

Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (MCOTA) Meeting Minutes
February 26, 2020, 1:00–3:00 PM
MnDOT Central Office Transportation Building
TEC Conference Room (basement level)

Members present:

Chair – Tim Henkel, Minnesota Department of Transportation
At-Large Representative – Victoria Nill, Minnesota Department of Transportation
Susan Bishop, Minnesota Department of Health
Peter Brickwedde, Minnesota Department of Commerce
Tiffany Collins, Minnesota Public Transit Association
Shawn Kremer, Minnesota Management and Budget
Kelly Garvey, Minnesota Department of Education (via Zoom)
Diogo Reis, Minnesota Department of Human Services
Rolando Sotolongo, Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (via Zoom)
Gerri Sutton, Metropolitan Council
Jodi Yanda, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

Members absent:

Kody Olson, Minnesota State Council on Disability
Jim Varpness, Minnesota Board on Aging

Others present:

Minnesota Department of Transportation:
 Kristie Billiar, ADA Program and Policy
 Tom Gottfried, Office of Transit and Active Transportation
University of Minnesota, Center for Transportation Studies:
 Kaydee Kirk
 Arlene Mathison
Karen Amundson, East Central Regional Development Commission
Robyn Bernardy, Dakota County
Heidi Corcoran (via Zoom)
Ashley Eckdahl, East Central Regional Development Commission (via Zoom)
Alan Hermann, Scott County (via Zoom)
Sheila Holbrook-White, Washington County (via Zoom)
Heather Molesworth, West Central Minnesota Communities Action, Inc.
Sherry Munyon, MPTA
Karen Onan, East Central RTCC (via Zoom)
Kim Pettman, Transit Advocate (remotely via Zoom)
Samuel Rodriguez (via Zoom)
Mark Schermerhorn, Anoka County Transit (via Zoom)
Courtney Whited, Minnesota Board on Aging

Call to Order + Introductions

Henkel called to order the February meeting of the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access at 1:06 PM on February 26, 2020. Everyone introduced themselves. He shared that the Minnesota Council on Disability notified MCOTA recently that they are going through staffing changes and Willshire has departed the organization.

Review and Approve Agenda

Reis moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Yanda. The agenda was unanimously **approved**.

Public Comments

Pettman will be on public comment for each meeting going forward. The following are the comments that Pettman shared at this meeting:

- She asks that anyone giving public comment should have their comment accurately reflected especially since minutes become public. The January public comments in the minutes were not accurate and noted that this has been previously requested.
- She would like to see MCOTA and the agencies represented to have a good inclusion mandatory training that includes public engagement and public participation that focuses on people with disabilities and other transit-dependent populations and noted that this has been requested many times.
- She asked for the Departments of Health and Human Services and other relevant agencies to help with food access, especially in areas with food deserts, whether in the metro or non-metro. An example she noted was Farmington, a community that lost their grocery store/pharmacy. There are many seniors, children, veterans, and other transit-dependent populations that food access affects. She encouraged all agencies to work together on this issue.
- Regarding the coronavirus, she'd like to see emergency management representatives from agencies be invited to MCOTA to get people out of their silos and work together.
- She also expressed that it is key for members to practice active listening and ask questions or reflective questions to anyone who provides public comment; this will help members better understand and truly hear what members of the public are sharing. She reiterated the desire to have a good inclusion training and that will help with people better hearing/understanding public comments.

Henkel shared with Pettman he appreciated her feedback and that MCOTA takes it seriously. Regarding the minutes, Pettman feels the best approach to getting good minutes is to spend a minute or two active listening and asking reflective questions during the meeting or after the meeting as needed.

1/22/20 Meeting Minutes

Members decided to table the approval of the January minutes until the next meeting. The public comments will be revised before that time.

Vice Chair Election

The process for filling the vice chair vacancy begins with member nominations; then the group votes on the candidate(s). If there is more than one nomination the group will do a ballot vote. Brickwedde nominated Reis. The election of Reis was unanimously **approved**.

Next Steps on Strategic Plan + Draft Work Plan

Gottfried shared the draft work plan on the overhead screen and walked through it. If anyone would like a copy of the work plan please contact Gottfried. Comments were as follows:

- Leadership Team section:
 - It was suggested to refine the focus the Leadership Team to be focused on the work plan review and also work team recommendations.
 - It is recommend that the Leadership Team be changed to be comprised of Chair, Vice Chair, and the MCOTA director.
- Agency Senior Leadership Team section:
 - It was clarified that the Leadership Team would meet in March or April to plan out and prepare the draft materials for the June Agency Senior Leadership Team meeting. The plan for the Agency Senior Leadership Team meeting would be discussed at the May MCOTA meeting.
- Volunteer Driver Forum section:
 - Recommend this event be tentative depending on the outcome of the legislation. In the event the legislation doesn't go through, it would still be valuable to have the forum to better understand why the legislation didn't move forward.
 - Reis suggested that the intent of the forum be refocused as needed and it could be focused on best practices.
 - Nill asked what the long-term vision of the volunteer driver work will be if the legislation passes. Gottfried shared he only has mapped out the plan for volunteer driver work for the coming year, not part of a five-year strategic plan, per se.

- RTCC/TCAPs section:
 - o Regarding IT solutions, the team first needs to look at data management issues and opportunities first and then they make suggestions (non-IT or IT related).

Gottfried will revise the draft work plan based on comments from the meeting and any comments that are received offline. He will send out the revised version to the group shortly after the meeting and there will be a two-week comment period.

Volunteer Driver Work Team

1. **Volunteer Driver Informational Pamphlet** – Gottfried shared that the team has met twice and has had good discussion. They are waiting until the legislative session is over to see what happens with the volunteer driver legislation. Brickwedde noted that the team meetings have led to a better understanding from the service providers on how to use the volunteer driver brochure. This is a useful tool for recruitment and retention. Other members of this team include Varpness, Pettman, and Munyon.
2. **Volunteer Driver Work Team 2020/21 Tasks** – Onan, East Central RTCC Director, shared they are aiming to have the volunteer driver forum in the late fall 2020. Venue is still to be determined. She felt the purpose of the forum needs to be more clearly articulated. The group commented they would appreciate a format similar to the 2018 forum with opening agency leadership comments, panel discussions, best practices and potentially a broader focus, etc. Potential forum topics could be focused on: disability issues, communications as it related to individuals' first language, cultural diversity, trauma-informed care, etc. Mathison will email Onan and all members of the work team the 2018 forum evaluation summary as well as the participant survey conducted before the forum.

Pettman suggested integrating into the forum in some way a diversity training and a trauma-informed care perspective with the goal of helping volunteer drivers (and passengers) feel more comfortable. She felt this approach to delivering training could be a good way for people to comfortably step into these issues if they haven't focused on them much before.

Bishop asked if there could there be more articulation of reaching riders/users when identifying gaps and gathering information. Gottfried said RTCCs can help with this. He will also follow up with the MN Department of Health offline on this issue. This topic will be discussed at the March 4th meeting in St. Cloud.

In next month or so the council needs to have information on cost, audience, agenda, purpose, venue, etc for the forum. Because the forum is different this year, more time is needed to plan the event. Gottfried will be connecting with CTS and the work team on this to flesh out the details and timelines. Yanda offered to also help with this work team and on forum topics.

CTS will add this agenda item to the next meeting.

Communications

1. **Quarterly Stakeholder Communication:** Mathison provided an overview of the content. Henkel suggested adding an item to thank Willshire for her service as outgoing as Vice Chair and to welcome the new Vice Chair. Mathison will work directly with Henkel, Gottfried, and Reis on this. Motion made by Nill to approve the communication, Yanda seconds. The motion was unanimously **approved**.
2. **MCOTA Website Redesign:** The redesign process will be kicked off soon with a survey of MCOTA, TCAP and RTCC members. There will also be a virtual focus group held. Pettman asked if the web and other documents can have accessibility included and Billiar shared that anything moving forward will be run by MnDOT communications office to ensure accessibility.

Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils (RTCCs) Update: West Central RTCC

Molesworth of the West Central Minnesota Communities Action, Inc. provided an overview of their work plan short-term goals:

- Educating the public about transportation available by centralizing information about transit and distributing in high potential ridership locations
- Increasing service hours, establish taxi-subsidy programs and establish/enhance assisted transportation
- Implementing rural transit bus stops
- Developing a provider directory
- Start testing Transportation Management Coordination Center (TMCC)
- Developing a Volunteer Driver Program Committee
- Douglas County Car Care Program involvement in more counties

Challenges they are facing:

- 1) Community buy-in from some stakeholders.
- 2) The RTCCs will now need to have a 10% match in the third year of the grant and there is push back on this from county commissioners. Discussion from members:
 - Some counties have concerns with match requirement. The first two years MnDOT has funded the project 100% with seed money to get things up and running. In the third year, there is a local match which has been communicated all along and should not be a surprise. The locals did know about the match but some thought they wouldn't need to meet the match in the end.
 - It is still difficult for some locals to point to tangible things/accomplishments and that leads to concerns with providing the match dollars.
 - But many other local groups have found the RTCCs have provided a lot of added value and have no concerns about the match. Gottfried stated that it would be helpful to better articulate to the locals how the RTCCs are benefitting.

Agency Updates

MPTA Volunteer Driver Legislation:

- Munyon gave an update on the coalition, 65 organizations total, including AARP. A "call to action" handout on the volunteer driver legislation was shared.
- The meeting with the trial attorneys did not as go well as anticipated. The trial attorneys group does not like anything about the proposed legislation and are not open to negotiation. The hearing has now been halted. They are hoping to have the legislation heard in the transportation committee and perhaps in the future at the commerce committee. Most members of the legislature have been contacted by constituents on this and this has been helpful. Overall there is good bipartisan support; but the issues with the trial attorneys is challenging. There will likely be wordsmithing to the legislation proposal to help improve it.
- On the Senate side, the commerce committee is looking more hopeful.
- MPTA is also working on a draft letter from their leadership in the support of the volunteer driver legislation. This letter will go to the Governor and the four caucus leaders. They are setting the stage if this issue goes into 2021.
- If the bill doesn't go through this year, MCOTA will be contacted after the session for formal support on the legislation.

Olmstead Plan: Billiar shared that the last subcabinet meeting was last Monday and it was a quarterly report time for agencies. MnDOT reported on their infrastructure goals. Goals are being met and exceeded. Also, the Olmstead cabinet is rethinking their structure and committee membership. The executive committee would be the approver of reports vs. the subcabinet. Overall, the plan is moving along and the goals are being met and most work plan items that the agencies are involved with are on track.

Review Draft Agenda for Next Meeting: Henkel reviewed the next meeting agenda. Future agendas will be aligned with the work plan.

Adjourn: Nill made a motion to adjourn; Yanda seconded. The motion was unanimously **approved**. The meeting was adjourned at 3:04 PM.