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Introduction

The transportation system is complex; there is no single network, but rather multiple networks that may or may not connect smoothly to each other. Coordination of transportation services offers many benefits for transportation users and for providers—cost savings, better service delivery, and greater mobility. Fostering communication and cooperation among different governmental agencies and stakeholder groups can enhance transportation services and enable the more efficient use of public resources. To better coordinate public transit and human service transportation activities, most states have created coordinating councils at one or more levels of government.

Minnesota’s statewide coordinating council is the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (MCOTA), created in 2010 by the Minnesota State Legislature 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 (Minn. Stat. 174.285).

Mission Statement

The mission of the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access is to work together to remove obstacles that prevent the successful coordination of transportation programs and resources among their respective customers.

Vision Statement

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

In 2014, the council began a process of re-examining its priorities, and decided to embark on a strategic planning and stakeholder engagement process to determine what changes would help MCOTA improve Minnesota’s transportation coordination environment.

Since 2004, MCOTA has followed its legislative mandate 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.” In kicking off the strategic planning effort in August 2014, MCOTA re-examined the 2005 study that shaped MCOTA’s direction (see Appendix B). The council found that the conditions and barriers identified in that study largely still exist, and that the strategy of relying on local transit providers to coordinate has not worked. While there are some successful examples of coordination efforts, they are not replicated throughout the state and there are many inefficiencies and gaps in service. In the next 10 years, Council members would like to be able to look back and see more significant improvements in Minnesota’s transportation coordination landscape than it has seen in the past 10 years.

After looking at the 2005 study and realizing that the same conditions and barriers to coordination still exist, the Council considered its roles, based on the roles that statewide coordination councils play in other states.
MCOTA has focused on the following areas for the past two years:

1. Providing technical assistance for the Non-emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) Advisory Committee and for the Dakota County Transportation Coordination action plan and Collaborative.
2. Conducting research, planning activities, generating information to guide coordination initiatives at the state, local and regional levels.
3. Providing a funding match for statewide initiatives, such as the MNHelp.Info transportation link.

In addition to technical assistance at the state and local level, research and planning, and funding statewide initiatives, MCOTA could also serve in the following roles:

4. Developing legislation
5. Providing policy oversight and direction
6. Supporting local demonstration projects

Questions the council considered in a discussion at its August 2014 meeting.

- What roles should MCOTA undertake to meet its mission and vision?
- What roles have the greatest potential for allowing MCOTA to carry out its mission?
- What roles have the greatest potential for allowing MCOTA to reach its vision?

Members responded that they would like to see the following changes in MCOTA’s roles, to ensure greater progress.

For MCOTA to be more proactive in coming up with legislation, something to the effect of “All entities must coordinate.”

- An important question is how to resolve conflicts of interest between agencies?
- Members felt that MCOTA needs mandates at the state and local levels.
- Members also suggested using the eight MnDOT districts as the basis for a regional coordination structure.
- Use Special Transportation coordination statute; already on books since 1979 (section 174.24, subdivision 2a).
- Initiate more local demonstration projects, in part to learn ways to make barriers to coordination more manageable.
- Create or find a funding stream for coordination and mobility management at the local level especially.
- Include veterans.
- Address crossing county lines.
  a. Transit Link does this by going up to two miles beyond county line or transferring
  b. There are good models for transferring riders across county lines – mandate that providers use these agreements.
Strategic Planning Workshop

MCOTA members participated in a strategic planning workshop on November 25, 2014. The workshop was facilitated by Steve Kelley of the University of Minnesota’s Humphrey School of Public Affairs and hosted by the Center for Transportation Studies. It was designed to engage MCOTA members to determine strategic priorities for moving coordination forward.

MCOTA members who participated in the workshop:

• Joan Willshire, Vice Chair, Minnesota State Council on Disability
• Paul Colton (for Gerri Sutton), Metropolitan Council
• Harlan Tardy, Minnesota Board on Aging
• Kelly Wosika, Minnesota Department of Education
• Thant Pearson, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development
• Steve Masson, Minnesota Department of Human Services

Other workshop participants:

• Frank Douma, University of Minnesota

At this workshop the group confirmed the definition of coordination at the community/regional level that MCOTA had adopted in 2013:

• Coordination is a strategy for managing resources. It is applied within community political environments. Fundamentally, coordination is about shared power and accountability among organizations that are working together to achieve common goals.
• Coordination focuses on management, resources, cost-effectiveness, broad perspectives, multiple stakeholders, cooperation, action and accountability.
• Coordination can be used to address problematic transportation situations, such as duplication of effort and opportunities for improving transportation resource efficiency. Coordinating transportation means doing better (obtaining more results, like trips) with existing resources by working together with persons from different agencies and backgrounds.

1. Conceptual maps of local coordination

In small groups, members discussed what coordination looks like on the ground. The groups created conceptual maps of local coordination: one for the Twin Cities metro area and one for a small city. Members identified the key actors and what the relationships are among each other.
1.1 Twin Cities Metropolitan Area

One small group identified key actors for local coordination in the metro area. These key actors included:

- **Political actors/decision makers:**
  - City councils
  - Mayors
  - County boards
  - State legislators
  - State agencies
  - Governor
  - Federal agencies

- **Community influencers:**
  - Community development groups
  - Business leadership groups
  - Advocacy groups

- **Customers:**
  - Clients
  - Users
  - Labor unions

- **Funders:**
  - Metropolitan Council
  - Minnesota Department of Transportation
  - Minnesota Department of Human Services
  - Federal government

- **Regulatory agencies:**
  - Local boards (i.e., workforce development)
  - Metropolitan Council
  - Airport community
  - MnDOT
  - Metro NEMT
  - Insurance providers
  - Private industry

- **Intermediaries/providers:**
  - U-Trans Admin
  - Trip providers
  - Transportation providers

The group also sketched out a conceptual map of local coordination for the Twin Cities metropolitan area:
1.2. Small City

Another group identified key actors in local coordination for a small city area. These key actors included:

- **Funders and policy authority agencies:**
  - City council
  - Mayor
  - County board members
  - Minnesota Department of Transportation Office of Transit Staff
  - Transit Authority Board
  - Transit Authority
  - Federal government

- **Service providers:**
  - County Human Services
  - Veteran Service Officer
  - Medical providers
  - Non-emergency medical providers
  - Older adult and assisted living communities
  - Job placement agencies

- **Stakeholders/user communities:**
  - Senior housing leaders
  - Transportation users
  - Day training and habilitation center leader
  - Immigrant communities’ leaders
  - Disability community
  - Senior centers
  - Business community
  - Non-profit organizations for older adults or disabled

The group sketched out a conceptual map of local coordination for a small city:

![Small City Conceptual Map](image-url)
2. Barriers to Local/Regional Coordination
For background, barriers to local coordination that were identified in MCOTA’s Synthesis of Local Coordination Plans (2012) were presented to participants. These were barriers identified by local planning organizations in Greater Minnesota’s 12 economic development regions in 2011, reflecting on progress since the adoption of their 2006 coordination plans.

2.1 Systemic issues. The most commonly cited barriers included:

- Lack of resources (funding/staff time)
- Lack of regional leadership or project champions
- Inflexible policies and regulations
- Insufficient local partnerships
- Struggle to educate and influence policymakers, in spite of increased efforts to communicate with local and state officials

2.2 Examples of specific activities that had little or no action taken:

- Holding regular meetings of a regional coordination body
- Creating an inventory or web-based provider directory
- Centralizing regional facilities or dispatch
- Sharing volunteers across agencies
- Standardizing volunteer driver training across agencies
- Developing a tool for user evaluation of services
- Increasing the use of technology, such as GPS, to improve tracking and management of vehicles
3. Models for Local/Regional Coordination

The workshop also involved presentations of a variety of best practices as models for local and regional coordination. The following is a list of the models that were presented to the group.

- **Florida**: Local Coordinating Boards (LCBs), primarily at the county level, to set local policies, oversee county-based coordination activities, and select and monitor the activities of a Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC).
  - Funding: Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund to support transportation to disadvantaged individuals who have no other means of transportation. This fund is administered by the state coordination body, the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD).

- **Rainbow Rider Transit (Minnesota)**
  - Consortium of 6 counties: Douglas, Pope, Stevens, and Traverse, Todd, and Grant;
  - Joint Powers Board meets monthly; each county appoints 2 commissioners to serve
  - Each county has a Transit Advisory Committee; meets quarterly

- **North Carolina**: Each county — or group of counties — must have a transportation advisory or governing board in order to be eligible for any FTA program funds.
• **Colorado** – bi-level model
  o State coordinating council “seeks policy changes and other steps to create an environment supportive of coordination.”
  o Local/regional councils “implement coordinated transportation programs, oversee the agencies that provide coordinated transportation in their respective areas, and provide feedback to the state council as to what is working and what problems need to be addressed.”
  o County or group of counties
  o Example, Douglas County’s Local Coordinating Council established through MOU between 21 founding member organizations.

• **The Statewide Emergency Communications Board (SECB) and Regional Radio Boards (Minnesota)** are at the center of Minnesota's interoperable communications governance structure.
  o The Statewide Radio Board is called for in [Minnesota Statute 403.36](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/laws/display?ch=1&isr=statute&year=2017&section=403.36.010&sectionid=159191161)
  o Designates the Statewide Radio Board as the State Interoperability Executive Committee
  o Requires local units of government receiving state funds to file an integration plan with the Board
  o Develop standards and guidelines

### 4. Vision of Success

Finally, the group identified what success looks like and how it could be measured. The ideas listed below were captured from the discussion.

1. **What does success look like? How is success measured?**
   - More options and choices
   - Riders have a choice
   - Less turf protection
   - Transportation is not a barrier
   - Transportation influences [facility and housing] location decisions
   - Housing, jobs, services
   - Trip availability for everyone
   - More cost effective
   - Coordination across $ sources, pooled $

2. **What were the barriers to coordination that were overcome? and What were the essential conditions that made community/regional coordination successful?**
   - Eliminate funding silos
   - Don’t classify rides – not social, etc. “just a ride”
   - Bureaucracy streamlined/reduce administrative bureaucracy
   - Fewer providers, fewer separated service areas
   - Forced cooperation among providers
   - Tribal transportation coordination
   - Shared information
   - Policymakers engaged in solving problems
5. Achieving the Vision – Goals

Participants were asked to define 2-3 tangible and measurable goals for MCOTA; including the Olmstead Plan transportation goal.

The goals selected were:

- **One call/one click system (x2)**
- **Regional system that combines funding and reporting (x2)**
- Public facility siting will be made with transportation as a priority
- More and better transportation solutions for (school) trips
- People with disabilities will have access to reliable, cost-effective, and accessible transportation choices that support the essential elements of life such as employment, housing, education, and social connections. (Olmstead Plan)

6. Achieving the Vision – Strategies

What state level strategies will enable the goal to be achieved by removing barriers or creating essential conditions for community coordination, and how can the goals be achieved?

Participants were presented a list of potential strategies:

**Regulatory**

1. Require locally-developed coordination plans
2. Foster regional approaches to service delivery
3. Standardize recordkeeping and reporting
4. Develop uniform cost sharing/cost allocation strategies
5. Determine performance standards
6. Determine liability insurance requirements/mechanisms

**Fiscal**

1. Consolidate federal and state grant programs through MCOTA, requiring a coordination plan and streamlining applications and reporting
2. Develop a statewide approach to vehicle acquisition
3. Establish a dedicated funding source for coordinated transportation

**Other**

1. Provide technical assistance, including training programs
2. Provide outreach and communications
3. Establish the infrastructure and operating framework/guidelines for local (county or groups of counties) coordinating councils
4. Hold regular and annual coordination meetings/webinars to gather local and regional coordinators together to share experiences, influence statewide policies and practices

Olmstead plan strategies (transportation)

1. Establish a baseline of transit expenditures and types of service provided across state agencies to better support people with disabilities
2. Engage community members to expand flexibility in transportation systems
3. Integrate Olmstead principles into transportation plans

Participants selected 3-4 state-level strategies that they thought would best help achieve those goals and placed them on a worksheet.

7. Priority strategies
Groups identify strategies that should take precedence using a Priority Wedge.

• What should be the first priority?
• What will create the most momentum for change?
• What two things are next in importance?
• What three things are next in importance?
8. Round Robin: most important take-away from today
Participants identified their single most impression at the end of the workshop.

- Standardization of terminology
- Hopeful
- Doable pieces
- Starting to feel a consensus emerge
- Pooling of resources
- Rural and metro/urban [needs] do have lots of similarities
Strategic Priorities

Following the strategic planning workshop, the council reviewed the top priority strategies identified there, and agreed upon the top five strategic priorities on January 27, 2015.

Top strategies from workshop:

1. **Use common administrative tools/standard record keeping and reporting**

*Secondary priorities*

2. **Regional organization to help people use statewide tools**
3. Eliminate funding silos or find a way to share
4. State-supplied dispatch software
5. Reduce/consolidate number of service providers

*Tertiary priorities*

6. Pass laws or set policies encouraging transportation considerations in facility siting
7. Compare performance standards for similar programs

*Other ideas suggested (no votes)*

8. Eliminate school bus stipulations
9. State mandate for coordination
10. Share vehicles and maintenance services across programs

Table 1: MCOTA’s five strategic priorities, approved January 27, 2015, with their associated legislative duties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Priority</th>
<th>Legislative Duties Addressed Under Minn. Stat. 174.285</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Develop regional organizations to help people use statewide tools.</td>
<td>1-7, 9-11, 13-14, 16-17, 19-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Optimize the number of service providers and agencies within the state.</td>
<td>1-5, 11, 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Use common administrative tools to standardize recordkeeping and reporting.</td>
<td>1-5, 12-13, 15, 20,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Eliminate funding silos or find a way to share funds.</td>
<td>1-5, 18, 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Offer state-supplied dispatch software and/or enable coordination between dispatch software programs throughout the state.</td>
<td>1-5, 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See Appendix D for the full list of strategic priorities and associated legislative duties.
Recommendations

Below are recommended actions within each of the top five strategic priorities.

Generally, MCOTA may want to consider requesting changes in legislative language to align its duties with these priorities. And, MCOTA may want to assign members and staff to task forces or subcommittees to move each priority forward.

**Strategic Priority 1. Develop regional organizations to help people use statewide tools.**

After MCOTA embarked on its strategic planning effort, MnDOT, DHS and the Met Council developed a concept to create Regional Transportation Coordination Councils. The MnDOT, DHS, and Met Council Program Management Team recognized that RTCCs are a way to improve transit coordination and services, but that they needed to be created with active participation and input from local stakeholders. The PMT requested funding from MCOTA to conduct initial stakeholder engagement to get feedback on the concept. To gather feedback about this concept, four workshops were held across the state in April and May of 2015. Participants primarily representing transportation providers, social services, and government agencies were asked to provide insight about several aspects of this concept. See Appendix C for a summary of the workshop’s findings.

The recommendations below are based in large part on the stakeholder feedback from the workshops, as well as further conversations. Participants generally saw the value of the role of state agencies, suggesting the need for a statewide oversight council to help direct and coordinate all of the regional councils’ efforts. They recommended that the regional councils have representatives on the state council. They recognized the need for communications among the regional councils, as well as transparency of communications and decision-making. MCOTA is well positioned to fulfill these duties.

1. Move forward with developing Regional Transportation Coordination Councils (RTCCs)
2. Create an advisory committee to MCOTA that would be made up of reps from each RTCC (8-12). This advisory committee would meet separately from MCOTA, and be invited to attend and be on the agenda of each regular MCOTA meeting.
   a. Travel, conference call, and meeting expenses likely could be covered by MCOTA funds or by the RTCC administrative funds.
3. Host an annual dialogue for all RTCCs in conjunction with events like the MPTA Annual Conference or as a standalone event.
4. Host regional workshops for each RTCC, either annually or every other year.
5. Develop other infrastructure to facilitate communication within and between the RTCCs (e.g., meeting and conference call space, electronic discussion group(s), collaborative website)
6. Provide technical assistance to RTCCs.
7. Develop tools/products that could be used by RTCCs; disseminate products developed by one RTCC to the other RTCCs. These could include:
a. Sample by-laws and other operational guidelines
b. Insurance agreements
c. Waiver templates, examples
d. Other templates, such as vehicle-sharing agreements, volunteer driver program information, travel training programs, and marketing/communication materials.

8. Assist with resolving state and federal barriers to coordination.
   a. Funding restrictions
   b. Privacy regulations
   c. Insurance regulations
   d. Legislation
   e. Interagency conflicts

9. Support RTCC pilot projects such as:
   a. Surveying customers regarding: Uber, Lyft, or autonomous vehicles
   b. Testing car sharing programs in rural areas
   c. Testing different models for volunteer driver programs

Projects could be identified through a solicitation process, with a presentation and/or report given to MCOTA or to a regional or statewide coordination event.

10. With RTCC advisory committee input, develop minimum standards for outcomes/performance measures. These outcomes could include:

    - Increased ridership
    - Cost savings
    - Reduction in service gaps
    - Reduction in duplicative services
    - Fewer service denials
    - Consistent policies and practices among providers
    - Improved outreach to potential users
    - Continued success of programs that are already working well
    - Stakeholder satisfaction
    - Improved collaboration (such as ride-sharing) among members

One challenge for MCOTA is balancing state standards with local control and flexibility for innovation. Ideally, MCOTA will develop a framework and tools, define statewide outcomes, and allow flexibility for how the outcomes are accomplished at the local/regional level.
Strategic Priority 2. Optimize the number of service providers and agencies within the state.

While there are significant service gaps in many areas of the state, there are also some areas with duplicate services. See Figure 1, the transportation provider map from the Coordinate MN Transit website. Through the reduction of duplicate services, resources can be used for service expansion, in hours and/or geographical areas. The RTCCs are then able to develop a clear understanding of the extent of the transportation service networks in their regions, and to identify opportunities for reducing duplication and increasing access. One way to reduce duplication is for MCOTA and the RTCCs to clearly define the standards for the service area and population served by providers.

Figure 1. Screenshot of Minnesota human services transportation provider map that shows service areas for three types of providers: Faith in Action, Living at Home Network, and 5310 providers. Public transit systems are not included at this stage. The interactive map can be viewed on the CoordinateMNTransit.org website at www.coordinatemntransit.org/directories/index.html.
Strategic Priority 3. Use common administrative tools to standardize recordkeeping and reporting.

MCOTA has a project team that is examining ways to standardize recordkeeping and reporting at the state level. The adoption of standardized reporting is a huge task, and will likely require legislative/regulatory, system, and process changes, as well as training for staff. The project team identified the following next steps for MCOTA, as well as a set of recommendations for each of the state agencies involved in transportation services reporting.

1. Minnesota’s Office of the State Auditor maintains the Government Accounting Standards Board. The Office developed a chart of accounts for cities and counties to follow. The MCOTA project panel can meet with the Office of the State Auditor to learn about the chart of accounts, benefits and challenges of using common reporting standards, and any recommendations on implementation.

• Develop a policy or a statute to make collection and reporting of financial data related to public transit and human service transportation a requirement for participating agencies. This action may require legislation to be effective, or a directive or guidance to MCOTA. The development of a policy or statute would need decision makers from participating agencies to address financial reporting information within each agency and to agree on a system for reporting financial information. An example of a policy statement could be the requirement to use the common standards chart of accounts that was developed by the project’s Technical Working Group.

• Use the RTCCs as a method to support common reporting standards. One activity of the RTCCs may be to ensure that local agencies and systems have the same standards and requirements to report financial information.

Strategic Priority 4. Eliminate funding silos or find a way to share funds.

Funding regulations and restrictions are significant barriers to coordination. MCOTA can explore the options for simplifying funding identified in MCOTA’s funding primer. One option is to provide “a role for MCOTA in the processing of Human Services Transportation funds”. Rather than having funds from the differing sources flow directly to specific providers, which, as a result, tailor their services to the needs of that funder, the funds flow to MCOTA, which then allocates them to the providers based upon the level of service provided. Ultimately, this may result in a more uniform invoicing system which would allow providers to focus on providing rides to those that need them, regardless of the funding source covering the cost.”

In conjunction with the funds flowing through MCOTA, the RTCCs would serve as the mechanism for greater local coordination, leading to lower operational costs and easier client access to transportation.

Strategic Priority 5. Offer state-supplied dispatch software and/or enable coordination between dispatch software programs throughout the state.

For providers, access to online databases and communication tools make it easier to share information between agencies. It would be helpful to have a common web-based
platform/format for information, such as transit routes and schedules. MCOTA and the RTCCs could evaluate the current transit-scheduling vendors used by providers in Minnesota and determine whether to consolidate with a single vendor or identify ways for the systems to communicate with each other.

These systems could also be used for dispatch services, perhaps in conjunction with GPS technology in vehicles. In addition, using common customer payment systems for multiple purposes would assist customers and facilitate cross-boundary travel.

**Immediate next steps from strategic plan**

These are actions for MCOTA to accomplish in the next two years.

1. Have the RTCC Program Management Team, made up of representatives from MnDOT, DHS, and the Met Council, report to MCOTA.
2. Continue to align MCOTA’s activities with its list of legislative duties and with tactics identified in the strategic plan, which correspond to all but one of the legislative duties.
3. Follow the recommendations of the *MCOTA Funding Primer (2015)* by determining how to streamline human services transportation funding by having funds flow through MCOTA and then through the RTCCs to providers.
4. Identify incentives for counties and providers to participate in coordination efforts.
5. Follow-up on the recommendations from the 2015 MCOTA *Common Standards for Reporting Financial Information for Transportation* report in order to begin developing common reporting standards.
6. Work with legislative liaisons from other state agencies to develop a comprehensive package of legislative changes to support the activities outlined in the strategic plan.
7. Identify and disseminate ways to enhance cross-boundary coordination.
8. Hold a strategic planning workshop every two years to confirm and adjust strategic priorities and engage all members. Include RTCC advisory committee members.

**Conclusion**

The strategic planning and stakeholder engagement work has consistently found a need for MCOTA to shift its role from one of simply informing, facilitating, and recommending to a role with the authority to lead change.

With political will and leadership from state agencies, the legislature, and counties, transportation coordination in Minnesota is poised to make real progress.

Across the state, workshop participants expressed cautious optimism and enthusiasm for the Regional Transportation Coordination Council concept. Many attendees noted that
this level of coordination is long overdue and that they have had many previous discussions about coordination efforts that never came to fruition. They hope for a better outcome this time.

Attendees demonstrated a readiness to move forward quickly, and requested state support and funding to do so. However, they cautioned that they need a structure that creates less red tape, not more, in order for them to champion this effort. The recommendations outlined in this report are aimed at moving transportation coordination, and access and services, forward for Minnesota’s citizens.
Appendix A: Summary of MCOTA Mission, Vision, Goals, and Strategies

Mission Statement

The mission of the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access is to work together to remove obstacles that prevent the successful coordination of transportation programs and resources among their respective customers.

Vision Statement

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

Goals

- One call/one click system (x2)
- Regional system that combines funding and reporting (x2)
- Public facility siting will be made with transportation as a priority
- More and better transportation solutions for (school) trips
- People with disabilities will have access to reliable, cost-effective, and accessible transportation choices that support the essential elements of life such as employment, housing, education, and social connections. (Olmstead Plan)

MCOTA’s Five Strategic Priorities, approved January 27, 2015

1. Develop regional organizations to help people use statewide tools.
2. Optimize the number of service providers and agencies within the state.
3. Use common administrative tools to standardize recordkeeping and reporting.
4. Eliminate funding silos or find a way to share funds.
5. Offer state-supplied dispatch software and/or enable coordination between dispatch software programs throughout the state.
Appendix B: Assessment of Obstacles to Coordination presentation, August 14, 2014
Assessment of Obstacles to Coordination

MCOTA Action Plan
August 26, 2014
Process for Identifying Obstacles to Coordination in Minnesota

- Regional Workshops
- Interviews
- Stakerholder Surveys
- Local Elected Official Surveys
- Literature Search
- Obstacles
- United We Ride

Minnesota Council on Transportation Access
Local Elected Officials

• Lack of funding

• Lack of Population/Density

Minnesota Council on Transportation Access
Stakeholder Interviews

- Insurance.
- Billing and rider eligibility issues.
- funding.
- Driver training/qualifications.
Workshops

- Turfism, or the resistance to give up ownership and control;
- Resistance to the revision of Special Transportation Service (STS) rules;
- Additional funding needed for coordination;
- Local restrictions for crossing county boundaries;
- Conflicting regulations, such as drug and alcohol, motor carrier, and school bus;
- Insurance and liability issues;
- Insufficient time to commit to coordination; and
- Agencies unwilling to pay fully allocated costs for service

Minnesota Council on Transportation Access
STATE AGENCY, METROPOLITAN COUNCIL, AND PRIVATE SECTOR INTERVIEWS

- Driver qualifications and training requirements;
- Lack of funding;
- Coordination leadership;
- Service fragmentation;
- Program regulations (inter-regional travel);
- STS regulations;
- Private sector issues;
- Turfism;
- Insurance; and
- Funding
Other Literature Searches
Coordination Barriers: Customer’s Perspective

- Confusing and inconsistent eligibility standards for various programs
- (Often) no clearinghouse to find out about options
- Travel across county lines is difficult and time consuming, especially if a transfer is involved
- Social service caseworkers don’t always know full range of mobility options
Coordination Barriers

• Funding restrictions—funds often dedicated to one client group with “strings” attached
• Vehicle requirements aren’t always compatible for mixing clients
• Insurance costs, or concerns about liability prevent coordination
• Inconsistent driver requirements
Coordination Barriers, cont.

• Inconsistent planning and reporting requirements for transportation and human service agencies
• Unique customer needs don’t always allow for grouping passengers
• Contract or labor union restrictions sometimes limit flexibility
MCOTA Vehicle Sharing Study

- Cost Savings/Revenue
- Program Incentives or Requirements
- Furthers General Good

- Time & Cost
- Information Acquisition
- Operational Challenges
- Doesn't further organization’s specific mission

Minnesota Council on Transportation Access
Appendix C: MCOTA Members

Tim Henkel, Chair
Minnesota Department of Transportation

Joan Willshire, Vice Chair
Minnesota State Council on Disability

Vacant
Office of the Governor

Gerri Sutton
Metropolitan Council

Harlan Tardy
Minnesota Board on Aging

Vacant
Minnesota Department of Commerce

Kelly Wosika
Minnesota Department of Education

Thanh Pearson
Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

Tim Held
Minnesota Department of Health

Steve Masson
Minnesota Department of Human Services

Ron Quade
Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs

Keith Bogut
Minnesota Management and Budget

Tiffany Collins
Minnesota Public Transit Association
Appendix D: MCOTA Legislative Duties, grouped by strategic priority

Below are the 20 legislatively-defined duties of the council, grouped into the top five strategic priorities.

In order to accomplish the purposes in subdivision 1, the council, following consultation with the legislative committees or divisions with jurisdiction over transportation policy and budget, or with appropriate legislative transportation subcommittees, shall adopt a biennial work plan that must incorporate the following activities:

**Duties that apply to all strategic priorities**

1. (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. (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. (3) recommend statewide objectives for providing public transportation services for the transit public;

4. (4) identify barriers prohibiting coordination and accessibility of public transportation services and aggressively pursue the elimination of those barriers;

5. (5) recommend policies and procedures for coordinating local, regional, state, and federal funding and services for the transit public;

6. (20) advocate aggressively for eliminating barriers to coordination, implementing coordination strategies, enacting necessary legislation, and appropriating resources to achieve the council's objectives.

**Strategic Priority 1. Develop regional organizations to help people use statewide tools.**

(6) identify stakeholders in 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;

(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;

(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;

(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;

(19) identify policies and necessary legislation to facilitate vehicle sharing

Strategic Priority 2. Optimize the number of service providers and agencies within the state.

(11) recommend minimum performance standards for delivery of services;

Strategic Priority 3. Use common administrative tools to standardize recordkeeping and reporting.

(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;

(15) recommend an interagency uniform contracting and billing and accounting system for providing coordinated transportation services;

Strategic Priority 4. Eliminate funding silos or find a way to share funds.

(18) develop an allocation methodology that equitably distributes transportation funds to compensate units of government and all entities that provide coordinated transportation services;

Strategic Priority 5. Offer state-supplied dispatch software and/or enable coordination between dispatch software programs throughout the state.

The legislative duties above address this priority.

Not included in the strategic priorities

(8) encourage all state agencies participating in the council to purchase trips within the coordinated system;
Appendix E: Regional Transportation Coordination Council Workshops Summary Presentation
Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordination Council Concept: Stakeholder Workshop Results

June 9, 2015
Workshops

• Four stakeholder workshops to explore the Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordination Council (RTCC) Concept:
  – Duluth: April 23
  – St. Cloud: April 30
  – Mankato: May 13
  – St. Paul: May 14
Individual Responses
Q1. What issue or concern brought you here today?

1. **Greater MN**: Concerns about under-and unserved people in rural areas
2. **Twin Cities**: Concerns about better transportation options for specific county areas and outer-ring suburbs
Q1. What issue or concern brought you here today? (cont’d)

All:

3. Available and affordable transportation for elderly and low-income individuals, as well as others with specific barriers

4. “The fact that this meeting is actually about coordination”

5. Coordination that includes private transportation providers
Q2. What is the most important issue for coordination in your area?
Duluth

1. “Public transit can’t do it all. We need to develop other options.”

2. State funding silos makes programs hard to coordinate

3. Cooperation of existing providers
St. Cloud

- Politics: “Who’s going to fix the politics?”
- “Local share $ = local decisions, local walls, local taxes, and local politics”
- Concerns re: costs and funding
Mankato

• Crossing geographic boundaries
• Limited resources that are over regulated so they are too difficult to share
• Coordinated, timely and available transportation for low income people (elderly, people with disabilities) to get work and appointments
Twin Cities

- Diversified/expanded options for older adults and those with disabilities
- Communication between service providers
- Coordination with private carriers/DT&H’s
- Figuring out effective ways to use all of our vehicles efficiently 7 days a week
Q3. What idea or issue related to coordination should MnDOT, DHS, and the Met Council pay most attention to?
Duluth

1. Cooperation between providers
2. Apply uniform operating standards to all providers
3. How to use current funding to support coordination
4. Need realistic funding levels: enough support staff to accomplish what a “champion” gets started
5. Don’t stop at identifying barriers. We’ve identified and admired them for a long time.
6. **True** coordination
St. Cloud

• How to be cost effective AND provide affordable access in very rural areas
• Offering incentives and easing burdens of providers to collaborate
• “Needs to be enough support staff to accomplish the goal. This is not the time to skimp on staff.”
• More emphasis on local/regional control and coordination

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Mankato

- “Meeting-ed out”; ready for action
- Need meetings in Western Minnesota
- Think outside the box
- Don’t lose sight of volunteer driver programs
- Takes time to build relationships for coordination – need dedicated people
- Success of our newly-formed system: Faribault and Martin County
Twin Cities

- Remove turf barriers
- Technical assistance
- The tools to provide coordination: insurance, liability waivers, coordination councils?
- Fund coordination and collaboration
Coordination Roles
Potential RTCC members

- Transit users
- Funders
- Local elected officials
- Workforce centers
- Disability services
- Transportation providers (public, private, STS, volunteer, medical, school)
- Religious organizations
- Area Agencies on Aging
- Social service providers
- Health care providers
- Veterans services
- County divisions: health, human services, housing, transportation
- Regional Development Commissions
- MPOs
- Rural AND urban locations represented

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RTCC Authority/Responsibility

- Authority and the expertise to create policies, make decisions
- Clear mission and goals
- Funding to support councils
- Funders’ control over councils a question/concern
- Mixed opinions about level of involvement of state gov’t (St. Cloud)
- Independent (Mankato)
- Level of authority a concern; potential for negative impacts on end users (Twin Cities)
RTCC Goals/Activities

• Distribute funding
• Coordinate providers to improve service
• Promote cross-agency collaboration
• Oversee transportation providers to ensure compliance with policies, best practices, and financial standards
• Develop a regional transportation plan, and define levels of service
• Advocate for, develop, and implement policy

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RTCC Goals/Activities (cont’d)

• Develop tools for trip planning, reimbursement (for users traveling via multiple providers)
• Provide a “one call” and “one click” referral service
RTCC Staff Structure/Roles

• Crucial to have a paid coordinator, at least in the council’s formation stage. A champion with strong outreach and collaboration skills.

• The staff could provide operational support for the council and service providers and users: convening stakeholders, providing operational support for members, dispatching transportation, gathering and sharing information about transportation services, and creating a one-stop website and phone line for service users.
Coordination Processes
How should governance actors be chosen?

– Use an application process, but no clear consensus on appointment or election
– Concerns about how to keep a balance of power between larger and smaller agencies, as well as between providers and users
– Could be a two-level structure: funders as the council; others as an advisory group
– Limit size to 8-15 people to be effective. Use subcommittees for greater participation and in-depth attention to key issues
How should governance actors be chosen? (cont’d)

- Need sufficient inclusion of disenfranchised populations
- Use term limits
- Important to have a grievance and removal process
How should RTCCs be accountable for results?

- Need clear mission, goals, and accountability structure. This structure could come through a funding agreement with the state (perhaps with incentives), measurable outcomes and reporting, and/or a council charter.
- Members noted that each region is unique. Although many would like to have state oversight for the councils, they stressed that each council should have the freedom to adapt to meet local needs.
How should the RTCCs be accountable for results? (cont’d)

• Success measures:
  – Increased ridership
  – Cost savings
  – Reduction in service gaps
  – Reduction in duplicative services
  – Fewer service denials
  – Consistent policies and practices among providers

  – Improved outreach to potential users
  – Continued success of programs that are already working well
  – Stakeholder satisfaction
  – Improved collaboration (such as ride-sharing) among members
Coordination Tools

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Coordination Tools

• Two communications systems the council will need: one for providers and one for riders. Both systems will need adequate training and maintenance support.

• The system for providers will need to be consistent and sharable between transportation providers. A software platform could provide support for transit scheduling, billing, mapping, and reporting. This system will need to protect client privacy while making it possible for providers to share information when needed. If medical providers are included in the system, HIPAA compliance may be necessary.
Coordination Spaces
Size of Regions – Greater MN

• In general, participants suggested having 7-12 regions.
• Most popular options were Designated Workforce Center regions, MnDOT districts (perhaps with an adaptation to follow county lines), and Economic Development Regions.
Possible regions

• Designated Workforce Center Regions (12)
Possible regions

- MnDOT Districts (8-12)

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Possible regions

- MN Economic Development Regions (13)
Size of Regions – Twin Cities

• Divide seven-county metro area along county lines, Met Council districts, or other existing boundaries
Cross-boundary transportation

- Financial incentives
- The ability to change policies (for instance, on payment procedures or data access)
- The opportunity to pilot initiatives without risk of penalty
- Need for a “warm handoff” when riders must transfer services
Implications for MCOTA’s Role

- MCOTA could serve as statewide oversight council to help direct and coordinate all of the regional councils’ efforts.
- Regional councils would have representatives on the statewide board.
- MCOTA could enhance/support communications between regional councils.
- MCOTA could support transparency.
Final Impressions

• Cautious optimism
• Big project with a lot of potential
• Keep communication open
• Send out emails to participants as updates are available
• Moving in the right direction
• Fast results wanted
• Create less red tape, not more
• Would like to hear strong objectives and a defined end goal

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Next Steps

• High level of interest in moving forward, including additional meetings in smaller/more regions, especially in the western part of state
Thank you!

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