

MCOTA Meeting Minutes

September 27, 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
- Kelly Garvey, Minnesota Department of Education
- Brandon Kasprick, Office of the Governor
- Ron Quade, Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs
- Maureen Schneider, Minnesota Board on Aging
- Shirley Schoening Scheuler, Minnesota Department of Health
- Gerri Sutton, Metropolitan Council

Members absent:

- Peter Brickwedde, Minnesota Department of Commerce
- Nick Lardinois, Minnesota Management and Budget
- Brandon Nurmi, Minnesota Public Transit Association
- Jodi Yanda, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

Others present:

- Minnesota Department of Transportation: John Dukich, Tom Gottfried, Michelle Lichtig, Davin Simmons, Mai Thor
- University of Minnesota Center for Transportation Studies: Arlene Mathison, Samantha Hahn-Douville, Chelsea Arbury Prorok, Gina Baas
- Steve Workman, Consultant for NCMM at Easterseals, Inc. and Director of Transport New Hampshire
- Eric Day, Mid-Minnesota Development Commission and RTCC
- Terry Smith, Mid-Minnesota Development Commission and RTCC
- Mike Greenbaum, Newtrax/Ramsey County TCAP
- Beverly Sidlo-Tolliver, ARDC and Arrowhead RTCC
- Gavin Bukovich, ARDC and Arrowhead RTCC
- Tammi Hagen, Headwaters RTCC
- Robin Rohr, Hennepin County TCAP
- Ashley Craiglow- Arrowhead Agency on Aging

- Mark Schermerhorn, Anoka County
- Shelly Pflaum, United Community Action Partnership/Southwest MN RTCC
- Lynnell Popowski, Northwest Regional Development Commission/RTCC
- Robyn Bernardy, Dakota County TCAP
- Barbara Bursack, Washington County TCAP
- Tad Erickson, Region 5 RDC
- John Slade, MICAH
- Linda S., MICAH
- Donna RSVP Litchfield, MN
- Eric Meline
- Sarah Tarleton
- ASL interpreters Kyle and Maria
- CART captioner: Angie

Call to Order

Tom Gottfried, MnDOT, began the meeting and noted the official call to order and roll call would occur when MCOTA Chair Tim Sexton joined the meeting. New member Brandon Kasprick from the Governor's Office introduced himself.

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

Michelle Lichtig, MnDOT, shared an update on the Minnesota Mobility Managers' Workshop. Lichtig noted that the group workshop was led by Steven Workman and Judy Shanley, who are Federal Transportation Administration Technical Assistance individuals and have developed the mobility management sustainability assessment tool.

Lichtig listed the comparative elements of the Mobility Management Workplan and Mobility Management Sustainability Assessment Tool.

MnDOT – Mobility Management Workplan

- Transportation Guidance/Consultation
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Vehicle Sharing
- Volunteer Drivers
- Mobility Management Integration
- Training and Education
- MCOTA Participation

Mobility Management Sustainability Assessment Tool

- Organization Structure
- Coordination & Collaboration/Coordination Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM)
- Service Delivery
- Evaluation

- Environmental Impact

Lichtig stated that at its heart, mobility management is mobility for people by people. When talking about strategic planning, managers are an inherent part of the engine that can inform and help shape some of the potential directions because they are at the pulse of the community.

Lichtig shared an example of addressing transportation for dialysis for Arrowhead RTCC. Lichtig outlined that there are three dialysis centers in St. Louis County (two in Duluth). Two hospitals provide dialysis. There are a high percentage of people on dialysis, especially on Medicare. 50% of people needing treatment do not have access to regular transportation options. Dialysis treatment schedule is not flexible and transportation options are not flexible.

Lichtig updated that Headwaters RTCC has been added to the network of mobility managers and their contract began in July along with other contracts for the RTCCs. TCAPS have just submitted applications review for upcoming 2025 contract. There are two upcoming presentations: MPTA in October with Alan Hermann and Beverly Sidlo-Tolliver co-presenting with Wisconsin Mobility Managers and St. Louis County Human Services in October with Robyn Bernardy, Beverly Sidlo-Tolliver, Michelle Lichtig, and Mai Thor.

Call to Order and Member Roll Call

Tim Sexton joined at about 1:30 p.m. and called the meeting of the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access to order. There was a quorum of MCOTA members. MCOTA members introduced themselves.

Review and Approve Agenda

A vote to approve the agenda was moved via the chat feature. The agenda was unanimously **approved**.

May Meeting Minutes

A vote to approve the May meeting minutes was moved via the chat feature. The agenda was unanimously **approved**.

Annual Election of Officers (chair and vice-chair)

Gottfried noted that typically, officer elections are held annually in September, however they will be held in November this year. Gottfried reviewed the [by-laws and roles and duties of the Chair and Vice Chair \(PDF\)](#) with the group.

Sexton added that if anyone has interest in these positions to reach out to Tom Gottfried or Michelle Lichtig.

Legislative and Governor's Budget Update

John Dukich, Minnesota Department of Transportation

Dukich highlighted items from the 2023 session. \$6 billion in new revenue is expected from indexing the gas tax to inflation, adjusting the motor vehicle registration tax as well as increasing the motor vehicle sales tax. There is also a new Metro area sales tax increase and a new delivery fee on deliveries over \$100, excluding tax exempt items and food. Just under \$600 million in trunk highway bonds went to MnDOT facilities, several earmarked projects around

the state, funding for safe routes to schools, active transportation programs, infrastructure, and the express train between Minneapolis and Duluth. Dukich also noted additional funding for transportation projects around the state. Looking towards 2024, MnDOT recently submitted policy recommendations to the Governor's office for review.

Maureen Melgaard Schneider, Minnesota Board on Aging

Schneider noted that the Board on Aging's priorities this year were the legislative task force on aging as well as the Native American Elders coordinator position. Both were included in the Human Services Omnibus Bill and will be funded. They also received additional funding for the Office of Ombudsman for long-term care for additional staffing. This funding could be useful to home and community-based transportation. They will also see a continuation of the Minnesota Age Friendly Council funding and the Live Well at Home Expansion.

Gerri Sutton, Metropolitan Council

Sutton stated that the Metropolitan Council is currently implementing a number of things that were set forth by the legislature including the invest sales tax. They have expanded service options for Metro Mobility customers into evenings and weekends using a taxi provider. They have implemented free fares on routes 32 and 62 and have also implemented pre-fares on fixed routes for certified riders.

Senior Leadership meeting follow-up

Sexton thanked all those who were able to participate in the Senior Leadership meeting. Sexton noted that this meeting was a great way to remind leadership of the importance of MCOTA efforts and reinforce the value of statewide partnerships.

Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM) Update

Gottfried introduced Steve Workman, Consultant for the National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM) at Easterseals, Inc. and Director of Transport New Hampshire. Workman began by discussing CCAM's role on building on what exists and what is planned. This includes expanding and strengthening the MCOTA Strategic Plan. Thriving mobility management networks create the opportunity for CCAM agencies to contribute. CCAM highlights the commitment to transportation coordination, efficiency, and efficacy across MN state agencies. Additionally, it develops support to sustain the connections across mobility management and MCOTA activities. Finally, it helps make it "easy" to coordinate across agencies in MN.

Workman noted that DHS has the majority of funds that finance community transportation type services, therefore communication between community and federal agencies is key. Workman stated that DOT is the connection between communities and services.

Upcoming timeline of activities:

- Judy Shanley & Steve have discussions virtually with MCOTA agency liaisons (October-December)
- MN CCAM state roundtable. In person opportunity to address policy/practice barriers that inhibit coordination (January 2024)

- MN CCAM guide that integrates in the updated MCOTA strategic plan and identifies activities related to reducing policy and practice barriers (January-April 2024)
- NCMM produce a lessons-learned brief that can be replicated by other states (May-July 2024)

Next steps:

- Federal Transit Administration will send out note to Federal CCAM representatives of your agency to acknowledge your participation
- Please identify point person(s) for discussion – please send to Tom by October 6.
- Sample focus areas of conversation with Judy & Steve
 - What transportation services does your agency support and through which program?
 - Who is the targeted population for these services?
 - Do these programs have any explicit language regarding the intended use of program funds? For instance, can you share your vehicles with other programs, can you provide cost match, can you offer other financial support related to transportation?

MCOTA Work Teams

Accessibility & Olmstead

Work team lead David Fenley reported that the group is focused on two areas, including a potential pilot project for a one-call, one-click website for accessible transportation.

Volunteer Driver Programs

Beverly Sidlo-Tolliver reported that the volunteer driver work team welcomed new members. The group is continuing to hold lunch & learn webinars, with one featuring Elliott McFadden on Mobility-as-a-Service pilot projects in Southern Minnesota in July, and the next one planned for November on the planned federal volunteer driver mileage reimbursement legislation with the Volunteer Driver Coalition. And the team drafted an RFP for research on the impact of volunteer drivers on Minnesotans' health access and outcomes.

Communications

Lichtig noted that the Communications Work Team is focused on the annual legislative report and planning content for the next issues of the newsletter.

Public Comment

Gottfried read the first written comment from Kim Pettman.

Hi, my name is Kim Pettman, and I have attended many MCOTA meetings over the years. Some of you may remember me. I am here to help make a connection and to invite you to some events that will help you all with what you do. There are people who are looking for you and what you do and are not quite understanding what you do.

I feel that working together with these people will help so much in accomplishing many of your goals and help so much in fulfilling the mission of MCOTA. So high impact, lower effort.

Because both you and the big housing and affordable housing community have already put in so much time, you don't have to start from scratch. A lot of it is meeting each other and working together, reaching out to another. These events are a wonderful way to do this. Please come. Please send lots of people, including from your network.

The attached flyer that is shown is for the "MICAHA VIRTUAL FALL BUS TOURS." I encourage you and your agency staff and networks to attend and let them know the work that MCOTA is doing to improve transportation access for all Minnesotans.

Please also consider coming to the MICAHA chapter meetings. Even if you live in Greater MN these meetings can be very helpful. Transit and Affordable Housing go together. Please come.

Thanks very much.

Kim

Linda from MICAHA, the Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing, provided more information about the six upcoming virtual tours in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Linda stated that "The tours are about the implementation and the use of our tremendous abundance in affordable housing which came through in the last session. Each tour will feature 5 or 6 programs that are already working. And we need to build bridges between transportation needs and housing needs."

Annual MICAHA Chapters' Affordable Housing Virtual Bus Tours: see [MICAHA website](#)

Tuesday, October 3, 8a to 9:30 - South (Dakota county) - Contact [Sue Watlov Phillips](#)
- Senator Lindsey Port (55, DFL), Chair Housing and Homelessness Prevention

Thursday, October 5, 8a to 9:30 - NorthEast (Ramsey & Washington counties) - Contact [John Slade](#)
- St. Andrew's Community Resource Center, Breanna Nichols

Thursday, October 12, 8a to 9:30 - Anoka County - Contact [Sue Baysden](#)

Tuesday, October 17, 8a to 9:30 - St. Paul - Contact [John Slade](#)
- East Side Freedom Library, Sidney Stuart

Monday, October 23, 1:30p to 3 - Minneapolis - Contact [Sue Watlov Phillips](#)

Tuesday, October 24, 8a to 9:30 - Housing for All - Contact [Sue Watlov Phillips](#)

The second public comment was from Beverly Sidlo-Tolliver of the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission and RTCC.

This feeds in well to the CCAM presentation. But I promise it wasn't planned that way. so I just wanted this group to keep aware of the ongoing challenges with specialized

transportation services. The Non-Emergency Medical Transportation services in any other state-regulated or Medicaid-related services. The two examples are for context. I'm not asking for any discussion on the reasons of these examples. They deserve their own time and attention and have been resolved to a certain extent. Recently, it came across my attention, and I have shared that with other State agencies, including DHS, about one of which was a local non-emergency medical company discontinuing their service due to a safety policy of the stretcher transportation with their vans, and then another one in which local specialized transportation providers no longer providing service to dialysis patients because they were not going to be reimbursed for the time they would need to wait cause for those on where dialysis includes the lengthy appointment time for up to 4 hours. And I provide these two examples for context only. The more concerning part from what I had to navigate, and from what the healthcare agencies need to navigate, was the delivery of those decisions being very abrupt and usually coming from the transportation providers themselves in the form of "we are now discontinuing xyz service." The patients are now put in a crisis mode to find their alternatives in a landscape where transportation resources are already scarce. In both these examples, those were the only options, period.

I wanted to share this with the state agencies to remain aware of how these upper-level decisions, when they're made without identifying alternatives, have real-time impacts. And hopefully, we can come to a place where there can be some engagement early on again. These decisions had their place and their reasons. But perhaps as the decisions are being identified, there could be times to engage sooner before the final decision is made. And the timeliness is, you know, within maybe a week of healthcare on patients being notified.

Administrative Changes

Gottfried shared that Arlene Mathison from the University of Minnesota Center for Transportation Studies is leaving her position at the end of the year, and her duties with MCOTA will transfer to Chelsea Arbury Prorok, Education and Engagement Manager at CTS, and Gina Baas, Deputy Director of CTS, along with continued support from Samantha Hahn Douville.

Adjourn

Sexton adjourned the meeting at 2:58 p.m.

Action Items

1. All attendees: Consider signing up for a MICAH Affordable Housing Virtual Bus Tour: see [MICAH website](#)
2. MCOTA members: Consider running for MCOTA Chair or Vice-Chair and contact Tom Gottfried or Michelle Lichtig if interested.
3. MCOTA members: Please identify agency point person(s) for CCAM discussion - sign up for agency meetings with Tom Gottfried by Oct. 18 (new date).