



April 18, 2025

Chairs Torkelson and Stephenson and members of the House Ways and Means Committee:

I am writing in support of funding for regional parks and trails operations and maintenance funding in the first engrossment of [HF 2439](#) (Heintzeman/Fischer).

Regional parks and trails operations and maintenance funding is critical for the regional parks and trails system in the metropolitan area. This bill includes Governor Walz's budget recommendations of \$2.54 million in general fund and \$8.95 million from the natural resources fund (lottery-in-lieu) in each of the next two fiscal years (FY26 and FY27) to the Metropolitan Council for regional parks operations and maintenance. State funds to operate and maintain regional parks are an investment in the people who call this region home. Every dollar allocated to the Met Council for this program is passed through to the 10 regional park implementing agencies.

The regional system is comprised of 46 regional parks, 12 park reserves, eight special recreation features, and nearly 500 miles of regional trails. These high-quality spaces connect people to the outdoors, build health, and support assets that drive our economy. Operations and maintenance funding from the state is used for many critical activities in regional parks, including:

- Facility maintenance, repair, and rehabilitation
- Trail maintenance and upkeep
- Forestry and groundskeeping (mowing, tree trimming, native plant restoration, and invasive species control)
- Staff salaries and overhead expenses (facilities, natural resources, and programming)

Again, we appreciate inclusion of parks and trails operations and maintenance funding in this bill. Please reach out to me or Judd Schetnan (judd.schetnan@metc.state.mn.us) with any questions or comments. We are available to meet at your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles A. Zelle".

Charles A. Zelle
Chair