

MCOTA Meeting Minutes

January 25, 2023 | 1:00 – 3:00 PM
Meeting held virtually via Zoom.

Members present:

Chair – Tim Sexton, Minnesota Department of Transportation
Vice Chair – Diogo Reis, Minnesota Department of Human Services
Tiffany Collins, Minnesota Public Transit Association
David Fenley, Minnesota State Council on Disability
Dylan Galos, Minnesota Department of Health
Kelly Garvey, Minnesota Department of Education
Jim Miller, Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs
Maureen Schneider, Minnesota Board on Aging
Gerri Sutton, Metropolitan Council
Jodi Yanda, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

Members absent:

Peter Brickwedde, Minnesota Department of Commerce
Rachel Dame, Office of the Governor
Nick Lardinois, Minnesota Management and Budget

Others present:

- Minnesota Department of Transportation: Kristie Billiar, Tom Gottfried, Michelle Lichtig, Mark Nelson, Sue Siemers, Mai Thor, Davin Simmons, Glenn Gadbois
- University of Minnesota Center for Transportation Studies: Rachel Brodeur, Arlene Mathison
- ASL interpreters Maria Dively and Jennifer Williams
- CART captioner: Jayne
- Sharon Bring, County Commissioner, Marshall County and NW RTCC Member
- Eric Day, Mid-Minnesota Development Commission and RTCC
- Mike Greenbaum, Newtrax/Ramsey County TCAP
- John Harper, Metropolitan Council
- Elizabeth Hensrud
- Sheila Holbrook-White, Metropolitan Council
- Alan Herrmann, Scott/Carver County TCAP
- Steve Johnson, Central Minnesota RTCC District 7W

- Matt Kallroos, Region Five RTCC
- Anne Larkin Walter, Anoka County
- Ted Nelson, Prairie Five Transportation Director/RTCC
- Scott Olson, Newtrax/Ramsey County TCAP
- Shelly Pflaum, United Community Action Partnership RTCC
- Anna Phearman, MDLC
- Glenda Phillipe
- Lynnell Popowski, Northwest Regional Development Commission/RTCC
- Mark Schermerhorn, Anoka County Transit TCAP
- Robin Rohr, Hennepin County TCAP
- Lindsey Sand, Knute Nelson
- Beverly Sidlo-Tolliver, ARDC/Arrowhead RTCC
- Terry Smith, Mid-Minnesota Development Commission and RTCC
- Michelle Thomas, East Central RTCC
- Joan Willshire, former member and disability advocate

Call to Order and Member Roll Call

Tim Sexton, MCOTA Chair, called the meeting of the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access to order at 1:03 PM on January 25, 2023. There was a quorum of MCOTA members.

Review and Approve Agenda

Jim Miller moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Diogo Reis. The agenda was unanimously **approved**.

November Meeting Minutes

Maureen Schneider moved to approve the November minutes, seconded by Gerri Sutton. The minutes were unanimously **approved**.

Legislative and Governor's Budget Update

David Fenley stated that the MN Council on Disability has had good introductory meetings with legislators and that requests for an increased budget are moving forward in committees. The only explicit transportation bill the Council on Disability is tracking is one they are working on with the Metropolitan Council. Fenley also shared an online disability bill tracking tool created by the Council on Disability: <https://www.disability.state.mn.us/about-our-public-policy/public-policy-agenda/>.

Jim Miller reported that the Minnesota Veterans' Administration's legislative focus is on homes; no bills specifically about transportation this year.

Maureen Schneider shared highlights from the Board on Aging's legislative proposal:

- 1) Establishment of a legislative task force to review and prioritize resources to support the aging demographic in Minnesota, including looking at the current status of publicly-funded aging-related programs
- 2) Funding request for Native American Elders Coordination staff to coordinate staff that we need to develop and coordinate a tribal government-designed and led statewide service system for Native American elders
- 3) Technical amendment requirement for an exemption from requirements for a legislative advisory committee for federal Older Americans Act funding so the Area Agencies on Aging can access the funds more quickly
- 4) Technical revisions to dementia grants administration programs

Gerri Sutton shared several of the Metropolitan Council's legislative requests:

- 1/8-cent sales tax in the Twin Cities metro area for transit funding
- funding for electric buses
- regional transit capital funding
- administrative citations authority request (carryover from last session)
- Capital funding proposal will be released tomorrow

Diogo Reis talked about some specific Department of Human Services' funding items in the Governor's budget. These include:

- A proposed 12% increase for Non-emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) reimbursement rates for unassisted, assisted, and lift-equipped rides
- A fuel-adjuster reimbursement rate for transportation providers that will allow flexibility for reimbursement rates to change when fuel prices go up or down.
- An increase in meals and lodging reimbursement for NEMT participants; proposed to be the same rates as for State employees

Reis also mentioned [House File 690](#), a bill that removes the requirement for taxicabs to meet the MnDOT Special Transportation Services standard and allows them to essentially operate because they meet a municipal standard. Reis did not know who is behind the bill and suggested that if providers are meeting multiple standards for different programs, it might be an opportunity to have a conversation that some of these standards might be interchangeable or sufficient to meet the standards of other programs.

Michelle Lichtig, MnDOT Program Manager, provided an overview of the proposed Driver's Licenses for All legislation ([HF4](#)). The significance of this proposed legislation is that it relates to transportation access and it could allow at least 10,000 people who are currently not able to legally drive with a driver's license to have greater access to transportation. Proof of citizenship or lawful presence would no longer be required for a driver's license. It is supported by the Chamber of Commerce and the Minnesota Department of Public Safety. The reasons for doing this is that people who may not be legal citizens still have a need to get to medical

appointments, to take children to school and to get to work and be able to drive in emergency situations. The bill has passed the Transportation House Committee.

Presentation on Waiver Transportation

Sheila Holbrook-White and John Harper from the Metropolitan Council presented information about waiver transportation efforts led by the Council. The focus of the presentation was the ongoing development by the Metropolitan Council of a waiver transportation program that will offer distinct features and service options for persons with disabilities in the seven-county metro area.

Holbrook-White shared that Medicaid/Medical Assistance (MA) is a program that covers medical costs of no- and low-income families and individuals. Funding is administered by states and jointly funded by federal government in compliance with federal requirements. Among those requirements is that each state must provide certain benefits to all individuals who receive services across the state. States may opt to expand the benefits available to individuals through a waiver. Minnesota currently offers five major waiver programs that seek to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities.

Holbrook-White identified the process of how waivers work:

- 1) Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) applies for permission to provide Medicaid waiver services
- 2) The Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) rules on the application
- 3) Minnesota DHS manages waivers centrally
- 4) Lead agencies service as on-the-ground connectors
- 5) Selected providers deliver or facilitate services

Minnesota's Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Waiver Programs include:

- 1) Brain Injury (BI)
- 2) Community Access for Disability Inclusion (CADI)
- 3) Developmental Disabilities (DD)
- 4) Community Alternative Care

In 2022 nearly 100,000 Minnesotans participated in waiver programs.

John Harper provided an overview of the current services offered by the Metropolitan Council.

Harper shared a map of the Metro Mobility Service Area, identifying the federally required ADA service area and non-ADA service area mandated by state law. For customers who request trips that begin and end in the federally required ADA service area, services must be provided during the same days and hours that fixed route or Metro Transit services operate in those same communities. For customers who request trips that begin and/or end in the non-Ada service area, they may be placed on stand-by. These customers may request a trip during the days and

hours of service, but not have a confirmed ride when they complete that request. These participants additionally are not eligible for standing orders.

Metro Mobility currently offers transportation to day support services through agency and demand contracts. Agency contracts include the region's nine largest Day Support Services and only ADA trips are eligible. Demand contracts are both non-routine trips and standing orders. Demand contracts are the only option for Day Support Services not served through the Agency contract.

Harper shared a timeline of the history of the Waiver Transportation Program, including the turning point in 2021 when the Department of Human Services (DHS) unbundled transportation from program costs. This led to Day Support Services abandoning transportation efforts, which supplemented the services that Metro Mobility was providing in the past.

Holbrook-White stated that the Metropolitan Council is now moving forward on the development and implementation of the Waiver Transportation program. The Council plans to sunset the Agency Contract in 2024. The Council will launch Waiver Transportation in 2024. Current Metro Mobility demand contracts and services will remain unchanged. The Waiver Transportation program supports and advances current transportation accessibility efforts.

Holbrook-White noted that the Waiver Transportation Program is separate and distinct from Metro Mobility and is a premium service including features such as:

- Multiple waiver-eligible purposes
- Expanded days and hours of service
- Expanded access to the service area
- Expanded standing order options
- Fare-free travel
- Single point of contact
- No Metro Mobility application, certification, or re-certification
- First-door through first-door escort
- ADA-accessible vehicles

Harper discussed the funding principles and limitations of the new Waiver Transportation Program. The first key is to represent and reflect that this service is a human service and to record and capture funding as human service as opposed to the general Metro Mobility budget. Second, is to leverage additional federal funds that the Council does not receive currently.

Holbrook-White shared the working plan for the Waiver Transportation Program:

- 1) 2023-Q1: Outreach to disability-serving agencies and county staff to gauge participant interest in the waiver transportation program

- 2) 2023-Q2: Release RFP for waiver transportation program and establish program branding
- 3) 2023-Q3-Q4: Coordinate administrative details with county staff
- 4) April 1, 2024: Begin phased delivery of waiver transportation
 - a. Shift current Agency riders to waiver or to demand
 - b. Shift current Demand riders to waiver
 - c. New riders
- 5) 2024-Q2-Q3: Sunset Agency Contract

See the [waiver transportation presentation slides \(PDF\)](#).

Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM)

Michelle Lichtig, MnDOT Project Manager, presented information about the Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM), which works on a federal level to coordinate transportation services to meet diverse transportation needs, similar to MCOTA's efforts on the state level. CCAM recently released their strategic plan for 2023 to 2026, providing a framework to move forward and a mirror to reflect on the current work on transportation access.

CCAM identified 130 federal programs for funding human services, transportation for people with disabilities, older adults, and low-income individuals. This is important because some of the programs identified have connections to state programs that could be explored further regarding transportation access.

Lichtig shared the CCAM values of access, accessibility, mobility, safety, reliability, affordability, and equity – values that could also be framework to further identify and strengthen the values and mission of MCOTA.

The 2023-2026 CCAM strategic plan identifies three major goals:

- 1) Strengthen the CCAM and improve multisector collaboration at all levels and jurisdictions
- 2) Promote the development of safer and more accessible transportation networks
- 3) Address CCAM agency policies that impede transportation coordination

Lichtig identified a future goal of determining appropriate alignment of MCOTA with CCAM goals/strategies. Continued and additional alignment for MCOTA, Mobility Management, and MN State Agencies that provide transportation will create opportunities for transportation access research, technical assistance, and funding. The CCAM Strategic Plan is available at <https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-programs/access/ccam/about/2023-2026-coordinating-council-access-and-mobility>.

MCOTA Work Teams

Removing Barriers

Dylan Galos reported that after identifying the most important issues and barriers to the community, informing work plans, and grouping activities together to create subcommittees, between the months of October and December the Work Team ran into challenges taking action and moving steps forward. Galos identified that there were challenges in communication and trying to do too many things at once. In January, the Work Team identified the biggest priorities and narrowed its focus to updating the 2013 Vehicle Sharing Study, with plans to move on to other priorities after that.

Accessibility & Olmstead

David Fenley reported that their approach is virtually the same as the Removing Barriers team. The group has narrowed its focus for now, with others to be pursued as longer-term goals.

Volunteer Driver & Forum Series

Tiffany Collins shared the new Volunteer Driver Information Brochure. The audience for this brochure is volunteer drivers and transit agencies and organizations who run volunteer driver programs. Collins made a motion to approve endorsing the Volunteer Driver Information Brochure, seconded by Jodi Yanda. The brochure was unanimously **approved**.

Beverly Sidlo-Tolliver shared that the next [Volunteer Driver Forum](#) will be held on February 16, 2023, from 1-3 p.m.

Communications

Jodi Yanda shared the final annual report, draft January newsletter and reviewed the Communications Team's Work Plan.

Agency Updates

Olmstead Plan

Kristie Billiar stated that the Olmstead Plan Sub-Cabinet adopted and approved the measures for 2022 and there was discussion for what will be next with the plan amendment for 2023. Staff recommended that the infrastructure goal be eliminated since it is already part of the measures and evaluations report that is provided to the legislature. They will also be reviewing the Greater Minnesota Transit Investment Plan for needed adjustments.

Member Round Robin

Gottfried stated that in the Office of Transit the local coordination plans that are required every five years by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are wrapping up. The Greater Minnesota Transit Investment Plan is a document that will hopefully feed the plans as they are being developed because they reference what public transit is doing, the limitations of it, and the aspects of transportation gaps. Gottfried will provide an update as early as the March meeting.

Jodi Yandi stated that Department Employment and Economic Development (DEED) with Vocational Rehabilitation Services received a 5-year, \$13 million Disability Initiative Fund award. The award is to provide opportunities for individuals by helping them look for jobs focusing on the transportation industry. This is a partnership with State Services for the Blind, Department of Human Services, Department of Education, and the Transportation Center of Excellence. See [announcement of award from DEED](#).

David Fenley shared information about a new working group for people of disabilities in the workforce. The email address for more information or to participate in the group is ERG.Disability.MMB@state.mn.us.

Discussion of potential June 28 Senior Leadership meeting

Gottfried introduced the idea of holding a Senior Leadership meeting on June 28, including the background of past meetings. Tim Sexton asked members to share their thoughts and feedback on the value of sharing MCOTA's work with senior leaders across agencies and what methods to use for that. Gottfried will follow-up with members about this topic before the March meeting.

Adjourn

Sexton adjourned the meeting at 3:00 p.m.

Action Items

- Tom Gottfried will email members regarding scheduling a senior leadership meeting, with follow-up discussion to be included in the March meeting.