

**Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (MCOTA) Meeting Minutes**  
**September 10, 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  
Tiffany Collins, Minnesota Public Transit Association  
John Doan, Minnesota Board on Aging  
Kelly Garvey, Minnesota Department of Education  
David Fenley, Minnesota State Council on Disability (proxy for Kody Olson)  
Shawn Kremer, Minnesota Management and Budget  
Ellen Pillsbury, Minnesota Department of Health  
Suzanne Sobotka, Office of the Governor.  
Gerri Sutton, Metropolitan Council  
Jodi Yanda, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

**Members absent:**

Peter Brickwedde, Minnesota Department of Commerce  
Rolando Sotolongo, Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs

**Others present:**

- Minnesota Department of Transportation:
  - Nancy Daubenberger, Deputy Commissioner
  - Office of Transit & Active Transportation: Kristie Billiar, Tom Gottfried, Michelle Lichtig, Noel Shughart, Sue Siemers
- University of Minnesota:
  - Humphrey School of Public Affairs: Frank Douma
  - Center for Transportation Studies: Kaydee Kirk, Arlene Mathison
- Robyn Bernardy, Dakota County
- Ashley Eckdahl, East Central Regional Development Commission and RTCC
- Alan Hermann, Scott County
- Mike Greenbaum, NewTrax
- Sheila Holbrook-White
- Gail Jerve, Prairie Five Development Commission
- Matt Kallroos, Region 5 Development Commission
- Shelley Madore, Olmstead Implementation Office
- Bryan McCoy, Headwaters Regional Development Commission & North Central MN RTCC
- Heather Molesworth
- Scott Olson, NewTrax
- Karen Onan, East Central Regional Transportation Coordinating Council
- Kim Pettman, Transit and Public Policy Advocate
- Shelly Pflaum, Southwest Regional Development Commission
- Lynnell Popowski, Northwest Regional Development Commission
- Robin Rohr, Hennepin County
- Mark Schermerhorn, Anoka County Transit
- Dawn Simonson
- Beverly Tolliver, Arrowhead Regional Development Commission and Northeast Minnesota RTCC

**Call to Order + Member Roll Call**

Henkel called to order the September meeting of the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access at 1:02 PM on September 10, 2020. Kirk led a verbal roll call of MCOTA members.

## Review and Approve Agenda

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

## Public Comments

Pettman shared the following:

I this is a little personal for me. So please excuse me if it sounds different than normal. I want everybody to listen to the statement really carefully and I'm going to say it a couple times because it's a pretty big deal: *There isn't bariatric transportation in many cases in Greater Minnesota, and that includes ambulance service, medical transportation, and volunteer driver service.* I'm going to focus primarily on EMS or emergency service such as ambulance. I have a personal story if anybody wants to talk to me offline, they can because it's longer than three minute story.

If you multiply the population of Greater Minnesota times the obesity rate, which the Department of Health says 30.1%, that's 750,000 people. So I'm going to say this again: There isn't an ambulance service in greater Minnesota for bariatric patients. It's been checked out there might be an anomaly in some pockets. But we've got a big problem it directly affects people's health, and I'm currently partially stranded at a hospital. There's another matter about getting equipment at the place I'm going to. But can you imagine the health impact costs and the Medicare costs and the costs to society? How do people even get to their appointments? How do they keep up with their care? One thing I'd like people to realize: we can talk all day long about why people are overweight or fat. But for today, or the day that they're being picked up, we have to deal with a situation they're in today. And different people are going to try to help with this, but it also affects the transit dependent population in a higher percentage, people of color, people living in poverty, and people with disabilities. So we've got to do something about this. I'm surprised I got through this without crying. But please let's do something about this. And again, just to know that volunteer drivers stuff and have small cars and a lot of the STS NEMT providers, there's not a lot of choices. So let's please work on this together in an interagency way if anybody wants to talk to me offline that is just fine.

## 7/15/20 Meeting Minutes

Fenley moved to approve the 7/15/20 minutes, seconded by Collins. The minutes were unanimously **approved**.

## 7/24/20 Meeting Minutes

Sutton moved to approve the 7/24/20 minutes, seconded by Kremer. The minutes were unanimously **approved**.

## Debrief Agency Senior Leadership Team Meeting

Gottfried provided an overview of the [Agency Senior Leadership Team meeting](#) held July 24. Among the items discussed, the MCOTA agencies are working to move forward the volunteer driver-related legislation issues put forth at that meeting with the aim of having them incorporated into the Governor's budget proposal. Henkel also reminded the group the purpose of the meeting is gather senior agency leaders together (face to face when possible) to understand the MCOTA strategic plan and related action plan, act on any opportunities that may require agency leader action that cannot be accomplished by the agency MCOTA member representatives, and an opportunity identify gaps in our strategic and action plans. Henkel thanked the member representatives who prepared their agency leaders very well to help make the meeting a success. He also acknowledged all the friends of MCOTA who were present and helped move the legislation discussions forward. Pettman encouraged members to invite their other top senior agency leaders to this meeting and to any and all MCOTA meetings held throughout the year so that people always feel welcome.

## Legislative Planning for Next Session

Gottfried shared that MnDOT staff are working to bring forward the two different pieces of volunteer driver-related legislation coming out of the Agency Senior Leadership Meeting to the top MnDOT leadership in order to ultimately deliver this to the Governor to facilitate the inclusion of the legislation into the Governor's budget.

Reis shared that the Department of Human Services is also planning for the 2021 legislative session. There are two possible legislative proposals related to the non-NEMT program.

- Based on community feedback, one is related to parents' ability to get to medical appointments when they have other minor children – the proposal would be to cover the cost of travel for the minor children to accompany the parent that needs health care services. This would be to eliminate barriers for people to get to medical care.
- The second idea that DHS is exploring, also based on some feedback from stakeholders and community members, is related to people have access to transportation and beyond for medical services. Today, DHS has a cost effectiveness test - so if somebody uses public transit and it's more cost effective for DHS to buy a public monthly pass for them, they will do so. DHS is contemplating eliminating that cost effectiveness test for anybody who uses public transit in the Medicaid program for at least one healthcare service a month – in this case, DHS would buy a public transit pass for them to use for things like grocery, pharmacy trips, family trips, entertainment, visit a friend, attend a religious event, and also job opportunities/training. So since DHS is already paying for some of the transportation, they'd like to offer little bit more flexibility for folks that can use public transit to use it in ways that really serve their lives more holistically.

Pettman shared that she is completely supportive of this legislative work and can see how it will improve the lives and health of people, including those who are low income and persons with disabilities, and also save money.

### **COVID-Positive Transportation Program Update**

Gottfried shared that MnDOT released in September a solicitation for a transportation coordinator to instigate a program called "COVID-19 Positive Transportation" legislation. This has been approved through the Governor and the funds were released to MnDOT in August. MnDOT is working to create an opportunity for the non-medical emergency transportation providers across the state that includes all counties (but not metro since they have equivalent programs). By early October this program will be set up. MnDOT is working very closely with DHS and, more specifically, the local public health staff who will ultimately identify who will need this transportation. These are for people that don't have any other option for transportation and it will be COVID protocol safe and transporting people in the safest environment. The information on the program is posted on MnDOT's website.

### **MCOTA Work Teams**

- Volunteer Driver – Gottfried shared that the Volunteer Driver Work Team is working on three topics including the forum series, the brochure, and how this group can continue to support volunteer driver programs post-COVID.
- Forum Series – Onan shared that the final few moderators and presenters are being confirmed. Marketing and a graphic look at coming together. The RTCCs and other partner groups will be promoting the events. The events will be videorecorded and posted to the web for future viewing. Henkel thanked Onan and the team for their work in getting this to the final stages.
- Communication – Lichtig shared the Communication Work Team is focused on the annual legislative report, the newsletter, and the website including the RTCC information that is posted. They are also supporting the communication activities of the Volunteer Driver Virtual Forum Series.
  - Draft Annual Report – Mathison thanked the work team members who helped with the annual report effort. The Work Team will meet in October and in late October members will be emailed the updated draft for review. Then the first draft of this report is turned into MnDOT the 1<sup>st</sup> of November and then the final version will come to MCOTA for approval in November. It is turned into the Governor's office in December and posted on the web likely in January. Mathison provided an overview of the report details.
  - Draft Quarterly Newsletter – Mathison provided an overview of the September topics including the Volunteer Driver Forum Series, update on the Agency Senior Leadership meeting, update on Arrowhead RTCC, highlight Dakota County's Lyft riding share pilot, and Washington County food security and transportation responsiveness during COVID-19. Mathison also shared about potential topics for the next newsletter as well.
    - Pettman suggested having an equity or greater Minnesota focus in every newsletter and MCOTA members agreed this would be helpful. Lichtig also added that both the annual report and newsletter involve more elements of storytelling about how lives are changed

with transportation coordination. Pettman also inquired about having something in the newsletter about regarding transportation for voting.

- A motion was made by Kremer to approve the newsletter content, seconded by Sutton. The September newsletter was unanimously **approved**.
- Operations – Molesworth shared the team has been working since the late spring on the development performance measures for the RTCCs and TCAPs. They'll have a final draft at the November meeting to present.

## **Greater MN Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils (RTCCs) + Twin Cities Transit Coordination Assistance Projects (TCAPs)**

### **1. Program/Grants Update**

Siemers shared an [update](#) that as of the end of September they will have all of their regional planning grants completed. They will be working this fall with the four regions who have not yet moved into implementation. Phase two of the application is January 1 to December 31 with 80% federal funding and 20% state funding. Phase three is July 1, 2020 to June 20, 2020 with 80% federal, 10% state and a 10% local match funds. This work has been very positive and the partnership are working well.

Shughart provided an update on the TCAPs in the metro. Most of these are affiliated with a county. They are older than the RTCCs since they've been around 4-6 years. Anoka County is in their phase one planning by the end of 2020 and they've found public participation during COVID has been hard. Hennepin County has decided to postpone their planning until next year given the lack of public participation with COVID. Dakota County applied for some CARES money and received some funds to do some transportation projects and provide transportation service. TCAPs are trying to meet needs in response to COVID. The TCAPs meet together monthly to share best practices.

Lichtig shared that she has met virtually with these groups recently as she has begun her new position to support MCOTA. She shared that the foundation in the start of these groups is bringing together people and organizations who don't usually talk to each other and they are now working in a collaborative way. This foundation has been very valuable now that we are in COVID. The groups see each other as collaborators, not competitors. Two RTCCs, Northwest and Headwaters, jointly applied for and were awarded funding for the National Center for Mobility Management and these grants support communities to seek to create innovative mobility solutions. Only 3-5 grants nationally are awarded. Because of this collaboration among all the RTCCs and that we have this opportunity within our state through Northwest and Headwaters, they will lead us through the thinking and opportunities as we work towards a coordinated efforts.

### **2. TCAP Presentation + Discussion on Transit Response to COVID-19**

Holbrook-White presented on the work of Washington County Mobility Management best practices including the value of cultivating partnerships, especially in a time of COVID-19. Details can be found [here](#).

## **Agency Updates**

Olmstead Plan – Madore said the Olmstead Implementation Office is looking into address all issues (transportation, housing, etc.) in a holistic way and to work even more closely with MCOTA and support the work of MCOTA.

Member Round Robin – Members did not have any items to share

## **Review Draft Agenda for November 18th Meeting**

Henkel provided a high-level overview of the November meeting. Members did not have any questions.

**Adjourn:** Doan made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Yanda. The motion was unanimously **approved**. The meeting adjourned at 3:08 PM.