

Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (MCOTA) Meeting Minutes
November 28, 2018
MnDOT Central Office Transportation Building
395 John Ireland Blvd, Saint Paul, Conference Room 461
1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Members present:

Chair – Tim Henkel, Minnesota Department of Transportation
Vice-Chair – Joan Willshire, Minnesota State Council on Disability
At-Large Representative – Victoria Nill, Minnesota Department of Transportation
Peter Brickwedde, Minnesota Department of Commerce (via phone)
Tiffany Collins, Minnesota Public Transit Association (via phone)
Kelly Garvey, Minnesota Department of Education (via phone)
Thant Pearson, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (via phone)
Ellen Pillsbury (proxy for Susan Bishop)
Ronald Quade II, Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (via phone)
Diogo Reis, Minnesota Department of Human Services (proxy for Claire Wilson) (via phone)
Gerri Sutton, Metropolitan Council

Members absent:

Susan Bishop, Minnesota Department of Health (Ellen Pillsbury served as proxy)
Laura Logsdon, Minnesota Management and Budget
Harlan Tardy, Minnesota Board on Aging
Claire Wilson, Minnesota Department of Human Services (Diogo Reis served as proxy)

Others present:

Minnesota Department of Transportation:

Kristie Billiar, ADA Program and Policy
Mark Nelson, Office of Transportation System Management
Serge Phillips, Government Affairs Office
Jake Reuter, Office of Transit and Active Transportation
Noel Shughart, Office of Transit and Active Transportation
Sue Siemers, Office of Transit and Active Transportation

University of Minnesota, Center for Transportation Studies:

Kaydee Kirk (via phone)
Arlene Mathison

Minnesota Board on Aging:

Clancy Farria
Rolf Hage
Jackie Peichel

Jon Kelly, Minnesota Department of Commerce (via phone)
Stephanie Aasness, West Central Community Action (via phone)
Karen Amundson, East Central RDC (via phone)
Alan Herrmann, Scott County
Sherry Munyon, Minnesota Public Transit Association
Kim Pettman, Transit Advocate (via phone)
Mark Schermerhorn, Anoka County Transit (via phone)

Call to order & introductions: Henkel called to order the November meeting of the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access at 1:03 PM on November 28, 2018 at the MnDOT Central Office, St. Paul, MN. Everyone present and on the phone introduced themselves.

Review and approve agenda: Willshire moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Sutton. The agenda was unanimously **approved**.

10/24/18 meeting minutes: Collins moved to approve the October minutes, seconded by Kelly. The minutes were unanimously **approved**.

Public comments: Pettman shared the following comments:

- Thank you for having the disability awareness training. She recommends distributing this training to MCOTA and non-MCOTA groups. Without training, education, and experience, people are not able to fully understand the perspective of persons with disabilities. She asked for a focus on public and community engagement. She felt that Minnesota has a lot of learning to do on engagement.
- Can MCOTA coordinate with other groups on transportation? For example, the NEMT Advisory Committee, rural health advisory committee, health equity and advisory council, governor's council on mental health---can these groups be invited to MCOTA so we can do good work together?

Draft volunteer driver reimbursement legislation

Phillips shared information on the draft volunteer driver reimbursement legislation:

- Phillips serves as the federal liaison in MnDOT's Office of Government Affairs.
- Stakeholders have made clear that the current 14 cent/mile reimbursement rate doesn't reflect the true costs incurred by volunteers. Have also heard that this hurts rural transit services in particular.
- There are 5 of 8 members of Congress who are new and turnover may present an opportunity to increase awareness on this topic.
- Stakeholders have expressed a goal of increasing the volunteer driver reimbursement rate to be equal to the business rate. U.S. Rep. Nolan was a sponsor of this legislation in the House. In general, there is wide support for the change. Stakeholders have expressed a desire for the legislation to advance as stand-alone legislation and not part of a transportation reauthorization bill.
- There is a state cost since DHS pays for reimbursement. Their involvement in the process is crucial.
- The MCOTA research study on this topic has been helpful.
- MCOTA may choose to sponsor a letter of support to be shared with the Minnesota congressional delegation. A potential next step may be to form group of stakeholders to be the core of advocacy on this issue in a unified way. This role may be filled by MCOTA, though policy positions taken by state agencies will need to be in line with the governor's office.
- It is important for MCOTA to consider its role with respect to federal legislation.
- MnDOT takes part in a trip to Washington DC to discuss transportation issues with the MN delegation. Volunteer driver reimbursement may be a topic of interest.
- Willshire noted that Governor Walz is aware of the issue.
- What is the impact on revenue with this change?
- Philips will share the House legislation bill number on this issue with members.

MPTA Legislation

Munyon of the Minnesota Public Transit Association discussed the following, requested a MCOTA resolution of support:

- Following up to Philips previous item, MPTA is looking for support for the federal legislation.
- Who is in charge of/leading this issue at the state level? MCOTA is in a good position to lead vs. just one association or advocacy group. MPTA is looking for support at the state level and it was noted that state support is probably more important at this time than the federal level. Munyon asked for MCOTA to be a supporter and leader on this issue.
- It is also important to connect with the insurance industry on this issue.

- There are two primary issues: (1) the federal issue on the reimbursement rate and (2) the 1099 form that impacts at the state level.

Discussion:

- Will the small group advocacy that is being organized around this issue include the public? Can have more “boots on the ground” to help. Shughart noted that MCOTA has direct connections with the organizations who took part in the volunteer driver forum that took place in May – those stakeholders could be tapped.
- The Department of Commerce staff noted that they were not aware this bill was introduced last year. Commerce is in a position to work on the insurance aspects of this issue since that is their wheelhouse.
- Can MCOTA go further in its leadership role and put a solution in writing to broker a way to bring closure to this issue?
- It was suggested to have a motion to support a resolution from MCTOA members to state agencies. The idea is to put agencies on notice regarding the issue and explain how they can impact this issue.
- First, acknowledge the problem and, second, come to a resolution through the agency legislative liaisons. Can we take last year’s legislation and build on that?
- Would there be a working group in the next couple months that leads to a bill? Members did not have consensus around this approach.
- Can we vote electronically and put the verbiage into writing?

A motion was made by Willshire to draft a resolution on this issue to send to agencies that would put them on notice and, moreover, get them working in a group regarding a solution. The draft resolution will be reviewed and voted on electronically before the next meeting. The motion was seconded by Collins and was unanimously **approved**.

Review and approve final draft of the annual report

Mathison provided a recap of changes from the last meeting. There were no additional comments submitted since the last meeting. The draft report has been submitted to the MnDOT for review. Members had a few minor formatting changes at this meeting that Mathison will incorporate. Sutton made a motion to approve the report, seconded by Wilshire, the motion was unanimously **approved**.

Update on proposed MCOTA strategic plan

Mathison provided an overview of the schedule and scope of the strategic plan.

Update on RTCCs

Siemers shared that two regions have responded with their letter of intent. Application is due March 31 and in working format in July. One is in the SW MN counties and the other is in the Mankato planning organization counties. Current grantees are working in structures, public involvement, and bylaws.

Amundson shared the following:

- Background: The East Central Regional Development Commission (ECRDC) is located in Mora. It is a public agency who’s focus is on positively developing the East Central region, organized under the authority of the “Regional Development Act” of 1969. There are 13 RDC’s in the state of MN. The ECRDC’s governing board consists of county commissioners, mayors/council members, township supervisors, school board members, and various public interest representatives from all five counties. The governing board meets 6x/yr and may call additional special meetings when necessary. The RDC will rely on the technical and real-life experiences of the RTCC Advisory board members who will be those who study the issues, realize the encumbrances, understand through involvement and are the expert representatives for transportation needs in the region.
- The ECRDC applied for and was awarded the MnDOT grant to develop the ECRTCC beginning in July 2018.
- So far, we have held 3 Stakeholder meetings, one in August, September, & November. Our August meeting convened 20 interested parties and the numbers increased to 29 by November.
- Identified stakeholders: Area Agency on Aging, Workforce Development, Transportation Providers, Human Service Agencies, Community Action & Habilitation Advocates, Veteran Service Organizations, Continuum of

Care, Health Care Systems, Centers for Independent Living, Public/Private Funders of Transportation Services, County Commissioners, City Administration, Political Involvement, Home Health Aids

- One representative from each agency to be present at each ECRTCC meeting, can share responsibility as long as information is relayed to others in the agency that are involved. Detailed summaries after each meeting are sent out to all who are or have been involved in the stakeholder's meetings to bring everyone up to the same level.
- The ECRTCC's organizational structure has been ratified as follows: The ECRDC will be one with the ECRTCC. In its role as the RTCC, the ECRDC will rely on the use of an appointed advisory committee consisting of professionals from the list previously mentioned. Additionally, the advisory committee will include a representative from the ECRDC Board acting as a liaison to ensure good communication through the decision-making process.
- The ECRTCC's mission was discussed in Meeting 3 and current consensus is as follows: To coordinate the provision of multimodal transportation services to assure that transportation is convenient and affordable and will benefit those residents facing transportation barriers throughout the East Central Minnesota Region 7E.
- By-Laws for the Advisory Board were approved by the board at Meeting 3.
- The RTCC's financial match will be provided by the ECRDC through its budgeting process. These funds are derived from a regional tax levy. It is the ECRDC's intention to utilize these monies during the early implementation stages until other financial resources are developed.
- Currently we are developing two surveys – one for the ECRTCC agencies that need transportation and one for the agencies of the ECRTCC that provide transportation. In order to facilitate filling the gaps, we need to find out where the gaps are, who is using the services, where they are, where they need to be transported to, etc.
- The ECRTCC goals were discussed and 3 goals were considered, though yet need to be fine-tuned:
 1. Create an Office of Mobility Management or Regionalized Dispatch: The RTCC/Advisory Board's role will be to determine how to build the administration structure. Focus on building a Business Plan.
 2. Each agency must advocate for proper funding: This goal is aimed at the charitable reimbursement rate. Volunteer drivers are so very necessary in our unique rural region, most volunteer drivers are over 55. We believe that we'd garner more interest if they were able to be reimbursed for their gas/car use – rather than giving away their gas/vehicle wear & tear. Baby boomers are the future of volunteer drivers – if this is to be a sustainable program, there would need to be some incentive for them to donate their time.
 3. Explore sustainability of volunteer drivers and/or private transportation sources (connection with goal 2)
 - ~ Develop 10 year plan
 - ~ Leveraging partnerships, utilizing vehicle sharing (PHASE buses);
Employee/Employer benefits of ride sharing
- We are planning our Public Meetings to be held in January throughout the region.
- The next ECRDC/ECRTCC meeting is December 17, at the RDC office in Mora.
- Our next Advisory Board meeting is slated for January 10.

Shughart shared that this was the first quarterly meeting held with RTCC organizing groups and MCOTA. The groups expressed a desire for guidance on best practices on what their efforts should look like in the end. Shughart and Siemers noted that the representatives attending these meetings are tasked with bringing back actual concepts they are aiming to explore in their area and share with the whole group.

Quarterly stakeholder communication

Mathison provided an overview of the content and shared that the communication would be sent out by the first week in December or sooner. Members did not have any changes. Sutton moved to approve the communication; Willshire seconded; the motion was unanimously **approved**.

FY19 MCOTA budget update

Rueter provided a brief update and shared that the budget is on track. Members did not have questions.

Agency updates

- **Olmstead Plan** – Billiar shared that the last subcabinet meeting was November 26. The meeting focused on reporting and discussions regarding the minimum level of service in greater Minnesota. Next, the group will be looking at any revisions to the goals for the coming year.
- **Other updates**
 - Shughart shared about the successful transportation equity work being done across the state through MnDOT. Part of this work is to identify gaps and also to focus on transportation stakeholders (not consumers). These efforts are really raising the awareness in districts with the DEs, engineers, construction staff, etc.
 - It was shared that November 29 is the unveiling of the Minnesota Career Forest.
 - The Minnesota Council on Disability has an event on December 3 to discuss the upcoming legislative issues for the session.

Review draft agenda for next meeting

Henkel shared the recommendation to cancel the December meeting given there are not any pressing items. Members agreed to cancel the December 19 meeting.

Adjourn

Willshire made a motion to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by Nill. The motion was unanimously **approved**. The meeting ended at 2:25 p.m.

2:25-3:30

Disability Awareness Training – Margot Imdieke Cross, Minnesota Council on Disability

If you are attending remotely, you can view presentation materials on the following webpage. Audio will be facilitated using the conference call line.

<https://www.disability.state.mn.us/other-resources/disability-awareness-the-basics/>

Future meetings on Wednesdays, 1:00-3:30pm, MnDOT Central Office:

- **2018:** Dec 19 - cancelled
- **2019:** Jan 23, Feb 27, Mar 27, Apr 24, May 22, Jun 26, Jul 24, Aug 28, Sep 25, Oct 23, Nov 27, Dec 18

Future agenda items:

- Strategic planning ½ day for March or April 2019

Standing agenda items:

- Review and approve agenda
- Public comments
- Review and approve meeting minutes
- Quarterly stakeholder communication – review and/or approve
- FY19 MCOTA budget update
- Agency updates
- Review draft agenda for next monthly meeting