

GMPT Legislative Update Forum AI Summary – March 14, 2025

Quick recap

Elizabeth Wefel, the lobbyist from Flaherty and Hood, provided a legislative update, discussing the current state of the legislative session and the legislative agenda. She also highlighted the importance of member involvement in the legislative lobbying efforts of GMPT and discussed several financial and legislative issues affecting parks and trails funding. Lastly, Elizabeth emphasized the importance of connecting with lawmakers and sharing feedback, and encouraged everyone to stay engaged.

Summary

Elizabeth Wefel's Legislative Update

Elizabeth discussed the current state of the legislative session, focusing on the hottest issues. Elizabeth also shared the legislative agenda and other matters GMPT is monitoring. She emphasized the importance of the group's involvement and offered guidance on how they can contribute to the legislative process. [Click here to read about the bills in the forum presentation.](#)

GMPT Lobbying and Legislative Issues

Elizabeth discussed the legislative lobbying efforts of GMPT, emphasizing the importance of member involvement. She highlighted the recent shift in power-sharing in the House, with the committees now having equal representation from both parties. Elizabeth then focused on four key issues: the Legacy Fund overpayment, turmoil related to the LCCMR, eminent domain, and park dedication prohibition concerns.

Parks and Trails Funding Issues – Legacy and LCCMR

Elizabeth reported on two financial issues affecting parks and trails funding. The first issue stems from an accounting error in which the Legacy Fund has been overpaid over the last 15 years. Since 2010, the Department of Revenue had misclassified \$31 million that should have been credited to the General Fund. The funds were credited to the Legacy Fund instead. After the mistake was found, \$31 million was transferred from the Legacy Fund to the General Fund. There is a \$3 million impact on the parks and trails Fund, with \$536,000

affecting Greater Minnesota. While this means less grant money will be available for the upcoming biennium, no funds will be clawed back from existing projects.

Second, she discussed unexpected changes to the LCCMR bill in the House. An amendment was introduced that significantly reduces the set-aside for the new Community Grant Program, redistributing funds to various other programs including clean water quality initiatives and trail functions. Elizabeth noted that while individual project funding remains unchanged, this amendment alters the original compromise reached for the Environmental Natural Resource Trust Fund (ENRTF) renewal. Elizabeth is concerned that the amendment creates uncertainty about passage of the entire bill.

Legislative Updates on Parks and Trails

Elizabeth provided an update on several pieces of legislation that could potentially affect parks and trails. She also mentioned a recurring eminent domain bill that could restrict the use of legacy funds for property acquisition. Elizabeth expresses concern that a package of housing bills could prohibit cities (and counties) from requiring parkland dedication from new housing developments. This language appears in three different bills: [S.F. 2229/H.F. 1987](#), [S.F. 2231/H.F. 2140](#), and [S.F. 2286/H.F. 2018](#). If this issue concerns you, Elizabeth urged that you either reach out to your legislators or work with staff at your local government to reach out.

She updated on the progress of two main bills the organization is pushing: one for appropriating 20% of Legacy funds to Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC), and another to fund the Commission from the General Fund. Elizabeth noted challenges in getting hearings and funding for the General Fund bill. She also mentioned ongoing efforts regarding local sales tax authority for parks and trails and provided brief updates on other legislation of interest.

Engaging Lawmakers with Greater Minnesota Parks

Elizabeth discussed the importance of connecting with lawmakers and sharing feedback. Gina Hugo, GMPT Chair, praised the one-pager provided at Legislative Action Day, highlighting its effectiveness in educating legislators about Greater Minnesota parks and trails. Gina also encouraged others to set up meetings with their legislators to further educate them. Elizabeth promised to send out a copy of the one-pager, including a link to the handout, and urged everyone to stay engaged.

Next steps

- GMPT members to continue reading monthly newsletters and legislative updates.
- GMPT members to connect with their lawmakers about the discussed legislative issues.
- GMPT members to inform Elizabeth about any feedback or information they hear from legislators.
- Elizabeth and Renee Matson to meet with the chair of the Legacy Committee next week to push for a hearing on the legacy appropriation bill.
- GMPT Board to discuss and decide on the approach to take regarding the LCCMR bill amendment.