

**Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (MCOTA) Meeting Minutes**  
**January 27, 2021, 1:00–3:00 PM**  
**Meeting held via Zoom.**

**Members present:**

Chair – Tim Henkel, Minnesota Department of Transportation  
Vice Chair – Diogo Reis, Minnesota Department of Human Services  
At-Large Representative – Victoria Nill, Minnesota Department of Transportation  
Susan Bishop, Minnesota Department of Health  
Peter Brickwedde, Minnesota Department of Commerce  
Tiffany Collins, Minnesota Public Transit Association  
John Doan, Minnesota Board on Aging  
David Fenley, Minnesota State Council on Disability  
Kelly Garvey, Minnesota Department of Education  
Shawn Kremer, Minnesota Management and Budget  
Suzanne Sobotka, Office of the Governor  
Gerri Sutton, Metropolitan Council  
Jodi Yanda, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

**Members absent:**

Rolando Sotolongo, Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs

**Others present:**

- Minnesota Department of Transportation:
  - Office of Transit & Active Transportation: Kristie Billiar, Tom Gottfried, Michelle Lichtig, Mark Nelson, Noel Shughart
  - Office of Government Affairs: Erik Rudeen
- University of Minnesota:
  - Humphrey School of Public Affairs: Frank Douma
  - Center for Transportation Studies: Kaydee Kirk, Arlene Mathison
- Stephanie Aasness, Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging
- Robyn Bernardy, Dakota County
- Tammy Buttweiler
- Heidi Corcoran, Milligan Partners
- Eric Day, MMRDC
- Ron Decker
- Ashley Eckdahl, East Central Regional Development Commission and RTCC
- Tom Fennell
- Mike Greenbaum, Newtrax
- Alan Hermann, Scott County
- Sheila Holbrook-White, Washington County
- Suzanne Martin
- Bryan McCoy, Headwaters Regional Development Commission & North Central MN RTCC
- Heather Molesworth, WCMCA
- Sherry Munyon
- Ted Nelson, Prairie Five CAC Inc.
- Jeff Niblack, Minnesota Management and Budget
- Scott Olson, Newtrax
- Karen Onan, East Central Regional Transportation Coordinating Council
- Shelly Pflaum, Southwest Regional Development Commission
- Lynnell Popowski, Northwest Regional Development Commission
- Mark Schermerhorn, Anoka County Transit
- Troy Schroeder, NWRDC

- Brian Strub
- Beverly Tolliver, Arrowhead Regional Development Commission and Northeast Minnesota RTCC
- Bob Voss
- Courtney Whited, MN Board on Aging
- Sheri Wegner, Connectability MN

### **Call to Order + Member Roll Call**

Henkel called to order the January meeting of the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access at 1:01 PM on January 27, 2021. There was a quorum of MCOTA members with 10 of 14 members present.

### **Review and Approve Agenda**

Reis moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Nill. The agenda was unanimously **approved**.

### **Public Comments**

Pettman shared the following:

I'd like to remind people that everybody needs to participate, because there's people all over the state that are counting on your agency to really understand how transportation works with your agency. Especially regarding Covid-19, there's people that are going to need to figure out solutions on how to get their vaccine. There's people that still need to go to the doctor. It'd be great to figure out how to get more funding back for that Covid positive transportation. Is there any way you could consider putting the round robin right after public comment because I feel like it's getting a rush at the end of the meeting and that's really important for each agency to think about how transportation is interacting with what they do. Here is an illustration: Do you remember hearing about Gander Newfoundland when 911 happened? There were 38 jumbo jets had to land and the whole community came together to help shelter feed and take care of 7,000 people. MCOTA can be a really good interagency thing that will help. And it will actually make your job easier in your own departments if you can work together really well in an interagency way. I'm really thankful for the people that are trying hard like MnDOT and Commerce and others but it's really important to have the people on your own agencies think about how transportation intersects with what you do. People all over the state or depending on you and your different agencies to think about how transportation intersects with what you do. Thank you very much.

### **11/18/20 Meeting Minutes**

Doan moved to approve the November minutes, seconded by Collins. The minutes were unanimously **approved**.

### **Legislative Updates**

Reis shared that in the Governor's budget that was released there is a NEMT provision where the department issues a series of contracts for an entity to administer the NEMT program. This would administer the program for the Medicaid and Minnesota Care population. This has been part of the work of the Blue Ribbon Commission which began in 2019 at the request of the legislature to reduce health and human services costs. Pettman asked if these new series of contracts would lead to better or worse performance. Reis shared that the legislation is broad to allow either one contract or regional contracts – this will be decided through the legislative process or through the RFP process. He also shared that some people like having a coordinator since it is a one-stop shop when they need transportation. Others like the ability to contract a provider directly and set that up. Most NEMT providers have shared they don't like having a contractor in place. There is some data over the years that suggests that having a contractor helps with program integrity measures.

Rudeen shared that the legislature is focused on putting together the biennial budget now that the Governor's budget came out. For MnDOT, greater Minnesota has base level funding. They have received some additional federal funds for Covid relief and they are working on how those will flow to transit providers. Policywise, there is the volunteer driver policy bill that was brought forward to create a uniform definition of volunteer drivers. Right now they are trying to get authors and hearings on this legislation. Doan asked if Rudeen could share the bill number however there isn't a bill number yet assigned and there is not a weblink yet. Gottfried shared that as soon as this information is known he will share it with the group.

McCoy asked about [SF0075](#) that sets transit fares at a maximum of \$0.25 and fare free study. Rudeen shared this would have major impacts to transit providers and that he was not familiar with this bill but will look into it. Collins added that transit fares are used by public transit systems to bring down the local share funding for counties.

Munyon shared that MPTA has been working on the two pieces of legislation that MCOTA endorsed. On the policy side, Rep. Erin Koegel is carrying the language on the Commerce Committee. MPTA has met with House Commerce Committee Chair Stephenson regarding the legislation and was generally supportive. They are waiting to meet with the Chair of the Senate Committee. MPTA is working on the tax bill will be reintroduced and Rep. Lislegard is the author in the House. They will also be meeting with the new Tax Committee Chair in the Senate.

## **MCOTA Work Teams**

### **Volunteer Driver**

- **Highlights from Volunteer Driver Virtual Forum Series** – Sidlo-Tolliver shared that the main focus of this group has been the Volunteer Driver Virtual Forum series. The first three forums were held and drew between 112-140 attendees each. Of all the 250 people who have registered for the series, there is representation from every county and many tribal nations as well as interest from those living in other states. It is hoped that more volunteer drivers will be joining for the upcoming forums. The recordings from the forums are all posted online on the MCOTA [website](#).
- **Brochure** – Doan shared that work team has been working to update the brochure. Based on feedback received from the team and the volunteer driver coalition, they are recommending to hold off on finalizing the brochure and table it until more is known about the legislation this session since it will have an impact on the content. The brochure will be brought back to the summer meeting after session ends.

**Communications** – Lichtig shared that the team has been focused on the annual legislative report the last few months. The report really reflects stories of the communities served with transportation services.

- **Legislative Report:** The finalized report has been published and on the MCOTA website and has been sent to the legislature. She thanked the team and Jennifer Witt from MnDOT on all their hard work.
- **Draft Quarterly Newsletter:** The December newsletter was sent out since the group last met. Mathison shared the March newsletter topics as listed in the meeting materials. Henkel suggested that there could be an opportunity to capture ongoing legislative work and perhaps interview an MCOTA stakeholder who has been involved with the legislative work.
- **Website Redesign**
  - **MCOTA-focused content and plans:** Mathison walked through the purpose of the website, the audiences, the content, the goals of website migration, and design elements.
  - **RTCC- & TCAP-focused content:** Lichtig shared about the proposed content for the RTCC and TCAP pages and the overall timeline of next steps.

**Operations:** Lichtig and Niblack shared the MCOTA performance measures and indicators logic model/workplan updates.

**Research:** Gottfried will be reaching out with a communication to all members to get their ideas on potential MCOTA research and to potentially serve on this work team.

**June 23 Agency Senior Leadership meeting:** This will now be an annual meeting where the commissioners, or the commissioners' designees, attend. Gottfried will email members by early February to confirm their agency's representative who will attend. Then the "hold the date" calendar appointment to the commissioners or the designees will come from the MnDOT Commissioner's office since that person will be chairing the meeting.

## **Greater MN Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils (RTCCs) & Twin Cities Transit Coordination Assistance Projects (TCAPs)**

**1. Program/Grants Update** – Lichtig shared details about Prairie Five RTCC's Phase II and RTCC funding applications.

**2. Newtrax Presentation** – Greenbaum and Olson presented on Newtrax, mobility management, impacts of Covid-19, and current and future projects. They presented a video as well. Members appreciated this information.

**3. Southwest RTCC, Phase I & II Presentation** – Pflaum presented about the work of the Southwest Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordinating Council. Members appreciated this information.

### **Agency Updates:**

- **Olmstead Plan** – Billiar shared that Olmstead will involve more interagency work in the future. There is an annual revision of goals that is currently underway. There was not much to report from the January meeting. The next meeting is in March where they will report on their infrastructure goals and transit (including hours and on-time performance). In May and June we will hear more about MnDOT's transition plan which will be made available to the public. The plan focuses a lot on increased accessibility with communications from within MnDOT. Finally, the US DOT released their draft strategic plan on accessible transportation; MnDOT is following and aligning closely with this plan.
- **Minnesota Board on Aging/DHS:** Doan and Whited shared more about the Live Well at Home Program. There were 14 different grants. They are potentially releasing the Live Well at Home FY22 RFP on February 16.
- **Additional Member Round Robin:** Members did not have any other updates.

### **Review Draft Agenda for Next Meeting**

Henkel and Gottfried provided a high-level overview of the March meeting. Members did not have any questions.

**Adjourn:** Reis made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Collins. The motion was unanimously **approved**. The meeting adjourned at 3:05 PM.