

Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (MCOTA) Senior Leadership Meeting Minutes

July 10, 2023 | 8:30 a.m. Central Time
Meeting held virtually via Zoom.

MCOTA Senior Leadership:

- Nancy Daubenberger, Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Transportation
- Maureen Melgaard Schneider, MN Board on Aging Interim Chair
- Grace Arnold, Commerce Commissioner, represented by Hali Kolkind, Chief of Staff, Commerce
- David Dively, MN Council on Disability, Executive Director, represented by David Fenley, ADA Director, Minnesota Council on Disability
- Kevin McKinnon, DEED Commissioner, represented by Chris C. McVey, DEED-VRS Deputy Director of Disability Employment Services
- Willie Jett (MDE), Commissioner and Daron Korte (MDE) Assistant Commissioner, Office of Student Support Services
- Brooke Cunningham, Commissioner, Health, represented by Daniel Huff, Assistant Commissioner
- Julie A. Marquardt, Assistant Commissioner and Medicaid Director, DHS
- Ryan Daniel, Minnesota Public Transit Association President, represented by Brandon Nurmi, Board Member, Minnesota Public Transit Association
- Charles Zelle, Chair of Metropolitan Council
- Jim D. Schowalter, MMB Commissioner

MCOTA Senior Leadership not represented:

- Larry Herke, Commissioner MDVA
Designee: Ron Quade, Assistant Commissioner MDVA

Members present:

- Chair: Tim Sexton – Assistant Commissioner for Sustainability, Planning, and Program Management, Minnesota Department of Transportation
- Vice-Chair: Diogo Reis – Division Director, Minnesota Department of Human Services
- David Fenley – ADA Director, Minnesota Council on Disability
- Kelly Garvey – Transportation Specialist, Minnesota Department of Education
- Nick Lardinois – Executive Budget Officer, Minnesota Management and Budget
- Maureen Melgaard Schneider – Interim Chair, Minnesota Board on Aging
- Brandon Nurmi – Director, Arrowhead Transit and Minnesota Public Transit Association Board Member

- Shirley Schoening Scheuler – Active Living Coordinator, Minnesota Department of Health
- Gerri Sutton – Director, Metropolitan Council
- Jodi Yanda – Disability Services Integration Manager, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

Members absent:

- Peter Brickwedde – Assistant Commissioner of Government and External Affairs, Minnesota Department of Commerce
- Jeff Burth – Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs
- Rachel Dame – Policy Advisor, Office of Governor Tim Walz and Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan

Others present:

- Judy Shanley, Easterseals and FTA funded Nat. Ctr for Mobility Management (NCMM)
- Steve Workman, NCMM Consultant at Easterseals & Director of Transport New Hampshire
- Minnesota Department of Transportation: Tom Gottfried, Michelle Lichtig, Davin Simmons, Sarah Ghandour, Mai Thor, Davin Simmons
- University of Minnesota Center for Transportation Studies: Arlene Mathison, Samantha Hahn-Douville, Gina Baas, Chelsea Arbury Prorok
- Sherry Munyon, Minnesota Public Transit Association
- Shelly Pflaum, United Community Action Partnership/Southwest MN RTCC
- Robyn Bernardy, Dakota County TCAP

Call to Order and Member Roll Call

Nancy Daubenberger, Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) called the meeting of the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access Senior Leadership to order at 8:30 a.m. Tim Sexton, MCOTA Chair and Assistant Commissioner for Sustainability, Planning, and Program Management, MnDOT requested MCOTA members and senior leadership to introduce themselves in the chat.

Work Plan Update (Fall 2021-2023)

Background

Tom Gottfried, MCOTA Executive Director and Program Director, Department of Transportation provided highlights of the MCOTA 2020-2024 Strategic Plan and the MCOTA 2022-2024 Work Plan. Gottfried noted that key elements of the MCOTA Work Plan are Program Intent and Core Strategies.

Program Intent

- Staff support that coordinate and engages
- Work Teams that are focused and have clear directives
- Clear communication and direction with local partners
- Consistency in engaging with Minnesotans

What We Do: Our Core Strategies

- We will utilize the following strategies to improve transportation coordination in Minnesota
 - Provide support and technical assistance to local partners
 - Share best practices and build coalitions
 - Identify and respond to research needs
 - Engage in responsible education, communication, and advocacy activities

MCOTA Work Teams Updates

David Fenley, ADA Director, Minnesota Council on Disability and Accessibility & Olmstead Work Team Lead provided a brief overview of the goals of the Accessibility & Olmstead Work Team.

- Goal 1: Who is eligible for non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) and how are people made aware that they have this service?
- Goal 2: Integrate Transportation Planning for Housing
- Goal 3: Transportation Management Coordination Centers – one-call, one-click

Brandon Nurmi, Director, Minnesota Public Transit Association and Transportation Director, Arrowhead Transit and Removing Barriers Work Team Lead provided a brief overview of the goals of the Removing Barriers Work Team, including joint priorities between the Removing Barriers and Accessibility & Olmstead Work Teams.

- Joint Priorities
 - Identify and address current transportation gaps and how mobility management can make greater utilization of current resources in those gap areas by providing and coordinating a “first mile/last mile” connection to current transportation options.
 - Provide a central operational methodology to providing a complete trip through a single organizational coordination of transportation options across all transportation needs.
- Increase resources available to address a lack of transportation options in many locations and timespans.
 - Developing Shared Vehicle usage options for organizations by identifying and addressing barriers to utilization
 - Shared vehicle insurance questions and costs
 - Vehicle utilization costs and current operator policies for operational responsibilities
 - Identify current funding availability and future needs for organizational reimbursement to develop and provide affordable transportation options
 - Evaluate current available funding options and levels to support sustainable transportation options
 - Identify future funding needs to utilize current resources and develop needed resources
- Vehicle and driver shortages are a real problem since the pandemic caused shortages in supply chains and labor force

- Currently exploring opportunities to support organizations in increasing operator and staffing workforce levels to meet service needs

Beverly Sidlo-Tolliver, Mobility Manager and Transportation Coordinator, Arrowhead RTCC and Volunteer Driver Programs Work Team Lead provided a brief overview of the work the Volunteer Driver Work Team has done.

- Volunteer Driver Brochure
- Volunteer Federal Legislation
- Lunch and Learn webinars
- Research on Volunteer Driver Services on Health Outcomes

Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM)

Michelle Lichtig, Mobility Management Program Coordinator, MnDOT discussed the following questions.

- What is mobility management?
 - Mobility management is an approach to designing and delivering transportation services that starts and ends with the customer
 - It begins with a community vision in which the entire transportation network – public transit, private operators, cycling and walking, volunteer drivers, and others – works together with customers, planners, and stakeholders to deliver the transportation options that best meet the community’s needs
- Who is involved?
 - State agencies, Transit providers, County Commissioner, Area agencies on aging, Workforce development, Human services non-profits, Transportation advocates, Veteran service organizations, Managed care, Centers for independent living, Consumers, Business community, Local public health, and many more
- What is the challenge?
 - Transportation need exceeds resources
- Who is served, and why is it important?
 - Supporting transportation needs for older adults, people with disabilities and low-income individuals
 - Meeting the needs when public transportation is insufficient, inappropriate or unavailable
 - Often a relatively low number of a region’s population requires human, social transportation compared to the entire region. But challenges that an individual face are significant – along with a complex process toward solution – key focus

Judy Shanley, Easterseals Director of National Center for Mobility Management and federal agency partner discussed the value of CCAM and the connections with the work already being done in Minnesota.

CCAM has been in existence since 2008 and is an executive order being led by the Federal Transit Administration. 11 agencies coordinate CCAM at the federal level. Minnesota is only one

of two states that the National Center for Mobility Management is working with intensely in an effort to see how CCAM practices can work at the state level.

2023-2026 CCAM Strategic Plan Mission and Goals

Mission statement: The Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM) collaborates to improve transportation access for all people

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

Shanley discussed the reasons why CCAM at the State Level is a good thing.

- Creates efficiency to address transportation challenges
- Consistent with the MCOTA Strategic Plan and Logic Model – operationalizes this work
- Aligns with agency plans. For instance:
 - Department of Human Services, Minnesota’s Medicaid (Title XIX) and CHIP (Title XXI) state plans
 - Department of Employment and Economic Development, (DEED), The Path to Career Success
- Identifies new state partners and resources
- Improves performance metrics for your agency and outcomes for the individuals you serve related to access to health care, jobs, education, and inclusive community services and opportunities.

Going forward – MCOTA opportunity to improve collaboration – upcoming meetings with agencies

Shanley discussed how to improve multisector collaboration.

1. Explore existing coordination. Funding, braiding, sharing vehicles (incidental use), grant programs, training, informational content, policies
2. Identify obstacles and challenges
3. Implement cooperative plans to remove barriers – policies and practices

Shanley next discussed next steps for building on the work already being done with MCOTA agencies.

- Learn about existing coordination activities – successes and challenges
 - Please identify key personnel in your agency with whom we can speak
 - If feasible, identify a forum for our conversation
 - Share relevant resources
 - NCMM to hold focus groups and interviews
- MCOTA Stakeholder face to face forum to roll-up sleeves (January 2024?)
 - Confirm understanding of CCAM issues and topics
 - Connect CCAM action plan to the MCOTA strategic plan
 - Develop tangible activities for participating MCOTA agencies
- NCMM to develop an action guide/implementation tool

- Reflecting lessons learned, strategies, and resources
- Case study of the process so others can learn

MCOTA's Strategic Plan for 2025-2029

Tom Gottfried, MCOTA Executive Director and Program Director, Department of Transportation discussed that MCOTA will be building on the original strategic plan in the coming years. MCOTA is looking for continued membership agencies to be involved in the stakeholder engagement conversation. MCOTA will be looking into consultant services to facilitate the current compressed timeline along with a Project Management Team. Gottfried noted that they hope to have the scope of work pulled together by no later than the January MCOTA meeting. Gottfried reminded the group that this is a revisit of what MCOTA has already done, but at the same time with new aspects that need focus.

Gottfried noted that MCOTA will be looking at other State partners regarding resources associated with the strategic plan. Gottfried stated that some of the pieces of the strategic plan could have a potential fiscal impact, and certainly a policy and relational aspect on it.

Next Steps and Member Follow-up

Tim Sexton called for any follow up questions regarding the MCOTA Strategic Plan. Sexton noted that MCOTA will not be meeting in July, and next MCOTA meeting will be held on September 27, which will include the election of chair and vice chair.

Closing Comments

Commissioner Nancy Daubenberger noted the importance of recognizing that needs exceed resources and emphasized why this meeting is necessary to make sure we have the biggest, best use of resources moving forward. Daubenberger stated that the coordinating efforts and the collaboration between agencies is important and that's why input is needed from the group on how to bring those resources together for efficiency and serving those with the greatest needs and who are the most vulnerable.

Public Comment

Sherry Munyon of the Minnesota Public Transit Association mentioned the importance of volunteer drivers in Minnesota, which MCOTA understands as demonstrated by its endorsement of the Volunteer Driver Tax Appreciation Act of 2022 (U.S. House File 3032), a federal bill to raise the charitable mileage reimbursement rate for volunteers from 14 cents per mile to equal the rate for business travel as set annually by the IRS (currently 62.5 cents per mile).

Maureen Schneider stated that the "MN Board on Aging is leading efforts serving older Minnesotans using a lens of diversity, equity, inclusion and access and has an action plan in place. We need to keep the DEIA lens in place when considering transit options throughout the state."

Adjourn

Sexton adjourned the meeting at 9:30 a.m.