

Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (MCOTA) Meeting Minutes
July 27, 2022, 1:00–3:00 PM

Meeting held via Zoom.

Members present:

Vice Chair – Diogo Reis, Minnesota Department of Human Services
At-Large Representative – Mark Nelson, Minnesota Department of Transportation
Dylan Galos, Minnesota Department of Health
David Fenley, Minnesota State Council on Disability
Maureen Schneider, Minnesota Board on Aging
Jim Miller, Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs
Tiffany Collins, Minnesota Public Transit Association
Kelly Garvey, Minnesota Department of Education
Gerri Sutton, Metropolitan Council

Members absent:

Rachel Dame, Office of the Governor
Jodi Yanda, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development
Peter Brickwedde, Minnesota Department of Commerce
Nick Lardinois, Minnesota Management and Budget

Others present:

- Minnesota Department of Transportation: Kristie Billiar, Tom Gottfried, Michelle Lichtig, Mai Thor, Amber Dallman, Sue Siemers, Davin Simmons
- University of Minnesota Center for Transportation Studies: Arlene Mathison, Samantha Hahn-Douville
- Rhonda Danielson
- Beverly Sidlo-Tolliver, Arrowhead RTCC
- Barbara Bursack, Washington County
- Tammy Buttweiler, ConnectAbility of MN
- Heidi Corcoran
- Eric Day, Mid-Minnesota Development Commission
- Rachel Garaghty, MDH
- Alan Herrmann, Scott/Carver TCAP
- Karen Onan
- Shelly Pflaum, United Community Action Partnership
- Lynnell Popowski
- Robin Rohr, Hennepin County
- Mark Schermerhorn, Anoka County Transit

Call to Order + Member Roll Call

Reis called the July meeting of the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access to order at 1:03 PM on July 27, 2022. There was a quorum of MCOTA members.

Review and Approve Agenda

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

Meeting Minutes

Schneider moved to approve the May minutes, seconded by Collins. The minutes were unanimously **approved**.

Legislative Updates

Reis reported no significant updates from DHS and no real updates from last meeting. There is hope for a special session to pick up issues that did not pass during 2022 legislative session, but a special session has not been scheduled. Most agencies are beginning to prep for the 2023 legislative session.

Fenley reported no changes on legislative scene for MN Council on Disability.

No other legislative updates.

MCOTA Work Teams

Removing Barriers

Galos reminded the group that the work team assembled a set of activities that were presented back in May. The work group is now working to come up with a plan for how they will implement these activities. The group is being mindful to ensure that they are engaged and focused on making sure that their approach involves the perspective and experience of people living with disabilities along with community engagement. Planning to talk about specific details in the next meeting.

Work team activities listed on table below

Activities

1. Assure that people with behavioral and accessibility challenges have meaningful access through ongoing engagement, accurate rates, and to build in a financial add-on to providers who 1) are equipped to serve a population requiring additional support (e.g., lift vehicles, specially trained drivers, rider support, etc.) and 2) actually serve individuals requiring pre-defined additional supports.
2. Reduce barriers to sharing vehicles identified in 2013 Vehicle Sharing study, including providing incentives to these providers to both share their vehicles with others and provide more individualized transportation services in their region to non-client populations.
3. Set accurate market rates for reimbursements (in negotiating with counties/funders); need to account for increased costs (include a fuel escalator in contract as well as different mode rates); one blended rate creates incentive for providing rides to ambulatory customers and disincentive for those with additional mobility needs

Activities

4. De-mystify current confusion and lack of consistent information regarding waived services reimbursement; lack of communication between DHS and providers (e.g., could be missing out on federal funding); difference between state and county DHS waiver dollars and how they can be spent

5. Identify ways of improving cost effectiveness of rural transportation, as well as researching different types of modeling to create sustainable efficiencies are important to improving and reforming in how rural transportation is delivered.

Accessibility & Olmstead

Fenley mentioned they are close to being done selecting 3-4 items to present to MCOTA for the 2022-2024 workplan. They are currently in the initial phase of narrowing down topics and figuring out who is needed to complete the goals and what other partners they can work with.

Gottfried explained the top 4 activities that are being discussed by Accessibility work team.

See table below.

Activities

1. Develop a single phone number and website for individuals who need a wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV) can call to find one (taxis, TNCs, buses, managed care/insurance providers). Chicago has done this.

2. Integrate transportation planning into all state-supported [or all] housing plans – universal and walkability planning.

3. Incorporate transportation planning for the future through the Olmstead Plan by creating a goal of at least bi-annually investigating the usage of non-regular route transportation for people with disabilities and addressing new growth opportunities to build regular route service.

4. Many people who are eligible for NEMT aren't aware of it. MCOTA should conduct outreach to inform individuals who are eligible for NEMT, either directly or by working with counties to increase their outreach.

Volunteer Driver

Collins explained that team is working on a brochure and is hopeful that they will have a draft for review for the September meeting. They are working on the first volunteer driver forum for October.

They are planning a second forum for February 2023. They are also focusing on volunteer driver research that has been done over the past several years.

Sidlo-Tolliver reiterated that research needs from surveys by the volunteer driver coalition has matched up with their own research needs ideas based on what agencies have identified as current challenges.

Gottfried added that this work team has been in place longer than when work teams were established and was refocused when work teams were created. He noted that they have done an excellent job with collaboration. There has been a lot of engagement on this discussion. He added that there has been some movement on the federal level with support.

Work team activities listed on table below

| <i>Activities</i> | <i>Date</i> |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Volunteer Driver Mileage Reimbursement Fact Sheet | May 2022 |
| 2. Volunteer Driver Brochure | September 2022 |
| 3. 1st Volunteer Driver Forum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance on recent legislative changes • Marketing 101 to expand volunteer driver pool • Proposed Federal legislation | October 5, 2022 |
| 4. 2nd Volunteer Driver Forum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools to build and sustain your volunteer driver services • Innovative programs | February 2023 |
| 5. Update 2017 volunteer driver program research, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternatives & solutions for future, especially since COVID-19 • Cost-benefit analysis for volunteers • Benefits and barriers for volunteers • Driver training for volunteers – related to insurance, rider needs, reimbursements, Medicaid | Potentially Sept 2022 – December 2023 |

Communications

Lichtig stated the Communications team has been an ongoing team for the past several years. Lichtig presented the work plan for the coming year including the legislative report. *See table below for activity work plan.*

| <i>Activities</i> | <i>Date</i> |
|--|---|
| <i>1. Annual legislative report</i> | <i>May-December 2022 May-December 2023</i> |
| <i>2. Quarterly newsletter</i> | <i>March, June, September, December each year</i> |
| <i>3. Website maintenance</i> | <i>Ongoing</i> |
| <i>4. MCOTA member guide/manual – annual review and update</i> | <i>May-June 2022 May-June 2023</i> |
| <i>5. Resource Library for RTCCs and TCAPs</i> | <i>June 2022 and ongoing</i> |
| <i>6. Communications & Outreach support for other Work Teams</i> | <i>TBD: July 2022 and ongoing</i> |

Lichtig stated that at this point the work team doesn't know what type of effort the other work teams may need, as far as outreach and communication about their work, but they would coordinate with the other work teams if this is needed for their own activities.

Lichtig stated that the key themes and messages for the next fiscal year will tie back to the work of the RTCC/TCAP work plans; transportation guidance/consultation, vehicle sharing, private non-profit and for-profit providers-engagement, and volunteer driver programs. This will include sharing stories and examples of outcomes and activities that have been developed and implemented in these areas. Lichtig additionally mentioned highlighting volunteer driver legislation and perhaps forming an insider look at the ongoing impact of COVID.

Lichtig gave an additional update on the RTCC/TCAP Resource library. A Google form has been created to collect ongoing information and will be sent out especially in fall to RTCC and TCAP to begin to start this repository.

Mathison stated that the MCOTA member guide was recently updated and is posted on the website. The newsletter will be sent in September, with topics including a Q&A with Newtrax about resolving barriers related to insurance for automated shuttle and Mid-Minnesota Rural Transportation Coordinating Council (MMRTCC) Volunteer Recruitment During Mature Driver Classes. Mathison then asked if members had additional suggestions for articles for the September newsletter.

Schneider suggested anecdotes from volunteer drivers could be featured in future newsletters or could become a regular column.

Gottfried reminded the group that action items are needed from each work team, aside from Removing Barriers at this time, with the expectation that September's meeting will have fully fleshed out plans.

Reis called for motion on the tentative work plans for the Accessibility & Olmstead, Volunteer Driver, and Communications work plans. Sutton moved to approve; Miller seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Presentation – Rhonda Danielson

Fenley introduced Rhonda Danielson, an advocate for transportation access, to bring a real-world perspective as an individual with a disability who utilizes public transportation.

Danielson shared that her medical diagnosis has put her permanently in a power wheelchair. She is unable to self-transfer out of that wheelchair and requires a lift. Due to her diagnosis, she is unable to drive a handicap adaptive vehicle. Danielson shared that in rural Minnesota, public transportation is not accessible. Danielson noted that without affordable and accessible public transportation, she is unable to do mandated jury duty (one of the requirements by law to being citizen of the country). She requires use of a private transport company, which is incredibly costly, and an expense that most able-bodied people are not forced to bear in following the law.

Fenley and others in attendance thanked Danielson for sharing her personal story and her ideas for creating solutions for those in her situation.

Greater MN Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils (RTCCs) and Transit Coordination Assistance Projects (TCAPS) – Program/Grants Update: Year-end reports

Lichtig gave an update of the Phase Chart (*see below*). Lichtig noted that some efforts have moved to new phases, 6W RTCC started Phase 3 in January, Connect Central Minnesota RTCC began Phase 3 on July 1st, Headwaters and Region 4 RTCC have completed Phase 3 and are currently inactive. Phase 4 is a two-year process; many of the RTCCs are in the second year, which started July 2022. Southwest RTCC just began their first year of Phase 4.

Lichtig mentioned that TCAPs, which are based in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, will be updated in more detail at a later time.

Agency Updates

Olmstead Plan

Billiar stated that the focus of the past cabinet meeting was what is going to be next for the Olmstead goals and if these goals are sufficient. It was not a meeting to come to specific recommendations but it was a broad-based conversation to make certain that they have the right goals.

Minnesota Board on Aging

Schneider shared that in October the Board will be having their annual review of the area agencies on aging plans. She will bring forth their plans for 2023 after this review.

MnDOT

Nelson reported that a replacement for the MnDOT Division Director has been filled and they will be present at the next MCOTA meeting.

Minnesota Department of Health

Galos reported that MDH is currently working on the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership Program and applicants are coming in. They have their final set of activities in their active living or active transportation focused on biking and walking initiatives. One is focused on increasing accessibility, one on ease of transportation planning, one on safe routes to schools, and another is fully focused on park planning with opportunities to make parks more accessible.

Review Draft Agenda for September Meeting

Gottfried provided an overview of the September meeting. Members did not have any changes or questions.

Public Comment

No comments from the public were submitted for this meeting.

Adjourn

Reis adjourned the meeting at 3:02 p.m.