



March 29, 2023

Chair Hawj and Members of the Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee,

Thank you for the inclusion of several Metropolitan Council priorities in your omnibus bill, SF 2438.

Modernizing Regional Parks and Trails

The delete-everything amendment to SF 2438 would provide \$10 million to modernize regional parks and trails. The Governor proposed \$12 million for modernizing regional parks and trails in his budget. The modernizing funds would be matched on a 3:2 basis with Council funds. If the legislature includes \$10 million for modernizing regional parks and trails, the Council would match that with \$6.67 million in regional funds. The Metropolitan Regional Parks System is made up of cared-for places to connect, build health, and access nature for millions of Minnesotans, and the need for repairs and upgrades have grown as more people used parks and trails during the pandemic, and as climate and weather events have continued to impact parks, trails, and structures.

Operations and Maintenance Funding for Regional Parks and Trails

The delete-everything amendment to SF 2438 would provide additional operations and maintenance dollars to regional parks and trails. The Governor recommended an additional \$2.5 million annually to the base using General Funds. The Senate omnibus bill would provide an increase of \$5 million for FY24 in one-time General Funds, with an increase to the base of \$1.0 million annually using lottery in lieu funds. With 44 regional parks, 12 park reserves, 55 regional trails, and 8 special recreation features, additional operations and maintenance funding will help keep the whole system in good working order. Well maintained parks and trails create welcoming spaces that remove barriers, acknowledge history, and advance equity across the region.

Mapping Infrastructure Climate Risk and Resiliency Opportunities

The delete-everything amendment to SF 2438 would partially fund the development of a climate impact assessment tool by the Met Council. The Governor requested \$5 million for this initiative and the omnibus bill language proposes \$2.5 million. I appreciate your investment in this tool and would appreciate your consideration of funding it at the Governor's recommended amount. This tool will help pinpoint areas and infrastructure at risk from the changing climate and extreme weather events. Local governments can use these data and tools to help prioritize funding to build and reinforce infrastructure that can withstand the impacts of these more frequent and intense weather patterns.

I look forward to working with all of you over the next few weeks as you complete your work on the omnibus Environment and Climate budget bill. Please reach out to me or Judd Schetnan with any questions or comments. We are available to meet at your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles A. Zelle".

Charles A. Zelle
Chair