



Minnesota Council on Transportation Access

Strategic Plan 2020 – 2024

Acknowledgements: The Minnesota Council on Transportation Access would like to thank its stakeholders and partners who played a critical role in the development of this Strategic Plan, especially Minnesota’s RTCCs and TCAPs. The Council would like to extend a special thank you the University of Minnesota’s Center for Transportation Studies for their efforts in engaging key stakeholders and reporting the findings of engagement sessions.

The Council applauds agency staff and community partners from across Minnesota who have contributed to its strategic plan and looks forward to future work together.

Our Authority and Composition:

The Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (MCOTA) was established by the Minnesota Legislature in 2010 ([Minn. Statute 2010 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." "Transit public" means those persons who utilize public transit and those who, because of mental or physical disability, income status, or age are unable to transport themselves and are dependent upon others for transportation services.

Minnesota Council on Transportation Access Strategic Plan

- What Drives Us: Our Mission

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.

- What We Strive Toward: Our Vision

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

- What We Aim to Do: Our Goals

- Improve outcomes for people in the state of Minnesota.
- Increase the efficacy, efficiency, safety, cost-effectiveness, coordination and accessibility of service delivery.
- Increase capacity for change through cross-agency collaboration.

How We Work: Our Guiding Principles

As agency leaders charged with removing obstacles to coordinating transportation services and resources, it is imperative to focus on achieving the goals set out in MCOTA's authorizing legislation. The following updates to MCOTA's organizational structure are recommended to better meet the Council's legislative duties. Overarching principles provide context for the roles that will be expected from each level of the organization. This new structure will better position MCOTA to make progress towards its goals and respond to issues faced by the transit public.

Leadership from the top

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 or their designees, and will set strategic direction and prioritize work plan items for the MCOTA Leadership Team. Members of the MCOTA Leadership Team will be expected to check in with their agency's Senior Leadership Team member on a regular basis to keep them informed of Council activities.

Engaged and empowered agency representatives

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 Leadership Team will meet every-other-month, unless additional meetings are deemed necessary for Council business.

Staff support that coordinates and engages

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 the work of MCOTA working teams. The MCOTA Executive Director will receive direction from the MCOTA Leadership Team, recruit participation for working teams, and will facilitate work group meetings and shepherd groups towards successful outcomes.

Work groups that are focused and have clear directives

MCOTA Working Teams should consist of MCOTA leadership team members, agency staff, content experts, and RTCCs/TCAPs to work on specific initiatives identified by MCOTA, such as communications, event planning, legislation, research, and topics like volunteer driver programs. Special consideration should be given to establishing a work group with representatives who regularly rely on a variety of transit services in Minnesota. The working teams should meet frequently and report on their work to the MCOTA Leadership Team.

Clear communication and direction with local partners

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.

Consistency in engaging with Minnesotans

It is important for MCOTA to craft policies and recommendations with input from people who use Minnesota's transit systems. In the past, MCOTA has received input from both transit users and providers. Going forward, a transit user working group is being proposed to better center engagement with the transit public in MCOTA's work. Additionally, the RTCCs and TCAPs are tasked with engaging with members of the public at a regional level.

MCOTA should continue to engage with existing community advisory groups such as the Minnesota Council on Disability, the Minnesota Board on Aging and its Area Agencies on Aging, the [Minnesota Olmstead Plan's Community Engagement Workgroup](#), and the Met Council's Transit Accessibility Advisory Committee, while encouraging direct public engagement by RTCCs/TCAPs.

2019 MCOTA Leadership Team Members

Tim Henkel, Chair

Minnesota Department of Transportation

Joan Willshire, Vice Chair

Minnesota State Council on Disability

At-Large Representative: Victoria Nill

Minnesota Department of Transportation

Office of the Governor

Gerri Sutton

Metropolitan Council

Jim Varpness

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

Susan Bishop

Minnesota Department of Health

Diogo Reis

Minnesota Department of Human Services

Ron Quade

Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs

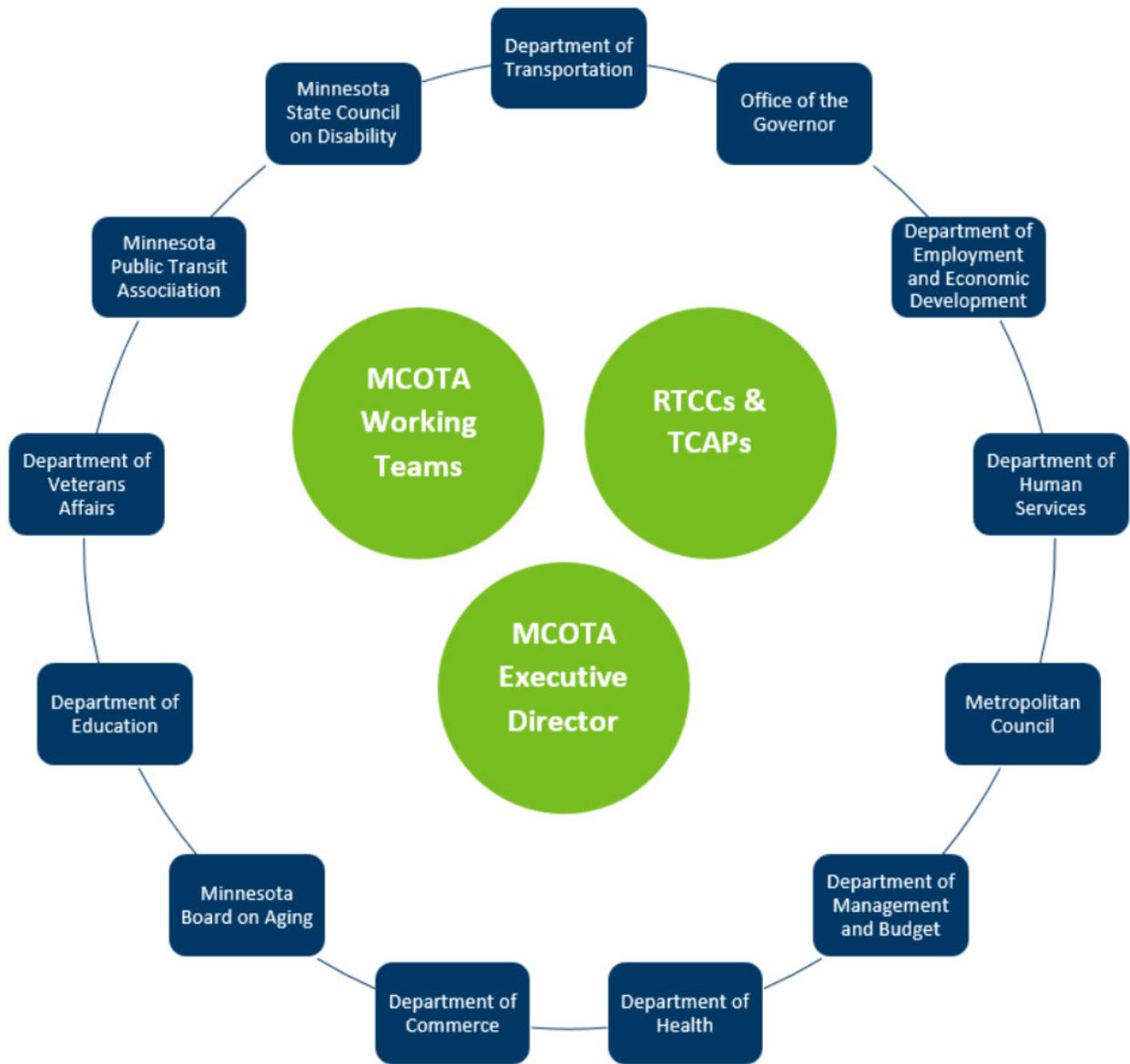
Shawn Kremer

Minnesota Management and Budget

Tiffany Collins

Minnesota Public Transit Association

Our Reach: Partners in Transportation



Our Desired Outcomes

MCOTA has a 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.” Achieving these outcomes will rely on work in a variety of areas with many stakeholders.

To make sure we’re moving the needle toward this goal over the next five years, we commit to developing effective measures that tell us how well Minnesota’s transit system is faring in these areas. Measures should help us understand our users’ experiences and understand how effective our service is.

As we do so, we will pay attention to disparities in transit service that are rooted in racial inequity, poverty, accessibility, affordability, and other special needs. We will take bold, data-driven action to intervene and address disparities. When and where someone receives services and supports from the state, we will work to ensure that those services and supports are delivered effectively, efficiently and equitably.

MCOTA believes that transit services for the transit public should:



What We Do: Our Core Strategies

We will utilize the following strategies to improve transportation coordination in Minnesota.

Provide support and technical assistance to local partners

- Provide technical assistance to RTCCs and TCAPs
- Assist with resolving state and federal barriers to coordination and service delivery
- Host an annual dialogue for all RTCCs and TCAPs
- Develop other infrastructure to facilitate communication within RTCCs and TCAPs
- Host regional workshops for each RTCC/TCAP

Share best practices and build coalitions

- Mitigate barriers of the state agency silos at the legislature
- Bring in various agencies that impact RTCCs/TCAPs related to coordination and increasing efficiencies
- Make recommendations to improve the coordination, availability, accessibility, efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and safety of transportation services provided to the transit public
- Help people know that MCOTA exists and is a resource for local entities

Identify and respond to research needs

- Develop a consistent, annual process for RTCCs/TCAPs to participate in nominating and selecting research and best practice needs
- Oversee research and best practice development
- Identify funding sources and champions for research
- Develop next steps on what to do with completed research and best practices recommendations

Engage in responsible education, communication, and advocacy activities

- Actively listen to input from the transit public and incorporate engagement results into Council activities
- Recommend statewide objectives for providing public transportation services for the transit public
- Identify barriers prohibiting coordination and accessibility of public transportation services and aggressively pursue the elimination of those barriers
- Advocate aggressively and coordinate with the Minnesota State Legislature to drive progress¹
- Recommend policies and procedures that meet current transit public needs for coordinating local, regional, state and federal funding and services for the transit public
- Develop an allocation methodology that equitably distributes transportation funds to compensate units of government and all entities that provide coordinated transportation services
- Identify policies and necessary legislation to facilitate vehicle sharing
- Advocate for eliminating barriers to coordination, implementing coordination strategies, enacting necessary legislation and appropriating resources to achieve the council's objectives.

¹ 174.285 MINNESOTA COUNCIL ON TRANSPORTATION ACCESS, Subd. 2. Duties of council (20) - advocate aggressively for *eliminating barriers* to coordination, *implementing coordination strategies*, *enacting necessary legislation*, and *appropriating resources* to achieve the council's objectives.

How We Assess Our Work: Core Strategy Outputs

The challenges that exist in Minnesota's current public transit systems will not be overcome unless state agencies change the way we do business and keep each other accountable. We will ensure that our strategies produce results by tracking our outputs annually over the next five years.

Provide support and technical assistance to local partners

- Sponsor meetings and conferences that address stakeholder needs and provide connections to a variety of resources
- Establishment of clear communication between MCOTA and Minnesota's RTCCs and TCAPs and transportation providers
- Regular attendance by Council members at meetings
- Develop or share tools/products that could be used by RTCCs and TCAPs
- Support RTCC/TCAP pilot projects

Share best practices and build coalitions

- Sponsor meetings and conferences that address stakeholder needs
- Revamp MCOTA's website to make it easier for stakeholders and the public to find information about past and current research, upcoming events, and other MCOTA activities, including RTCC- and TCAP-related activities and information
- Help establish relationships between RTCCs and TCAPs by holding bi-annual meetups
- Host an annual add-on to the public transit conference to convene regional groups

Identify and respond to research needs

- Establish a clear process for identifying potential research topic ideas
- Facilitate a transparent, defensible way to select and fund research projects
- Establish how research results will be used to help define need

Engage in responsible education, communication, and advocacy activities

- Create a transit user working group that will provide information to MCOTA about experiences using transit service throughout Minnesota.
- Regular attendance by Council members at meetings
- Establish a work team focused on legislative issues and coordinate MCOTA legislative priorities with member agencies' internal legislative timelines
- Recommend guidelines for developing accessible transportation coordination plans throughout the state
- Identify stakeholders in providing services for the transit public, and seek input from them concerning barriers and appropriate strategies

What to Expect: Our Timeline

Over the next five years, MCOTA will define its structure and organization, identify work products that are tangible and valuable, and contribute towards meaningful improvement in Minnesota's transit ecosystem.

Year 1²: Improve governance: Solidify Council structure and organization

- **MCOTA Leadership Team** clearly defines role and responsibilities for the **MCOTA Executive Director**
- **Agency Senior Leadership Team** meets to identify top priorities for the coming year (including how resources are provided for the Council), and **MCOTA Leadership Team** translates priorities into a work plan for the Council.
- **MCOTA Executive Director** organizes required **working teams** to address the priorities selected by the **Agency Senior Leadership Team**
- Continue engagement with RTCC/TCAP organizations to better understand how MCOTA can be a resource to local transportation coordination
- Use an **MCOTA Work Group** to define measures for assessing MCOTA's performance

Year 2: Improve deliverables: Ensure Council work products are tangible, valuable, and measurable

- Survey stakeholders to determine best practices in communication methods and deliverables to connect with stakeholders throughout Minnesota
- Attendance at **MCOTA Leadership Team** meetings is consistent and engaged
- **MCOTA Leadership Team** establishes a consistent process for identifying research needs and guiding research projects
- **Agency Senior Leadership Team** considers the need for dedicated MCOTA funding and identifies possible funding options for MCOTA initiatives
- **MCOTA Leadership Team** identifies actions to address measures identified by work group

Years 3-5: Improve outcomes: Consistent engagement and meaningful outcomes result in improvement

- **MCOTA work group** measures reductions in service gaps and duplicative services
- **MCOTA Leadership Team** develops consistent policies and practices to be used among all providers
- **MCOTA Leadership Team** works in partnership with RTCCs and TCAPs to identify effective ways for engaging with the public
- **MCOTA Leadership Team** monitors for the continued success of programs that are already working well
- **MCOTA work group** measures stakeholder satisfaction
- **MCOTA Executive Director** ensures improved collaboration among members

² MCOTA's work-planning year begins in March, which corresponds to the first full MCOTA Leadership Team meeting held following the adoption of this strategic planning document.