

### **2020-2021 VOLUNTEER DRIVER PROGRAM FORUM SERIES**

Join us for a new educational webinar series on volunteer driver programs! The Minnesota Council on Transportation Access is hosting this monthly virtual series starting November 13.

Karen Onan of the East Central Regional Development Commission and Beverly Sidlo-Tolliver of the Northeast/Arrowhead Regional Transportation Coordinating Council are co-chairs of the planning committee, which includes MCOTA members and members of the Minnesota Volunteer Driver Coalition. The series will be monthly from November 2020 through May 2021. All sessions will be virtual and will also be recorded and available online.

Save the dates and watch for more information soon.

- November 13, 2020: Series Overview
- December 9, 2020: Policy Issues
- January 20, 2021: Volunteer Driver Recruitment and Promotion
- February 17, 2021: How to Start a Volunteer Driver Program
- March 17, 2021: Disability, Person-Centered, Cultural Diversity and Equity Training
- April 21, 2021: Trauma-Informed Care Training and Deaf & Hard of Hearing Community
- May 19, 2021: Resources for Safety, Security, Crisis, Medical, Passenger, Resiliency and Boundary Issues

### **MCOTA SENIOR LEADERSHIP MEETING**

MCOTA held its first annual Agency Senior Leadership meeting with commissioners on July 24, 2020. The agenda included an overview the MCOTA's 2020-2024 Strategic Plan and 2020/21 Work Plan; discussion of MCOTA, Regional Transportation Coordinating Council (RTCC), and Transit Coordination Assistance Projects (TCAP) Program issues and opportunities, including how agency programs can support the mission and implementation of RTCC and TCAP initiatives; and two votes on volunteer driver program legislation that have been requested by the 81-member Minnesota Volunteer Driver Coalition and the Minnesota Public Transit Association.

Senior leaders voted that MCOTA agencies will support Minnesota state legislation and advocacy for inclusion in Governor Walz and Lieutenant Governor Flanagan's budget proposal for 2022-2023 that:

1. Clearly defines a volunteer driver as "not for hire"; and
2. Provides an income tax subtraction for volunteer drivers

MCOTA senior leadership also approved a motion that urges Congress to take action to change the 14 cents per mile reimbursement for volunteers to match the business mileage reimbursement which is, as of July 2020, about 57 cents. This request is to the Appropriations Committee in addition to the Minnesota Congressional delegation. A letter will be prepared from MCOTA to members of Congress that will include the language and the background.

### **ARROWHEAD RTCC UPDATE**

*By Beverly Sidlo-Tolliver, Transportation Coordinator, ARDC Planning, Division of Arrowhead Regional Development Commission*

In April, Beverly Sidlo-Tolliver provided an update to MCOTA about the Arrowhead RTCC's activities. Its members include public transit agencies, including through the Duluth Transit Authority (DTA), Arrowhead Transit, tribal transit agencies, volunteer driver agencies, direct client service providers, veteran services, healthcare representatives, and a representative from each county.

Arrowhead RTCC's work plan focuses on building the foundation for coordination between transportation services in the region and then filling the gaps. Examples include creating a transportation provider database, facilitating vehicle sharing, developing a rider training program, and strengthening volunteer driver programs.

### **DAKOTA COUNTY'S LYFT RIDESHARING PILOT**

*By Robyn Bernardy, Mobility Manager, Dakota County*

In May, Robyn Bernardy shared information several Dakota County transportation coordination initiatives, including their Dakota County Social Services and Lyft Partnership Pilot. In Minnesota, transportation is a billable service under the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Home and Community Based (HCBS) waivers. Under the pilot, individuals with HCBS waivers can take Lyft to get to and from employment and/or to access the community. Dakota County then bills the individual's Medicaid Waiver directly for the cost of the rides taken.



Prior to the pilot, individuals were using many different forms of transportation. The pilot began in March 2019 with 23 riders and slowly grew to 158 riders in November 2019 and up to 435 riders in May. Each rider was taking an average of 24 trips a month, with an average cost of \$13.40 per one-way trip.

The team has evaluated the pilot through one-month and six-month surveys, focus groups, and case studies. Prior to the pilot, 60% of individuals were either dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied with their transportation, with the remaining 40% neutral. One month into the pilot, nearly 92% of individuals were either satisfied or extremely satisfied with their transportation. Other outcomes include:

- Can get to work/leave when they need to = 71%
- Friends/family no longer have to drive = 63%

- Transportation is less stressful = 63%
- Transportation is more reliable = 61%
- Spending less time on transportation = 61%
- Can work more hours = 43%
- Got a new job! = 25%

The county highlights several [success stories from the pilot in videos on its website](#).

See the [GoDakota website](#) for information about the Lyft Ridesharing Program and other transportation initiatives in Dakota County, including its transportation finder, travel training, and DakotaLink.

## WASHINGTON COUNTY TCAP: FOOD SECURITY AND TRANSPORTATION RESPONSIVENESS DURING COVID-19

*By Sheila Holbrook-White, Mobility Manager, Washington County*

Early in the onset of the coronavirus pandemic in March, Washington County recognized the importance of responding to food insecurity and created a three-person Food Security Unit that leveraged existing relationships built through the Washington County Transportation Consortium, including Metro Council’s Transit Link and the Washington County Community Development Agency. The mobility manager serves as the human hub, connecting individuals who need food shelf deliveries to Transit Link’s contracted provider and supporting the connection between grocery purchases and individuals who order food.

The county sent a flyer with information about the grocery and food shelf deliveries to about 10,000 homes of people with disabilities, older adults and individuals who live at a Community Development Agency property in the county. As of September 1, 2020, Transit Link provided food shelf deliveries to 2,689 individuals in the county. 52% of those who had requested an emergency food shelf delivery had never requested assistance from a food shelf before.

The mobility manager is also connecting with community partners to make sure they know which volunteer driver programs are operating and which Community Circulators are still providing rides so that transportation is still available for those who rely on it.

