorities is ensuring that the statewide DNR local grants programs receive the funding that is provided in this bill. We thank you for getting that moving.

We're also very excited about the individual projects that are included in the bill – many of which are in Greater Minnesota, such as the Redhead Mountain Bike park, the Silver Bay project, the connection to Maple State park, and more. We are also pleased to see that smaller metro communities such as Scandia are also receiving funding. Their grant will allow the city to be better connected to the Gateway trail, something they could likely not afford without these funds. Improving access to facilities helps many more Minnesotans engage in a healthy outdoor lifestyle.

We have grave concerns about the language at line 50.24 requiring a 50% match for capital projects. This new requirement will render an important funding program inaccessible to the many communities across the state – both rural and urban – that have relied on it to build recreational facilities to improve the health and well-being of their citizens and visitors.

We're particularly concerned for the communities in Greater Minnesota. Many of them want to create trails and places where their residents and visitors can recreate outdoors, but it's expensive. And when you're a smaller community with many pressing needs, funding a new trail segment to connect to a state park, installing a boat wash station to fend off the spread of invasive species, or building a mountain bike facility so that the kids in your community can have the same access to one of the fastest growing sports that kids in wealthier communities have, is cost prohibitive. The LCCMR grant program helps these communities achieve- these goals.

As you've undoubtedly heard, the parks and trails of Greater Minnesota don't have the same access to sources of funds that other entities do. By imposing this requirement, our under-resourced communities would lose one of the few funding opportunities they have to improve access to the outdoors and to help create healthy activities for their residents, especially their kids.

We understand that there are concerns raised by the LCCMR staff to recommended that a 50% match be required, but we believe there are better ways to tackle these problems than foreclosing this

opportunity. We'd be happy to work with you and the LCCMR to find a better solution that does not harm future opportunities for our communities and children.

Thank you for your hard work to make Minnesota a better place to live. We hope that we can work with you on this important issue to ensure that all citizens of Minnesota, regardless of where they live or the wealth of their community, can enjoy outdoor recreational opportunities. If you have any questions, please contact either of us. We would love to work with you to ensure that Greater Minnesota's parks and trails continue to thrive and grow.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ben Anderson".

Ben Anderson  
Chair, Greater Minnesota Parks & Trails  
Stearns County, Parks Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gina Hugo".

Gina Hugo  
Vice Chair, Greater Minnesota Parks & Trails  
Sherburne County, Parks Coordinator