

**Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (MCOTA) Meeting Minutes**  
**May 27, 2020, 1:00–3:00 PM**  
**Meeting held via Zoom.**

**Members present:**

Chair – Tim Henkel, Minnesota Department of Transportation  
Vice Chair – Diogo Reis, Minnesota Department of Human Services  
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  
Gerri Sutton, Metropolitan Council  
Jodi Yanda, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

**Members absent:**

Kelly Garvey, Minnesota Department of Education  
Kody Olson, Minnesota State Council on Disability  
Rolando Sotolongo, Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs  
Jim Varpness, Minnesota Board on Aging

**Others present:**

Minnesota Department of Transportation:

Nancy Daubenberger, Deputy Commissioner  
Office of Transit and Active Transportation: Tom Gottfried, Mark Nelson, Sue Siemers, Noel Shughart  
Kristie Billiar, ADA Program and Policy  
Erik Rudeen, Office of Government Affairs

University of Minnesota:

Humphrey School of Public Affairs: Frank Douma  
Center for Transportation Studies: Kaydee Kirk, Arlene Mathison  
Cathleen Amick, United Community Action Partnership  
Robyn Bernardy, Dakota County  
Mary Bovee, Age Well Arrowhead, Duluth  
Heidi Corcoran, Milligan Partners  
Ashley Eckdahl, East Central Regional Development Commission  
Mike Greenbaum  
Mary Hayes, St. Anthony Park Area Seniors  
Alan Hermann, Scott County  
Sheila Holbrook-White, Washington County  
Bryan McCoy, Headwaters Regional Development Commission and North Central Minnesota RTCC  
Kelly McDonough, Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging  
Sherry Munyon, MN Public Transit Association  
Scott Olson, Newtrax  
Karen Onan, East Central RTCC  
Kim Pettman, Transit and Public Policy Advocate  
Lynnell Popowski, Northwest Regional Development Commission  
Mark Schermerhorn, Anoka County Transit  
Beverly Sidlo Tolliver, Northeast Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordinating Council  
Courtney Whited, Minnesota Board on Aging

**Call to Order + Introductions**

Henkel called to order the May meeting of the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access at 1:04 PM on May 27, 2020. Everyone introduced themselves.

## **Review and Approve Agenda**

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

## **Public Comments**

Pettman shared the following comments:

- She appreciated the new way MCOTA did introductions at the beginning of the meeting. People could hear clearly and know who was in the room.
- She encouraged attendees to invite others from their organization, especially policy leaders and people who are representing different programs, to MCOTA meetings. Many hands make light work. She also encouraged attendees to engage people from the community in the work of MCOTA. It is important to help build support for transit coordination and get many different perspectives.
- She is glad that today's meeting will involve conversation around the important topic of COVID-19. It is a top issue for agencies and many of us. It is important to think about the intersection of transportation and COVID-19 efforts at each state agency and organization represented here. Discussing the problems, challenges, things that are starting to work, etc. are all helpful. We can all help each other through these discussions.

## **April Meeting Minutes**

Kremer moved to approve the April minutes, seconded by Bishop. The minutes were unanimously **approved**.

## **Agency Senior Leadership Team Meeting Draft Agenda**

Gottfried shared the timing of the agency senior leadership team meeting will be mid-late July. The meeting is being timed to occur before agencies are drafting their proposed legislation for the coming legislative session, which is usually done in August. The proposed agenda would focus on: meeting purpose, program budgets, 2020-21 priorities (including the Volunteer Driver Forum, RTCCs/TCAPs Phase III, and MPTA and Volunteer Driver Coalition's proposed volunteer driver legislation). MnDOT Commissioner Anderson Kelliher would be facilitating the meeting since the chair of MCOTA, Henkel, is from MnDOT. In the future when another agency is chairing MCOTA, their commissioner could facilitate the leadership meeting. Henkel stated that holding this meeting is part of the MCOTA Strategic Plan. Gottfried will follow up offline to poll invitees with a series of meeting dates to see works for all. Members did not have any questions or concerns. Reis moved to approve the draft agency senior leadership team agenda, seconded by Collins. The draft agenda was unanimously **approved**.

## **Work Team Updates**

- **Volunteer Driver Work Team Tasks + Update on Proposed 2020 Volunteer Driver Forum** – Onan walked through the draft agendas which she shared on the screen. The forum is now being revisioned as a monthly series of smaller virtual webinars/forums on various volunteer driver-related topics to be held November 18, December 9, January 20, February 17, and March 17, April 21, and May 19. The planning group next meets this week. A draft final agenda will be shared at the June meeting. It was suggested by Henkel to consider having the webinar 90 minutes without a break or two hours but then include a small break. The webinars will be recorded and posted online.
- **Work Plan/Operations Work Team** (performance measures) – Gottfried shared that this work team will be focused on performance measures and also coordinating alignment of the various MCOTA, TCAP, RTCC plans. Confirmed members of this team are Sutton, Garvey, and Jeff Niblack from MMB. Gottfried will aim to have this group meet before the June MCOTA meeting.

## **FY20 MCOTA Budget Update**

Gottfried walked through the document that was shared ahead of time. The work is on track and on budget for FY20. Members did not have any questions.

## **FY21 CTS Draft Contract**

Gottfried shared that this contract aligns with the MCOTA work plan tasks for 2020-21. He walked through the contract and provided an overview. Kremer asked if there were any changes from where the funds are coming from – Gottfried stated all funds are continuing to come from MnDOT.

Sutton moved to approve the FY21 budget, seconded by Kremer. The budget was unanimously **approved**.

## **Quarterly Stakeholder Communication**

Mathison provided an overview of the communication content as outlined in the document that was shared prior to the meeting. Sutton moved to approve the communication, seconded by Reis. The communication was unanimously **approved**.

## **Legislative Updates**

Rudeen noted that the services provisions that he shared about the last meeting were included in a small transportation bill and it is anticipated it will be signed by the Governor soon. MnDOT added some requirements for keeping trip records. The bill allows MnDOT to not issue operating authority if background studies have not been performed as required; and the bill also is requiring MnDOT to send written notice to a provider who fails to pay for their inspection decals. If they don't follow up with payment, MnDOT has the ability to suspend their operating authority.

Regarding bonding, a bonding bill was not enacted. Rudeen shared some of the detail of that bill. It is anticipated the legislature, after taking about a one week break, will get back to negotiating on a bonding bill and some other issues that were left unfinished at the end of the regular session. A special session will likely be called by the Governor for a variety of reasons.

## **Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils Update**

Benardy presented about her work with the TCAP in Dakota County and their four different projects: transportation finder, Lyft partnership, Go Dakota travel training program, and Dakota Link. In terms of impacts of COVID-19, Lyft ridership in the program has dropped by half from February to April. Henkel also shared that at many of the Olmstead Plan listening sessions they heard over and over the need for this type of accessibility for people who have been incarcerated – the Dakota County programs have been very helpful for these populations.

## **Agency Updates**

- **MPTA Volunteer Driver Legislation** – Munyon with the Minnesota Public Transit Association shared about the Volunteer Driver Coalition's work to create a definition of volunteer drivers to be incorporated into statute. They are also working on policy regarding auto insurance to protect volunteer drivers from having an increase in their rates. They ran into opposition and the just decided to focus on the definition. When trying to get a hearing COVID-19 happened. They've also been active on the federal legislation in with Minnesota delegation and have sent letters to the chairs and minority leaders of the transportation divisions of the appropriations committee encouraging them to resolve the mileage reimbursement. Next spring, but they are going to have a concerted effort through the volunteer driver coalition for an educational campaign to ensure all people running for office at the state level and hopefully county commissioners receive information on this important issue. They will not be involved in political campaigns.

Request to MCOTA: MCOTA recommend legislation to address the insurance issues faced by volunteer drivers. First, this includes addressing the discrepancy in the reimbursement rate of 14 cents/mile as compared to the business rate of 57 cents/mile as dictated in congressional law. Additionally if volunteer drivers get reimbursed more than \$600 in a 12 month period or the calendar year, the IRS considers it income and it is taxed – this to be resolved. Finally, volunteer drivers have seen their rates go up simply because they are a volunteer driver. These are all disincentives for volunteer drivers – the tax implications and the insurance rate increases in some cases. In the near term, Munyon will send to Gottfried a document with the request for MCOTA members to review. The document will be shared with members and on the

June agenda for discussion and approval. Public comment on this topic can also be received at the June meeting.

- **Olmstead Plan** – Billiar shared the last subcabinet meeting was May 11 and it was a quarterly reporting time for them on service hours and on-time performance. Some tweaks to these items were made and will be in the next iteration of the plan. Next meeting is June 22. They are now meeting every other month. These meetings are open to the public.
- **Other Member Updates:**
  - Gottfried and Nelson have been working with Bishop and others at MDH on statewide transportation access and food access as well as on issues of how to safely and reliably transport people who have tested positive for COVID-19.

### **Review Draft Agenda for Next Meeting**

Henkel and Gottfried reviewed the draft agenda. Members did not have any comments.

### **Inviting Commissioners to MCOTA Meetings**

Members did not feel that MCOTA meetings to be added to their commissioners' schedule, unless the commissioner explicitly makes the request to do so. Commissioners have already appointed agency designees to the Council.

### **Adjourn**

Yanda made a motion to adjourn; Sutton seconded. The motion was unanimously **approved**. The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 PM.