

Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (MCOTA) Meeting Minutes
May 23, 2018
MnDOT Central Office Transportation Building
395 John Ireland Blvd, Saint Paul, Conference Room 461
1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Members present:

Chair – Tim Henkel, Minnesota Department of Transportation
Vice-Chair – Joan Willshire, Minnesota State Council on Disability
Susan Bishop, Minnesota Department of Health (via phone)
Tiffany Collins, Minnesota Public Transit Association (via phone)
Kelly Garvey, Minnesota Department of Education (via phone)
Jon Kelly, Minnesota Department of Commerce (via phone, proxy for Peter Brickwedde)
Thant Pearson, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development
Diogo Reis, Minnesota Department of Human Services (proxy for Claire Wilson)
Gerri Sutton, Metropolitan Council
Harlan Tardy, Minnesota Board on Aging (via phone)

Members absent:

At-Large Representative – Tim Sexton, Minnesota Department of Transportation
Peter Brickwedde, Minnesota Department of Commerce (Jon Kelly served as proxy)
Laura Logsdon, Minnesota Management and Budget
Ronald Quade II, Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs
Claire Wilson, Minnesota Department of Human Services (Diogo Reis served as proxy)

Others present:

Minnesota Department of Transportation:

Kristie Billiar, ADA Program and Policy
Noel Shughart, Office of Transit and Active Transportation
Sue Siemers, Office of Transit and Active Transportation (via phone)

Ilya Garelik, Minnesota Department of Human Services and Minnesota Board on Aging

University of Minnesota:

Frank Douma, Humphrey School of Public Affairs
Charles Noble, Humphrey School of Public Affairs
Kaydee Kirk, Center for Transportation Studies
Arlene Mathison, Center for Transportation Studies

Heidi Corcoran, Dakota County

Kim Pettman, Transit Advocate (via phone)

Leah Hegg, American Cancer Society

Call to order & introductions

Henkel called to order the May meeting of the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access at 1:07 PM on May 23, 2018 at the MnDOT Central Office, St. Paul, MN.

Review and approve agenda

Kelly moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Sutton. The agenda was unanimously **approved**.

Public comments

Pettman shared the following comments:

- She has a concerns about ensuring that seat belt extensions in transit vehicles and STS carriers since extensions are not very common, but necessary for various physical needs. Pettman has discussed this concern with legislators. She asked who we should be working with to change this.
- She offered that anyone is welcome to shadow her while using a transportation vehicle to better understand her experience traveling as a person with a disability.
- She also asked how the MCOTA disability awareness training planning is going.

3/28/18 meeting minutes

Reis moved to approve the March 2018 minutes, seconded by Sutton. The minutes were unanimously **approved**.

Update on MCOTA research study Best Practices for Addressing Youth Employment and Training Transportation

Douma and Noble highlighted the survey respondent characteristics and also the key findings, which included:

- Transit is important in urban areas for both employed and unemployed youth
- Youth without cars are much more likely to be unemployed in suburban/rural areas than their urban counterparts
- While disabilities do not in and of themselves indicate that the person faces transportation issues, the combination of having a disability in a suburban/rural area significantly increases transportation issues

Other topics that were presented included data on travel mode by employment type (urban, suburban, and rural), transportation issues (employed, unemployed, no disability, disability, urban, suburban, and rural), and data related to region, age, disability, etc.

Recommendations:

- The findings show that location is a strong determinant of transportation issues.
- To alleviate this, short, medium, and long-term recommendations are offered:
 - Short-term: Keep transit availability strong in areas with enough population density to support it. For other areas, provide individualized rides, whether that is carpool/rideshare/own vehicle. Youth with disabilities are also more dependent on carpooling.
 - Medium-term: Develop innovative options for the way transit and other SOV alternatives are offered in suburban and rural areas, such that youth in these areas no longer feel that they have to rely on their own cars. Continue to enhance and improve urban transit.
 - Long-term: Restructure the relationship between transportation and land use to better capture the benefits offered by autonomous vehicles and similar innovative options. This can be applied in all regions.

Noble presented the case study slides that included the following information:

- Based on the transportation issues identified from the survey and related recommendations, we found relevant programs to demonstrate how the recommendations could be implemented
- Ensure transit accessibility is capitalized upon in urban areas:
 - Youth outreach initiatives
 - Educating youth on transit availability increases the likelihood they use it, which is especially important for no-car households
 - Communication must be appealing to youth, both in mode and message
 - Messaging should highlight greater independence, more money to spend on other pursuits (like clothes, videogames, etc.)
- Make individual rides more reliable in non-urban settings:
 - Ben Franklin Transit in southeastern Washington State

- This municipal operator in the Tri-Cities area of Washington provides regular, fixed-route service, transit feeder, dial-a-ride, vanpool, demand-response service, and night and Sunday service
 - The variety of services (especially non-regular transit) allows users to get around in a way that is most convenient
- Provide programs with their own vehicles to better assist those with
 - Tennessee Vans Program
 - UT's Center for Transportation has run this program since 1990, which loans/ sells vans to disability, workforce, youth, and other organizations (public, private, and non-profit) throughout the state
 - Focus on cost-recovery seen as key to program longevity

The innovations of the Dakota County Lyft project and the Scott County/Carver County multimodal options, including the use of volunteer drivers to help people get to work, were discussed.

Members Q&A and discussion:

- The FTA up until recently had funds for the job access reverse commute program but this does not exist as a funding source anymore.
- The travel mode data showed that walking is more consistent than biking. There was not any information about biking and walking with respect to disability persons in suburban areas. The researchers noted that there were not any responses received to those questions.
- Every transit opportunity begins and ends with walking. How is walking and biking integrated into these strategies? The walking responses were not very significant vs. the other modes, so they were not highlighted. For long-term recommendations, there is a relationship between land use and transportation (e.g. mixed use) and in smaller communities this will help people not be as car dependent.
- Can this research go further to apply their findings especially to the RTCCs? And does it show where there is a strong link or need between employers and youth? Could this information be in map format to apply the findings into practice? The data collected is not specific to this. The survey included general geographic responses. Douma noted he could work with Larry Eisenstadt to connect to the youth populations and employers DEED is already aware of and work with them further. This can be included as a recommendation as part of the report.

The qualitative case studies will be part of the remainder of this report. The study will be wrapped up June 30 and the final draft will be shared with the group before the June meeting. The study will then be disseminated.

Debrief MCOTA Volunteer Driver Program Forum

Mathison shared highlights from the forum:

- There was a strong turnout of 139 participants and the event had good energy. A handful of MCOTA members said they were very impressed with turnout and energy.
- Some MCOTA members stated that this event exceeded their expectations.
- The evaluation summary was shared.
- The PPTs are posted on the website.
- Forum attendees have been added to the MCOTA email announcement list.
- The evaluation summary showed that 100% of respondents want to see this type of forum happen again. Some were interested in a live stream option.
- There was a desire for more follow up to the tax and insurance topics.
- Some members asked about the potential use of the videoconference option through DHS if people still want to have further conversations, especially those related to tax and insurance topics.
- The evaluations also showed that participants have a desire to invite/integrate volunteer drivers directly as part of the forum vs. just involving the organizations that represent them.

- The MN2030 follow-up survey will be sent soon. The survey will also include a question on type of organization. For example, some organizations are contractual organizations with DHS and work with them on reimbursement whereas other organizations are just trying to provide local transportation out of the goodness of their hearts and not looking to work with government. A future forum could have multiple tracks to address these different populations.
- A proceedings document will be shared mid-June with this group.
- This event was very visible for MCOTA and members wondered how we build on that. Do we want to do more of this type of outreach with MCOTA and/or focus the research/study aspects?

Quarterly stakeholder communication

Proposed topics included:

- Volunteer Driver Program Forum – summary report
- Youth Employment Study report
- Update on RTCCs?
- Upcoming MCOTA Meetings
 - List next three meeting dates

Willshire requested to include a way for people to submit ideas online for future forum topics. Mathison shared that a draft of the communication will be shared a number of days in advance of the next meeting.

Final FY19 work plan

Shughart provided an overview of Tasks 1-6 which include: website updates and maintenance; writing and editing the Council's annual report for the Minnesota legislature; support for and facilitation of MCOTA Council meetings, planning meetings with MCOTA chair and vice-chair, and committee meetings; quarterly stakeholder communications; RTCC priority activities; and support of MCOTA strategic direction work plan development and implementation. More support could be provided for the new RTCCs and for MCOTA meetings. In addition, the frequency of MCOTA Council meetings would drop to quarterly.

Henkel noted that MCOTA is moving toward more implementation and asked members what structure is necessary to accomplish that goal and asked for feedback on the proposal.

Member discussion:

- There could be some growing pains with the launch of the RTCCs. What is the Council's role in this?
 - MCOTA should be an advisor, not a director.
 - MCOTA should be a body to advise and provide access to solutions (like hosting the forum).
 - MCOTA can be the conduit to legislative contacts to create a better, more collaborative transportation system. May need to help in pursuing legislative solutions.
- Is there a clear structure to move forward?
 - Council needs to provide clear oversight to RTCCs.
 - As noted in the proposed work plan, MCOTA needs a staff-level technical/problem-solving/nuts & bolts group that is engaged and brings items for approval to Council. Members expressed support of this structure.
- There are silos across agencies that are barriers for people trying to implement at the local level. It is helpful to have MCOTA break down the silos and collaborate effectively across the agencies.
- What are the resources across state agencies that support creating efficiencies in a broader way? Bishop noted MDH's SHIP program as a separate example of this.
- Some members expressed concern about meeting less frequently as a Council. It is important to keep up to date for this group and meeting less would not help.
- What is the funding dedicated to MCOTA?
 - Past funding has come from the general transit fund in the amount of \$100,000/year but there is no longer an appropriation for this. Now there are more funding limitations and operation dollars for

transit are getting tighter. The target funding amount is generally \$100,000 but this current proposal is about \$79,800.

- Given the election in the fall, some members expressed concern with changing the MCOTA structure now vs. when the new administration comes in. There is much political uncertainty with the legislature and governor elections. While the proposed MCOTA structure/plan looks good, there remain concerns about the timing.
- MCOTA is at a crossroads – the Council has completed the legislative requirements and there is currently a good amount of interest in this Council. Can this Council remain relevant if this group only follows those tasks established by law? How is this group relevant? The forum showed great relevancy and much positive feedback was received. Given the progress made, we need to decide if we go beyond what it was established to be and ensure that it continues to remain relevant and valuable. We have done everything we can do in the research area. The new work plan would ensure relevance, continued interest, and involvement. It moves MCOTA to implementation through the RTCCs. Our responsibility is to take a bold step and move forward.
- Some members noted that MnDOT has funds and staffing to support MCOTA whereas smaller agencies (e.g. Commerce, Council on Disability) have staffing that is tight. MCOTA seems to be proposing a lot of various meetings and staff time. It is especially hard during the legislative session.
- The frequency of meeting is up for discussion.
- Some felt this proposal is a radical change. Can we move toward this new structure at this current time? The number of meetings to make this successful seems challenging.
- MCOTA is unique to have 12 agencies involved. What each person/agency brings to the table is valuable. Need to be more collaborative not in our silos.
- The current three goals of MCOTA could use a revision.
- There has been lots of progress with MCOTA's research area but much more work needs to be done in terms of collaboration. This Council cannot implement boots on the ground – we need a group on the ground to do the work. The Council could meet every other month or quarterly.
- Some members suggested that we try hosting another forum again to see if we yield similar, strong results so as to more fully assess interest in growth.
- Can we do a phased approach to the new proposed structure and have a slower transition? Is there a need for urgency with the change? It was noted that we have time to figure out the best structure and that staff can create options for the Council to consider at the next meeting. The RTCCs do not fully launch until next year.

It was decided that Shughart will work with CTS to modify the proposal and present a revision at the June meeting.

In order to get the contract in place with CTS for the coming fiscal year, Shughart suggested approving Tasks 1-4 at this time at their current levels. Tasks 5 and 6 will be revised and considered as an amendment in the future. Tardy made a motion to approve Tasks 1-4 at their current funding levels; Pearson seconded. The motion was unanimously **approved**.

FY18 MCOTA budget update

MCOTA has expended the full amount dedicated to the forum. The youth employment funds will also be spent by the end of the year. The budget is on target.

Agency updates

- **Legislative updates:** The data privacy sharing bill did not move forward
- **Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils:** The contracts are written and are being shared with the RTCC applicants. There was only one area of the state that will not have an RTCC at this time (Mankato). The metro counties are looking to apply for funding to expand their concept of councils. Contracts will be for 12 months and then they will turn in to long-term implementation contracts for the implementing organizations.
- **Olmstead Plan:** The subcommittee last met mid-late May. For the months of May-July, there are not any major items on tap at this time. There are only minor updates to the plan. Billiar and Shughart are working together on this work. The structure of Olmstead could change with the new administration that comes on board in January.
- **Other updates:** Shughart thanked DHS for their efforts on the transportation waiver work study that will take place over the next year. The goal of this study is to improve the delivery of services, the cost structure, and how

transportation costs are determined. This will include everything with the exception of non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT). Navigant is the primary consultant on this project and the sub consultants will be Douma and Jerry Zhao. They will be pointing to MCOTA as an example.

Call for future agenda items

The June meeting will include the Olmstead quality of life survey. The revision to the work plan for the disability awareness training may be presented in June but the small group needs to meet before it is presented to the full Council.

Adjourn

The meeting ended at 3:07 p.m.

2018 meetings: Wednesdays, 1:00-3:30pm, MnDOT Central Office: June 27, July 25, Aug 22, Sept 26, Oct 24, Nov 28, Dec 19 (3rd Wed. of month)

Future agenda items: Disability awareness training

June 27 agenda items:

Final draft of MCOTA research study Best Practices for Addressing Youth Employment and Training Transportation

July 25 agenda items:

August 22 agenda items:

Quarterly stakeholder communication

Standing agenda items:

- Review and approve agenda
- Public comments
- Review and approve meeting minutes
- Quarterly communications – review and/or approve
- FY18 MCOTA budget update
- Agency updates
- Call for future agenda items