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February 14, 2023

Representative Fue Lee
485 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Representative Lee and members of the House Capital Investment 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 thank you for the work you and your committee have done to construct a bonding bill that will address much needed infrastructure throughout the state of Minnesota.

We appreciate that you included \$2 million for local and regional parks and trails grants under Minn. Stat. 85.019. These grant programs are available to local governments anywhere in the state and provide important funding for many communities.

While Minnesota's state parks and trails are an invaluable asset, they are geographically out of reach for many citizens due to distance or a lack of trail connections. That is why local parks and trails are such an important part of our communities, especially in Greater Minnesota. In addition to daily recreational opportunities, local parks and trails promote economic development. As communities strive to attract younger workers, as well as promote healthy living for all ages, local facilities are indispensable. These grant programs are especially important to our members because Greater Minnesota is at a disadvantage with respect to parks and trails funding in the state budget.

Former Capital Investment Chair Mary Murphy introduced legislation dedicating funding to these programs last session. Your inclusion of this funding is an excellent tribute to her lasting legacy.

Thank you for your time and consideration. 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,

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

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