

MCOTA Meeting Minutes

March 22, 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
- David Fenley, Minnesota State Council on Disability
- Dylan Galos, Minnesota Department of Health
- Kelly Garvey, Minnesota Department of Education
- 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
- Jim Miller, Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs
- Brandon Nurmi, Minnesota Public Transit Association

Others present:

- Minnesota Department of Transportation: Tom Gottfried, Michelle Lichtig, Kristie Billiar, John Dukich, Davin Simmons, Mai Thor
- University of Minnesota Center for Transportation Studies: Arlene Mathison, Samantha Hahn-Douville
- ASL interpreters Jessica and Tricia
- CART captioner: Jayne
- Eric Day, Mid-Minnesota Development Commission and RTCC
- Mike Greenbaum, Newtrax/Ramsey County TCAP
- Alan Herrmann, Scott/Carver County TCAP
- Anne Larkin Walter, Anoka County
- Shelly Pflaum, United Community Action Partnership/Southwest MN RTCC
- Lynnell Popowski, Northwest Regional Development Commission/RTCC
- Mark Schermerhorn, Anoka County Transit TCAP
- Robin Rohr, Hennepin County TCAP
- Beverly Sidlo-Tolliver, ARDC/Arrowhead RTCC

- Chelsea Martin
- Gavin Bukovich, ARDC
- Karen Onan, East Central RTCC
- Michael Woods, Ombudsman for Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities
- Nick Leske, United Community Action Partnership
- Rachel Garaghty, MDH
- Shirley Schoening Scheuler, MDH

Call to Order and Member Roll Call

Tim Sexton, MCOTA Chair, called the meeting of the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access to order at 1:05 PM. There was a quorum of MCOTA members. MCOTA members each introduced themselves. Dylan Galos, Minnesota Department of Health, is resigning as MDH's representative to MCOTA due to changing job responsibilities and he introduced his successor Shirley Schoening Scheuler. Sexton thanked Galos for his contributions to MCOTA. Tom Gottfried announced that Tiffany Collins has moved to a new position and that Brandon Nurmi, Transit Director at Arrowhead Transit, will be the new member representing the Minnesota Public Transit Association on MCOTA. Gottfried also thanked Collins for her service with MCOTA.

Review and Approve Agenda

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

January Meeting Minutes

Jodi Yanda moved to approve the January minutes, seconded by Dylan Galos. The minutes were unanimously **approved**.

Legislative and Governor's Budget Update

John Dukich, Minnesota Department of Transportation

Dukich stated that legislative leaders and the Governor announced budget targets for the various committees, including a target of \$1.1 billion dedicated to transportation funding. The House is scheduled to release its transportation budget so further updates will be given at the next meeting.

Diogo Reis, Minnesota Department of Human Services

Reis stated not much has changed since January. The budget target for Health and Human Services around the state is just under \$2 billion. Rate increases for medical mileage rates and other related needs are still being considered, and budget bills are planned to be shared in key committees next week.

Maureen Melgaard Schneider, Minnesota Board on Aging

Schneider discussed the Legislative Task Force on Aging. This is a task force that would review and prioritize resources to support the aging demographic in Minnesota. Schneider also mentioned the funding request for the Native American Elders Coordinator position which had been added to statute without funding in the 1990s.

David Fenley, Minnesota Council on Disability

Fenley stated that the Minnesota Council on Disability is not leading any major transportation accessibility bills but is [tracking quite a few of them](#). Fenley noted that one they think is good for transportation access in Greater Minnesota is a bill which allows individuals who are 15 years old to acquire a driver's license if they have a parent or family member with a disability who cannot drive. This would create more access for individuals who have a disability.

Kelly Garvey, Minnesota Department of Education

Garvey stated that the Minnesota Department of Education is involved in a few fiscal notes. One includes an amendment to a statute that would allow districts to provide transportation for students to area learning centers. The other is centered around post-secondary institution enrollment and aid for meals and transportation cost for qualifying students.

Gerri Sutton, Metropolitan Council

Sutton stated that the Metropolitan Council has several legislative updates. First, they were included in the revised budget recommendations from the Governor last week. It included funding to be used to enclose up to 3 light rail stations, increase camera monitoring capabilities, and expand their presence by providing funding for community-based organizations to connect people to social services.

The [Legislative Audit Commission heard the report on the Green Line extension](#) and that report is available online. As of March 22, the Senate had not passed the capital investment package. Sutton also discussed Senate File 1933, which would establish a Metro Mobility enhanced pilot program with a goal to provide services throughout the Metro Mobility service area until 10:00pm. Sutton also noted House File 2677 which would require MnDOT in coordination with the Metropolitan Council to establish benchmarks for statewide greenhouse gas emissions.

Discussion of potential June 28 Senior Leadership

Gottfried presented a draft of the MCOTA Policy and Legislative Development Process document. This document includes a background timeline of transportation access issues, an overview of MCOTA work teams, and what MCOTA is proposing for the next year. A group discussion was had regarding the time frame of a June meeting along with the need for Senior Leadership to meet. In addition, Michelle Lichtig mentioned that she and Tom Gottfried had just been informed of an opportunity for MCOTA to work with the federal Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility to align MCOTA's work with the federal efforts.

Greater MN Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils (RTCCs) & Transit Coordination Assistance Projects (TCAPs)

Michelle Lichtig, Minnesota Department of Transportation, presented on examples of what RTCCs and TCAPs do as mobility managers.

Vision: Minnesotans will have access to coordinated transportation services to meet their mobility needs.

Mission: To work together to remove obstacles that prevent the successful coordination of transportation programs and resources among their respective customers.

Focus: Transportation access and coordination for older adults, people with disabilities and people with low income.

Lichtig noted that last week they had the opportunity to present at the Minnesota Social Service Association on Transportation Barriers: Partnering for Improved Access. Presenters included Robyn Bernardy of the Dakota County TCAP, Shelly Pflaum with the Southwest RTCC, Alan Herrmann of Carver/Scott TCAP, and Mai Thor and Michelle Lichtig with MnDOT. Lichtig noted the importance of presentations at non-transportation conferences, as transportation impacts human services and conference participation offers mutual learning, engages attendees to participate in their RTCC/TCAP, and increases awareness of mobility management with RTCCs/TCAPs as local resources.

Lichtig discussed the need for community partners. She stated that there is a need to partner because need is larger than resources. It is also important because collaboration helps define the issue and solution. Lichtig noted that through collaboration, partnering organizations are now participating in solutions rather than only defining the problems.

MCOTA Work Teams

Removing Barriers

Dylan Galos shared that the work team has been narrowing the scope of their work and starting to think about where to focus. The work group has begun focusing on the insurance requirements, and at the last meeting had presentations talking about how different mobility management organizations found ways to get insurance coverage for their volunteer or staff drivers. They are leveraging the expertise of the membership of the group, finding the right partners, and looking to move forward into other pieces towards a proposed plan.

Accessibility & Olmstead

David Fenley provided an update that the work team has begun discussion towards the goal of creating a single website or phone number that individuals can call for the entire State of Minnesota to find accessible rides.

Volunteer Driver Programs

Beverly Sidlo-Tolliver shared that the first Volunteer Driver Forum occurred on February 16, 2023. Kevin Chambers from an organization in Oregon spoke on a low-tech option called Ride Sheets that he developed through a grant with AARP. Sidlo-Tolliver also noted that the work team is currently narrowing their scope on the upcoming research topic they will be pursuing.

Communications

Jodi Yanda shared that there will be an April newsletter coming out soon. Newsletters can be accessed through the MCOTA website.

Yanda also presented the updates to the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access Member Guide. After review, Yanda made a motion to approve the updated MCOTA Member Guide, seconded by Maureen Schneider. The updated guide was unanimously approved.

Agency Updates

Olmstead Plan

Kristie Billiar reported that there are no significant updates for Olmstead Transportation Goals at this time. The Olmstead Implementation Office has drafted the RFP for a national data collection and benchmarking project to inform future revisions of the MN Olmstead Plan. The goal is to have the contract in place by mid-May. Shelley Madore shared that they are in the process right now of building four RFPs to go out to community vendors to look at issues around informed choice, person-centered planning, positive behavioral supports, and their impact on services such as housing, employment, transportation, and education. Madore also mentioned that the Olmstead Implementation Office is planning to get information out to be used by all the sub-cabinet agencies by early January 2024, when the OIO will be updating goals to make sure that we are addressing those critical areas where we are serving individuals, and no longer serving a process. Madore will have more information to share at the May or July MCOTA meeting.

Member Round Robin

Tom Gottfried reiterated that MnDOT and Office of Transit will be working closely with the Federal FTA CCAM group which also includes all the other state agencies federal partners attached to it. He hopes to have updates at the May or July meeting.

Adjourn

Sexton adjourned the meeting at 2:38 p.m.

Action items:

- Before the May meeting, Tom Gottfried and Tim Sexton will communicate about scheduling a Senior Leadership Meeting in June or later, including reaching out to senior leaders' executive assistants to put holds on calendars.
- In the May meeting, MCOTA members will decide on plans for a Senior Leadership Meeting in June or later.
- The May meeting will likely include an update on Local Coordination Plans.
- Shelley Madore will most likely share information about potential new/updated Olmstead Plan Goals in the May or July MCOTA meeting.
- Tom Gottfried and Michelle Lichtig will share more information about the potential opportunity for MCOTA to work with the federal Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility.