



## MCOTA Meeting Minutes

March 27, 2024 | 1:00 – 3:00 PM

Meeting held virtually via Zoom.

Supporting meeting materials available on [MCOTA website](#)

### Call to Order and Member Roll Call

Chair, Tim Sexton, called the meeting to order at 1:02 PM. Roll call was taken via chat.

Name	Organization	Attendance
Tim Sexton	Assistant Commissioner for Sustainability, Planning, and Program	X
Diogo Reis	Director, Health Improvement and Benefit Design Division, Minnesota Department of Human Services	X
Peter Brickwedde	Assistant Commissioner of Government and External Affairs, Minnesota Department of Commerce	X
Ron Quade	Director of Veteran Services, Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs	X
Brandon Kasprick	Policy Advisor, Office of Governor Tim Walz and Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan	
David Fenley	ADA Director, Minnesota Council on Disability	X
Kelly Garvey	Transportation Specialist, Minnesota Department of Education	X
Nick Lardinois	Executive Budget Officer, Minnesota Management and Budget	
Maureen Melgaard Schneider	Interim Chair, Minnesota Board on Aging	X
Brandon Nurmi	Director, Minnesota Public Transit Association	X
Shirley Schoening Scheuler	Active Living Coordinator, Minnesota Department of Health	X
Gerri Sutton	Director, Metropolitan Council	X
Jennifer Pelletier	Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialist, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, State Services for the Blind	X

Ten of thirteen MCOTA Members were present at the time of the roll call. Sexton determined there was a quorum.

### **Review and Approve November and January Meeting Minutes**

Executive Director, Tom Gottfried, reviewed the November and January Meeting Minutes. Motion made by Fenley, seconded by Nurmi, motion carried (9 ayes/1 abstention – Brickwedde).

### **Review and Approve March Meeting Agenda**

Sexton reviewed the March Meeting Agenda. Motion made by Gerri Sutton, seconded by Melgaard Schneider, motion carried (9 ayes/1 abstention – Brickwedde)

### **MCOTA FY 2025/26 Strategic Direction**

Sexton introduced the discussion on the FY 2025/26 Strategic Plan. They informed the members that the goal of the MCOTA Priorities Survey is to narrow the focus of MCOTA initiatives to one priority that is attainable over the next 12-18 months. The top priority, influenced by the members and MCOTA leadership, will be included in the 2025/26 Strategic Plan.

Gottfried gave an overview of the survey results. For survey results, **see the attached presentation.**

Ron Quade, Department of Veteran Affairs, shared that MDVA has reviewed the survey with the new Commissioner and response information is being prepared.

Shirley Schoening Scheuler, Department of Health, provided an explanation on their top priority, specific to funding active transportation and working with local public health within the policy systems and environmental change area.

Kelly Garvey, Department of Education, provided an explanation on their top priority, specific to transportation for school districts having full control over how it would be implemented.

David Fenley, Council on Disability, provided an explanation on their top priority, specific to moving MCOTA toward implementation in addition to research and advocacy.

Maureen Melgaard Schneider, Board on Aging, provided clarification on the acronym HCBS. Home and Community Based Services for elders.

Sexton led a discussion regarding the designation of one top priority, requesting members share their thoughts.

Brandon Nurmi, Public Transit Association, agreed that addressing the volunteer driver shortage is the largest issue across the state in transportation. They question if that priority is something MCOTA can address effectively.

Melgaard Schneider considered the action steps that would fall under the driver shortage priority and does not believe it would go very far. They shared that the research program should be considered higher up in the priorities using a data-driven approach.

Diogo Reis, Department of Human Services, shared their agreement with the top priority being to address volunteer driver shortages. They stated that it is an issue all communities and departments face.

Sexton shared that many of the priorities included in the survey could fall under the shortage issue as a way to address them. There is concern it may be too broad and would not meet the goal of this process: to focus MCOTA's Strategic Plan.

Guest, Dana Thewis, suggested including "driver effectiveness" in the top priority rather than just availability to encompass how to make drivers more efficient.

Nurmi shared their agreement with Melgaard Schneider's comments on using a data-driven approach.

Guest, Alan Herrmann, shared in the chat, saying, "A great way to help with driver shortages [is] for NEMT [to] have coordinated transportation between MCO and fee for services drivers to get the best bang for your buck. Oklahoma is looking at this right now". Herrmann clarified the acronym MCO: Managed Care Organization.

Melgaard Schneider provided context to what MCOs are and their importance across the state.

Sexton asked the members if they believe that MCOTA is able to focus on addressing driver shortages as their number one priority for the next year.

Nurmi suggested changing the phrase "increasing driver availability" to "increasing transportation availability".

Melgaard Schneider recommended keeping the phrasing as it was presented.

Fenley emphasized the importance of collaboration at MCOTA to accomplish success. MCOTA often works at a high level, making it challenging to achieve implementation.

Guest, Steve Workman, shared a message in the chat: "Please take advantage of the resources that the FTA-funded TA Center, Transit Workforce Center has. It will not

address all of your driver needs and topics you are speaking about, but it has a number of tools for agencies and states to address transit workforce issues.

<https://www.transitworkforce.org/>".

## **MCOTA Work Teams**

Gottfried introduced each work team.

### ***Removing Barriers***

Nurmi provided an overview of the Removing Barriers Work Team initiatives, including defining the team's role and reducing the cost of transportation.

### ***Accessibility & Olmstead***

Fenley provided an overview of the Accessibility and Olmstead Work Team and its current initiative: creating a "one-stop-shop" for accessing and scheduling transportation across the State.

### ***Communications***

Gottfried provided an overview of the Communications Work Team initiatives. The 2023 Annual Report and March 2024 Newsletter are posted on the MCOTA website. The website transfer is expected to occur before the end of April.

### ***Volunteer Driver***

Beverly Sidlo-Tolliver and Colette Hanson, Volunteer Driver Co-Chairs, provided an overview of the Work Team's initiatives. Sidlo-Tolliver reviewed the success of the [February 28<sup>th</sup> Lunch and Learn](#). Hanson provided an overview of the Research Needs Statement as approved by MCOTA in November 2023. The focus of the research is on healthcare-related transportation.

## **Proposed Partnership**

Melgaard Schneider provided an overview of the Board on Aging taskforce. They introduced Reena Shetty and Kirsten Olson.

Shetty and Olson presented the Blueprint for Aging and a potential collaboration between the Board on Aging and MCOTA. They prompted the members to share their thoughts on how the Blueprint for Aging initiatives related to MCOTA and how they could best consult each other on future initiatives.

Gottfried presented the previously discussed priorities that MCOTA has been working toward. They noted the similarities between the MCOTA and Aging strategies.

Schoening Scheuler shared their desire to support the activities of the Board on Aging.

## **Public Comment**

Sexton opened the meeting for public comment where members of the public are each allowed up to three minutes for comment.

Ashely Craiglow provided an overview of an upcoming webinar on interacting and understanding those with Alzheimer Disease. The webinar is scheduled for April 9th, 4:00 – 5:00 PM. For a flyer and more information, see the attached image.

Wendy Schrag provided information on a dashboard developed by Fresenius Medical Care illustrating the issues around transportation gaps for dialysis.

### **Future MCOTA Meetings**

Gottfried informed the members and guests of upcoming MCOTA meetings. The next MCOTA meeting is scheduled for **May 22, 2024**. There is a CCAM Roundtable meeting scheduled for June 26, 2024. The following MCOTA meeting is scheduled for July 24, 2024. All MCOTA meetings are currently hosted from 1:00 to 3:00 PM.

### **Adjourn**

Sexton adjourned the meeting at 3:01 PM.