

2023 report on

## Minnesota Council on Transportation Access

January 2024

---



**Strengthening transportation access  
for all Minnesotans**

---

Prepared by:

The Minnesota Department of Transportation  
395 John Ireland Boulevard  
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155-1899

Phone: 651-296-3000

Toll-Free: 1-800-657-3774

TTY, Voice or ASCII: 1-800-627-3529

To request this document in an alternative format, call 651-366-4718 or 1-800-657-3774 (Greater Minnesota).

You may also send an email to [ADArequest.dot@state.mn.us](mailto:ADArequest.dot@state.mn.us)

# Contents

<b>Legislative Request</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>9</b>
MCOTA Structure	10
Mission	11
Vision	11
Legislative Duties	11
<b>2023 Activities and Accomplishments</b>	<b>14</b>
Mobility Management and Mobility Managers	15
New State Laws Improve Transportation Access	20
Presentations Informing MCOTA’s Activities	21
Work Teams	24
<b>Fiscal Year 2024 Priorities</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Appendix A: List of Abbreviations</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Appendix B: 2023 MCOTA Members</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Appendix C: MCOTA Legislative Duties and Accomplishments Since Inception</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Appendix D: Progress on Top Challenges and Opportunities for MCOTA Members in 2021</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Appendix E: RTCC and TCAP Annual Reports</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Appendix F: Funding Sources for RTCCs and TCAPs</b>	<b>84</b>

# Legislative Request

This report is issued to comply with [Minnesota Statutes 174.285, subdivision 5.](#)

## **174.285 MINNESOTA COUNCIL ON TRANSPORTATION ACCESS.**

### **Subd. 5. Report.**

By January 15 of each year, beginning in 2012, the council shall report its findings, recommendations, and activities to the governor's office and to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over transportation, health, and human services, and to the legislature as provided under section 3.195.

*The cost of preparing this report is \$7,200.*

## Summary

Accessible and affordable transportation is essential for well-being, providing opportunities to work, attend school, socialize with friends, shop, and obtain medical care. Transportation affects all facets of our state's economy, culture and communities.

Although various modes of transportation are available, gaps in service still exist in many communities. These gaps affect quality of life when people are unable to access essential services or medical care, like dialysis or cancer treatments. The lack of service significantly impacts older adults, individuals with disabilities and individuals with low incomes.

The Legislature formed the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access under [Minn. Stat. 174.285](#), in 2010 to “study, evaluate, oversee and make recommendations to improve the coordination, availability, accessibility, efficiency, cost-effectiveness and safety of transportation services provided to the transit public.”

## Mission

---

The mission of MCOTA is to remove obstacles that prevent the successful coordination of transportation programs and resources among their respective customers.

## Vision

---

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

## Goals

---

MCOTA promotes cooperation and coordination by bringing many agencies and organizations together to improve transportation access for those with the greatest needs. It offers a venue for constituencies to work together and find opportunities to increase capacity, serve unmet needs, improve quality of service, improve understanding and access to services by the public, and achieve more cost-effective service delivery.

The council partners with Greater Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils (RTCCs) and Twin Cities Transit Coordination Assistance Projects (TCAPs) to improve regional and local transportation coordination and access. Together, MCOTA and its partners work toward a vision where Minnesotans benefit from access to coordinated transportation services that meet their mobility needs. MCOTA pursues three key transportation goals:

- Identify and reduce transportation gaps.
- Develop effective and streamlined access to transportation.
- Provide more transportation options.



MCOTA’s 2020-2024 Strategic Plan guides activities to achieve these three goals, including recommending the establishment of work teams to make progress on specific initiatives. The work teams, which include MCOTA members and staff, content experts, and RTCC and TCAP representatives, address strategic priorities through policy, legislative, research recommendations and communications. Thanks to the strength of its partnerships, MCOTA continues to make progress in coordinating and improving transportation access for Minnesotans.

## Accomplishments

---

With local, state, and federal partners, MCOTA addresses challenges with transportation access and mobility as driver and vehicle shortages place continued pressure on transportation providers, agencies, and residents who need access to essential services, such as shopping, employment, housing, medical care, and social activities.

Legislation passed in the 2023 session provided momentum to improve access to transportation and essential services. Regions updated their Local Human Service Public Transit Coordination Plans with input from RTCCs, improving the RTCCs ability to identify and influence the filling of local transportation service gaps.

MCOTA staff and RTCC and TCAP representatives presented at several human services, planning, and transportation conferences. They shared how person-centered mobility management and local coordination can improve transportation options, especially for persons with disabilities and for older adults, and increased awareness of RTCCs and TCAPs as mobility management resources.

MCOTA members and work teams made significant progress on the challenges identified during the 2021 Senior Leadership meeting, including the challenges faced by volunteer driver programs. Rural Minnesotans often rely on volunteers as their primary source of transportation. MCOTA updated guidance to reflect new state legislation and to answer questions about insurance and mileage reimbursement for these essential drivers and endorsed federal legislation to increase the volunteer driver mileage reimbursement rate.

Looking forward, MCOTA will update its Strategic Plan for 2025-2029, with technical assistance from the National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM) and with input from state and local partners, including our RTCCs and TCAPs. MCOTA will also continue to implement the current priorities of the four MCOTA work teams.

The accomplishments highlighted in this report show the results of improved coordination and its impact on transportation access. The MCOTA foundation of partnership and collaboration aims to improve the lives, connectedness, and health of all Minnesotans by providing better transportation access throughout the state.

## MCOTA Timeline, July 2022 – July 2023





## Introduction

Accessible and affordable transportation is essential for well-being. It provides a means to participate in the workforce, attend school, socialize with friends, worship, shop, and obtain healthcare. Transportation affects all facets of our state's economy, culture and communities.

Although various modes of transportation are available, gaps in service still exist in many communities. These gaps affect quality of life when people are unable to access essential services or medical care, like dialysis or cancer treatments. The lack of service significantly impacts older adults, individuals with disabilities and individuals with low incomes.

In 2010 our Legislature formed the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access, under [Minn. Stat. 174.285](#), to "study, evaluate, oversee and make recommendations to improve the coordination, availability, accessibility, efficiency, cost-effectiveness and safety of transportation services provided to the transit public." Since its establishment, MCOTA has worked to expand transportation coordination at state, regional, and local levels, with a focus on improving mobility for the "transportation disadvantaged" (e.g., older adults, individuals with disabilities, individuals with low incomes).

Transportation coordination involves many partners. These include state agencies, public transit organizations, regional and local transportation providers, consumers, and state and local programs. At the federal level, 11 agencies administer 130 transportation programs.

MCOTA promotes cooperation and coordination to improve transportation access for those with the greatest need by bringing many agencies and organizations together. It offers a venue for constituencies to work together to find opportunities to increase capacity, address unmet needs, improve service quality, increase the public's understanding and access to services, and achieve more cost-effective service delivery. MCOTA uses the following strategies:

- 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.

The council partners with Greater Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils (RTCCs) and Twin Cities Transit Coordination Assistance Projects (TCAPs) to improve regional and local transportation coordination and access. Together, MCOTA and its partners work toward a vision where Minnesotans benefit from access to coordinated transportation services that meet their mobility needs. MCOTA pursues three key transportation goals:

- Identify and reduce transportation gaps.
- Develop effective and streamlined access to transportation.
- Provide more transportation options.



MCOTA’s 2020-2024 Strategic Plan guides activities to achieve these three goals, including recommending the establishment of work teams to make progress on specific initiatives. The work teams, which include MCOTA members and staff, content experts, and RTCC and TCAP representatives, address strategic priorities through policy, legislative, research recommendations and communications. Thanks to the strength of its partnerships, MCOTA continues to make progress in coordinating and improving transportation access for Minnesotans.

The accomplishments highlighted in this report illustrate the results of improved transportation service coordination. They include strategies employed to overcome driver and vehicle shortages, volunteer driver recruitment and retention challenges, and reduce barriers to access via policy changes and legislation.

## MCOTA Structure

---

MCOTA’s structure is shown below.

### Members

MCOTA includes senior leadership from 13 state agencies and organizations (also listed in Appendix B): Minnesota Departments of Commerce, Education, Employment and Economic Development, Human Services, Management and Budget, Transportation and Veterans Affairs; the Metropolitan Council; the Office of the Governor; the Minnesota Board on Aging; Minnesota State Council on Disability; and the Minnesota Public Transit Association. MCOTA membership is specified by legislation.

## Executive Committee, Chair and Vice-Chair

Tim Sexton, MnDOT’s assistant commissioner for Sustainability, Planning, and Program Management, was elected as the new MCOTA Chair in September 2022. As chair, Sexton presides at all meetings of MCOTA and its Executive Committee, acts as the liaison with the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative transportation committees, divisions, and appropriate subcommittees.

Diogo Reis, the Minnesota Department of Human Services benefit policy manager, serves as MCOTA’s Vice-Chair and on the MCOTA Executive Committee, aiding in the performance of the chair's duties and, in the absence of the chair, presiding at meetings of MCOTA and the Executive Committee.

## Executive Director

Tom Gottfried, the MnDOT Office of Transit and Active Transportation’s program director and transportation mobility manager, serves as MCOTA’s executive director. In this role, Gottfried provides coordination and leadership for the council by building relationships between agencies and stakeholders and by guiding the work of MCOTA’s work teams.

Gottfried is assisted by other MnDOT Office of Transit and Active Transportation staff, including Michelle Lichtig, MCOTA’s program manager and a MnDOT mobility management project manager.

## Work Teams

MCOTA’s Strategic Plan recommended the creation of several work teams to develop specific initiatives. The work teams include MCOTA members, agency staff, content experts and RTCC/TCAP members. MCOTA’s current work teams are listed starting on p. 24.

## Mission

---

The mission of MCOTA is to remove obstacles that prevent the successful coordination of transportation programs and resources among their respective customers.

## Vision

---

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

## Legislative Duties

---

Under [Minn. Stat. 174.285](#), the purpose of MCOTA is to “study, evaluate, oversee and make recommendations to improve the coordination, availability, accessibility, efficiency, cost-effectiveness and safety of transportation services provided to the transit public.”

To improve coordination and accessibility, the statute assigns the council 20 duties:

1. Compile information on existing transportation alternatives for the transit public, and serve as a clearinghouse for information on services, funding sources, innovations and coordination efforts.
2. Identify best practices and strategies that have been successful in Minnesota and in other states for coordination of local, regional, state and federal funding and services.
3. Recommend statewide objectives for providing public transportation services for the transit public.
4. Identify barriers prohibiting coordination and accessibility of public transportation services and aggressively pursue the elimination of those barriers.
5. Recommend policies and procedures for coordinating local, regional, state and federal funding and services for the transit public.
6. Identify stakeholders providing services for the transit public and seek input from them concerning barriers and appropriate strategies.
7. Recommend guidelines for developing transportation coordination plans throughout the state.
8. Encourage all state agencies participating in the council to purchase trips within the coordinated system.
9. Facilitate the creation and operation of transportation brokerages to match riders to the appropriate service, promote shared dispatching, compile and disseminate information on transportation options and promote regional communication.
10. Encourage volunteer driver programs and recommend legislation to address liability and insurance issues.
11. Recommend minimum performance standards for delivery of services.
12. Identify methods to eliminate fraud and abuse in special transportation services.
13. Develop a standard method for addressing liability insurance requirements for transportation services purchased, provided or coordinated.
14. Design and develop a contracting template for providing coordinated transportation services.
15. Recommend an interagency uniform contracting billing and accounting system for providing coordinated transportation services.
16. Encourage the design and development of training programs for coordinated transportation services.
17. Encourage the use of public-school transportation vehicles for the transit public.

18. Develop an allocation methodology that equitably distributes transportation funds to compensate units of government and all entities that provide coordinated transportation services.
19. Identify policies and necessary legislation to facilitate vehicle sharing.
20. Advocate for eliminating barriers to coordination, implementing coordination strategies, enacting necessary legislation and appropriating resources to achieve the council's objectives.

# 2023 Activities and Accomplishments

Since its creation in 2010, MCOTA has pursued projects and activities to improve transportation coordination throughout Minnesota. Below are brief descriptions of key council activities and accomplishments during 2023. The numbers referenced in Table 1 are the numbers of the duties in the statute and listed on p. 11-13 of this report.

**Table 1: Key MCOTA 2023 activities and accomplishments**

Activity	Legislative Duties Addressed Under <a href="#">Minn. Stat. 174.285</a>
Mobility management and mobility managers	1-11, 13-14, 16-17, 19-20
New state laws improve transportation access	1-7, 11, 18, 20
Presentations inform MCOTA’s activities	2-7, 9-11, 13, 18-20
Accessibility & Olmstead Work Team focuses on NEMT awareness	2-11, 20
Removing Barriers Work Team reducing insurance barriers to vehicle sharing and improving transportation access for Minnesotans who need more ride assistance	2-6, 9-11, 13, 18-20
Volunteer Driver Program initiatives: Legislation, brochure, information sharing	10, 13, 19, 20
Stakeholder communications	1

See Appendix C for a list of all initiatives grouped by legislative duty.

### Mobility Management: Collaboration Examples



### What is mobility management?

As defined by the National Center for Mobility Management<sup>1</sup>: “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.”

Through the work of the RTCCs and TCAPs and the leadership of MCOTA, Minnesota is recognized as a leader in mobility management. An intricate network of partnerships and collaborations among transit providers, community-based organizations, counties, health workers, and other stakeholders work together to create solutions for the customer. The involvement and needs of the customer are at the center of this complex infrastructure. Mobility management in Minnesota is just as much about transportation access as it is about the customer’s health and well-being, community connections, life enriching experiences, and quality of life and dignity.

---

<sup>1</sup> Source: National Council on Mobility Management’s definition of mobility management (see What is Mobility Management and Mobility Managers? on the NCMM website).

## Mobility management in Minnesota

The community participants involved in their area's Federal Transportation Administration 5310 Local Human Service Public Transit Coordination Plans discussion indicated a need to coordinate and collaborate on regional transportation through mobility management. The Minnesota Department of Transportation directed 5310 funds establishing Transit Assistance Coordination Projects in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area and Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils in Greater Minnesota. With this funding mobility management must be facilitated to address the transportation access for older adults, people with disabilities and low-income individuals.

Minnesota's mobility management projects face challenges, including an unbalanced ratio of transportation resources, compared to growing transportation needs, and the need to support individual transportation situations by maximizing accessibility. To identify transportation solutions, mobility managers and community partners facilitate ongoing engagement with community partners and stakeholders who represent a cross section of public, non-profit, and for-profit organizations in the medical, human services, aging, disability services, and transportation industries. These groups also include elected representatives and transportation consumers.

## Presentations showcase person-centered mobility management

As part of ongoing engagement, MCOTA, RTCC, and TCAP representatives presented at regional and national conferences. This provided an opportunity to share information on improved transportation access that resulted from community involvement and the coordination/leveraging of resources.

These presentations also linked attendees to their local RTCC or TCAP, thereby increasing awareness of mobility management and encouraging future RTCC/TCAP participation. Presentations were delivered at a wide variety of conferences, including:

- National Association of Development Organizations Annual Training Conference (July 2022)
- Association of Travel Instruction Annual Conference (August 2022)
- St. Louis County Human Services Conference (October 2022)
- Minnesota Association of Development Organizations Retreat (November 2022)
- Minnesota Social Service Association Annual Training Conference & Expo (March 2023)
- American Public Transportation Association Mobility Conference (April 2023)
- Minnesota Transportation Conference & Expo (May 2023)

## Mobility management and MCOTA: Greater MN Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils (RTCCs) & Transit Coordination Assistance Projects (TCAPs)

The RTCC and TCAP Mobility Managers' MCOTA involvement is rooted in their understanding of their region's opportunities as well as the demands that must be addressed through statewide efforts. Their expertise and insights guide the MCOTA strategic plan.

RTCCs and TCAPs provide a foundation for statewide mobility management. At their core, they focus on providing a place for community partners such as residents, agencies and organizations (public and private) to collaborate. This foundation supports the removal of barriers for people and places without transportation



access. RTCCs and TCAPs have shared examples of their work with MCOTA. They include the Scott County’s “Hop Scott” volunteer driver program and the Support Our Troops wheelchair-accessible van, a Region 6W RTCC Initiative led by Prairie Five Community Action to serve veterans in Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift and Yellow Medicine Counties. More examples of RTCC and TCAP projects are included in Appendix E.

**RTCCs**

- Region Five
- Region 6W
- Arrowhead
- Connect Central
- East Central
- Headwaters
- Mid-Minnesota
- Northwest
- Southwest Minnesota

**TCAPs**

- Anoka County
- GoDakota
- Hennepin County
- Newtrax in Ramsey County
- SmartLink Mobility Management - Scott and Carver Counties
- Washington County

## MCOTA Newsletter articles about RTCCs and TCAPs

- [NWRTCC collaborations help lay foundation for funding potential volunteer driver program](#)
- [Dakota County TCAP encourages riders through 'travel training'](#)
- [Arrowhead RTCC facilitates vehicle-sharing among community agencies to expand capacity and resources](#)
- [Dakota County and Washington County TCAPs update: Lyft ride-sharing program frees riders](#)
- [Region 5 RTCC grant targets more livable community through better access for all](#)
- [Mid-Minnesota RTCC expands volunteer driver recruitment strategies](#)
- [Prairie Five receives grant to serve area veterans with a wheelchair-accessible van](#)

Figure 1: Map of Minnesota with RTCCs and TCAPS as of June 30, 2023



June 2023

## Coordination vital in filling local transportation access gaps

Every five years, regional organizations throughout Minnesota submit Local Human Service Public Transit Coordination Plans, as required by the Federal Transit Administration for regions to qualify for FTA Section 5310 funding that supports the enhanced mobility of seniors and people with disabilities. Since 2006, the MnDOT Office of Transit and Active Transportation and Minnesota Department of Human Services have partnered with local planning organizations throughout Minnesota to develop these Local Human Service-Public Transit Coordination Plans.

In 2022, the regions again worked to update the Local Human Service Public Transit Coordination Plans, this time with the additional support and input of the RTCCs. This served to strengthen planning, make more efficient use of resources, and improve plan quality and transportation access.

Coordination is vital when working to identify and fill transportation gaps. For example, a regional organization may find federal funding to purchase a bus or van, but questions may remain about who will drive it, pay the driver, and insure, store, and maintain the vehicle. RTCCs help by fostering the relationships that lead to transportation solutions.

Local Human Service Public Transit Coordination Plans help shape the agendas of the RTCCs as they advance their own workplan strategies and actions. The 2022 plans show increased awareness, coordination, public engagement and strong stakeholder support for RTCCs.

- [2022 Regional Coordination Plans](#)

## New State Laws Improve Transportation Access

---

MCOTA members regularly share updates about their agencies' proposed state transportation access and mobility-related legislation.

In 2023, the legislature increased funding for public transit throughout the state, added funding to expand internet access in areas of the state without high-speed access, and passed the Transformative Energy Bill. In addition, the following bills to influence transportation accessibility and mobility became law.

- The Minnesota Board on Aging's priorities of a legislative task force on aging ([2023 Laws of Minn., Ch. 62, Art. 2, Sec. 120](#)), funding of the Native American Elders coordinator position ([2023 Laws of Minn., Ch. 61, Art. 2, Sec. 1](#)), continuation of the Minnesota Age Friendly Council funding ([2023 Laws of Minn., Ch. 61, Art. 2, Sec. 35](#)), expansion of the Live Well at Home Program ([2023 Laws of Minn., Ch. 61, Art. 2, Sec. 2](#)), and 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. ([2023 Laws of Minn., Ch. 61, Art. 9, Sec. 2](#))
- The Minnesota Department of Education provided fiscal notes for an amendment to a statute that would allow school districts to provide transportation for students to area learning centers ([2023 Laws of Minn., Ch. 55, Art. 1, Sec. 36](#)) and aid for meals and transportation cost for qualifying post-secondary education students. ([2023 Laws of Minn., Ch. 41, Art. 1, Sec. 2](#))

- The Metropolitan Council’s requirement to establish the Metro Mobility Enhancement Pilot Program to enhance the existing service levels of Metro Mobility and provide service outside of the current Metro Mobility hours of service, with a goal to provide services throughout the Metro Mobility service area until 10:00 p.m. ([2023 Laws of Minn., Ch. 68, Art. 4, Sec. 121](#))
- A 10 percent increase for nonemergency medical transportation reimbursement rates for unassisted, assisted, and lift-equipped rides ([2023 Laws of Minn., Ch. 61, Art. 3, Sec. 5](#))
- A fuel adjustment for nonemergency medical transportation reimbursement rates when fuel costs exceed \$3 per gallon, subject to federal approval ([2023 Laws of Minn., Ch. 61, Art. 3, Sec. 8](#))
- Personal Care Assistance Program modification regarding transportation ([2023 Laws of Minn., Ch. 61, Art. 1, Sec. 12](#))
- Disabled relative driver’s license for 15-year-olds ([2023 Laws of Minn., Ch. 68, Art. 4, Sec. 55](#))
- Legal blindness as a qualifying condition for disability parking ([2023 Laws of Minn., Ch. 68, Art. 4, Sec. 49](#))
- Driver’s Licenses for All, where proof of citizenship or lawful presence is no longer required for obtaining a driver’s license ([2023 Laws of Minn., Ch. 13, Art. 2, Sec. 7](#))
- Passenger rail from Twin Cities to Duluth ([2023 Laws of Minn., Ch. 68, Art. 1, Sec. 2](#))

## Presentations Informing MCOTA’s Activities

---

MCOTA regularly invites presentations from members and others to share information about programs that affect transportation accessibility and mobility.

### Federal Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility

Michelle Lichtig, MCOTA program manager and MnDOT project manager for Minnesota’s RTCCs and TCAPs, provided an overview of the federal Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility. CCAM coordinates transportation services on a federal level to meet diverse transportation needs, similar to MCOTA's efforts on the state level. [CCAM’s 2023-2026 strategic plan](#) offers a framework for MCOTA moving forward.

CCAM has identified 130 federal programs for funding human services transportation for people with disabilities, older adults, and low-income individuals. Some of the programs identified have connections to state programs that could be further explored to improve transportation access.

The CCAM values--access, accessibility, mobility, safety, reliability, affordability, and equity--could also provide a framework to further identify and strengthen MCOTA’s values and mission.

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 state agencies that provide transportation will create opportunities for transportation access research, technical assistance and funding.

## Metropolitan Council’s Waiver Transportation Program

Waiver Transportation Program Manager Sheila Holbrook-White and John Harper, Contracted Transit Services Manager with Metropolitan Transportation Services at the Metropolitan Council, presented information about Metropolitan Council led waiver transportation efforts. The focus of the presentation was the ongoing development of a waiver transportation program that will offer distinct features and service options for persons with disabilities within the seven-county metro area.

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 the 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 to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities. In 2022 nearly 100,000 Minnesotans participated in waiver programs.

In 2021, 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. The Metropolitan Council is now moving forward on the development and implementation of the Waiver Transportation Program, with an expected launch 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

Program funding is provided by state and federal human services programs and is separate from the general Metro Mobility budget.

- [Waiver Transportation Program presentation slides \(PDF\)](#)



## Age-Friendly Minnesota Council

Age-Friendly Minnesota Council Executive Director Reena Shetty explained that, in late 2019, the Age-Friendly Minnesota Council was created by Governor Walz. The public/private partnership of multiple state agencies and leaders resulted in recommendations for an age-friendly state – one that engages older people and understands that to be age-friendly, a community must consider the social, economic, environmental and lifestyle factors, including transportation access, that influence health and aging for everyone.

Shetty noted that there are 462 Age-Friendly communities in the United States and 10 Age-Friendly States, including Minnesota. There has been rapid growth of Age-Friendly communities since Minnesota joined the network, and there are now 14 Age-Friendly communities in our state.



## MnDOT pilot project for a mobile app to make travel easier in Greater Minnesota, Rochester, Mankato

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) has launched a pilot project to bring trip planning and payment technology for daily trips in areas less dense than urban settings.

Residents and visitors in southern and western Minnesota now can plan for and, in some cases, pay for public transit and intercity bus trips by using the new Transit app. Travel and route information for these agencies went live within the app on March 1.

The Transit app is available at no charge via download in Google Play or the Apple App Store. It is used in more than 300 cities globally and it allows users to see route and travel options for public transit and connecting services. Select transit agencies will have in-app ticketing, allowing riders to pay for fares electronically and show their device to bus drivers to ride.

“This pilot with Transit app focuses on rural areas because this technology has not yet been made available outside of Minnesota’s big cities,” said Elliott McFadden, MnDOT Greater Minnesota shared mobility program coordinator. “The project will be the first to bring the latest technology to make it easier to plan and take trips in many communities in Greater Minnesota.”

The pilot will run through April 2024 and is funded by two innovation grants from the Federal Transit Administration at a cost of \$1.9 million. Researchers from the University of Minnesota will study both projects to help determine whether this technology should be scaled to the rest of the state, with the goal of better informing future public transit investment in Greater Minnesota.

- [News release: MnDOT launches first multimodal trip planner to focus on rural transportation services](#)

## Planning for people first: MnDOT's updated Complete Streets guidance

Nissa Tupper, Transportation and Public Health Planning Director at the MnDOT Office of Sustainability & Public Health, shared information on MnDOT's updated Complete Streets guidance with MCOTA members. As defined by Minnesota Statutes §174.75, "Complete Streets" is the planning, scoping, design, implementation, operation, and maintenance of roads to reasonably address the safety and accessibility needs of users of all ages and abilities. Complete Streets consider the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, motorists, commercial vehicles, and emergency vehicles moving along and across roads, intersections, and crossings. It is sensitive to local context and recognizes that needs vary across urban, suburban, and rural settings. Addressing ADA is an integrated part of a Complete Streets approach to improve mobility and access for all abilities, and a Complete Streets approach also advances transportation equity for people with disabilities, communities of color, older adults, children, and low-income communities.

- [MnDOT Complete Streets website](#)



## Work Teams

---

MCOTA's Strategic Plan recommended the creation of several work teams to develop specific initiatives. The work teams include MCOTA members, agency staff, content experts and both RTCC and TCAP members. The work teams support priorities identified in the Strategic Plan and by senior leadership.

In FY23 active work teams included the Accessibility & Olmstead, Removing Barriers, Volunteer Driver Program Initiatives and Communications Work Teams.

### Accessibility & Olmstead Work Team

The purpose of the Accessibility & Olmstead Work Team is to address accessibility issues for people with disabilities. The team's work aligns with Minnesota's Olmstead Plan. The objective is to enable safe and accessible pedestrian and multimodal transportation facilities for all users. This includes compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and user accessibility for transportation services and facilities at all levels of government.

Chaired by MCOTA member David Fenley, ADA director with the Minnesota Council on Disability, the work team Identified top four priorities in the 2022-24 Work Plan and broke into small groups to identify ways to address them.



**Table 2: Accessibility & Olmstead Work Team Priorities for 2022-24**

Priorities
1. Develop a single phone number and website for individuals who need a wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV) can call to find one (taxis, TNCs, buses, managed care/insurance providers).
2. Integrate transportation planning into all new housing development plans.
3. Incorporate transportation planning for the future through the Olmstead Plan by creating a goal of at least bi-annually (every other year) investigating the usage of non-regular route transportation for people with disabilities and addressing new growth opportunities to build regular route service.
4. Ensure that all Minnesotans who qualify for nonemergency medical transportation services are informed and aware of these services.

After discussions and information gathering, the work team narrowed its focus to the following priority for this year:

Priority 4. Ensure that all Minnesotans who qualify for nonemergency medical transportation (NEMT) services are informed and aware of these services.

Anecdotally, many Medical Assistance recipients are not aware of their eligibility for transportation services, including NEMT. An informal survey among work team members of their own counties (including Isanti, Washington, Dakota, and counties in the southwest part of the state) found that practices for informing recipients about transportation services vary and that the options are confusing for both human services staff and for recipients.

The work team discussed the question of how to prevent individuals who qualify for NEMT but are not aware of it from falling through the cracks. To understand the scale of the problem, the work team began drafting a request for proposals for the development of a survey to collect feedback from counties on how individuals they serve are made aware of NEMT services, what the barriers are, and how to improve awareness and usage of NEMT services among eligible Minnesotans. The survey results will identify specific needs and ways to address them.

The work team also explored what would be needed to accomplish the following priorities.

- Priority 1. Develop a single phone number and website for individuals who need a wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV) can call to find one (taxis, TNCs, buses, managed care/insurance providers).
- Met with the Removing Barriers Work Team and discussed the potential development of Transportation Management Coordination Centers to provide one-call, one-click service to ensure access to accessible transportation (e.g., transportation providers that can accommodate those with wheelchairs).
- This goal requires a longer timeline than 12-18 months.
- Priority 2. Integrate transportation planning into all new housing development plans.

- The work team explored who would need to be involved in this goal, and decided that with the number of entities involved, it could take several months to reach out to them and to create the partnerships needed to make progress.
- Priority 3. Incorporate transportation planning for the future through the Olmstead Plan by creating a goal of at least bi-annually (every other year) investigating the usage of non-regular route transportation for people with disabilities and addressing new growth opportunities to build regular route service.
- The work team identified two new potential goals for the updated Olmstead Plan related to hours of service (accessibility) and on-time performance (reliability) for both public transit and for on-demand services. A key need for the on-time performance goal is to identify how to include actual customer experiences of service reliability.
- Late in 2023, the work team learned that the Olmstead Plan will be completely rewritten. People with disabilities who are directly affected by the Olmstead Plan will participate in writing the new plan.

## Removing Barriers Work Team

The Removing Barriers Work Team developed the following statement as the reason for all its activities: “Everyone deserves access to a diversity of mobility choices to seize all of life’s opportunities.” Without reliable transportation and vehicles, people are denied access to basic human rights such as food, employment, housing, medical care, mental health services, and social activities.

The work team aims to improve the lives, the connections, and the health of Minnesotans by efficiently and effectively managing transportation initiatives that provide fully accessible transportation and mobility options, because access to transportation has an impact on health outcomes throughout a person’s life.

Chaired by MCOTA member Dylan Galos, a research scientist with the Minnesota Department of Health, followed by Brandon Nurmi, Director of the Minnesota Public Transit Association and Transportation Director for Arrowhead Transit, the work team explored several ideas for reducing barriers to transportation and decided to focus on the following goals in FY23:

- Reduce insurance barriers to vehicle sharing.
- Identify how to improve transportation access for Minnesotans who need more assistance with their rides, with an initial focus on recommending accurate market rates for reimbursements that will incentivize more equitable transportation services for people with disabilities.

## Reduce insurance barriers to vehicle sharing

The work team reviewed recommendations from the [2013 Vehicle Sharing Study](#). Some of the recommendations can be led by RTCCs and TCAPs, while others, such as vehicle insurance barriers, are appropriate for MCOTA to address.

The Removing Barriers Work Team members found that vehicle insurance continues to be cited as a barrier to sharing vehicles with volunteers or other organizations by transportation providers. To understand the specific issues, the group heard presentations from a non-profit insurance agency and from several transportation

providers about ways to successfully obtain insurance coverage when sharing vehicles with volunteers and with other organizations. Essentially, when the organization owning the vehicles uses the same background check and training requirements for volunteer drivers and partner organization drivers that they use for their employees, insurance coverage is easy to obtain. Presenting organizations included the following:

- Nonprofits' Insurance Agency (NPIA), Inc.
- Hop Scott Program in Scott County
- United Community Action Partnership/SW RTCC
- Prairie Five Community Action Council & 6W RTCC
- Newtrax

Following the presentations, the work team decided to develop a guidance document about vehicle-sharing and insurance to share these successful practices with transportation providers and volunteer organizations throughout the state. Sharing vehicles is one way to increase access to transportation for residents, especially in this time of vehicle shortages and higher purchasing costs.

### **Improve transportation access for Minnesotans who need more ride assistance**

People with disabilities in Minnesota, especially in rural areas, have fewer transportation options. One barrier is that transportation providers are reimbursed with a blended rate for all riders. This creates an incentive to provide rides to ambulatory riders and is a disincentive to serve riders with additional mobility needs.

The second focus area for the work team is:

- Set accurate market rates for reimbursements (in negotiating with counties/funders); need to account for increased costs (include a fuel escalator in contract as well as different mode rates); one blended rate creates incentive for providing rides to ambulatory customers and disincentive for those with additional mobility needs.

A subgroup of the work team reviewed the 2022 Minnesota Organization for Habilitation and Rehabilitation (MOHR) Transportation Provider Survey, which gathered real costs from group transportation providers using accessible vehicles throughout the state, with a focus on transportation for people with disabilities. The group recommended the use of the term "baseline rate" plus "rider-centric services" to accurately reflect full actual costs.

The baseline ride cost is the cost for typical rides without rider-centric services such as wheelchair position, rider assistance, and a variable based on the time or mileage of a ride. The work team aims to ensure transportation services are available for higher-need riders and to be realistic about what it costs.

The Removing Barriers and Accessibility & Olmstead Work Teams are also working together to identify ways to improve awareness of transportation services to individuals who are eligible for NEMT and waived transportation services.

## Volunteer Driver Program Initiatives Work Team

The Volunteer Driver Program Work Team focuses on strengthening volunteer driver programs, including reducing legislative barriers and providing opportunities for networking and professional development.

Co-chairs Tiffany Collins, director, Minnesota Public Transit Association and Transit Director of Central Community Transit, and Beverly Sidlo-Tolliver, principal planner for Arrowhead Regional Development Commission Planning and transportation coordinator for Arrowhead RTCC, led the work team's efforts, which included the following:

- Volunteer Driver Brochure
- Volunteer Federal Legislation
- Volunteer Driver Forums and Lunch and Learn webinars
- Volunteer Driver Resources web pages
- Research Needs Statement on Volunteer Driver Services Impacts on Health Outcomes

### Updated MCOTA volunteer driver brochure

In April 2023, MCOTA published an updated, printable brochure that contains information about mileage reimbursement and answers to questions frequently asked by potential volunteer drivers. The content reflects 2021 Minnesota legislation on the definition of volunteer drivers and a state income tax subtraction for mileage. It also answers questions about car insurance and liability coverage.

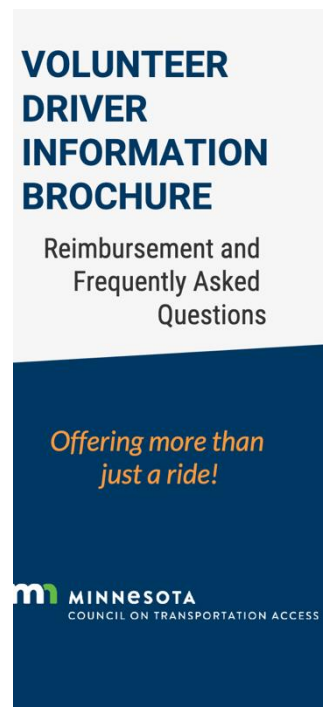
The brochure was developed in cooperation with the Minnesota Department of Commerce, the Minnesota Department of Revenue, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, and the Minnesota Board on Aging. It is a companion to a fact sheet and web page on mileage reimbursement for volunteer drivers developed by MCOTA and the Minnesota Department of Revenue in 2022.

- [Volunteer Driver Program trifold brochure \(PDF\)](#)
- [Volunteer Mileage Reimbursement Fact Sheet \(PDF\)](#)
- [Minnesota Department of Revenue Volunteer Mileage Reimbursement website](#)

### Minnesota's Road to Volunteer Drivers Virtual Forum Series, 2022-2023

In another initiative to support volunteer driver programs, MnDOT and MCOTA continued the Minnesota's Road to Volunteer Drivers Virtual Forum Series, coordinated by the RTCCs in with the Minnesota Volunteer Driver Coalition.

The series highlighted the legislative changes related to volunteer drivers, low-cost software to help smaller programs with scheduling and operations; ways to recruit drivers and pilot projects that are supplementing volunteer driver programs, and MnDOT's regional Mobility-as-a-Service pilot projects, including how volunteer driver programs might fit into the use of this technology.



## Series recordings

The following series recordings are available for on-demand viewing.

- [October 6, 2022 Forum recording](#) (1 hour and 45 minutes)  
Includes guidance on recent state legislative changes and proposed federal legislation and the Hop Scott program in Scott County
- [February 16, 2023 Forum recording](#) (1 hour and 50 minutes)  
Includes presentations on ways to attract and support volunteer drivers, innovative pilot programs to supplement volunteer driver programs, and the Lyft program in Dakota County.
- [March 21, 2023 Forum recording](#) (40 minutes)  
About [RideSheet](#), an open-source Google Sheets-based web application that enables small demand-responsive transportation providers to manage internal operations.
- [May 25, 2023 Scheduling software recording](#) (55 minutes)  
Panel discussion on scheduling software for volunteer driver programs.
- [July 27, 2023 Transit-focused Mobility-as-a-Service pilot projects recording](#) (48 minutes)  
Introduction to MnDOT's regional Mobility-as-a-Service pilot, what the project has accomplished to date, planned new features, and how volunteer driver programs might fit into this technology.

## MCOTA supports federal mileage reimbursement legislation for volunteer drivers

In April 2023, the [Volunteer Driver Tax Appreciation Act of 2023 \(U.S. House File 7432\)](#) was introduced by U.S. Rep. Pete Stauber (MN-08) with co-sponsorship from U.S. Rep. Angie Craig (MN-02). This bill would remove the volunteer driver reimbursement rate from legislative jurisdiction and permanently link it to the IRS reimbursement rate in effect increasing the reimbursement rate for volunteer drivers from 14 cents a mile to the current business reimbursement rate, which fluctuates as needed. MCOTA members endorsed the legislation in May 2022 and continue to support it.

National organizations supporting the bill include the Community Transportation Association of America, the National Association of Towns and Townships, the National Council of Nonprofits, and organizations in other states, such as the California Association of Nonprofits and the Illinois Association of Area Agencies on Aging.

## New volunteer driver program resources web page

MCOTA created a web page dedicated to volunteer driver program resources. The page includes mileage reimbursement guidance, volunteer recruitment and marketing resources shared by RTCCs and TCAPs, research conducted for MCOTA, and recordings from the Minnesota's Road to Volunteer Drivers Virtual Forum Series. The recordings serve as on-demand training modules for volunteer drivers on topics such as person-centered practices and disability etiquette, cultural diversity and equity, emergency preparedness, and passenger assistance and safety.

- [Volunteer Driver Program Resources](#)

## Research on the value of volunteer drivers in health care access

Volunteer driver programs are a critical piece of the transportation puzzle, particularly in rural areas. In 2016-17, MCOTA sponsored three research studies about volunteer driver programs in Minnesota. The MCOTA Volunteer Driver Program Initiatives Work Team reviewed these studies and believe parts of them should be updated to better understand the current volunteer driver program situation. This would also serve to help MCOTA identify ways to sustain the programs and explore alternatives to volunteer drivers to ensure that Minnesotans who need transportation are able to get it. The work team developed a request for proposals for a consultant to conduct this research in 2024.

## Communications Work Team

Under the leadership of Chair Jodi Yanda, Vocational Rehabilitation Area Manager at Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, the Communications Work Team proposes content for and reviews the MCOTA annual legislative report, newsletter, website (including RTCC and TCAP sections) and other products such as a member guide.

## Website

The Communications Work Team led the development of a section of the [CoordinateMNTransit.org](https://CoordinateMNTransit.org) website for sharing marketing, promotion, and media resources developed by, and for, RTCCs and TCAPs, to learn from and build on each other's accomplishments.

- [Volunteer driver recruitment and marketing resources](#)
- [General RTCC & TCAP promotion and event materials](#)
- [Lunch & Learn presentations](#)

### Give the Gift of a Lift!

Become a Volunteer Driver!

Volunteer drivers hold the key to helping people stay healthy and connected in communities. For more information visit [arrowheadrtcc.org](https://arrowheadrtcc.org) or call 218-529-7515



## MCOTA Newsletter

MCOTA produces a quarterly email newsletter, which started in 2017 in response to requests from stakeholders. The distribution list includes people who were invited to or attended the workshops, transit stakeholders and those who self-register on the [CoordinateMNTransit.org](https://CoordinateMNTransit.org) website.

The newsletter has included updates about new resources, highlights from individual RTCCs and TCAPs, and articles about equity, automated vehicles, and other technology related to transportation coordination. The readership statistics are shown in Table 3.

Two of the biggest challenges for transportation providers are the continued shortages of drivers and vehicles. Articles in the MCOTA newsletter highlighted efforts by Minnesota's agencies and providers to try to meet those challenges.

- [Roundtable discussion focuses on vehicle shortage challenges and possible solutions](#), MCOTA Newsletter, April 2023
- [Transportation providers look to lessen impact of rising vehicle costs and decreased availability](#), MCOTA Newsletter, July 2023

**Table 3: MCOTA newsletter readership statistics**

	<b>October 2022</b>	<b>March 2023</b>	<b>April 2023</b>	<b>July 2023</b>
Recipients	713	686	677	645
Open rate*	24%	25%	26%	25%
Unique click-through rate*	5%	6%	11%	6%

\*The email open rate is the percentage of recipients who opened the email. The unique click-through rate is the percentage of recipients who clicked at least one link in the email.

## Fiscal Year 2024 Priorities

In addition to continuing current work team initiatives, MCOTA will develop a new strategic plan for 2025-2029 with technical assistance from the National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM). The strategic plan will be informed by the federal Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM) strategic plan and by state and local partners such as our RTCCs and TCAPs. CCAM coordinates transportation services on a federal level to meet diverse transportation needs, like MCOTA's efforts on the state level. [CCAM's 2023-2026 strategic plan](#) offers a framework for MCOTA moving forward.

MCOTA seeks to align with the 2023-2026 CCAM strategic plan major goals:

- Strengthen and improve multisector collaboration at all levels and jurisdictions.
- Promote the development of safer and more accessible transportation networks.
- Address agencies' policies that impede transportation coordination.

In the upcoming year, through strategic planning by engaging MCOTA members, there will be extensive meetings with our MCOTA partners to address policies, barriers and opportunities for improved coordination among Minnesota state agencies.



## Appendix A: List of Abbreviations

CCAM.....	Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility
DHS.....	Minnesota Department of Human Services
FTA.....	Federal Transit Administration
MCOTA.....	Minnesota Council on Transportation Access
MnDOT.....	Minnesota Department of Transportation
MPTA.....	Minnesota Public Transit Association
NCMM.....	National Center for Mobility Management
NEMT.....	Nonemergency Medical Transportation
RTCC.....	Regional Transportation Coordinating Council
STS.....	Special Transportation Service
TCAP.....	Transit Coordination Assistance Project
TNC.....	Transportation Network Company (e.g., Lyft, Uber, etc.)

## Appendix B: 2023 MCOTA Members

Tim Sexton, Chair  
Minnesota Department of Transportation

Diogo Reis, Vice Chair  
Minnesota Department of Human Services

Rachel Dame (through August 2023)  
Office of the Governor

Brandon Kasprick (since September 2023)  
Office of the Governor

David Fenley  
Minnesota State Council on Disability

Gerri Sutton  
Metropolitan Council

Maureen Schneider  
Minnesota Board on Aging

Peter Brickwedde  
Minnesota Department of Commerce

Kelly Garvey  
Minnesota Department of Education

Jodi Yanda  
Minnesota Department of Employment and  
Economic Development

Dylan Galos (through April 2023)  
Minnesota Department of Health

Shirley Schoening Scheuler (since May 2023)  
Minnesota Department of Health

James A. Miller (through April 2023)  
Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs

Ron Quade (Since May 2023)  
Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs

Nick Lardinois  
Minnesota Management and Budget

Tiffany Collins (through April 2023)  
Minnesota Public Transit Association

Brandon Nurmi (since May 2023)  
Minnesota Public Transit Association

## Appendix C: MCOTA Legislative Duties and Accomplishments Since Inception

Year(s)
2011-2023, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
Legislative Duty #1
Compile information on existing transportation alternatives for the transit public and serve as a clearinghouse for information on services, funding sources, innovations and coordination efforts.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minnesota coordination website and resource library</li> <li>• Economic cost-benefit studies</li> <li>• Transportation section of Minnesotahelp.info</li> <li>• NEMT Advisory Committee support</li> <li>• NEMT Coordination Study</li> <li>• Local Transit Coordination Case Studies</li> <li>• Primer of funding sources for “transit public” in Minnesota</li> <li>• RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> <li>• Study of economic benefits of Minnesota volunteer driver programs</li> <li>• Study of public-private partnerships in transit</li> <li>• Periodic stakeholder e-mail communication</li> <li>• Volunteer Driver Program Forum</li> <li>• Study on best practices in youth employment transportation</li> </ul>

Year(s)
2011-2023, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
Legislative Duty #2
Identify best practices and strategies that have been successful in Minnesota and in other states for coordination of local, regional, state and federal funding, and services.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEMT Advisory Committee support</li> <li>• NEMT Coordination Study</li> <li>• Vehicle-sharing Study</li> <li>• Successful Local Transit Coordination Case Studies</li> <li>• Minnesota mobility management case studies</li> <li>• Strategic planning</li> <li>• RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> <li>• Volunteer transportation programs inventory and survey</li> <li>• Study of economic benefits of Minnesota volunteer driver programs</li> <li>• Study of public-private partnerships in transit</li> <li>• Volunteer Driver Program Forum</li> <li>• Study on best practices in youth employment transportation</li> </ul>

Year(s)
2012-2023, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
Legislative Duty #3
Recommend statewide objectives for providing public transportation services for the transit public.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEMT Advisory Committee support</li> <li>• NEMT Coordination Study</li> <li>• Definition of coordination</li> <li>• Strategic planning</li> <li>• Olmstead Plan goals and measures</li> <li>• Homelessness and transportation services</li> <li>• RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> </ul>

<b>Year(s)</b>
2011-2023, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
<b>Legislative Duty #4</b>
Identify barriers prohibiting coordination and accessibility of public transportation services and aggressively pursue the elimination of those barriers.
<b>Supporting Activities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEMT Advisory Committee support</li> <li>• NEMT Study</li> <li>• Synthesis of 2011 Greater MN regional transportation coordination plans</li> <li>• Planning guidance for the 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plans in Minnesota</li> <li>• Maps of human service transportation providers' areas of service in MN</li> <li>• Strategic planning</li> <li>• Olmstead Plan goals and measures</li> <li>• Homelessness and transportation services</li> <li>• RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> <li>• Ways to increase vehicle sharing in Minnesota</li> <li>• Study of public-private partnerships in transit</li> <li>• Study on best practices in youth employment transportation</li> </ul>

<b>Year(s)</b>
2011-2023, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
<b>Legislative Duty #5</b>
Recommend policies and procedures for coordinating local, regional, state and federal funding, and services for the transit public.
<b>Supporting Activities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Synthesis of 2011 Greater MN regional transportation coordination plans</li> <li>• Successful Local Transit Coordination Case Studies</li> <li>• Primer of funding sources for "transit public" in Minnesota</li> <li>• Strategic planning</li> <li>• RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> <li>• Study of public-private partnerships in transit</li> </ul>

Year(s)
2011, 2014-2023, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
Legislative Duty #6
Identify stakeholders in providing services for the transit public and seek input from them concerning barriers and appropriate strategies.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Synthesis of 2011 Greater MN regional transportation coordination plans</li> <li>• Participation in the MN State Council on Disability’s annual Town Hall Mtg.</li> <li>• Data collection and analysis of vehicle sharing</li> <li>• Strategic planning</li> <li>• Homelessness and transportation services</li> <li>• RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> <li>• Ways to increase vehicle sharing in Minnesota</li> <li>• Volunteer transportation programs inventory and survey</li> </ul>

Year(s)
2011-2023, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
Legislative Duty #7
Recommend guidelines for developing transportation coordination plans throughout the state.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Synthesis of 2011 Greater MN regional transportation coordination plans</li> <li>• Planning guidance for the 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plans in Minnesota</li> <li>• Successful Local Transit Coordination case studies</li> <li>• RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> </ul>

Year(s)
None of the years between 2011-2023
Legislative Duty #8
Encourage all state agencies participating in the council to purchase trips within the coordinated system.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This model of centralized purchasing is not in place in Minnesota.</li> </ul>

Year(s)
2011-2012, 2014-2023
Legislative Duty #9
Facilitate the creation and operation of transportation brokerages to match riders to the appropriate service, promote shared dispatching, compile and disseminate information on transportation options, and promote regional communication.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobility management webinars</li> <li>• Planning guidance for the 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plans in Minnesota</li> <li>• Successful Local Transit Coordination case studies</li> <li>• Minnesota mobility management case studies</li> <li>• RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> </ul>

Year(s)
2011, 2015-2023, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
Legislative Duty #10
Encourage volunteer driver programs and recommend legislation to address liability and insurance issues.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful local transit coordination case studies</li> <li>• A survey and selected case studies of volunteer driver programs in MN, including faith-based programs</li> <li>• RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> <li>• Volunteer transportation programs inventory and survey</li> <li>• Study of economic benefits of Minnesota volunteer driver programs</li> <li>• Volunteer driver insurance and reimbursement issues and education</li> <li>• Volunteer Driver Program Forum</li> <li>• Volunteer Driver Program resolution, brochure</li> </ul>

Year(s)
2016-2023, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
Legislative Duty #11
Recommend minimum performance standards for delivery of services.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> </ul>



Year(s)
None of the years between 2011-2023
Legislative Duty #12
Identify methods to eliminate fraud and abuse in special transportation services.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be addressed in future work plans</li> </ul>

Year(s)
2013, 2015-2023 expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
Legislative Duty #13
Develop a standard method for addressing liability insurance requirements for transportation services purchased, provided or coordinated.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vehicle-sharing Study</li> <li>RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> <li>Ways to increase vehicle sharing in Minnesota</li> <li>Volunteer driver insurance and reimbursement issues and education</li> <li>Volunteer Driver Program resolution, brochure</li> </ul>

Year(s)
2011-2012
Legislative Duty #14
Design and develop a contracting template for providing coordinated transportation services.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of contract template</li> <li>RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> </ul>

Year(s)
2011, 2014-2023 expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
Legislative Duty #15
Recommend an interagency uniform contracting and billing and accounting system for providing coordinated transportation services.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration on development of a Unified Transit Data Center pilot project in Scott and Carver counties</li> <li>• Common standards for financial records</li> <li>• RTCC organizing and implementation</li> </ul>

Year(s)
2012-2023 expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
Legislative Duty #16
Encourage the design and development of training programs for coordinated transportation services.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEMT Advisory Committee support</li> <li>• NEMT Study</li> <li>• Mobility management webinars</li> <li>• Minnesota mobility management case studies</li> <li>• Minnesota Mobility Management Handbook</li> <li>• RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> </ul>

Year(s)
2016, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
Legislative Duty #17
Encourage the use of public-school transportation vehicles for the transit public.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> </ul>

Year(s)
2014-2015, 2023 expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
Legislative Duty #18
Develop an allocation methodology that equitably distributes transportation funds to compensate units of government and all entities that provide coordinated transportation services.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common standards for financial records</li> <li>• RTCC organizing and implementation</li> </ul>

Year(s)
2013, 2015, 2016, 2021-2023 expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
Legislative Duty #19
Identify policies and necessary legislation to facilitate vehicle sharing.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vehicle-sharing study</li> <li>• Data collection and analysis of vehicle sharing</li> <li>• Maps of human service transportation providers' areas of service in Minnesota</li> <li>• Outreach to providers about options and benefits of vehicle sharing</li> <li>• RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> </ul>

Year(s)
2012-2022 expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2023
Legislative Duty #20
Advocate aggressively for eliminating barriers to coordination, implementing coordination strategies, enacting necessary legislation and appropriating resources to achieve the council's objectives.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEMT Advisory Committee support</li> <li>• Transportation section of Minnesotahelp.info</li> <li>• Primer of funding sources for “transit public” in Minnesota</li> <li>• Strategic planning</li> <li>• RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> <li>• Volunteer driver insurance and reimbursement issues and education</li> <li>• Volunteer Driver Program resolution, brochure</li> </ul>

# Appendix D: Progress on Top Challenges and Opportunities for MCOTA Members in 2021

*Table 4: Progress on top transportation challenges and opportunities for MCOTA members in 2021 Senior Leadership meeting*

Top Challenges & Opportunities	Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Transportation accessibility and availability</li> <li>● Sufficient and affordable transportation throughout the state</li> <li>● Remove transportation barriers for people to access health care and other essential needs that contribute to well-being</li> <li>● Waiver Transportation Pilot</li> </ul>	<p>Accessibility &amp; Olmstead and Removing Barriers Work Teams focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● NEMT awareness</li> <li>● Improve transportation access for Minnesotans who need more ride assistance.</li> </ul> <p>MCOTA Newsletter shared ways of coping with driver and vehicle shortages</p> <p>Metropolitan Council is implementing a pilot Waiver Transportation Program</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Driver shortages</li> <li>● For public transit and other transportation services</li> <li>● Volunteer drivers</li> <li>● Low mileage reimbursement rate and tax liabilities are barriers for volunteer drivers.</li> <li>● Limited/costly insurance is a barrier for volunteer drivers.</li> </ul>	<p>Volunteer Driver Program Initiatives Work Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● MCOTA volunteer driver brochures</li> <li>● Minnesota's Road to Volunteer Drivers Virtual Forum Series, 2022-2023</li> <li>● MCOTA supports federal mileage reimbursement legislation for volunteer drivers.</li> <li>● New volunteer driver program resources web page</li> <li>● Planning research on the value of volunteer drivers in health care access</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Legal, regulatory or policy barriers</li> <li>● Challenge with long-term resource capacity to support MCOTA, RTCC and TCAP programs.</li> <li>● Transportation providers serve Minnesotans in multiple programs and must meet duplicative standards.</li> <li>● Service collaborations face legal, regulatory or policy barriers that make it very complex and difficult to coordinate.</li> </ul>	

Top Challenges & Opportunities	Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Inability to share data between state agencies is a barrier to collaboration and coordination.</li> <li>● In partnering with multiple state agencies and counties to help people with employment, each has distinctions in eligibility and methods</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Insurance</li> <li>● Limited/costly insurance is a barrier for volunteer drivers.</li> <li>● Opportunities and challenges with automobile insurance in an evolving personal transportation environment</li> </ul>	<p>Removing Barriers Work Teams focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reduce insurance barriers to vehicle sharing.</li> </ul>

## Appendix E: RTCC and TCAP Annual Reports

This section contains brief summaries of FY23 activities from the Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils in Greater Minnesota and the Transit Coordination Assistance Projects in the Twin Cities.

### RTCCs

---

- Region Five
- Region 6W
- Arrowhead
- Connect Central
- East Central
- Headwaters
- Mid-Minnesota
- Northwest
- Southwest Minnesota

### TCAPs

---

- Anoka County
- GoDakota in Dakota County
- Newtrax in Ramsey County
- SmartLink Mobility Management - Scott and Carver Counties
- Washington County

# Region Five Regional Transportation Coordination Council

## Annual Report for July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

---

### Introduction

While most transportation services were back in operation during this reporting period, our residents, providers, and communities were still dealing with the shockwaves and aftermath of COVID-19. From reduced ridership, to supply chain disruptions affecting the purchase of transit vehicles to increased pressures placed on volunteer drivers, the R5 RTCC worked diligently to continuously improve transportation and mobility within Region Five through a robust seven-task action plan that addresses a broad array of transportation and transit-related issues.

### TASK 1: Transportation Guidance and Consultation

This task sought to resolve services that are underused because consumers had limited knowledge about current services. The R5RTCC implemented an overall marketing campaign that promoted existing services within the region. This included flyers, social media posts, online publications to the R5RTCC webpage, and a series of podcasts R5RTCC hosted as an effort to increase awareness. Along with marketing efforts, we placed an emphasis on educating the public about transportation services and how to use them. This was accomplished by holding community engagements throughout the region. The main goal of these engagements is to gather information and interact with communities by allowing residents to ask questions and to become familiar with what exists in their community.

The second task was vehicle-sharing, which looked at identifying potential sharing opportunities of existing vehicles throughout the region. The R5RTCC sought to identify available vehicles in the region by contacting transportation providers in the region. From there, it reached out to the residents in the region to identify what need exists. The needs were identified through surveys of transportation organizations on what gaps exist and how a shared vehicle could fill those gaps. The R5RTCC also began discussing the possibility of an intercounty transit vehicle and a route sharing program. Successful implementation will include identifying priority routes, estimating the cost, and identifying funding sources. Traveling from county to county can be a challenging task in rural Minnesota, and this is one way the R5RTCC has identified to tackle the issue.

### TASK 3: Private Nonprofit and For-Profit Provider Engagement

Involvement of private for-profit providers and nonprofit organizations was key in identifying and addressing transportation issues. This is why the third task of the R5RTCC was private nonprofit and for-profit provider engagement. The R5RTCC conducted bimonthly meetings of these stakeholders to encourage collaboration and understand what each brings to the region. To ensure key stakeholders remained at the table, the R5RTCC invited private, for-profit providers and nonprofit organizations to provide updates and presentations at R5RTCC board meetings as well.

### TASK 4: Volunteer Driver Programs

The R5RTCC wanted supportive resources for volunteer driver programs. This is key for the region because volunteer driver programs are crucial for the transportation of individuals in the region. The R5RTCC wanted to help with recruitment and communication of volunteer driver services, with an emphasis on social media



posts, online publications, and podcasts. Many volunteer driver programs do not have the capacity to market and provide outreach services to the public — the R5RTCC saw this as a gap that could be filled with its assistance. Volunteer drivers also face obstacles when it comes to policy issues such as tax and insurance issues. The R5RTCC strives to create awareness of these issues throughout the region and stay up to date on all policy issues through continued involvement with the Volunteer Driver Coalition.

## **TASK 5: Staff Training**

Staff training is a key component for the success of the R5RTCC. R5RTCC staff sought to stay up to date on the always changing world of transportation and to improve mobility manager skills by participating in training events, conferences, and MnDOT workshops throughout the year while also staying actively involved with MCOTA. By focusing on these training objectives, R5RTCC staff continued to develop expertise as a regional transportation resource and, thus, further develop the transportation management coordination center with increased knowledge. Capping this task off, staff had the opportunity to be a presenter at the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) National Regional Transportation Conference, held in Kansas City in 2022.

## **TASK 6: Local Human Services Transit Coordination Plans**

The development of a Local Human Services Transit Coordination Plan is a federal requirement under the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act). Federal regulations state that projects eligible for funding under the Transportation for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities (Section 5310) program must advance strategies identified in a Local Human Services Transit Coordination Plan. This planning process fulfills federal requirements by engaging transportation providers, social services agencies, and members of the public in identifying strategies for regional transportation coordination.

Beyond fulfilling federal requirements, this planning process encouraged representatives of diverse organizations to join in articulating specific projects that could advance transportation services in Region Five. Through public participation activities, stakeholders brainstormed project ideas and refined these ideas in a collaborative setting. The final project list reflects input from a broad range of regional stakeholders and provides a five-year blueprint for future coordination efforts in Region Five. Finally, the plan was developed to identify viable FTA-eligible projects (capital projects). Without a local coordination plan, the region is unable to successfully determine and address specific FTA funding for capital projects.

## **TASK 7: Emergency Preparedness Facilitation**

The seventh task sought to improve transportation services for persons with disabilities and older adults and to ensure that communities are coordinating resources provided through local, state, and federal programs. The R5RTCC board and regional stakeholders assist in the development of certain state plans and provide aid when and where needed as the plan(s) are developed. In addition, this task focuses on emergency preparedness facilitation. The R5RTCC will be establishing relationships between transportation providers and local emergency operation centers to ensure that the region is prepared for emergency situations by seeking to increase collaboration and by utilizing as many resources as possible. The R5RTCC strives to accomplish this task by interviewing county emergency managers for an understanding of where relationships currently stand, research hazard-mitigation plans to see where transportation is or is not included, and to create an R5RTCC board position for one county emergency manager to ensure they remain a key stakeholder.

## Conclusion

Through the seven-task workplan and subsequent logic model, the R5RTCC has moved closer to its goal of increasing access to transportation for residents in their regions by aligning resources and reducing gaps. In addition to achieving deliverables in all seven areas, staff capped the year off as a national presenter for NADO at the National Regional Transportation Conference in Kansas City.

## Region 6W Regional Transportation Coordination Council Report for July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

---

An FY23 highlight is the Support Our Troops wheelchair-accessible van, a Region 6W RTCC Initiative led by Prairie Five Community Action to serve veterans in the region.

Prairie Five Community Action Council and the 6W Regional Transportation Coordinating Council received an \$80,000 grant through the Minnesota "Support Our Troops" License Plate Program to purchase a wheelchair-accessible van for veterans. The van, which made its maiden voyage in August 2023, provides accessible transportation to veterans in the five-county region, which includes Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift and Yellow Medicine counties.

Prairie Five RIDES and 6W RTCC wanted to better serve veterans in the region, so RTCC program directors searched for grants for veterans. They discovered that the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs offers grant opportunities ranging from \$1,000 to \$100,000 through the Minnesota "Support Our Troops" License Plate Program to support and improve the lives of veterans and their families. Prairie Five RIDES and RTCC members collaborated with five-county veteran service officers to present the opportunity to the full council. The group came up with the idea of purchasing a wheelchair-accessible van to offer free rides to veterans.

The Support Our Troops van was purchased this past summer through Rollx Vans in Savage and wrapped by DC Signs of Montevideo.

It is the first time MDVA has approved funding for an outside organization to purchase a vehicle. In addition, RTCC partners have begun promoting the service by producing a brochure and visiting area VFWs and American Legions with the van.

*Adapted from [Community Highlights blog of the Minnesota Community Action Partnership, posted August 24, 2022](#).*

# Arrowhead Regional Transportation Coordinating Council

## July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

---

### Introduction

Coordination among transportation providers aims to enhance transportation access by minimizing duplication of services and facilitating the most appropriate and cost-effective transportation possible with available resources. Integrating all transportation stakeholders into coordination with transit providers produces reciprocal relationships among health and human services agencies, agencies for older adults, day treatment and rehabilitation services, schools, and other direct client service agencies that traditionally serve people who are transit dependent. The goal of the Arrowhead RTCC is to improve access, availability, and options for transportation services in northeastern Minnesota through improved communication, coordination, and collaboration. The Arrowhead RTCC's objectives guide the council to meet and sustain its goal and are implemented through the following work tasks.

### TASK 1: Transportation Guidance and Consultation

Year 2 of the phase 4 work tasks continued RTCC goals to assess community readiness, map transportation service areas, and work toward developing vehicle sharing practices in the region to support transportation guidance and consultation. RTCC staff were used as both advisers and subject matter experts by several regional and state committees focused on identifying unmet personal mobility needs and facilitating and developing services responsive to those needs. RTCC staff provided planning assistance to Moose Lake aging services as part of a community assessment to gauge local transportation needs and funding options. RTCC staff provided technical assistance to the Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging for the transportation section of its 2023 aging community assessment survey.

RTCC staff maintained and updated the regional transportation directory throughout the year. RTCC staff developed a paper directory under advisement of the RTCC council. More than 300 copies were distributed at regional conferences, tabling events, mailings, and through partner agencies. Through membership on the Rural Transit Assistance Program Advisory Committee, RTCC staff have increased knowledge of the opportunities and challenges present for transit agencies.

### TASK 2: Vehicle Sharing

RTCC staff facilitated partnership with Big Woods Transit and Falls Hunger Coalition to provide free rides to International Falls-area food shelves using transit vehicles. RTCC staff arranged and attended meetings with regional partners, MnDOT staff, and 5310 recipients. Meetings resulted in shared learning about the policy and procedure elements of vehicle-sharing. RTCC staff attended the presentation about the Nonprofit Insurance Trust for increased knowledge on insurance barriers to transportation and transit.

### TASK 3: Private Nonprofit and For-Profit Provider Engagement

Conversations during RTCC meetings, networking at conferences, and the ongoing efforts of RTCC staff have increased access to services in the region. RTCC staff engaged with regional health care staff resulting in technical assistance and grant writing services provided in increase access to health care. RTCC staff helped secure funding for the Essentia Health Deer River clinic to revive a transportation program targeting mobility

challenged individuals and their caregivers. The National Center for Mobility Management accepted an RTCC staff application on behalf of Fresenius Dialysis and Kidney Care.

The RTCC held regular meetings, with member attendance supporting increased coordination between transportation providers and cross industry. A presenter from the Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging provided information on the changing age demographics in the region and impacts of ageism on transportation.

#### **TASK 4: Volunteer Driver Programs**

RTCC staff supported volunteer driver programs and transportation providers to increase organizational capacity and program sustainability. A highlight of these initiatives includes RTCC staff providing technical assistance to Big Woods Transit on an FTA grant application for successful procurement of propane buses. RTCC staff continued to support volunteer driver recruitment through print and online ads, tabling events, and presentations. RTCC staff also worked with the MCOTA Volunteer Driver Program Initiatives Work Team to plan and facilitate the 2022–23 Volunteer Driver Web Forum Series and Lunch and Learns. In addition, RTCC staff worked on the MCOTA Removing Barriers Work Team to further practical knowledge of vehicle-sharing and waived billing for transportation services. RTCC staff routinely met with volunteer driver agencies throughout the grant year to gauge current capacity and needs for sustainability of the programs.

#### **TASK 5: Staff Training**

RTCC staff continually disseminated learnings and resources from trainings to council members. Information relevant to transportation access and equity was routinely shared through sources such as Basecamp, email blasts, and word-of-mouth at in-person events. RTCC staff delivered two presentations at the St. Louis County Health and Human Services Conference: one panel discussion with MnDOT, East Central RTCC, and Dakota County TCAP on person-centered transportation, and another with the Duluth Transit Authority on age-friendly transportation. RTCC staff and council members attended trainings and conferences throughout the year. Training topics included understanding transportation issues in relation to direct services, higher-level impacts such as climate change, best practices of transportation and mobility models, and funding streams for services. The RTCC council and RTCC staff attended several events throughout the year, including the Minnesota Public Transit Conference, Duluth/St. Louis County Days at the Minnesota Capitol, Minnesota Transportation Conference, Community Transportation Association of America Conference, St. Louis County Health and Human Services Conference, and Minnesota Transportation Alliance Fly-In to Washington, D.C.

#### **TASK 6: Local Human Services Transit Coordination Plans**

RTCC staff co-facilitated the final review of the Local Human Services Transportation Plan (LHSTP), which outlines status of transportation options in the region and identifies priorities for future planning of transportation in the region. Transportation providers in the region remain engaged with the RTCC and were actively involved in the 2023 LHSTP development.

#### **TASK 7: Emergency Preparedness Facilitation**

RTCC staff continued to be involved with the Ready North disaster preparedness group. RTCC staff has increased knowledge of transit lines in relation to critical emergency infrastructure locations and developed a critical infrastructure and transit map.

## Conclusion

Arrowhead RTCC work throughout the fiscal year of 2023 is best characterized as multifaceted in nature, with efforts ranging from legislative support for volunteer drivers to informing and educating direct-service professionals on transportation related issues. The RTCC coordinator continued to chair the MCOTA Volunteer Driver Program Initiatives Work Team and co-chair the Volunteer Driver Coalition, while the RTCC co-coordinator actively maintained communications with regional volunteer driver providers for status updates about their operations. Transportation information and resources were regularly distributed at conferences, community tabling events, and among direct-service professionals. Involvement with the MCOTA Removing Barriers Work Team increased RTCC staff understanding of insurance barriers to vehicle-sharing and strategies to overcome them. RTCC staff also made progress establishing communications with health care staff to develop solutions for transportation access to health care services, an endeavor that will continue throughout fiscal year 2024. To best summarize Arrowhead RTCC work over the past year, it is continuing to serve as planning and information experts for improving transportation access and equity in the Northeast Minnesota region.

## Connect Central MN Regional Transportation Coordination Council Annual Report for July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

---

ConnectAbility of MN formed the Connect Central MN RTCC in the St. Cloud area (Stearns, Benton, Wright and Sherburne counties) in 2021. The RTCC is not continuing in FY24. One of its significant initiatives in FY23 was its award and engagement with the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center.

In August 2022, ConnectAbility of MN Selected as a Coordination Coalition Team by the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center.

ConnectAbility of MN is a nonprofit organization that provides coordination of services and community investment programs to people with any disability of any age anywhere in Minnesota. They also serve older adults in their communities with coordinated services. Their vision and purpose are to empower people with physical or invisible barriers to achieve their potential.

The NADTC announced the selection of two in the nation Coordination Coalition Teams, as part of their ongoing Coordination Initiative: ConnectAbility of MN (Waite Park, Minnesota) and Senior Resource Center of Douglas County (Lawrence, Kansas).

Each coalition team participated in a two-day workshop in September 2022, facilitated by NADTC staff, to build or strengthen a coalition group and develop an Action Plan the coalition can use as a foundation for improving local transportation options.

This opportunity is a result of NADTC's Coordination Advisory Committee which has guided their work over the past year to develop useful tools, resources, and opportunities for agencies to enhance their transportation coordination efforts.

In April 2023, Sheri Wagner of ConnectAbility of MN and Tony Masters of Sherburne County Health & Human Services and Chair of the Connect Central RTCC presented their progress on an [NADTC webinar about their Communication Coordination Initiative](#). They reported that the Connect Central RTCC was able to accomplish the following because of the NADTC award and the RTCC grant.

- Met to establish a shared vision statement and objectives, with an agreed-upon set of priorities.
- Developed an online database of transportation providers in the region.
- The NADTC Toolkit process can be replicated to setting goals and objectives annually.
- Held monthly meetings with RTCC Council.
- Merged the objectives from the RTCC grant with the NADTC Toolkit. Led to the creation of a solid roadmap for meeting RTCC grant objectives, such as strengthening volunteer driver program, promoting transportation as a career, and recruiting drivers and volunteers.
- Developed a website.
- Developed driver and customer personas to use in marketing to support all objectives.

### About ConnectAbility of MN

ConnectAbility of MN is a non-profit organization that was founded in 1954. It was formerly known as UCP of Central MN. In 2020, its mission and purpose outgrew its organization and voluntarily surrendered its charter with United Cerebral Palsy, changed its name, and expanded to serve the entire state of Minnesota. They now

serve any person with any disability, of any age, anywhere in Minnesota. For more information about ConnectAbility of MN, visit their website at [ConnectAbilityMN.org](https://ConnectAbilityMN.org).



# East Central Regional Transportation Coordinating Council

## July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

---

### Introduction

Since its inception in 2018, the ECRTCC has established itself as a driving force to improve transportation access for those in East Central Minnesota, especially focusing on those in the region who are transportation disadvantaged.

Each year has marked a new phase of building and coordination. Utilizing the newly developed logic model and recognizing its inherent accountability, each one of the ECRTCC tasks has become more focused. The Local Human Services Transit Coordination Plan, which was completed in 2022, has also contributed to the significance of the ECRTCC tasks.

Through the work of the ECRTCC Advisory Board, public outreach and staff, the tasks and details below are developing into projects that have been or will be considered for completion over the next few years, as possible.



### TASK 1: Transportation Guidance and Consultation

#### Goal: To inform people in the community about existing services

- Publication of the East Central Minnesota Transportation Provider Directory, which is online, printable, and distributed in printed form. It also includes information about park-and-ride lots as well as regional car charging stations.
- [Website](#) with helpful and relevant information to answer questions for riders and potential new riders. Provider links are available.
- Organizational branding with a recognizable design to assist with marketing efforts.
- Continued collaboration with RTCCs throughout the state includes networking, sharing relevant and current information online and through email, Zoom meetings, in-person, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram.
- Participation in statewide events, including Operation Community Connects, senior fairs, age-friendly events, and a large health and human services conference.
- Bimonthly updates to East Central Regional Development Commission board members, which comprises representation from each of the region's county board of commissioners, public interest representatives, and regional school board representatives.
- Continued public outreach through radio (KBK 95.5fm), the Kanabec County Fair (2021, 2022, 2023), social media, and through other local and regional expos, events, fairs, and local news media.



2022 Kanabec County Fair Transportation Building

## TASK 2: Vehicle Sharing

**Goal: To maximize utilization of existing vehicles used by organizations, including, but not exclusively, FTA Section 5310 providers**

- The ECRTCC is gathering data regarding a possible vehicle-sharing program in the East Central region where volunteers would drive shared vehicles rather than using their own. There would be no compensation in this scenario. Commute with Enterprise is being explored for shared vehicle utilization.
- The Greater Minnesota Shared Mobility Program has been established under the Minnesota Shared Mobility Collaborative due to the involvement of the RTCCs. ECRTCC is a member of this steering committee.
- The ECRTCC continues to advocate for smaller vehicles available through 5310 funding.
- The ECRTCC continues to advocate for insurance coverage/policy changes/options for vehicle sharing.

## TASK 3: Private Nonprofit and For-Profit Provider Engagement

**Goal: To use mobility management for cultivating partnerships, creating or joining collaborative efforts that include transportation providers, planners and other community stakeholders**

- The importance of a well-rounded advisory board for the ECRTCC is paramount throughout all phases of ECRTCC processes. Individuals and entities are encouraged to participate if they have any interest in regional transportation, whether they are transit providers, schedulers, or users of transportation. As the ECRTCC has gained momentum and visibility, it has attracted more interest and involvement by new individuals each year.
- Mobility as a Service (MaaS) technology has been formulated as a MnDOT pilot program in southern and western Minnesota, including a partner from our region, Tri-CAP Transportation. MaaS will allow for scheduling by phone, real-time route information, and access to easy payment. Once the pilot program is concluded, more advancements will be made to enlarge the MaaS area. ECRTCC is staying

abreast of these developments to be sure we are considered for participation in the next phase — especially with developments from Tri-CAP.

- An established taxi service within the region was purchased by a couple very interested in working with the ECRTCC. This opportunity is a fortuitous option to the lack of transportation options within the region. Meetings about assistance from ECTRCC are in progress.
- Moving forward, ECRTCC will facilitate the Minnesota Safe Cab program. This opportunity will open doors to private transportation services, which were previously unavailable. Gaining these contacts will be positive for the Safe Cab program and allow for additional conversations to address other transportation obstacles.
- ECRTCC involvement with MCOTA allows RTCCs to voice the needs and obstacles experienced by this organization, which could bring solutions to those who can amend laws and reduce barriers.
- The Northern Lights Express Passenger Rail System (NLX) has gathered momentum and is now on the way to establishing station locations in our region (Cambridge and Hinckley). ECRTCC involvement in the process has been consistent and will continue with open communications between NLX and city and county officials.
- ECRTCC has conducted a survey through the end of November 2023. Results of one-on-one meetings with many respondents at events will help determine whether there is a need for transfer stations to connect the region’s public transportation systems and where they should be located. This information will then be presented to the public transportation systems to develop pilot programs.

## **TASK 4: Volunteer Driver Programs**

### **Goal: To have supportive resources to develop and sustain volunteer driver programs**

- Currently, all the volunteer driver programs in East Central Minnesota fall under the three public transportation programs. Each public provider recruits through their own channels.
- ECRTCC outreach coordination is in part driven by the need to assist public providers in recruiting volunteer drivers. The vehicle-sharing concept may help alleviate some of the problems in finding volunteers.
- ECRTCC is a member of the MCOTA Volunteer Driver Program Initiatives Work Team. The work team developed [webinars](#) with panelists and presentations by professionals held virtually in October 2022, February, March, May, and July of 2023. The last four transitioned into Lunch and Learns — one-hour presentations over the lunch hour. With the success of this forum series and the training and information readily available for use by anyone (housed on the MCOTA website), the work team is planning for more Lunch and Learns.
- RTCCs throughout the state support and collaborate with the Volunteer Driver Coalition. The group is focused on changing the volunteer driver reimbursement rate to follow the business reimbursement rate. U.S. Rep. Pete Stauber (District 8) has created a bill called the “Volunteer Driver Tax Appreciation Act of 2023” to move his endorsement forward. Because this is a federal issue with the IRS, it’s encouraging to see that many states are supporting this bill.

- Strong participation in [MCOTA meetings](#) has been the driving force for many legislative adjustments.
- Consistent recruitment efforts for volunteer drivers have been through radio (KBEK 95.5 FM), fairs, events, expos, social media, and local news media.

## TASK 5: Staff Training

### Goal: RTCC staff develop and share expertise as a regional transportation resource

- ECRTCC staff will stay up-to-date on the latest and greatest information about all transportation modes, connectivity, and technology, through webinars, conferences, networking, meetings, and trainings — many of which are suggested through MnDOT, MCOTA, and other RTCCs.
- ECRTCC staff have been working through a two-year Mobility Management Training program by Easter Seals.

## TASK 6: Local Human Services Transit Coordination Plans

### Goal: To identify viable FTA-eligible capital projects

- [Final Report](#)
- Updated every five years

## TASK 7: Emergency Preparedness Facilitation

### Goal: To facilitate networking with all emergency response units and all transportation providers within the region

- ECRTCC staff is building a network of EMS providers.
- As the ECRTCC develops projects, the ramifications of Emergency Preparedness are considered within the plans.
- ECRTCC continues to work with our five counties, organizations affiliated with each county, and related stakeholders.
- EMS operators in each county are aware of the ECRTCC as a centralized transportation resource.
- Public transportation service providers in the East Central Region are directly involved with EMS coordination as they help to improve lives in the communities they serve.



Residents on a TriShaw ride

## Conclusion

The focus of the East Central Regional Transportation Coordinating Council is to provide transportation solutions for the residents of Region 7E. To resolve issues, there must be improved coordination between transportation providers and service agencies, filling transportation gaps, providing more service with the same or fewer resources, streamlining access to transportation, and providing customers more options of

when and where to travel. The focus is particularly driven to improve mobility for the transportation disadvantaged such as older adults, individuals with disabilities, lower income individuals, and military veterans.

The ECRTCC was approved by MnDOT to move into 2023/2024/2025 as the first half of a two-year grant cycle beginning on July 1, 2023. Before each phase, the workplan is reevaluated, and reconstruction takes place to adjust the focus and tasks. The Local Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan priorities are the focus of the ECRTCC work now and will continue to be emphasized as we move forward.

# Mid-Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordinating Council

## July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

---

### Introduction

Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC) is the operator of the Mid-Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordination Council (MMRTCC), which serves the residents of Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, and Renville Counties. RTCC grant resources have increased our residents' access to transportation by reducing service gaps through improved alignment of transportation-related resources using active community and stakeholder engagement in seven task areas:

### **TASK 1: Transportation Guidance and Consultation**

To ensure our region's residents, including Somali and Spanish speakers, have access to information on transportation and related providers and resources, MMRTCC has informed many of our network partners of updated transportation services. These include an updated ride resources webpage on the MMDC website, available to help meet the needs of those with transportation barriers. The Transportation Resource Guide is currently available in English, Somali, and Spanish languages and MMRTCC staff are in the process of adding the Karen language. The updated guide is electronically accessible via MMDC/MMRTCC Ride Resources webpage. This Level 1 Transportation Management Coordination Center (TMCC) will continue to be distributed directly to those with transportation barriers and those who serve them (e.g., human services case managers), during outreach presentations, via social media, and through existing local networks. It will be available in both electronic and paper formats. During program year 2022-2023, both transportation consumer awareness and organization of MMRTCC transportation coordination efforts have increased. MMRTCC continues to receive at least two to three calls each month requesting assistance by or on behalf of those in need of transportation. We have become top of mind for transportation assistance among regional people-serving organizations.

Because our region's transportation gaps include a shortage of professional and volunteer drivers, Task 1 work included the promotion of both volunteer and professional driver opportunities. MMRTCC promoted these opportunities through the production and distribution of a short educational video, service club presentations, collaboration with local workforce development staff, social media outreach, and both print and radio advertisements purchased through local media outlets (following all applicable procurement guidelines). This outreach led to inquiries from prospective professional and volunteer drivers, resulting in multiple referrals to transportation service providers. These efforts also have highlighted the availability of volunteer driver services and have helped a number of riders connect with this new-to-them resource.

Three grants, supported by MMDC MMRTCC efforts, have increased public transportation ridership in the region. First, a farmers market transportation pilot project provided the opportunity for those living in disadvantaged and low-income neighborhoods to get to local farmers markets operating on two Saturday mornings in 2022.

Second, an AARP community challenge grant reduced financial barriers to transportation and increased the number of Trailblazer Transit rides taken by older adults, people with disabilities, and childcare providers. This was achieved by purchasing a total of 2,100 Trailblazer Transit ride tokens and six separate monthly childcare passes for in-home childcare centers that used the service. The grant also helped to fund a two-passenger electric-assist rickshaw tricycle for a Hutchinson senior living community. A similar tricycle-style unit was

purchased for another facility in Olivia, Minnesota, to improve residents' ability to navigate the community, run errands, and participate in social activities.

MMRTCC parlayed grant success to gain commitments from more than 30 agencies in Willmar, Minnesota, to assist with outreach needed for the successful delivery of a fare-free pilot. MMDC/MMRTCC received a \$20,000 grant from the Willmar Area Community Foundation to cover the fares and provide outreach for a six-month fare-free bus stop-to-bus stop pilot in the Willmar community. This pilot, which began in July and will run through December 2023, will remove financial transportation barriers for Willmar residents.

MMRTCC facilitated numerous meetings and held many conversations with people-serving agencies to ensure that they are aware of MMRTCC efforts and projects. MMRTCC staff also have collaborated to deliver several other smaller projects and presentations to raise awareness of transportation resources and find transportation solutions.

## **TASK 2: Vehicle Sharing**

MMRTCC is working to maximize the utility of vehicles by encouraging vehicle-sharing among people-serving organizations that require transportation for their consumers. MMRTCC has increased interest and opportunities for connection among existing transportation partners and other organizations in conversations surrounding vehicle-sharing.

Due to driver shortages and workforce issues, discussions have centered on how organizations might share drivers as well as vehicles. Specifically, the opportunity for organizations to have staff cross-trained as part-time Central Community Transit (CCT) drivers would give them a better opportunity to use existing CCT 5310-funded vehicles.

Additional work related to vehicle-sharing will include presenting other vehicle-sharing and hybrid volunteer driver models. Volunteers using public or private nonprofit vehicles and wheelchair-accessible vehicles (WAVs) led CCT to apply for funding to purchase a volunteer-driver vehicle, which may be checked out by drivers who prefer not to use their personal vehicle. Additional MMRTCC support and advice to maximize the use of this vehicle will continue.

## **TASK 3: Private Nonprofit and For-Profit Provider Engagement**

MMRTCC visits human services agencies and other organizations to inform them of MMRTCC activities. Through monthly meeting updates, email communications, and special meetings, MMRTCC has kept our region's human services agencies informed about opportunities for collaboration to better use existing transportation providers, bring new transportation providers to the region, and assist public and private transportation providers as they expand transportation services to meet regional needs. MMRTCC continues to make connections with these organizations to ensure directors and case workers are utilizing the Level 1 TMCC Transportation Resource Guide as they serve their clientele, especially during a time of frequent human services staff turnover.

## **TASK 4: Volunteer Driver Programs**

To increase public awareness of the need and opportunity for volunteer drivers, the MMRTCC has continued to create, improve, and distribute videos focused on volunteer driving. MMRTCC staff have organized outreach campaigns to promote the opportunity and have presented to local groups. Specific in-person activities have

included promoting volunteer driving with a local car wash event, speaking to students of mature driver insurance discount classes, and promoting volunteer-driver training through community education courses. Additionally, MMRTCC continues to participate in the Minnesota Volunteer Driver Coalition to keep local stakeholders aware of legislative changes and efforts to reduce financial barriers faced by volunteer drivers.

## **TASK 5: Staff Training**

To ensure MMRTCC staff are knowledgeable about transportation and related issues (e.g., transportation funding), and to ensure they have an effective professional network, MMRTCC staff have participated in conferences, seminars, and workshops related to transportation and transportation-related topics. This includes travel-training instruction and mobility management certification course instruction, received over a two-year period. However, this training also includes MMRTCC primary staff becoming certified as a community emergency response team volunteer. This helps MMRTCC keep abreast of issues that affect transportation during times of crisis while also fostering positive relationships with the area's emergency management staff.

MMRTCC staff have also engaged in conversations with transportation providers and third-party payers to better understand that process and its barriers.

## **TASK 6: Local Human Services Transit Coordination Plans**

To ensure the transportation needs of our region's senior residents and region's residents with disabilities are sufficiently considered, and that our region remains eligible for capital funding from the Federal Transit Administration, MMRTCC staff supported completion of the Region 6E Local Human Services – Public Transit Coordination Plan. This was achieved by connecting MMDC local transportation coordination planners to key transit and human services staff and by assisting with the facilitation and marketing of public stakeholder meetings. Maintaining community awareness of this plan and supporting any changes that reduce the region's transportation gaps remain priorities. MMDC already has used data collected through this planning process to apply for and receive two grants. MMRTCC continues to help with the use of the LCP to support grant applications and to help the region's transportation providers find additional funding to expand their services.

## **TASK 7: Emergency Preparedness Facilitation**

MMRTCC staff have successfully engaged with the region's emergency management offices and public transportation providers to ensure emergency preparedness plans incorporate adequate transportation strategies and resources. Offerings include using the MMRTCC network to help organize simulations to evaluate effective emergency preparedness plans. By attending trainings focused on emergency preparedness, receiving state and federal information through webinars, and attending other meetings, MMRTCC is available to help identify transportation-related gaps in current emergency management plans. We will continue to make recommendations to support and improve current plans, as appropriate. Related discussions have already led to an invitation for MMRTCC's coordinator to be included in the community emergency response team.



# Northwest Regional Transportation Coordination Council

## Annual Report for July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

---

### Introduction

“The vision of the Northwest RTCC is to support affordable, efficient and seamless regional transportation through creative partnerships.” Since 2018, the NWRRTCC has worked at closing gaps and opening new opportunities to improve quality of life for transportation disadvantaged populations. This work has consisted of problem identification, coalition building, and creating stakeholder awareness of the gaps in services. The primary goal is to gather transportation stakeholders in a variety of ways, to explore how the resources available can be shared and used most effectively. Most of the work involves increasing communication and understanding throughout the region. Our partners are busy running their business and don’t have time to collaborate as they might want. RTCC staff can be their eyes and ears around the region and get back to them with the news they need. The NWRRTCC supports partnerships that help meet the gaps in transportation services by learning who has what to share, and who needs just that very thing. By being at the table and at the meetings where local conversations are held, relationships are built. There is no substitute for being there.

### TASK 1: Transportation Guidance and Consultation

The RTCC supports promotional efforts for the wide range of transportation options in the region, including public transit, specialized transportation services, volunteer driver programs and informal opportunities. The role is to keep transportation needs on the mind of the public and bring to the attention of local, regional, and state policymakers. The RTCC supports efforts to create a more enjoyable transportation experience and increase rider satisfaction. Some coordination efforts require new technology and support at the state level. NWRRTCC brings those resources to our local transportation providers while helping communicate their needs to those with the power to change things.

To assist with transportation guidance, the NWRRTCC continue to manage our website to communicate current events, best practices and agency news. The RTCC has created two videos for the website and social media to explain the role of the RTCC and to recruit volunteer drivers. The RTCC will create two additional videos to share information about nonemergency medical transportation options and how to access specialized transportation services. RTCC staff attend various fairs, forums, seminars, and other opportunities for public outreach. Additionally, they attend regional meetings where transportation plays an important role in the successful outcome including land-use planning, emergency management and trail planning efforts. By being present at the table and in the community, the RTCC helps to keep transportation access at the forefront of the conversation.

### TASK 2: Vehicle Sharing

One of the most obvious ways to improve efficiency is to begin sharing the resources we currently have. The RTCC helps to identify the agencies willing to explore partnership opportunities and track vehicles available to share. This work is only possible because of the planning and relationship-building accomplished during the first four years of the grant. RTCC staff work as a broker between interested parties and generate new transportation opportunities. They research best practices related to insurance, driver training and requirements, and payment models, then report back to stakeholders. The biggest challenge is helping these

organizations develop the process and policy needed to address legal and insurance concerns. Also included under this topic is the shared use of bikes, trikes and trishaws throughout the region.

### **TASK 3: Private Nonprofit and For-Profit Provider Engagement**

NWRTCC staff participate in monthly Zoom calls with the Adult Mental Health Initiative, a gathering of all the social service directors in the region. They also participate in the Area Agency on Aging quarterly meetings. They have regular meetings with the Warroad Senior Living Center to help with both their volunteer driver program and their trishaw efforts. They met with the only specialized transportation service provider in the region to discuss barriers to sustainability of his program and service. They met with staff from Essentia in Fosston to discuss transportation from the ER after hours.

### **TASK 4: Volunteer Driver Programs**

Volunteer driver programs are the backbone of rural transportation and the NWRTCC is working with several local areas to develop programs to meet their specific transportation needs. A significant and concerted effort was made in Kittson County this year to develop transportation services. Staff worked with the National Center for Mobility Management to assist Kittson County stakeholders meet the need for nonemergency medical transportation. This involved publishing ads for two surveys in the local newspaper — one asking about their need for assisted transportation and the other asking about their willingness to serve as a volunteer driver. In particular, what level of compensation would inspire that service? RTCC staff worked with local social service providers to access and explore funding options. Ultimately, the organizations determined they did not have the capacity at this time to expand and provide nonemergency medical transportation. RTCC staff will continue to work with partners in Kittson County until a solution is found. RTCC staff continue to work with the MCOTA Volunteer Driver Program Initiatives Work Team and the Volunteer Driver Coalition to advance policy changes for improving volunteer-driver reimbursement. They also serve on the research team developing the agenda for the next two years. Combined, these efforts support and sustain the current volunteer driver programs and help others create new services for their community members.

### **TASK 5: Staff Training**

Mobility management is a new field and developing quickly. RTCC staff began training for certification as a mobility manager by the National Center for Mobility Management. This involves participating in regional and national meetings where they contribute by presenting or serving on committees. They share the lessons learned with the other mobility managers throughout the state and with local stakeholders. The key to professional development is to bring the tools home to local providers and apply them to local issues.

One of the ways the RTCC staff apply their new skills is through their participation in statewide and national work teams and committees. NWRTCC staff serve on the MCOTA volunteer driver work teams. In this capacity, they plan and deliver presentations for the MCOTA Volunteer Driver Forum Series, including lunch-and-learns and webinars. NWRTCC staff also serve on the Volunteer Driver Coalition, working for national legislation to match volunteer reimbursement with the business rate. They serve on the Shared Mobility Action Team, a national effort to reduce reliance on personal vehicles by expanding options to share vehicles and pedal options. NWRTCC staff serve on the climate committee and the finance committee for that group and represent the rural Midwest at this national forum.

## **TASK 6: Local Human Services Transit Coordination Plans**

N/A

## **TASK 7: Emergency Preparedness Facilitation**

The Northwest Regional Development Commission is fortunate to house the 14-county region emergency manager. They can regularly attend NWRTPCC meetings and offer periodic updates on issues that impact transportation and mobility. They gave a presentation to the group about the various forms of disaster and how each might impact transportation. They worked with RTCC staff to create a document that provides emergency transportation contact information and places for the user to put personal contact information for their own emergency contacts. This document will be distributed to RTCC partner members to share with their clients. It also will be used during outreach efforts throughout the region.

## **Conclusion**

The combined efforts of the RTCC over the last four years have created relationships that serve as the roots of the changes we are making in the transportation world. By engaging local service providers and transportation users, we create opportunities to share resources and ideas and to develop partnerships that solve problems experienced by a specific population as it accesses transportation. The RTCC helps to make transportation services more responsive to riders' needs while helping programs increase efficiencies. The future involves exploring micromobility efforts like shared bike and scooter programs as well as work on environmental sustainability efforts.

# Southwest Regional Transportation Coordination Council

## Annual Report for July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

---

### Introduction

There is no way to fully encapsulate the work of the SWRTCC in a few short sentences. The work of improving the connectedness in rural transportation is daunting and multifaceted. The SWRTCC approaches it through relationships and small successes, all of which are difficult to document. There is only a taste of what is being done here. The full meal will take decades to complete.

### TASK 1: Transportation Guidance and Consultation

The SWRTCC has had a consistent presence at many meetings and community events, including:

- Dementia awareness and other elder-focused service groups
- Area transit advisory committees
- Chambers of commerce and ministerial associations

From these meetings and events, as well as regular radio interviews, social media posts, and website updates throughout the year, the SWRTCC keeps the conversation going about transportation. Additionally, this sharing of information has led to many people reaching out from all over, and opportunities to offer one-on-one guidance or support on transportation issues many times. Here are a few examples:

- RTCC coordinator worked with the RTCC representative from Career Force on three separate occasions to find solutions for work transportation when payment was a barrier. The coordinator was educated on some of the requirements for transportation funding availability from Career Force.
- RTCC coordinator, after verifying what the options were, helped an individual get transportation to keep job, and the person was able to use public transit until needs changed.
- A person in need was able to arrange affordable transportation from Lamberton to Rochester for multiple medical appointments after seeking information from the RTCC coordinator.
- RTCC coordinator provided options for a trip from Albert Lea to Rochester, though both locations are outside of our service area.
- RTCC provided support letters for STS rate increases for straight MA transportation. Coordinator asked local human services agencies to track the effect of not having these providers available. Slight increases were given, but not in line with the increase in costs. This is a critical transportation access need for many Minnesotans. The RTCC will continue to work on this issue in the coming year.
- RTCC provided support letters for propane vehicles for Prairieland Transit.

### TASK 2: Vehicle Sharing

The SWRTCC focuses on vehicle-sharing as specific opportunities with individual entities. During the 2022-2023 grant year, the opportunities were most often with veterans' services. Lyon County Veteran Services has reached out to the RTCC coordinator many times over the course of the year to assist with getting veterans to appointments, Cottonwood County Veterans Services sought information on the United Community Action

Partnership (UCAP) volunteer registration process, and the Sioux Falls VA has called the RTCC coordinator for help locating local transportation options.

The relationship also goes the other way. When a veteran is referred to the RTCC coordinator for mobility management, veterans' services is often called. They have helped the RTCC understand a little more about the complex world of transportation for veterans and helped discover times when a veteran might be able to move an appointment to a closer clinic to eliminate the need for long-distance transportation, which is a process that the VSO helps the veteran work through. While there are no formal ways in place to make this kind of referral process standard, it continues to happen as needed and there have been some discussions about how to formalize the process, which are ongoing.

No formal vehicle-sharing agreements have been reached, but the SWRTCC has had some success with trip-sharing in a few cases. Some examples include:

- When UCAP had no resources to provide transportation for a group of high school students returning home from an after-school tutoring program, the RTCC coordinator was able to connect with a local taxi to fill the gap and offer transportation without the need for another phone call and with no interruption to service.
- A resident in the SWRTCC area needed dialysis transportation three times a week, including Saturdays. The resident's relative was aware of UCAP transportation and reached out. This trip was given to the RTCC coordinator because it was out of the UCAP service area. With no medical insurance that could cover transportation, cost was a major concern. The RTCC coordinator reached out to the volunteer program at CCT, which has a Title III program to help with the cost concern. Since CCT could not provide the Saturday trips, UCAP did. Because both programs have Title III programs, there was no cost difference, service was uninterrupted, and there was no duplication of paperwork for the family. The registration process was the same for both programs, and the programs worked together to obtain necessary information to perform transportation.

### **TASK 3: Private Nonprofit and For-Profit Provider Engagement**

Expanding partnerships is a vital part of the work done by RTCCs. This year, as in years past, the SWRTCC did everything possible to work with our partners in health care to understand their needs and help them find solutions. Of particular interest, of course, were return rides from medical facilities when there was no way to pay for transportation or the trip was after hours. In this vein, the RTCC coordinator was often called on for input. For example:

- RTCC coordinator was called on to meet several times with Hendricks Hospital about how they might design a program to handle this issue, and the conversation remains open.
- RTCC coordinator also met several times with Avera and SWHHS to discuss these issues. For payment, Avera was able to make some public transit tokens available to staff for people who do not have money to get home. These discussions also led to further conversations with SWHHS, law enforcement, emergency services, and others about the need for protected transport. Discussions are ongoing.

## **TASK 4: Volunteer Driver Programs**

The SWRTCC focused on volunteer drivers in several ways throughout this grant period. Here are a few:

- Several ads were shared through social and print media and with partners about the need for volunteer drivers in the region, including a collaborative campaign done in conjunction with Mid-Minnesota RTCC and Prairie Five Rides.
- SWRTCC shared struggles and current volunteer coalition initiatives with U.S. Rep. Michelle Fischbach at a local event. This interaction opened the door to future contact. Later, her staff contacted the RTCC coordinator when a constituent had a complaint about transportation services in the region.
- The RTCC coordinator shared impact stories with U.S. Rep. Pete Stauber at a volunteer coalition meeting to give him a clearer picture of the importance of volunteer drivers when he speaks to the larger legislative body.
- The RTCC coordinator led the MCOTA Volunteer Driver Program Initiatives Work Team subgroup to create an RFP for an updated volunteer-driver impact study, which will be used by multiple entities to support and advocate for volunteer drivers.
- Research done by the RTCC coordinator, in conversation with other providers throughout the state, led to a change in the background-check vendor for volunteer drivers throughout the region, and it made onboarding new volunteers easier.

## **TASK 5: Staff Training**

Continued training is essential to being seen as an expert in any field. Through ongoing training, the RTCC coordinator stays current on the emerging issues in transportation and gains the tools to effectively share the rural transportation story with larger audiences. The RTCC coordinator enrolled in mobility management certification this year and facilitated the enrollment of the UCAP volunteer specialist in training to become a passenger assistance, safety and security (PASS) trainer. This helped streamline the onboarding process for volunteer van drivers as well as enrollment in travel training certification. All of these classes already are being used in day-to-day interaction, though only PASS training is complete.

## **TASK 6: Local Human Services Transit Coordination Plans**

The regional plan was approved this year, and the RTCC served as the core group providing direction and dissemination of plan initiatives. This involved a lot of time and energy from all members.

## **TASK 7: Emergency Preparedness Facilitation**

The SWRTCC did not spend a lot of time investing in emergency preparedness facilitation this past year, but as a byproduct of being very involved in other areas, the RTCC has interacted with some of the regional emergency preparedness personnel. This is an area that will continue to grow.

## **Conclusion**

The efforts of the SWRTCC are ongoing. So, what is written in any summary will always be incomplete. It also always will be changing. What doesn't change is the impact that access to transportation has on people. It can

be said that the SWRTCC affected people this year and, for some, even connected them to viable transportation options they didn't have before. That is success.

# Anoka County Transit Coordination Assistance Project

## Annual Report for July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

---

### Introduction

The basis for the work of the Anoka County TCAP is the 2020 Transit Needs Study (TNS) conducted by Anoka County Transit, MnDOT and WSB. TCAP activities looked to take the planning and early-stage implementation accomplished in 2021 to the next level.

### TASK 1: Transportation Guidance and Consultation

The greatest accomplishment of this task involved the creation of transit orientation material and subsequent outreach to senior facilities to present at lunch and learns. Outreach is a recommended next step of the TNS. This reached over 250 staff and residents to give information on Anoka County Traveler Transit Link, Metro Mobility, area fixed routes, future BRT F-Line, Commute Solutions, and ride-hailing services. This led to a follow-up travel training involving a group trip on Traveler Transit Link. An infographic was developed to explain transportation services available in Anoka County. Travel trainings were observed at Dakota County and Metro Transit for further insight.

Another accomplishment was the orientations given to over 70 in-house Anoka County Human Service and Job Training staff. Pre- and post-orientation survey data was gathered. Post-orientation survey data showed the orientations were helpful. One comment from a secretary stated that although they don't work directly with clients the information would be helpful when they fill in at the main floor reception area during lunch/breaks and interact with walk-ins with transportation questions. A takeaway would be for all future orientations to involve a pre-orientation survey and make paper copies available beforehand.

### TASK 2: Vehicle Sharing

Vehicle Sharing will look for coordination opportunities with available resources and identify new funding where necessary. This straddles a couple recommended next steps from the TNS. First it will help grow the existing ride-hailing pilot program and expand Traveler Transit Link service. Through attending Anoka County/ Washington County/ Rise Inc./ Lyft meetings familiarity grows and gaps are defined. An example would be a Rise client that was looking to go from Anoka County to Sherburne County (on the western border). An existing policy allowed for transfers to approved medical locations within a two-mile buffer. Reaching out to another TCAP, at the time, ConnectAbility who in turn reached out to TriCAP led to a transfer site discussion with approved days and times. It also led to the Met Council opening the buffer up to trips to all businesses in the buffer. Work will continue with the current committees and look to increase efficiencies for public vehicles. This effort was attempted with Arrowhead Transit (on the north and eastern borders) but at the time driver shortages prevented this possibility.

### TASK 3: Private Nonprofit and For-Profit Provider Engagement

Private non-profit and for-profit provider engagement also involves the Anoka County/ Washington County/ Rise Inc./ Lyft meetings. This group continues to grow. As this involvement grows there is discussion of available resources and how demand can be met. These opportunities may help fill gaps identified in the TNS



including areas of the county where fixed routes make sense and evening/weekend dial-a-ride service. This effort will introduce providers to one another, create coordination opportunities and increase ridership.

#### **TASK 4: Volunteer Driver Programs**

A key takeaway of the TNS was a list of strengths that included the Anoka County Medlink volunteer driver program. The Anoka County TCAP can help build Medlink and other programs through involvement in the Volunteer Driver Coalition and MCOTA Volunteer Driver Forum Series. The coalition has worked to define what a volunteer driver is and does, pass legislation for an income tax subtraction and is working to raise the charitable mileage rate to match the business rate. The forum series is promoted to county officials, residents and current drivers so all can gain knowledge on volunteer programs and how they help folks age in place.

As mentioned, orientations were given to multiple senior facilities and with the increased demand the focus was shifted at the end of the year to help with driver recruitment via city and county newsletters, newspaper and Meta ads. A Star Tribune article titled [Driver shortage hits volunteer-run services](#), including Anoka County's Medlink, talked with a passenger and driver about the program. The passenger stated, "It's been a lifeline for us, I don't know how we would get to our appointments." A driver stated, "It's fulfilling, I'm providing a serve they can't do for themselves." Research into technology advancements for the existing database began.

#### **TASK 5: Staff Training**

Insight into best practices was gained through attending trainings, webinars, conferences and workshops available from:

- MCOTA - meetings and volunteer forum series, RTCC/TCAP Mobility Manager meetings
- National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM) - e-learning modules
- MN RTAP Scholarships to Minnesota Public Transit Assoc. Conference
- Easterseals - Travel Training Certificate
- Commute Solutions - Webinars

#### **Conclusion**

2023 TCAP work aims to focus on volunteer driver recruitment, advancing Medlink database capabilities and building on current partnerships for future projects.

# GoDakota, Dakota County Transit Coordination Assistance Project Annual Report for July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

---

## Introduction

Dakota County's TCAP program, GoDakota, works with stakeholders to reduce transportation barriers for individuals with disabilities and older adults in Dakota County.

## TASK 1: Transportation Guidance and Consultation

For Dakota County residents to be able to use available transportation options, they need to know what those options are and how to use them.

To provide information about what transportation options are available and details about them, GoDakota staff continually updated the GoDakota Transportation Finder and the GoDakota Transportation Resource document. The GoDakota Transportation Finder is a helpful GIS tool, available on the GoDakota web page, where individuals can input their starting address and it will show what transportation options are available at that given address. Fifteen "Transportation Options 101" presentations were provided to Dakota County staff and community members on available transportation options.

GoDakota Travel Training services help to support individuals to teach them how to use existing transportation options. The GoDakota Travel Training program provides one-on-one training, group training, train the trainer training and information and referral services for any mode of transportation available to the trainee. In 2022, 61 individuals completed one-on-one travel training. Over 21% of those trainees were trained how to go to and from work and 65% were trained how to go to a community location, such as a grocery store or a friend's house. Being able to use transportation safely and independently is a vital skill and leads to independence in other aspects of life. One GoDakota trainee said, "Now that I know how to use the bus, I feel free!" After travel training was completed, she now takes the bus to her new job. She said, "I wouldn't be able to have this job without travel training. Thank you for doing this."

## TASK 2: Vehicle Sharing

In 2022, GoDakota continued to use existing transportation resources in innovative ways to reduce transportation barriers.

The GoDakota Lyft program provided transportation services for individuals open to Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waivers. In 2022, over 1300 individuals were eligible for this service, providing over 225,000 rides to work and community locations. The use of Lyft has been a life-changing service for eligible individuals. Over 85% of individuals say using Lyft reduced their transportation barriers. Some accomplishments that GoDakota riders have had since riding Lyft include:

- "At my job, where there isn't a regular bus line, I've been able to pick up regular shifts."
- "I've been able to independently leave the house if I need to without the help of my parents."
- "I've gotten out of my house so much more and become less depressed."
- "I can do something spur of the moment!"
- "I got a job for the first time in three years."
- "I am more independent. I've been able to get to family events that I would have otherwise skipped."

GoDakota staff provided training to individual riders to teach them how to safely use Lyft. Family members were also trained on how to best support their loved ones and case managers on how the GoDakota Lyft process works.

In addition, the Dakota County Jail Transportation Pilot used Lyft Concierge to help provide rides to individuals recently released from the Dakota County Jail to their homes. In 2022, there were over 2400 calls to the call center to set up rides, and 1187 individuals completed a ride. Over 60% of riders said they had no other way home, or they didn't know how they would be getting home without this option. One rider said that he didn't know what he would have done without this option - he didn't have his cell phone, nor did he have the number of anybody who could pick him up. He said he could have walked and tried to figure it out along the way, but he wasn't sure where he was or which way he would need to walk to get back home (Minneapolis). He said he felt extremely relieved when Dakota County Jail staff let him know of this option upon his release and commented, "It's one less thing to worry about."

### **TASK 3: Private Nonprofit and For-Profit Provider Engagement**

The GoDakota Advisory Group continued to share and provide guidance for GoDakota activities at bimonthly meetings. In 2022, partnerships were formed that will continue to help increase transportation access for individuals with disabilities and older adults, including:

- Award of a Department of Human Services Innovation Grant to Dakota County in partnership with Lyft and Mobility 4 All.
- Award of an AARP Walking College mini grant to DARTS for the implementation of the Dakota County Walking Action Plan.
- Participation of GoDakota staff in reviewing programs and funding requests for Older Americans Act Title III funds.

### **TASK 4: Volunteer Driver Programs**

Volunteer drivers provide an important gap-filling transportation service for individuals in Dakota County. In 2022, Dakota County volunteer drivers, through two contracted agencies, provided 3,983 rides to individuals, totaling 87,457 miles driven for those rides. One rider said, "I don't know how I would get to dialysis without volunteer driver rides. These rides have been such a godsend." GoDakota staff supported those programs through legislative support and developing tools to help them manage their reporting and data collection methods.

### **TASK 5: Staff Training**

GoDakota staff continued growth in their knowledge of Travel Training and Mobility Management methods, tools, resources, and best practices. In 2022, GoDakota staff attended and presented at the Association of Travel Instruction (ATI) conference, the American Public Transit Association (APTA) Mobility Conference, the Minnesota Social Service Association (MSSA) Conference and the St. Louis County Health and Human Services Conference.

GoDakota staff continued to organize and facilitate monthly Regional Travel Trainer meetings, held to support growth and best practices in travel training for TCAPs, RTCCs, Transit Agencies, schools, and support organizations/agencies across Minnesota.

GoDakota staff were selected as a Walking Fellow for the 2022 AARP Walking College. As part of the Walking College, a Walking Action Plan was developed for Dakota County to support accessible, inviting walking facilities for Dakota County pedestrians and bicyclists.

## **Conclusion**

Activities undertaken by GoDakota staff and advisory members in 2022 increased transportation access and transportation options for individuals with disabilities and older adults in Dakota County and beyond.

# Newtrax, Inc., Ramsey County Transit Coordination Assistance Project Annual Report for July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

---

## Introduction

Newtrax, Inc. serves as Ramsey's County's TCAP provider and is unique as a TCAP as it serves as both a Mobility Management program and service operator. We serve the citizens of Ramsey County in both areas trying to identify and reduce transportation gaps in our community focused on people with disabilities and seniors.

## TASK 1: Vehicle-Sharing

Newtrax serves as a model in this area for using buses for multiple organizations and multiple purposes. Newtrax uses its fleet of vehicles to serve the primary population of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities providing more than 1200 daily rides for partner organizations. We then use these same vehicles during the mid-day and evenings and weekends to serve seniors and other communities with transportation gaps. Once a bus has passed its useful life as a primary vehicle (usually 6-7 years and nearing 200,000 miles) it serves as a back-up and community outing bus.

During 2022 Newtrax was able to take numerous steps in our vehicle sharing efforts. Newtrax was moving into more normal operations after the COVID time period and established new, more efficient routing for its shared routes with Merrick and PAI along with creating new routes for NCSI and MSS and fully taking over all of NCSI's transportation needs. Newtrax also established new safer loading and unloading procedures for all locations. It worked with Merrick to create routes and traffic flow for the new site. Newtrax also assisted the White Bear Area School District with its transportation challenges to provide two routes for its transition program for students with disabilities between the ages of 18-21.

In addition to the work and growth of existing vehicle sharing, Newtrax worked with other organizations to ensure that the 5310 buses were being fully used. It leased three 5310 vehicles owned by NCSI to use the program buses for its transportation along with other Newtrax partner rides and moved toward the completion of the transfer of six of their 5310 buses to Newtrax completely. Newtrax also started discussions with MSS for a potential leasing partnership.

## TASK 2: Maximize Resources

It is Newtrax's goal to use 5310 buses to assist people with disabilities and seniors in as many ways and areas as possible. Newtrax does this by utilizing the vehicles as many days a week and as many hours a day as we can to help fill transportation gaps.

One significant way we look to maximize resources is through our Senior Circulator loops during the midday period of our disability transportation. During 2022, we started a senior circulator loop in the East side of St. Paul, one in Maplewood/N. St. Paul, we added a second bus to the White Bear Lake/Mahtomedi/Vadnais Heights North loop and added health care clinics to a number of the routes to make medical appointments more available. We brought on a former driver to be an ambassador for the loops to go and talk to the senior communities and educate them about the loops we are providing. In addition to the loop services to senior living communities, we built capacity to include seniors living in their homes into the circulator loops.

We also increased other transportation options for seniors during non-peak times. We took over regular transportation services for six new senior residential facilities. We increased availability of Sunday faith service transportation in several communities and increased assistance to seniors with food insecurity. We also established a partnership with Envoy America to provide group transportation services to six senior community centers all around the Twin Cities Metro area.

### **TASK 3: Filling Additional Transportation Gaps**

Our third task was to create solutions for seniors and people with disabilities who do not have equitable access to transportation. This is an area that we look to meet this goal through the mobility management in Ramsey County and as a service provider.

From a service provider standpoint, we added over 20 people living independently and health care stops into our Senior Circulator loops. We started partnerships with several after-school programs for at-risk youth such as CoMUSICation, Vocal Essence, and Project Success to assist them to get students to their programs and back home. We worked with Fairview Health Services to assist with solutions for food insecurity.

From a Mobility Management perspective, we also served on numerous boards and work groups and created various partnerships to connect people. We joined the Age Friendly Alliance of Ramsey County to help identify transportation needs within the community. We started a partnership with Prosperity Ready (Immigrant Work Development) to understand the needs in more underserved areas and lastly started a partnership with ALIGHT (former ARC – American Refugee Committee) to assist new immigrants to the area.

### **Conclusion**

As transportation transitioned out of the COVID period, Newtrax worked to build capacity in the transportation system through vehicle sharing and maximizing resources. We were able to increase our reach throughout the county both through our own services and through mobility management through the numerous partnerships and committees we serve on.

# Scott County SmartLink Transit Coordination Assistance Project Annual Report for July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

---

## Introduction

As we are coming out of the pandemic, many transportation services are not returning or have changed the way they operate. SmartLink, with partners from Human Services and transportation providers, is working hard to understand how transportation services have changed, how services for clients have changed or disappeared, and how we will collectively navigate these changes to continue to provide the citizens of Scott and Carver Counties with the kinds of transportation resources they need and want. This is a great time to think outside the “norm” and come up with innovative ways for people to get to where they want to go.

## TASK 1: Transportation Guidance and Consultation

A key component of mobility management is understanding the resources in any geographic area and being able to guide citizens on the best resources for their needs. Some accomplishments are:

- Connected with Norwood Young America (NYA) Bus/senior advisory committee which led to adding more shopping trips.
- Advertised and presented Hop Scott volunteer driver program to Anchor Center which led to providing transportation to clients 2 days a week. Other promotions of Hop Scott include presentations to TCAPs, Region 5 RTCC, CHIC (County Health Improvement Committee) Wadena County, MMRTCC, Scott County Vets program, and MCOTA.
- Created a flyer in Spanish for Belle Plaine food shelf for advertising food delivery, up to 12 deliveries every 2 weeks. Elko/New Market also had food deliveries up to 10 deliveries a week. Four new volunteer drivers were recruited, trained and vetted. An agreement was also established with the City of Belle Plaine to allow parking for the Hop Scott van at the library. Added Anchor Center trips 2 days/week up to 24 trips in May.
- Shared information to the Mobility Board about COVID impacts to services including driver shortages and bus inventory. Added new community member to Board.
- Other accomplishments:
  - A Carver County survey that determined that more evening and weekend services are needed.
  - Met Council Travel Demand study.
  - SW Prime services updates.
  - Bear Tracks autonomous vehicle update.
- Additional transportation and consultation:
  - Website update
  - Project Community Connect – outreach to homeless individuals
  - Shakopee schools Career Expo
  - Present and tour of Transit Link bus for Scott/Carver Transition group

- Numerous consultations with human services workers on best solutions for transportation options of clients.

## **TASK 2: Vehicle Sharing**

SmartLink has 2 major models of shared vehicle- Norwood Young America (NYA) bus and Hop Scott Volunteer driver program.

Two hundred trips were done by NYA bus in January for Summerwood senior center in Chanhassen. Chanhassen got their own bus and stopped using NYA bus in March 2023. NYA continues to use for their 4 senior buildings in NYA.

Work continued with Hop Scott and the coordination of vehicles, drivers, and program needs. Communication is a key to make sure all three of these legs operate cohesively. The detail of accomplishments is put in the software and reported to many stakeholders on the continued success of Hop Scott and the impact it is having on Scott County citizens. A total of 606 trips were made by Hop Scott in 2022.

## **TASK 3: Private Nonprofit and For-Profit Provider Engagement**

Being connected to the providers of transportation services in your area is a key to success, but showing those resources how you can help them grow their business is even better. Keeping up with new trends, new technology and new ideas shows SmartLink wants to stay on the cutting edge.

- Hop Scott volunteer recruitment happened by presenting to groups, advertise in Facebook, Nextdoor, County Scene, radio ads, newspaper ads and more.
- SmartLink connected Transit Link and WeCab to the County employment centers for recruitment purposes. SmartLink added more NEMT providers to ensure we have enough resources to cover the needs of the citizens.
- Worked with Met Council to increase starting wages for bus drivers by \$3.00/hour. Organizations like CHIC, FISH, RTAP, TCAP, Unite US, SCALE, TripSpark, and MCOTA are used to both highlight work SmartLink is doing like Hop Scott but also to learn about innovative ideas happening like Bear tracks (Autonomous vehicle pilot), Dakota County Lyft, Family Resource centers- bringing resources to local community, and Volunteer coalition to increase mileage rate for volunteer drivers at the federal level.
- Provided 12 rides to the Project Community Connect Program to combat homelessness, volunteer picnic to appreciate the volunteers and their work, 200 flyers handed out at Scott County fair to recruit drivers, and MCOTA barriers team working on 4 barriers including insurance-Introduced Insurance Trust organization, researched existing examples of shared vehicles that are successful.

## **TASK 4: Volunteer Driver Programs**

The biggest pieces of volunteer driver programs are recruitment and retention. Communicating the accomplishments of the volunteers is a great way to show appreciation and to recruit, as some of the best recruiters of a program are the existing volunteers. In September and October of 2022, SmartLink ran a targeted campaign featuring a radio ad on a local KDUZ station, ads in local papers, a feature in the Scott County Scene, boosting of ads on Facebook, Twitter and Nextdoor. This was successful in bringing in 6 new recruits with a final count of 3 new volunteers fully vetted and providing service.



Hop Scott Volunteer program began in 2022 with food deliveries in Belle Plaine and Elko New Market. In May, SmartLink began passenger transports as Anchor Center (Mental health program for Scott County) opened its doors. Hop Scott was a resource for nonemergency medical transportation (NEMT) in 2022, as high gas prices and lack of drivers had taxi providers scrambling to provide all requests. SmartLink also began a partnership with Scott County Veteran program for “Vets helping Vets.” This initiative has SmartLink recruiting vets that can drive to help vets that cannot drive and help them get to medical appointments.

SmartLink also partners with another volunteer organization in Carver County called WeCab. WeCab operates and recruits in most of Carver County and focuses on medical transportation. SmartLink and WeCab both refer citizens in the appropriate areas to existing service areas, so we are not overlapping and confusing citizens on resources available.

## **TASK 5: Staff Training**

- Presented on Hop Scott program to a lunch and learn attended by 15 people throughout the State.
- MVTA planners meeting 24 in attendance to outline community changes like housing and retail.
- Mobility Board learned about Metro Mobility services (15 attended),
- Presented NEMT and Mobility management to Trailblazer Transit Board - 11 attended- want more info.
- Volunteer coalition formed to increase IRS rate for volunteer drivers - Stauber to author Legislation.
- Participated on 2 MCOTA teams- Barriers and Shared vehicle - later combined these 2 committees.
- Hosted TCAP monthly meetings- Program highlights - Lyft project, Bear Tracks autonomous, Hop Scott, NYA bus, Food deliveries, Senior shopping,
- Project Community Connect- 200 homeless individuals attended and received services like haircuts, dental, winter jackets, transportation information, resources available.
- Software demo attended by 7 showing NEMT software along with Hop Scott and NYA bus.

## **Conclusion**

SmartLink tracks many aspects of the work we do and presents some of this information in a quarterly report to our Mobility Board.

Some of the key areas are Transit Link- Dial-a-ride oversight, NEMT coordination, Hop Scott volunteer program and NYA bus. All these services and programs add to a well-rounded mobility management system that understands what is available in each community. Going forward, Scott/Carver County will continue to strive for improvement in programming and increase services.

# Washington County Transit Coordination Assistance Project

## Annual Report for July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

---

### Introduction

This year, 2022, was a transition back to pre-pandemic ridership patterns, with an increased focus on implementing the lessons learned during previous grant cycles. Outreach has expanded, new tools are being explored, and efforts to coordinate outreach & engagement are having a positive impact on county residents. The mobility staff at Washington County was hired in early 2022 and has worked hard to rebuild momentum, bridge gaps, and reinvigorate itself through the mission and guidance of the TCAP coordination structure.

### TASK 1: Transportation Guidance and Consultation

GoWashingtonMN.com was created in 2021 to address the resident and employee need for a one-stop resources hub that would both direct residents to accurate information and help to alleviate capacity strain on human services staff. After its official launch to staff, partners, and the public in the spring of 2022 (by the present Mobility Manager) – this site has evolved, improved, and is now accessible in four-languages. Site traffic is consistent at over 300 users a month and coordinating print materials (in multiple languages) are being used in community outreach activity with residents and valued partners. Transportation training curriculum has been re-vamped and tailored to meet staff and partner needs per the feedback received from 2021 participant surveys, service providers, and meetings with departments regarding specific content needs. These pieces are all working together to move toward the goal of residents and caregivers being able to easily get the information they need.

### TASK 2: Vehicle Sharing

Washington County does not provide transportation or maintain a fleet of vehicles for public transport. Mobility Management in the county is primarily comprised of coordinating service referrals and communication among local partners, internal departments, private ride-share services, and the Metropolitan Council. We continue to work with these invested groups to provide reliable assistance with Metro Mobility and Transit Link, city circulators, and ride-hail options. Community Services caseworkers coordinate with various providers who coordinate transportation through waiver-paid/provider-arranged Lyft rides. The county also uses Lyft for crisis teams and court-ordered appointment transportation; 1112 rides were provided to residents in 2022. Our NEMT service is contracted through Hennepin County and over 11,000 rides were provided to residents in 2022.

### TASK 3: Private Nonprofit and For-Profit Provider Engagement

Post-pandemic, the city circulators in the county are coming back to life. Partners are spending less time in crisis response & food delivery, more time re-engaging in day-to-day life, and imagining innovations for the future. The Washington County Transportation Consortium (WCTC) has been revived, re-imagined, and is planning to connect riders, providers, deciders to address barriers and seek solutions in 2023. The county is preparing to learn and propose new ideas for person-centered solutions that will come from expanding circulator rider surveys and implementing a transportation focus group activity in 2023. We are expanding our outreach efforts to reach not only aging adults in residential housing communities, but we are planning for

work with our nine school district transitions programs for younger adults living with disabilities, and aging adults living in multi-generational communities.

#### **TASK 4: Volunteer Driver Programs**

Community Thread in Stillwater implemented a new membership model of service delivery through its THRIVE program and has attempted to expand service and recruit larger numbers of volunteers. Washington County is working with this valued partner to provide more rides for our most vulnerable and isolated aging residents, assist with grant research and volunteer recruitment, and continue to find meaningful ways to work together with intention and efficiency to achieve our shared goals. A pilot program was started in December of 2022 and will run through 2023. We hope to learn how we can best support residents through collaboration and shared planning.

#### **TASK 5: Staff Training**

Washington County added a Transportation Navigator and hired a new Mobility Manager in 2022. Both staff members worked to bridge knowledge gaps and participate fully in professional networks. The Transportation Navigator completed the Easter Seal Travel Training Certification, and the Mobility Manager did extensive learning in mobility and transit to fulfill the responsibilities of this role and to complement her rich career experience in diversity, equity, and inclusion, training & engagement, and communications work.

#### **Conclusion**

Through many changes, Washington County has maintained coordination channels, expanded outreach, and planned for future improvements through resident and partner collaboration.

## Appendix F: Funding Sources for RTCCs and TCAPs

These charts show the funding distributions for RTCCs and TCAPs.

### *Regional Transportation Coordinating Council (RTCC) funding:*

FTA 5310 Funds 80%  
Greater MN Transit Funds 10%  
Fiscal Organization Match 10%

### *Transit Coordination Assistance Projects (TCAPs) funding:*

FTA 5310 Funds 80%  
Fiscal Organization Match 20%

### RTCC Fiscal Organizations

Fiscal Organization	RTCC
Northwest Regional Development Commission	Northwest RTCC
Arrowhead Regional Development Commission	Arrowhead RTCC
Region Five Regional Development Commission	Region Five RTCC
Prairie Five Action Council	6W RTCC
United Community Action Partnership	Southwest RTCC
Mid-Minnesota Regional Development Commission	Mid-Minnesota RTCC
East Central Regional Development Commission	East Central RTCC
ConnectAbility of MN	Connect Central Minnesota RTCC

### TCAP Fiscal Organizations

Fiscal Organization	TCAP
Scott County	Scott/Carver Counties TCAP
Dakota County	Dakota County TCAP
Hennepin County	Hennepin County TCAP
Anoka County	Anoka County TCAP
Newtrax	Newtrax TCAP (Ramsey County)
Washington County	Washington County TCAP