This email update is an effort by the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (MCOTA) to provide periodic updates about its initiatives to the public and to interested stakeholders. Please let us know what you think by contacting Arlene Mathison at mathi032@umn.edu or Tom Gottfried at tom.gottfried@state.mn.us.

New 2020–2024 MCOTA Strategic Plan

In January 2020, MCOTA approved a new five-year strategic plan. It puts the council in a position to more effectively act on its legislatively defined duties through a revised governance structure, through a focus on four key strategic priorities, and by developing measures to assess the council's progress.

Recommended updates to the MCOTA organizational structure:

- Senior state agency leadership will meet once per year to identify priorities for the council’s work. The agency senior leadership team will consist of member agency commissioners, set strategic direction, and prioritize work plan items for the MCOTA leadership team.
- MCOTA’s leadership team will include agency representatives selected by members of the agency senior leadership team. This team will provide strategic direction, oversee the implementation of MCOTA's initiatives, approve work products, and ensure coordination among different levels of work within the council structure.
- The MCOTA executive director provides coordination and leadership functions to the council. This role is critical in building relationships between agencies and stakeholders, and in guiding MCOTA working teams. The MCOTA executive director will receive direction from the MCOTA leadership team, recruit participants for working teams, facilitate work group meetings, and shepherd groups toward successful outcomes.
- MCOTA working teams should consist of MCOTA leadership team members, agency staff, content experts, and RTCC/TCAP members to work on specific initiatives identified by MCOTA. Those initiatives include communications, event planning, legislation, research, and topics like volunteer-driver programs.
Minnesota's Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils and Twin Cities Area Transit Coordination Assistance Projects conduct mobility management and transportation coordination at the local level. RTCCs and TCAPs are a critical link between MCOTA's statewide perspective and the operations of local providers.

MCOTA will focus on the following four key strategies to improve transportation coordination in Minnesota:

1. Provide support and technical assistance to local partners.
2. Share best practices and build coalitions.
3. Identify and respond to research needs.
4. Engage in responsible education, communication, and advocacy activities

View full strategic plan

- Minnesota Council on Transportation Access Strategic Plan 2020-2024 (PDF)

New Executive Director for MCOTA

As part of the new structure outlined in the MCOTA strategic plan, Tom Gottfried, program director and transportation mobility manager for the MnDOT Office of Transit and Active Transportation, is now the executive director of MCOTA. In his new role, Tom will provide coordination and leadership functions for the council. This role is critical in building relationships between agencies and stakeholders, and in guiding the work of MCOTA working teams. He will receive direction from the MCOTA leadership team, recruit participants for working teams, facilitate work group meetings, and shepherd groups towards successful outcomes.

Twin Cities Area Transit Coordination Assistance Projects Update

Twin Cities Area Transit Coordination Assistance Projects (TCAPs) conduct mobility management and transportation coordination at the local level in the Twin Cities, while Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils do so throughout the rest of Minnesota. Here are some recent highlights from the TCAPs.

Anoka, Scott, Dakota, Carver, and Washington counties received Federal Transit Administration 5310 funds in 2019 to continue implementation of mobility management strategies. FTA 5310 funds also were awarded to NewTrax, a local non-profit that provides mobility management primarily in Ramsey County. Additionally, both Hennepin County and Anoka County launched new efforts in 2019 to study their respective county's transportation and develop a mobility management plan. A few highlights include:

- Carver/Scott counties expanded SmartLink service to evenings and weekends. Travel
training sessions were held for transition students, adult mental health clients, and senior groups.

- Dakota County implemented a travel training project and launched a pilot program with grant funding from DHS, using Lyft as the provider to transport clients with disabilities to employment sites. It also developed the GoDakota Transportation Finder to help individuals learn about the transportation options available at a specific address in Dakota County.

- NewTrax continued to operate and create new community circulator transit routes in White Bear Lake, Mahtomedi, Vadnais Heights, Roseville, and Forest Lake. These circulators travel between high-density living facilities and grocery, pharmaceutical, and financial institutions.

- Washington County hired a mobility manager and began to implement recommendations developed through a 2016–2017 Washington County transportation needs study.

- Both Hennepin County and Anoka County have executed grants with MnDOT and will be working with consultants to identify transit gaps and potential resources within their county.

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**2019 MCOTA Annual Report available**

Every January, MCOTA publishes a summary of activities for the previous year. In 2019, MCOTA engaged with stakeholders to update its 2015 strategic plan through a membership survey, stakeholder input, engagement with RTCC and TCAP representatives (including both Greater Minnesota and the Twin Cities metropolitan area collaboratives), and a strategic planning workshop. In addition, MCOTA provided website support for the new RTCCs and had representatives from the RTCCs provide updates to MCOTA, supported state and federal legislation for volunteer-driver programs, and revised the volunteer-driver insurance brochure. MCOTA continued to inform stakeholders about its activities and meetings through email updates and its website, CoordinateMNTransit.org.

[View full annual report](#)

- [2019 Report on the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (PDF)](#)

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**MnDOT invites public to comment on rules governing special transportation services providers**

MnDOT is seeking public comments on existing rules for special transportation services providers that serve seniors and those with disabilities or provide nonemergency medical transportation services paid for with public funding.

MnDOT is updating the existing rules and would like to hear from stakeholders about updates and improvements that should be considered before any new rule changes are proposed.

Comments on the existing rules may be submitted online through the [Commercial Vehicle Operations rulemaking webpage](#) or by mailing written comments to Will Jensen-Kowski, Office of Freight and Commercial Vehicle Operations, Minnesota Department of Transportation, 395
John Ireland Blvd., MS 420, St. Paul, MN 55155.

There is no deadline for the public comment period at this time. There will be a 30-day comment period after MnDOT hears from stakeholders and proposes rule changes. Information about the 30-day comment period and other updates will be posted online at the Commercial Vehicle Operations rulemaking webpage when available.

View full news release

- MnDOT invites public to comment on rules governing Special Transportation Services providers

Upcoming MCOTA meetings

MCOTA usually meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at the MnDOT Central Office, from 1:00 to 3:30 p.m. The meetings are open, and members of the public are welcome to attend in person or to call in. Each meeting includes time for public comments. See the MCOTA website for more details.

- March 25, 2020, 1:00 to 3:30 p.m.
- April 22, 2020, 1:00 to 3:30 p.m.
- May 27, 2020, 1:00 to 3:30 p.m.

About MCOTA

The Minnesota Council on Transportation Access was established by the Minnesota Legislature 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."

www.CoordinateMNTransit.org