

GMPT Legislative Update and Reminder to Contact your Legislators

Dear GMPT Members,

It's Easter/Legislative break here at the Minnesota Legislature. It's a great time to talk to your legislators, many of whom are home for the break. If you have not yet responded to our action alert, please do so today! The instructions are [here](#). Please read along for an update on activities in the legislature.

Bonding work to pick up soon

Most Capitol watchers are hoping the legislature will stick with tradition and pass a bonding bill this year as they typically do in the second year of each biennium. However, what the bill will look like and when it will be released remains a mystery. In the House, Capital Investment Committee Chair Fue Lee (DFL - Minneapolis) has heard bills on individual projects (not on the bonding tour) and projects that have changed substantially since then. He has signaled his intention to unveil a bonding bill on April 19.

Last week, the Senate held its first Capital Investment Committee hearing of this biennium. The committee heard from the administration about the governor's bonding bill and no additional testimony was taken. Committee Chair Bakk announced he would be holding additional hearings after the break to look more in-depth at specific agency bills, but they will not be hearing any requests for local project funding. With more than 400 requests for local projects, he will rely on legislators to advocate for their community projects. Because of the uncertainty regarding hearings, [GMPT sent a letter to the Senate Capital Investment Committee](#) encouraging them to include our request, [SF539](#), for local grant programs funding in their bill.

LCCMR Funding

Every year, the Legislative Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) makes recommendations to the legislature on how funds from the Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) should be spent. In recent years, the LCCMR has recommended funding for the DNR's park and trail grant programs and for a variety of park and trail projects for local communities, many of whom are GMPT members. Advocating for the appropriation of these funds has been a top priority for our

organization.

Over the last year or two, the LCCMR process has been fraught with disagreement and for the second year in a row, they did not approve a consensus package of recommendations for the legislature. As a result, the Environmental chairs in both the House and Senate have created their own versions of an LCCMR bill.

The House version of the bill, [HF3765](#), has passed through all necessary committees and is waiting for a floor vote. This version contains funding (\$3.56 million) for the local parks and trails programs as we'd like to see. Member Mesabi Trail and the DNR would also receive funding for state parks and trails acquisition and trail development.

There's been some drama surrounding the Senate version, [SF4043](#). This version would put \$4 million into the local parks and trails programs, but would add stronger restrictions on how it could be used. It would also fund the Mesabi Trail and numerous other local projects. The bill failed to pass out of committee, however. The Senate Environment Finance Committee has 8 members, 5 GOP and 3 DFL. In an unexpected move, Senator Carrie Ruud voted against advancing the bill. It is not clear what will happen next in the Senate. We want to see both the House and Senate pass some version of this bill, so we will continue to advocate on this issue.

Legacy Funding

The House Legacy Committee passed a bill last week, [HF3438](#). The bill would spend the additional sales tax that has come in beyond forecast (without tapping into the statutorily required reserve) as dictated by the enabling statutes. The Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission would receive about \$1.3 million for grants under the proposal. Although the funding would be welcomed, it is unlikely that the legislation will advance because the Senate has shown no interest in passing the companion. If no bill is passed this year, the funds will be available the following fiscal year.

Omnibus Environmental Bills

Both the Senate and House Environmental and Natural Resources Finance and Policy committees adopted their own omnibus bills that include all the policy and supplemental spending they are supporting this year. The Senate bill did not appear to impact our interests. However, the House bill included a few notable items, such as more funding

for the No Child Left Inside program and a proposal to dedicate more of the lottery-in-lieu funding to the Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund. [We submitted a letter](#) regarding those provisions.

Lottery Reauthorization Proposal

In 1988, Minnesota voters adopted an amendment to the Minnesota Constitution that created the ENRTF. Under the amendment, at least 40 percent of net proceeds from the state lottery must be dedicated to that fund until 2025. With that authorization set to expire in three years, there has been an effort to place another amendment on the ballot that would reauthorize this dedication. The new language would also dedicate money to a new water improvement fund. The proposal passed multiple committees in the Senate and is awaiting a final vote in the Rules Committee before it can be heard on the floor. It has not yet moved anywhere in the House, but that could happen after Easter break.

GMPT has not been actively lobbying on this bill, but we are watching closely. Our concern is that if there is no amendment reauthorizing the dedication of the lottery, the money that currently flows to the trust fund could be dedicated to other purposes beyond the environment after 2025. Given the potential for power shifts in the legislature next year, this year is probably the best time for this proposal to move forward.

If you have any questions on our legislative activities, please contact me at eawefel@flaherty-hood.com. And please don't forget to take action on our [Action Alert this week](#). Legislators need to hear from you!

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Wefel