

Minnesota Council on Transportation Access
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, August 23, 2017

Members Present

Chair – Tim Henkel, Minnesota Department of Transportation
Vice-Chair – Joan Willshire, Minnesota State Council on Disability
Julie Belisle, Minnesota Department of Education (via phone)
Tiffany Collins, Minnesota Public Transit Association (via phone)
Tim Held, Minnesota Department of Health
Jon Kelly, Minnesota Department of Commerce (via phone)
Stewart McMullan, Minnesota Department of Management and Budget
Thant Pearson, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development
Ronald Quade II, Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (via phone)
Diogo Reis, Minnesota Department of Human Services (via phone, proxy for Claire Wilson)
Gerri Sutton, Metropolitan Council

Members Absent

Peter Brickwedde, Minnesota Department of Commerce (Jon Kelly served as proxy)
Harlan Tardy, Minnesota Board on Aging
Claire Wilson, Minnesota Department of Human Services (Diogo Reis served as proxy)

Others Present

Matt Damiani, Minnesota Department of Revenue
Kristie Billiar, Minnesota Department of Transportation ADA Program and Policy
Noel Shughart, Minnesota Department of Transportation Office of Transit
Sue Siemers, Minnesota Department of Transportation Office of Transit (via phone)
Sara Dunlap, Minnesota Department of Transportation Office of Transit
Mike Kronzer, Minnesota Department of Transportation Office of Traffic, Safety, and Technology
Heidi Corcoran, Dakota County (via phone)
Alan Herrmann, Scott County
Saif Benjaafar, Univ. of Minnesota, Department of Industrial & Systems Engineering
Frank Douma, Univ. of Minnesota, Humphrey School of Public Affairs (via phone)
Alireza Khani, Univ. of Minnesota, Department of Civil, Environmental, and Geo- Engineering
Kaydee Kirk, Univ. of Minnesota, Center for Transportation Studies
Arlene Mathison, Univ. of Minnesota, Center for Transportation Studies
Jerry Zhao, Univ. of Minnesota, Humphrey School of Public Affairs
Kim Pettman, disability advocate
Tim Weltcin, Prime West Health (via phone)

Call to order and introductions

Henkel called to order the August meeting of the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access at 1:04 PM on August 23, 2017 at the MnDOT Central Office, St. Paul, MN.

Review and approval of agenda

Reis made a motion to approve the agenda; the motion was seconded by Held and then was unanimously approved.

Review and approval of minutes from June 28 and July 22, 2017 meetings

Willshire moved to approve the 6/28/2017 MCOTA meeting minutes; the motion was seconded by Sutton and was then unanimously **approved**.

Jon Kelly noted that he was not in attendance at the July meeting. Willshire moved to approve the 6/28/2017 MCOTA meeting minutes with that change; the motion was seconded by Pearson and was then unanimously **approved**.

Website redesign

Member comments on the new website in previous meetings have been addressed. Billiar suggested that the State of Minnesota logo should be added to the banner of the site, and all agreed that should be done. Sutton made a motion to approve the website with that change; the motion was seconded by Willshire and was then unanimously **approved**.

Volunteer driver program reimbursement updates

Damiani gave a presentation on the Taxability of Volunteer Mileage Reimbursements to clarify the guidance the state is providing to volunteer drivers. There have been no legal, policy, or administrative changes to the rule. The only change had been that the Department of Revenue posted information about the federal requirements for volunteer mileage reimbursement on its website, which has prompted questions from volunteer organizations, volunteer drivers, and from MCOTA members.

Essentially, the IRS rule is that volunteer drivers can exclude one of the following from income: \$0.14 per mile OR the actual vehicle expenses, such as gas and oil, that are directly related to the charitable purpose. Volunteer drivers must report mileage reimbursements above the exclusion as income. And, organizations do not need to classify volunteers as employees even if reimbursing at rate higher than charitable rate; other factors are required to do that.

Damiani answered the specific questions that the MCOTA committee on volunteer driver reimbursement had drafted last month.

- The IRS Publication 554, Tax Guide for Seniors, is applicable to seniors.
- Fuel, oil, parking, and tolls are eligible expenses (car payments, maintenance, depreciation, and insurance are NOT eligible expenses for reimbursement)
- There is no separate Minnesota charitable tax-exempt mileage reimbursement rate - any change would need to be at the federal level
- The slightly higher (\$0.16 per mile) medical mileage reimbursement rate does not apply to volunteer drivers

Willshire, as head of the MCOTA committee on this topic, said that there is a need to get this information out (to contacts, on website). And, she intends to reconvene the committee, given the impact of current law on volunteer drivers, to determine what actions could be next. Damiani said that the IRS would likely not be open to reimburse at the \$0.53 rate; and thought it might be possible to get the medical reimbursement rate (\$0.16 per mile). He also suggested that it's beneficial to provide volunteers with a standard form for tracking actual expenses.

Presentation on Economic Benefits of Volunteer Driver programs

Zhao presented the results of his research on the economic benefits on volunteer driver programs in Minnesota, using six case studies. The researchers interviewed selected providers that use volunteer drivers in Minnesota, and compared the cost of volunteer driver programs to alternative services that may be available, such as private provider services, Special Transportation Services, or taxi services. On average,

for each round-trip volunteer driver services can save from \$18 to \$185, depending on trip length and the type of alternative services. The annual savings of these six program range from about \$75,000 to as much as \$1,480,000. The programs studied were: Volunteer Services of Carlton County, Central Community Transit (CCT), United Community Action Partnership, SEMCAC (Southeastern Minnesota Community Action Council), Faith in Action for Cass County, and Faith in Action in Red Wing.

Presentation on Public-Private Partnerships in Transit

Benjaafar presented the results of his research on public-private partnerships (P3s) in transit, specifically partnerships with transit network companies (TNCs) like Uber and Lyft. His presentation focused on two of the five case studies:

1. The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)'s partnership with Uber and Lyft to provide on-demand paratransit to the Massachusetts Bay area.
2. Liberty Mobility Now: Rural Transit Liberty Mobility Now is a TNC with a different model than Uber and Lyft. Liberty serves as the private end of public/private partnerships, focusing primarily on rural customers. In addition to a ridesharing service, Liberty also provides services to connect customers with existing transit infrastructure. Liberty finds that this method, which is more community oriented, works well for rural areas.

Challenges to P3 programs include the need for investments in marketing and outreach to get enough customers to be viable; the ability to monitor and enforce service quality standards; technology barriers--not all customers use smartphones; payment options beyond credit cards; and long-term risks due to the evolving business models of TNCs.

Khani then presented his analysis of potential opportunities for partnership with TNCs in the Twin Cities, including bus routes with particularly low ridership.

Members emphasized that the vehicles used by TNCs must be accessible to be used in any partnerships with public agencies.

New legislative required task force: Metro Mobility connections to Lyft and Uber

Sutton provided background and context for a legislatively-mandated task force of how Metro Mobility, the Metropolitan Council's paratransit service, might partner with transportation network companies like Lyft and Uber. Metro Mobility has experienced 7 percent average annual growth in ridership for the last 6-7 years, while the last fare increase was in 2008, resulting in a deficit. The task force held its first meeting today, and will issue a report to the legislature by Feb. 15, 2018. See [Metro Mobility Task Force information on the Met Council's website](#). The Metropolitan Council does offer a premium on-demand taxi service, with accessible taxis. 80% of riders average 3.7 miles per trip. The average Metro Mobility ride is 11.4 miles. Potential barriers for working with TNCs include: provision of data, fraud prevention, vehicle accessibility, and trips not being reportable to the National Transit Board (NTB), resulting in a loss of federal funds. Benjaafar mentioned that the MBTA pilot is capping rides from Uber and Lyft at 20 rides per month as a way to control costs. Customers do not like the cap.

Minnesota Autonomous Bus Project

Mike Kronzer, ITS Project Manager at the MnDOT Office of Traffic, Safety, and Technology, gave a presentation on the Minnesota Autonomous Bus Project. The project's goals are to test autonomous vehicles in snow and ice conditions, learn about implications for system operations, look at how AVs can improve mobility, test the infrastructure, to influence the development of AVs, and to develop partnerships. The project phases:

- Phase 1: MnROAD testing (Nov. 2017 – Feb. 2018) Tour opportunities at MnROAD

- Phase 2: Super Bowl Showcase (closed road demonstrations: Mpls, St. Paul, Bloomington) Stone Arch Bridge or Nicollet Mall. Open to public. 5 days of operation.
- Phase 3: additional testing site in spring/summer 2018, most likely at the 3M Corporate Campus.

MCOTA August Communication Update

Approval of the August MCOTA stakeholder communication was tabled for September due to need to approve the research reports. Content for the now-September update includes: results from the two research projects, the RTCC Application, and the final local coordination plans.

FY18 activities

Shughart walked the members through the proposed additional activities for FY18: a volunteer driver forum and a research project on youth employment transportation. Wilshire made motion to approve; Pearson seconded, and it was unanimously **approved**.

Proposed 2018 MCOTA meetings

Mathison presented the proposed 2018 MCOTA meeting schedule, and the members agreed to go ahead with it.

Proposed 2018 meetings, 1:00-3:30pm MnDOT Central Office:

- Wednesday, January 24
- Wednesday, February 28
- Wednesday, March 28
- Wednesday, April 25
- Wednesday, May 23
- Wednesday, June 27
- Wednesday, July 25
- Wednesday, August 22
- Wednesday, September 26
- Wednesday, October 24
- Wednesday, November 28
- Wednesday, December 19 (3rd Wednesday of month)

Agency updates

Shughart mentioned that the Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils application is nearly complete.

Billiar mentioned that the Olmstead Plan Subcabinet is meeting next week to discuss local coordination plans, public involvement, and information for the baseline goals.

Public comments

Pettman said that information about local transit options is not getting out to social service agencies who hold public meetings, and that the meetings are held in locations or at times that are difficult to reach by transit. She suggested that grant applications include a criteria that the applicants demonstrate that they understand how their local transit system works.

Adjourn

The meeting ended at 3:37 p.m.