

2017 Report on

Minnesota Council on Transportation Access

January 2018

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Legislative Request

This report is issued to comply with [Minnesota Statutes 174.285, subdivision 5.](#)

174.285 MINNESOTA COUNCIL ON TRANSPORTATION ACCESS.

Subd. 5. Report.

By January 15 of each year, beginning in 2012, the council shall report its findings, recommendations, and activities to the governor's office and to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over transportation, health, and human services, and to the legislature as provided under section 3.195.

The cost of preparing this report is less than \$5,000.

Summary

In 2010, under [Minn. Stat. 174.285](#), the Minnesota State Legislature created the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access 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.

In this annual report, the council provides a summary of 2017 activities that advance MCOTA's legislatively outlined duties to improve transportation coordination throughout the state.

This year, volunteer driver programs in Minnesota were a significant area of focus. MCOTA published two studies related to volunteer driver programs. The first study, [Volunteer Driver Programs in Minnesota: Benefits and Barriers](#), was an inventory of case studies of volunteer driver programs in Minnesota, including faith-based programs. The 30 volunteer driver programs represented in the survey provide a total of 32,000 volunteer hours per month, and are a significant and low-cost way of providing transportation services, especially in rural parts of the state. The study identified barriers for volunteer drivers and made recommendations to strengthen the programs. Details about this study were reported in last year's MCOTA annual report.¹

The second study identified the economic benefits of volunteer driver programs in the state by evaluating six volunteer driver programs. The study found that, on average, volunteer driver services save from \$18 to \$185 for each round-trip, depending on trip length and the type of alternative services. The annual savings of these six programs range from about \$75,000 to as much as \$1,480,000.

MCOTA members also identified potential steps to address two significant barriers to volunteer driver programs: 1) volunteer driver insurance liability and 2) tax implications of volunteer driver reimbursement. Two task forces of MCOTA are meeting with stakeholders to determine possible options and next steps for resolving each issue.

In addition, MnDOT and Department of Human Services staff participated in a series of facilitated discussions to understand their common transportation interests and identify ways to collaborate more effectively, including refinement of the concept and plans for Greater Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils. The grant application for the planning phase was issued in September 2017.

MCOTA is also working to ensure access for persons with disabilities in a changing transportation environment. In its new study about public-private transit partnerships that involve transportation network companies, MCOTA recommended public agencies ensure that public-private partnerships address access for persons with disabilities, civil rights and regulatory compliance. MCOTA is also interested in ensuring that autonomous vehicles accommodate persons with disabilities; members learned about current projects for the testing of autonomous vehicles in the state, and some members are participating in pilot testing and policy groups.

Finally, beginning in January 2017, MCOTA sent several e-mail updates to a distribution list of about 600 stakeholders who have been connected to transit coordination in the state. In addition, MCOTA refreshed its website, [CoordinateMNTransit.org](#), to be more modern and responsive, and to also include the new state of Minnesota branding.

¹ [2016 Report for Minnesota Council on Transportation Access](#)

MCOTA plans the following activities for 2018:

- Continue organizing and supporting the development of Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils
- Encourage the development of and reducing barriers to volunteer driver programs
- Identify best practices for youth employment transportation
- Communicate with stakeholders through quarterly e-mail updates and a volunteer driver program forum in May 2018

Introduction

Transportation is essential for connectivity among state residents. Improving coordination and efficiencies among transportation providers is critical to helping older adults, persons with low incomes, veterans and persons with disabilities enjoy independence and participate fully in the state's economy. As Minnesota's state-level coordinating council, MCOTA serves as an advisory group and a clearinghouse to address transportation coordination topics from a statewide perspective.

The Minnesota State Legislature established MCOTA in 2010. It includes representatives from 13 agencies, listed in Appendix A. MCOTA's work focuses on increasing capacity to serve unmet transportation needs, improving the quality of transit service, improving understanding and access to these services by the public, and achieving more cost-effective service delivery.

Major MCOTA efforts this year were to strengthen local involvement and to better understand the extent and impact of volunteer driver programs in Minnesota, including barriers to the programs. MCOTA agencies are working to develop local-level solutions to improve transportation access through coordination. Updates of local coordination plans outline strategies for local-level solutions. MCOTA continues to work on improving access to transportation through coordination among providers.

Volunteer driver programs, ensuring accessibility in light of potential new partnerships with transportation network companies, and preparing for new technologies (autonomous vehicles) in Minnesota were a significant area of focus this year. The organizing and planning for Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils in Greater Minnesota is starting this year, and the first-in-the-state transportation coordinating collaborative in Dakota County is maturing. MCOTA, through RTCCs and other initiatives, is supporting Minnesota's Olmstead Plan, which is designed to make it possible for individuals with disabilities to live and work in the setting they choose.

MCOTA mission

The mission of the MCOTA is to work together to remove obstacles that prevent the successful coordination of transportation programs and resources among their respective customers.

MCOTA vision

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

MCOTA legislative duties

Under [Minn. Stat. 174.285](#), the purpose of MCOTA is 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.

To improve transit coordination and accessibility, the statute assigns the council 20 duties:

1. Compile information on existing transportation alternatives for the transit public, and serve as a clearinghouse for information on services, funding sources, innovations and coordination efforts.

2. Identify best practices and strategies that have been successful in Minnesota and in other states for coordination of local, regional, state and federal funding and services.
3. Recommend statewide objectives for providing public transportation services for the transit public.
4. Identify barriers prohibiting coordination and accessibility of public transportation services and aggressively pursue the elimination of those barriers.
5. Recommend policies and procedures for coordinating local, regional, state and federal funding and services for the transit public.
6. Identify stakeholders in providing services for the transit public, and seek input from them concerning barriers and appropriate strategies.
7. Recommend guidelines for developing transportation coordination plans throughout the state.
8. Encourage all state agencies participating in the council to purchase trips within the coordinated system.
9. Facilitate the creation and operation of transportation brokerages to match riders to the appropriate service, promote shared dispatching, compile and disseminate information on transportation options, and promote regional communication.
10. Encourage volunteer driver programs and recommend legislation to address liability and insurance issues.
11. Recommend minimum performance standards for delivery of services.
12. Identify methods to eliminate fraud and abuse in special transportation services.
13. Develop a standard method for addressing liability insurance requirements for transportation services purchased, provided or coordinated.
14. Design and develop a contracting template for providing coordinated transportation services.
15. Recommend an interagency uniform contracting, billing and accounting system for providing coordinated transportation services.
16. Encourage the design and development of training programs for coordinated transportation services.
17. Encourage the use of public school transportation vehicles for the transit public.
18. Develop an allocation methodology that equitably distributes transportation funds to compensate units of government and all entities that provide coordinated transportation services.
19. Identify policies and necessary legislation to facilitate vehicle sharing.
20. Advocate for eliminating barriers to coordination, implementing coordination strategies, enacting necessary legislation and appropriating resources to achieve the council's objectives.

Strategic priorities

In 2014-15, MCOTA engaged in strategic planning. The five most important priorities for MCOTA are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: MCOTA's five strategic priorities with their associated legislative duties

| # | Strategic Priority* | Legislative Duties Addressed Under Minn. Stat. 174.285 |
|---|--|--|
| 1 | Develop regional organizations to help people use statewide tools. | 1-7, 9-11, 13-14, 16-17, 19-20 |
| 2 | Optimize the number of service providers and agencies within the state. | 1-5, 11, 20 |
| 3 | Use common administrative tools to standardize recordkeeping and reporting. | 1-5, 12-13, 15, 20, |
| 4 | Eliminate funding silos or find a way to share funds. | 1-5, 18, 20 |
| 5 | Offer state-supplied dispatch software and/or enable coordination between dispatch software programs throughout the state. | 1-5, 20 |

*Strategic priorities approved on Jan. 27, 2015

MCOTA 2017 Activities and Accomplishments

Since its creation in 2010, MCOTA has pursued projects and activities to improve transportation coordination in Minnesota. Below are brief descriptions of key council activities and accomplishments during 2017.

Table 2: Key MCOTA 2017 Activities and Accomplishments

| Activity* | Legislative Duties Addressed Under Minn. Stat. 174.285 |
|--|--|
| Published report on the economic benefits of Minnesota volunteer driver programs | 1, 2, 10 |
| Responded to issues with volunteer driver insurance and tax implications of reimbursement: consultation with appropriate regulatory agencies | 10, 13, 20 |
| Published report on public-private partnerships in transit | 1, 2, 4, and 5 |
| Participated in Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils development: planning phase 1 application issued | 1-11, 13-14, 16-17, 19-20 |
| Enhanced MCOTA's communications: website, e-mail updates | 1 |
| Received updates on Olmstead Plan progress | 3, 4 |

*See Appendix B for a list of all initiatives since the Council's inception grouped by legislative duty.

Economic benefits of Minnesota volunteer driver programs

This year, MCOTA published a report that identifies the economic benefits of volunteer driver programs in the state by building on the [2016 MCOTA volunteer program survey \(PDF\)](#). The study used six volunteer driver programs as case studies: county-based volunteer program, transit system-based programs, and Faith in Action programs. University of Minnesota researcher Jerry Zhao interviewed selected providers that use volunteer drivers in Minnesota and compared the cost of volunteer driver programs to alternative services, such as private provider services, MnDOT-certified special transportation services, or taxi services.

The study found that, on average, volunteer driver services can save from \$18 to \$185 for each round-trip, depending on trip length and the type of alternative services. The annual savings of these six programs range from about \$75,000 to as much as \$1,480,000.

The programs studied were:

1. Volunteer Services of Carlton County
2. Central Community Transit
3. United Community Action Partnership



Figure 1: Map of Minnesota with circles in the headquarters of volunteer driver program case studies

4. Southeastern Minnesota Community Action Council
5. Faith in Action for Cass County
6. Faith in Action in Red Wing

MCOTA plans to use this study to inform policymakers, share best practices for the networks, and to strengthen the volunteer programs.

The full report is available online and is entitled, [“Cost-Benefit Analysis of Volunteer Driver Programs: Minnesota Case Studies”](#).

This project relates to MCOTA legislative duties 1, 2 and 10 by compiling information on volunteer driver programs and identifying the economic benefits of those programs compared to other alternatives.

Volunteer driver program issues

MCOTA spent considerable time this year grappling with two urgent issues related to volunteer driver programs, which provide a significant number of trips and cost savings for communities in rural Minnesota. The issues are volunteer driver insurance liability and the tax implications of volunteer driver reimbursement.

Legislative solutions for volunteer insurance liability

In 2015, the Minnesota Legislature passed a law requiring “transportation network drivers” to carry additional insurance. There is some confusion about whether the Legislature intended to exempt volunteer drivers from this law, so the Department of Commerce and Minnesota Board on Aging may seek clarifying legislation to provide guidance about the insurance liability of volunteer drivers and insurance requirements for organizations providing volunteer riders.

The 2017 volunteer driver program study² recommended updating and using a 2008 Department of Commerce brochure to educate insurance companies about volunteer driver programs. That finding prompted MCOTA, with leadership from the Department of Commerce, to pursue updating the brochure more quickly. The Department of Commerce, consulting with other state agencies, updated and presented the draft brochure at the September 2016 MCOTA meeting.

A subcommittee of MCOTA members was formed to study the statutory language on how to define volunteer drivers. No other state has defined a volunteer driver to date. The subcommittee also looked at how to address some of the insurance issues from both county and insurance company perspectives.

The subcommittee developed, and MCOTA supports, proposed legislative language to define volunteer drivers as follows:

Volunteer driver means a person who provides transportation services with their personal vehicle for a sponsoring agency without compensation in excess of reimbursement of actual expenses incurred. A volunteer driver is not a transportation network company driver under section 65B.472, subdivision 1 (f), a taxi driver or delivery driver.

A bill on volunteer driver language was prepared but not introduced to the Minnesota Legislature due to time constraints. MCOTA will consider necessary changes to this language.

A related issue is how insurance companies define volunteer drivers. The Insurance Federation of Minnesota is an organization that represents insurance companies who have volunteer drivers. There are also trust

²[Frank Douma, 2017, Volunteer Driver Programs in Minnesota: Benefits and Barriers](#)

organizations for nonprofits that work with volunteer drivers. The Insurance Federation and the trusts interpret the current law differently, and issue different policies for their members to follow. There is a need to bring these organizations together to determine a consistent definition and policy for volunteer drivers' insurance, which MCOTA hopes to do in the coming year.

Tax implications of volunteer driver reimbursements

In spring 2017, the Minnesota Department of Revenue posted information about federal requirements for volunteer mileage reimbursement on its website, which has prompted questions from volunteer organizations, volunteer drivers, and from MCOTA members.

Transit providers with volunteer driver programs asked for MCOTA's assistance when they lost at least 25 percent of their volunteers in the first month after the volunteer mileage reimbursement requirements were posted.

In light of this urgent issue, MCOTA members established a task force to identify interim solutions, including contacting elected officials with a formal letter. MCOTA agreed that the task force should take three actions as an immediate response to the loss of volunteer drivers:

1. Clarify exact issues and impacts to drivers and programs
2. Notify state and federal elected officials in writing
3. Identify ways to bring back volunteer drivers who have recently left

The task force met with the departments of Revenue and Commerce regarding the taxability of volunteer driver reimbursements. A Department of Revenue staff person gave a presentation to MCOTA on the taxability of volunteer mileage reimbursements to clarify guidance the state is providing to volunteer drivers. There have been no legal, policy or administrative changes to the rule. The only change was that the Department of Revenue posted information on its website about the existing federal requirements for volunteer mileage reimbursement.

Essentially, the IRS rule is that volunteer drivers can exclude one of the following from income: \$0.14 per mile or the actual vehicle expenses (such as gas and oil) that are directly related to the charitable purpose. Volunteer drivers must report mileage reimbursements above the exclusion as income. Organizations do not need to classify volunteers as employees, even if reimbursing at rate higher than the charitable rate; other factors are required to do that.

Department of Revenue staff answered specific questions from the MCOTA task force on volunteer driver reimbursement:

- The IRS Publication 554, Tax Guide for Seniors, is applicable to seniors.
- Fuel, oil, parking and tolls are eligible expenses (car payments, maintenance, depreciation and insurance are NOT eligible expenses for reimbursement).
- There is no separate Minnesota charitable tax-exempt mileage reimbursement rate - any change would need to be at the federal level.
- The slightly higher (\$0.16 per mile) medical mileage reimbursement rate does not apply to volunteer drivers.

The task force will convene again to determine what actions could be taken next in an attempt to reduce the impact of the current law on volunteer drivers.

These tasks relate to MCOTA legislative duties 10 and 13 by identifying barriers to volunteer driver programs and recommending steps, including legislation and education, to address the barriers, such as liability and insurance issues.

Public-private partnerships in transit

With the emergence of new business models for transportation services in the private sector, new types of partnerships between the public and private sectors have started to emerge. A research team led by University of Minnesota professor Saif Benjaafar studied public-private partnerships in transit that involve transportation network companies such as Lyft and Uber. Partnerships have targeted various transportation needs but most fall into the following categories: first mile/last mile transportation, general transit and paratransit. Some partnerships target specific segments of the population, such as seniors or low-income communities, or specific regions, such as rural areas.

One limitation of these case studies is that access for persons with disabilities, compliance with regulations, and protection of civil rights was not clearly articulated in these pilot programs, and greater understanding of these areas is needed. MCOTA recommends that public agencies ensure that public-private partnerships address access for persons with disabilities, civil rights and regulatory compliance.

The case studies include:

- Centennial, Colorado's six-month pilot of its "Go Centennial" project, a first mile/last mile partnership with Lyft Line, Lyft's carpooling service.
- The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's partnership with Uber and Lyft to provide on-demand paratransit to the Massachusetts Bay area.
- Gainesville, Florida's Freedom in Motion program partners with Uber to provide discounted rides for all seniors in Gainesville.
- Dublin, California, a San Francisco suburb that Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority official Christy Wegener describes as "low density, high income," is currently experimenting with a general transit public-private partnership pilot.
- Liberty Mobility Now: Rural Transit uses a different model than Lyft and Uber. Liberty serves as the private end of public-private partnerships, focusing primarily on rural customers. In addition to a ridesharing service, Liberty also provides services to connect customers with existing transit infrastructure. Liberty finds that this method, which is more community oriented, works well for rural areas.

Three key takeaways emerging from this project were that public-private partnerships between transit providers and transportation network companies can:

1. Extend the reach of public transit
2. Serve as an alternative to traditional transit
3. Enable on-demand transportation for seniors and persons with disabilities

Potential opportunities for partnership in Minnesota include paratransit; senior transportation; first mile/last mile transportation; general transportation, especially for bus routes with particularly low ridership; transit for low-income populations; rural transit; and healthcare transportation.

Some challenges of these partnerships include the marketing and outreach investments needed to explain the programs to users; a willingness to experiment with different models, pricing, service regions and contractual agreements; quality of service monitoring and enforcement; overcoming technology and payment mode barriers; and mitigating long-term risks of outsourcing transit services such as lost negotiating leverage.

- [Public-Private Partnerships in Transit: Case Studies and Analysis](#)

This project relates to MCOTA legislative duties 1, 2, 4 and 5 by compiling information on new transportation alternatives and innovations, including the likely challenges and potential benefits for the transit public in Minnesota.

Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils development

Greater Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils

As Minnesota's state-level coordinating council, MCOTA addresses transportation coordination topics from a statewide perspective. Transportation coordination actually happens at the local level, and MCOTA agencies are working to develop RTCCs that will serve as the primary local drivers for transportation coordination, with guidance from MCOTA.

RTCCs consist of local stakeholders interested in improving mobility for the "transportation disadvantaged" – older adults, individuals with disabilities, individuals with low incomes and military veterans. The most successful RTCC will include representatives from a wide range of agencies and interests. RTCC board membership will be diverse and as comprehensive as possible, and include representatives from the region's county department of social services, Minnesota Area Agencies on Aging, workforce development, transportation providers, human services agencies, transportation and human services advocates, veteran service organizations, Minnesota Continuum of Care Coordinators, Centers for Independent Living, and public and private funders of transportation services.

There are two main phases to the RTCC process: 1) organizational planning, and 2) organizational implementation. The phase 1 planning grant application was issued in September 2017. Successful applicants will start work on July 1, 2018, and be eligible for phase 2 grants beginning in July 2019.

MCOTA members and staff heard throughout the year about the transportation issues that RTCCs will be designed to solve. For example, at the June Aging and Odyssey Conference, discussions included volunteer driver reimbursement, the loss of volunteer drivers, the lack of transportation across the state for all needed trips, and eligibility criteria for different types of funding. It was clear that RTCC implementation is a significant need statewide and people from this conference are excited to become part of this effort. The list of needs identified at the conference is available on the [CoordinateMNTransit.org website](http://CoordinateMNTransit.org). The Grand Rapids Mobility Mania and advocates for eliminating homelessness are two other groups that MnDOT met with to learn about needs and ideas for expanded transportation options.

Dakota County Collaborative coordination concept

In 2011, Dakota County evaluated existing human service transportation options within the county and found a lack of coordination and significant service gaps, often describing it as a "spaghetti bowl," with a variety of funding sources, providers and rules creating confusion. In 2013, Dakota County engaged a team from the University of Minnesota to conduct collaborative stakeholder engagement, data collection and analysis, emerging practices research and strategic planning in order to assist county government with identifying strategic opportunities to facilitate improved transit and client transportation services. The first recommendation was to form a group to coordinate human services transportation, and the Dakota County Transportation Coordinating Collaborative was formed in 2015. It is an example of how coordinating councils can be constructed, and is a model for a large, diverse county. It is one of the early pilots of transportation coordinating councils in Minnesota.

The DCTCC's mission is to work with stakeholders to develop and support coordinated transportation services and programs. The goal is to increase efficiencies and provide enhanced mobility and accessibility to all residents, particularly older adults and individuals with special transportation needs. The vision is to have a fully coordinated transportation system providing continuous transportation access for Dakota County residents.

To date, DCTCC has completed the client needs assessment as well as a transportation asset inventory report. These reports help identify gaps and opportunities for improved coordination. In 2017, DCTCC hired a

contractor to provide additional travel-training services and to identify additional data on the mobility needs of the target populations.

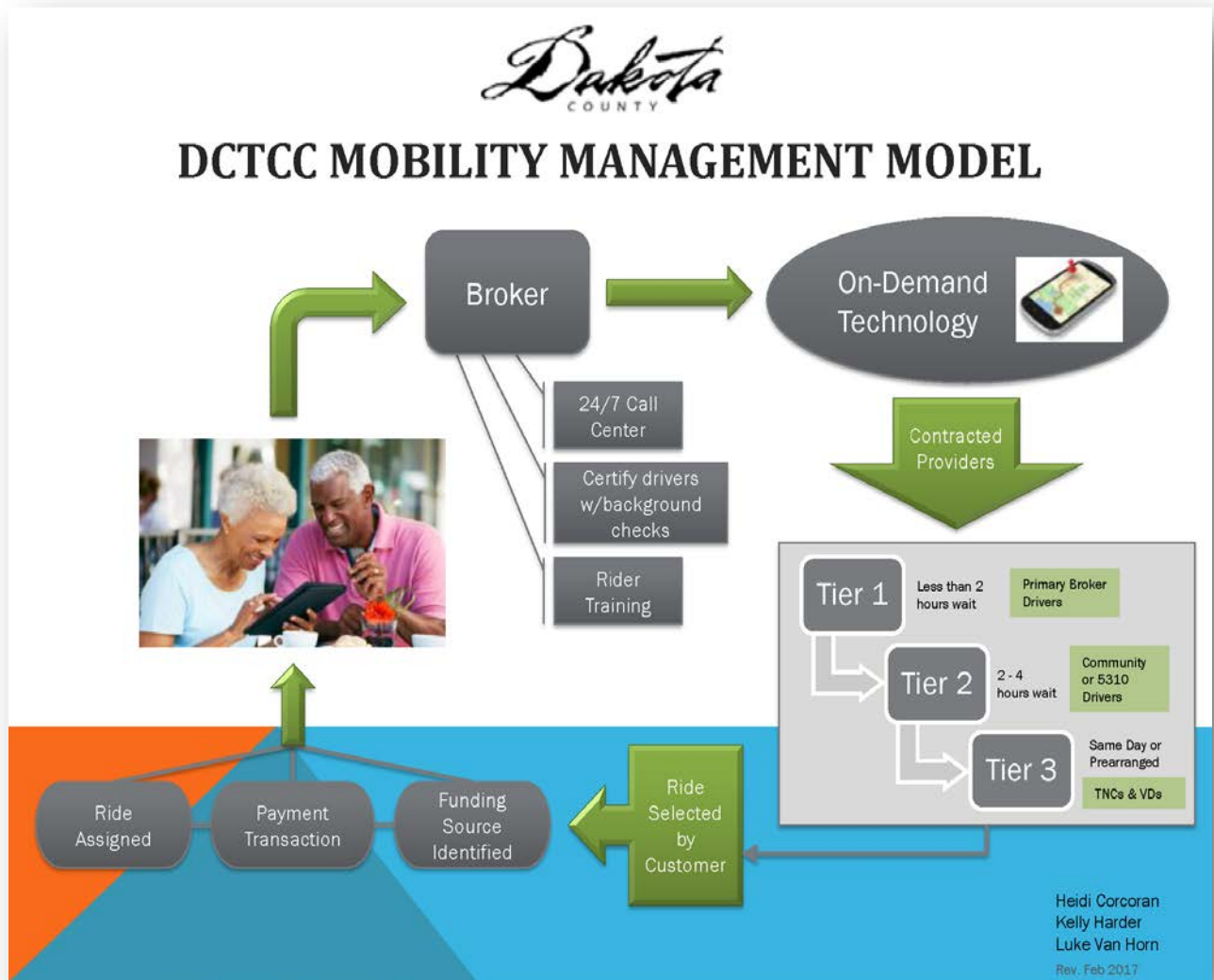


Figure 2: Dakota County Transportation Coordinating Collaborative mobility management model

In addition to the travel-training program, DCTCC has developed a concept model for mobility management (Figure 2). The model will help leverage technologies to increase transportation options for the target populations. The model also will benefit transportation agencies and local government with improved insights into travel patterns and mobility demand. Finally, DCTCC hopes to include a funding component with the model to process payments for transportation services from a variety of funding sources such as waiver programs and private pay. DCTCC is currently evaluating process models to test the mobility management concept and hopes to implement a pilot in 2018.

Other Twin Cities area counties coordinating efforts include:

- Scott and Carver counties
- Washington County
- Newtrax in Ramsey County

Communications enhancements

Periodic stakeholder e-mail update

Participants in the RTCC stakeholder workshops in 2015 and 2016 expressed interest in hearing updates from MCOTA about the RTCC grant process and other work that MCOTA does. In response, MCOTA added a periodic e-mail communication to its annual work plan on a trial basis for fiscal year 2017.

Beginning in January 2017, MCOTA sent several e-mail updates to a distribution list that includes people who were invited to or attended the workshops, other transit stakeholders, and those who have signed up on the CoordinateMNTransit.org website.

The contents included announcements about the RTCC grant application, the Greater Minnesota Transit Investment Plan, new MCOTA reports, updated local coordination plans in Greater Minnesota, a profile of Dakota County’s transportation collaborative, as well as notices of upcoming meetings. The readership statistics are shown in Table 3. The response from stakeholders has been positive, and MCOTA is continuing this e-mail update in FY18.

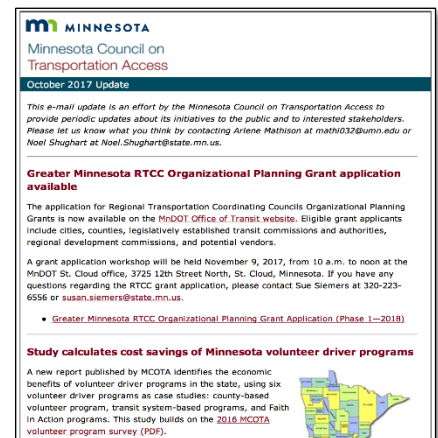


Table 3: MCOTA e-mail update readership statistics

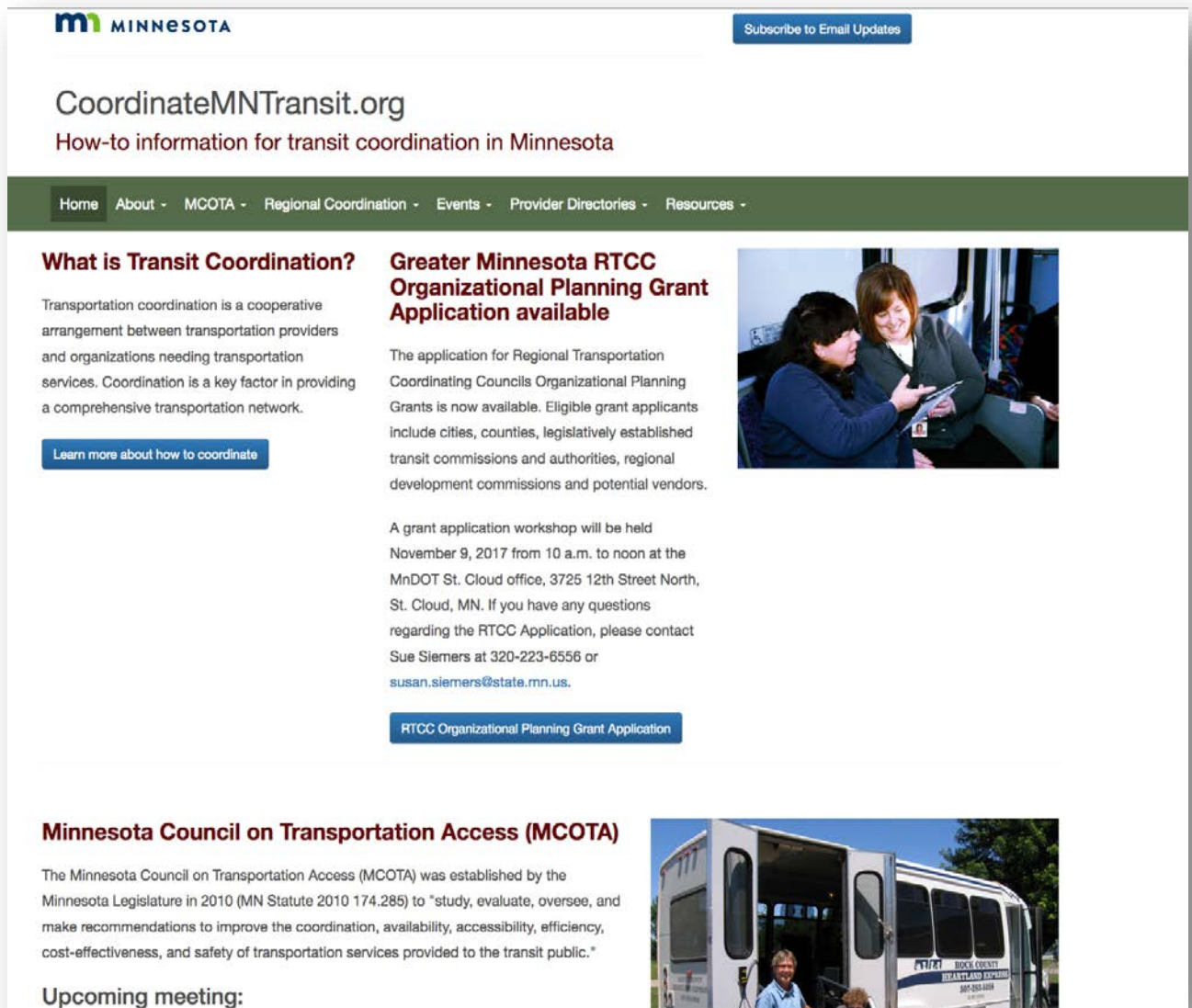
| | January 2017 | March 2017 | May 2017 | October 2017 |
|---------------------------|--------------|------------|----------|--------------|
| Subscribers | 611 | -- | -- | 704 |
| Open rate | 15.6% | 17.9% | 18.8% | 19.5% |
| Unique click-through rate | 8.0% | 7.0% | 4.7% | 9.1% |

Figure 3: Screenshot of October 2017 issue of the MCOTA e-mail update

Redesigned CoordinateMNTransit.org website

MCOTA also redesigned the CoordinateMNTransit.org website to have a more modern look and also to be easily accessible from devices of all sizes, such as phones, tablets, laptops and desktops. An accessibility expert from the Minnesota Council on Disability conducted a comprehensive review of the site's accessibility and made recommendations to improve it; those recommendations were incorporated into the site. In addition, the new state of Minnesota branding was added to the site. The new site launched in September 2017 (Figure 4).

These communications tasks relate to MCOTA's first legislative duty by sharing information with stakeholders on coordination efforts in the state.



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CoordinateMNTransit.org

How-to information for transit coordination in Minnesota

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What is Transit Coordination?

Transportation coordination is a cooperative arrangement between transportation providers and organizations needing transportation services. Coordination is a key factor in providing a comprehensive transportation network.

[Learn more about how to coordinate](#)

Greater Minnesota RTCC Organizational Planning Grant Application available

The application for Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils Organizational Planning Grants is now available. Eligible grant applicants include cities, counties, legislatively established transit commissions and authorities, regional development commissions and potential vendors.

A grant application workshop will be held November 9, 2017 from 10 a.m. to noon at the MnDOT St. Cloud office, 3725 12th Street North, St. Cloud, MN. If you have any questions regarding the RTCC Application, please contact Sue Siemers at 320-223-6556 or susan.siemers@state.mn.us.

[RTCC Organizational Planning Grant Application](#)

Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (MCOTA)

The Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (MCOTA) was established by the Minnesota Legislature in 2010 (MN 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."

Upcoming meeting:





Figure 4: Screenshot of redesigned CoordinateMNTransit.org website

Olmstead Plan Progress Updates

Minnesota's Olmstead Plan greatly influences the work of MCOTA, including the development of RTCCs and transportation coordination generally, which are important mechanisms for advancing Olmstead's goals. This year, MCOTA was kept informed about the implementation, goals and measures of the Olmstead Plan at every monthly meeting. In addition, the council talked about how the changes in employment for those with disabilities as a result of Olmstead Plan implementation might affect the transportation network, particularly its public transit capacity. The Olmstead Subcabinet is working to ensure that persons with disabilities are part of planning and development efforts.

Background on the Olmstead Plan

In 1999, the United States Supreme Court ruled in *Olmstead v. L.C.* that "unjustified segregation of persons with disabilities constitutes discrimination in violation of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The court held that public entities must provide community-based services to persons with disabilities when (1) such services are appropriate; (2) the affected persons do not oppose community-based treatment; and (3) community-based services can be reasonably accommodated, taking into account the resources available to the public entity and the needs of others who are receiving disability services from the entity."³

In response to a 2011 federal lawsuit, the state of Minnesota agreed to develop an Olmstead Plan, which is a way to document the state's "plans to provide services to individuals with disabilities in the most integrated setting appropriate to the individual. Effective Olmstead plans include analysis of current services, concrete commitments to increase integration (and to prevent unnecessary institutionalization), and specific and reasonable timeframes, among other components."⁴

Minnesota's Olmstead Plan describes how state agencies will provide services to individuals with disabilities to help them be as integrated in their community as is desirable and appropriate. On Sept. 29, 2015, the court approved the revised Olmstead Plan. The overall goal and purpose of the plan remains unchanged, which is to "ensure people with disabilities are living, learning, working, and enjoying life in the most integrated setting."⁵

This activity fulfills some of the MCOTA legislative duties in 1-11, 13, 14, 16, 19 and 20 by identifying stakeholders that provide services for the transit public, seeking their input about appropriate strategies, identifying best practices, recommending statewide objectives, identifying barriers and ways to eliminate barriers and advocating for implementation of recommendations to enhance coordination throughout the state.

Other MCOTA Activities

An important function of MCOTA is keeping members informed about issues that affect agency transportation. Below are brief summaries of topics MCOTA members discussed this year.

³ United States Department of Justice, Americans with Disabilities Act website, About Olmstead

⁴ Minnesota Governor's press release: Minnesota's new Olmstead Plan improves opportunities for people with disabilities, Nov. 1, 2013

⁵ mn.gov/olmstead

Autonomous vehicles discussion

The group discussed some of the potential policy implications of driverless vehicles, including presentations on projects at the University of Minnesota and at MnDOT. MCOTA recognizes that it is important to integrate the needs of persons with disabilities into this new technology up front.

Frank Douma from the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs gave a presentation to MCOTA on his research about driverless vehicles. Among the topics covered, he shared that the issue of equity has not been part of the driverless cars conversation at the national level, however Minnesota is intentionally integrating this focus. How can these vehicles be deployed in terms of equity and mobility? Driverless cars also will affect persons with disabilities; there have been a number of research reports and initiatives around this. Minnesota can influence the design of accessible vehicles in these early stages. The goal is to create a more inclusive transportation system. MCOTA has an opportunity to help influence the design aspects and also support more demonstration opportunities in Minnesota. How can deployment of driverless cars be statewide (not just the Twin Cities Metro area)?



Figure 5: Depiction of autonomous bus technology

The group talked about ways to get information out about autonomous vehicles. The timeline for when these cars will be on the roads is relatively short (perhaps by 2020). The group discussed the freight system and how driverless vehicles will affect young people and their commutes to school. Overall, members felt that MCOTA should be concerned about ensuring the technology is deployed so it supports MCOTA's mission.

Mike Kronzer, ITS Project Manager at the MnDOT Office of Traffic, Safety and Technology, gave a presentation on the Minnesota autonomous bus pilot project. The project's goals are to test autonomous vehicles in snow and ice conditions, learn about implications for system operations, look at how autonomous vehicles can improve mobility, test the infrastructure, influence the development of autonomous vehicles and develop partnerships. The project phases:

- Phase 1: MnROAD testing (November 2017 – February 2018). Tour opportunities at MnROAD.
- Phase 2: Super Bowl Showcase (closed road demonstrations on Nicollet Mall). Open to public. Five days of operation.
- Phase 3: Additional testing site in spring/summer 2018, most likely at the 3M corporate campus.

More information is on MnDOT's [autonomous bus project website](#).

Joint DHS/MnDOT meetings

Last year's planning for the development of RTCCs exposed the need for greater mutual understanding of the transportation functions and responsibilities between DHS and MnDOT. To address the need, DHS and MnDOT staff held a series of facilitated discussions regarding the overlap of common transportation interests (including RTCCs). A goal of this expanded partnership is to provide effective transportation.

The group is seeking to explore and expand what the definition and vision of partnership could be. They have begun to identify joint resources and coordination around where both agency systems address transportation. Minnesota Management and Budget developed a "Transportation Planning Process from MnDOT and DHS" report from the joint DHS/MnDOT meetings. The draft report outlines the process and results to date, including a joint work plan. One of the outcomes of these meetings has been the roll out of phase 1 planning application for RTCCs in Greater Minnesota.

Local Human Service – Public Transit Coordination Plan update

MnDOT and DHS have partnered with local planning organizations throughout Minnesota to carry out a planning process every five years since 2006, and recently concluded the 2016-2017 planning process.

Federal transit law, as amended by MAP-21 and the FAST Act, requires that projects selected for funding under the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities – Section 5310 Program – be "included in a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan" and that the plan be "developed and approved through a process that included participation by seniors, individuals with disabilities, representatives of public, private, and nonprofit transportation and human services providers and other members of the public."

These requirements are aimed at improving transportation services for persons with disabilities and older adults, ensuring that communities are coordinating resources provided through multiple federal programs.

Themes from southern Minnesota (Regions 8, 9 and 10) were included in a presentation to MCOTA. Highlights are below. The plans are all available on the [CoordinateMNTransit.org website](http://CoordinateMNTransit.org).

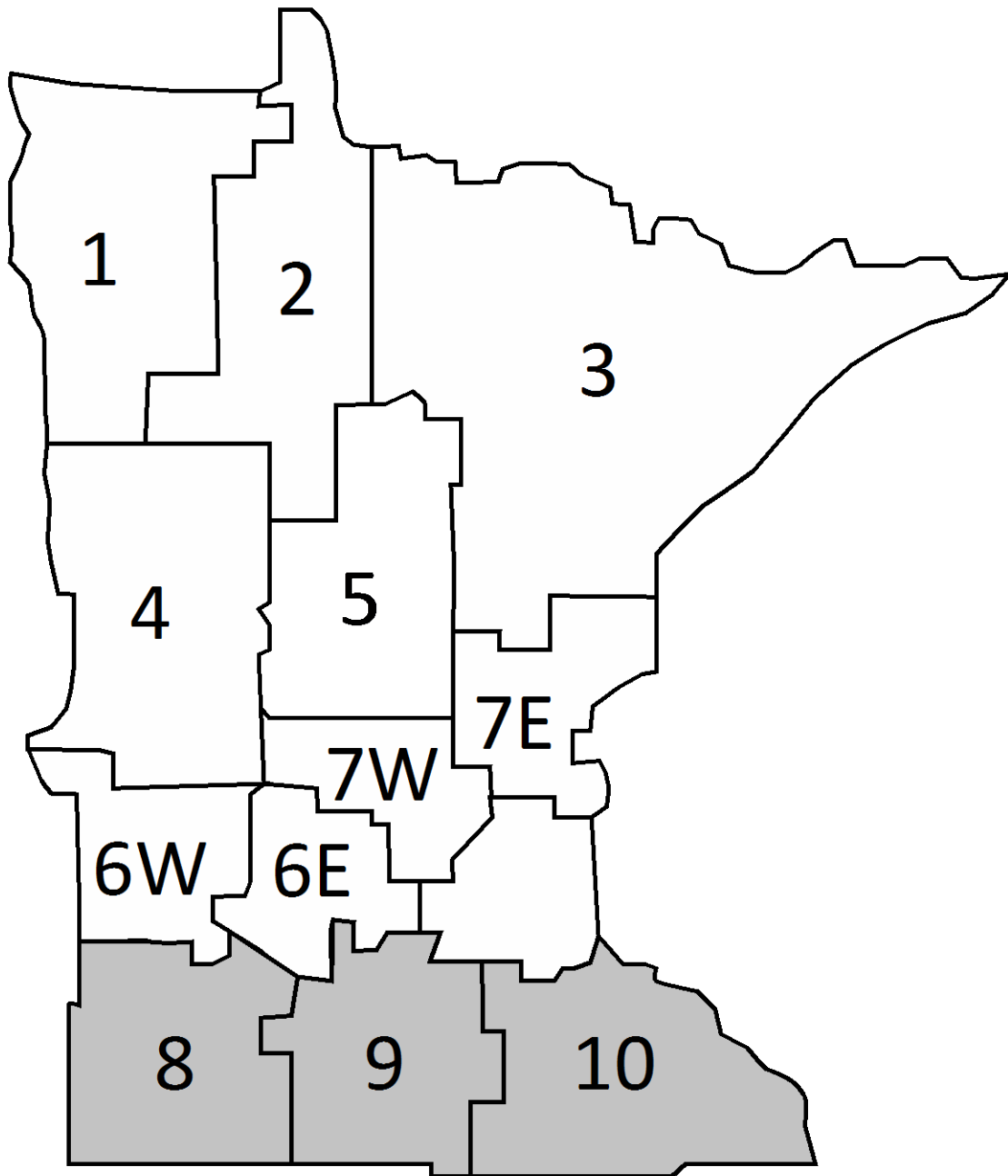


Figure 6: Map of Minnesota regional development organizations, highlighting regions 8, 9, and 10 in southern Minnesota

Table 4: Themes from Local Coordination Plans in southern Minnesota

| Challenges | Desired Improvements | Strategies |
|--|----------------------|---|
| Difficulties with the cost to provide services | Longer service hours | Share resources |
| Increasing demand for service area | Reliability | Coordinate dispatch |
| Fluctuations in funding | Better frequency | Address regulatory barriers |
| Cost of regional medical trips | Lower fares | Improve convenience |
| NEMT payments and regulations | Desired Improvements | Enhance/maintain volunteer driver programs |
| Shortage of volunteer drivers | Longer service hours | Accessibility enhancements |
| Limited night and weekend service | Reliability | Create a regional coordinating body |
| Long wait times | Better frequency | Improve awareness of existing resources |
| Employment transportation | Lower fares | Use technology to share information and resources |
| State and agency regulations | | Contract with common carrier |
| | | Develop partnership with Transportation Network Companies |
| | | Develop a non-profit transit cooperative |
| | | Create an app to connect riders with services |
| | | Coordinate with healthcare providers |
| | | Enhance subsidy programs for existing programs |
| | | Establish/enhance assisted transportation program |

DHS transportation waiver program study

Matt Knutson from DHS provided information to MCOTA on the legislatively-mandated study on the DHS transportation waiver program. A DHS gaps analysis is completed every two years and transportation is a significant gap identified. Olmstead is also requiring that this gap be addressed.

A redesign of the transportation waiver system and an RFP are currently under development. This includes payment and coordination changes. The goal is to increase transportation access for more individuals to more providers, as well as have these experiences be positive. A report and recommendations will be sent to the Legislature in 2019.

Metro Mobility task force

Gerri Sutton of the Metropolitan Council provided background and context for a legislatively mandated task force on how Metro Mobility (the Metropolitan Council's paratransit service) might partner with transportation network companies like Lyft and Uber. Metro Mobility has experienced 7 percent average annual growth in ridership for the last several years while the last fare increase was in 2008, resulting in a deficit. The task force held its first meeting in August, and will issue a report to the legislature by Feb. 15, 2018.

The Metropolitan Council offers a premium on-demand taxi service with accessible taxis. Eighty percent of riders average 3.7 miles per trip. The average Metro Mobility ride is 11.4 miles. Potential barriers for working with transportation network companies include provision of data, fraud prevention, vehicle accessibility and trips not being reportable to the National Transit Board, resulting in a loss of federal funds. The Metro Mobility Task Force information is on the [Metropolitan Council's website](#).

Arrowhead Rural Rides program

The Arrowhead Rural Rides program is an initiative by the Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency that responds to unmet needs identified in the 2006 Region 3 Local Human Service-Public Transit Coordination Plan and local community needs assessments. The program serves workers and job seekers through individualized strategies designed to eliminate transportation barriers to employment.

Transportation advocates (mobility managers) provide one-on-one consultations, develop plans and offer support through trip vouchers. The program began in 2008, and expanded to cover St. Louis (excluding Duluth), Lake, Cook, Itasca, Carlton and Aitkin counties. It supports about 67,000 rides per year.

Recommendations for the program include:

- **Develop program policies and procedures.** While it is understood that each consumer has their own transportation needs and individualized plan, policies that determine eligibility, period of use and termination are needed.
- **Identify additional funding sources.** MnDOT recognizes the purpose of the program is transportation and is willing to provide financial support. However, there are other federal, state and local funding sources that could be used to support the program. Obtaining a contribution to help cover the costs of public transit passes, work buddy stipends and volunteer mileage reimbursements can be leveraged when applying for grant funding to help additional consumers.
- **Implement a structure to increase program generated revenues.** Since the program began as a Job Access and Reverse Commute project, no contribution was required from those using the program. However, since Rural Rides is now funded through the Public Transportation Policy

Plan, program-generated revenue should help to support both mobility management and transportation services.

- **Expand the mobility management role of transportation advocates.** Currently funding for this program is through the Public Transportation Policy Plan and as such should be available to all members of the population. A program such as Rural Rides could assist anyone regardless of their trip purpose in understanding their transportation options and developing a personalized travel plan.

MCOTA Priorities for 2018

RTCC organizing and implementation

A continuing focus for MCOTA in 2018 is the organizing phase for the RTCCs. Each RTCC will develop its structure and operations plan. MCOTA will monitor the progress of the RTCCs’ organizing efforts to ensure the applicable strategic priority activities listed in its Appendix C, especially tactics 5, 7, 8 and 10, are incorporated. These activities were first identified in the MCOTA 2015 Strategic Plan⁶, and were modified and approved by MCOTA in 2016.

Table 5: MCOTA’s Priority Activities for RTCCs (see Appendix C for full list)

| MCOTA’s Priority Activities for RTCCs |
|---|
| Develop other infrastructure to facilitate communication within and between the RTCCs (activity #5) |
| Develop tools/products that could be used by RTCCs; disseminate products developed by one RTCC to the other RTCCs (activity #7) |
| Assist with resolving state and federal barriers to coordination (activity #8) |
| Develop minimum standards for outcomes/performance measures with RTCC input (activity #10) |

This project relates to MCOTA legislative duties 1-11, 13, 14, 16, 19 and 20 by identifying stakeholders that provide services for the transit public, seeking their input about appropriate strategies, identifying best practices, recommending statewide objectives, identifying barriers and ways to eliminate barriers, and advocating for implementation of recommendations to enhance coordination throughout the state.

Volunteer driver insurance and reimbursement

MCOTA’s new study on the cost savings of volunteer driver programs (as described on page 10) shows how important those programs are to state residents. Insurance coverage for volunteer drivers, as well as reimbursement rates and restrictions are critical issues for recruiting and retaining volunteer drivers. MCOTA is committed to working with stakeholders, relevant state agencies and elected officials at the state and federal levels to identify and implement ways to eliminate the obstacles that currently exist. Education is also an important role that MCOTA is well-positioned to lead.

⁶ June 2015 MCOTA Strategic Plan

These activities relate to MCOTA legislative duties 10, 13 and 20 by identifying barriers to volunteer driver programs and recommending steps, including legislation and advocacy, to address barriers such as liability and insurance issues.

Volunteer driver program forum

With all the issues affecting volunteer driver programs in the state, MCOTA members felt that convening a day-long event to bring together those running volunteer driver programs and other stakeholders would be an effective way to share information to maintain and strengthen the programs. The forum is scheduled for May 9, 2018, and will include a published summary.

Research project on youth employment transportation

In spring 2018, MCOTA will engage in a study on employment and training transportation for young people. The study will gather data on best practices that address one of the biggest barriers that youth employment and training program graduates face: the lack of transportation. Surveys repeatedly show that the inadequacy of transportation resources prevents youth from obtaining jobs in apprenticeship, construction and other industries that require mobility. In addition, youth who do not have their own transportation have difficulties getting to retail and service jobs with variable start and end times. The study will document both national and Minnesota examples of innovative programs meeting the transportation needs of working youth through surveys or semi-structured interviews.

Continued stakeholder communications

As more RTCCs are formed in 2018 and as MCOTA addresses issues related to volunteer driver programs, regular communications with stakeholders throughout the state will be critical to keeping everyone informed. MCOTA plans to continue sending periodic (approximately quarterly) e-mail updates and also to continue updating the CoordinateMNTransit.org website.

Conclusion

Transportation is essential for residents of the state to access work, school, shopping, health care and recreation. Volunteer driver programs are one of the cornerstones of transportation services, especially in rural Minnesota. MCOTA studied the cost savings of volunteer driver programs and found they offer significant savings compared to other transportation alternatives. MCOTA is also identifying ways to address two threats to volunteer driver programs: volunteer driver insurance liability and volunteer driver reimbursement.

MCOTA is working to ensure access in a changing transportation environment for those with disabilities. Through its study of about several public-private transit partnerships that involve transportation network companies and the testing of autonomous vehicles, MCOTA is offering information, guidance and recommendations to state and local agencies.

MCOTA is advancing the goals of improved transportation services and access through coordination, especially at the local level through the development of regional transportation coordinating councils. The planning grant application for Greater Minnesota RTCCs is the culmination of several years of developing a vision and meeting with stakeholders throughout the state. It was issued in September 2017, and is an important way to meet the transportation access goals in the Olmstead Plan.

In 2018, MCOTA plans to continue organizing and supporting the development of RTCCs, encouraging the development of and reducing barriers to volunteer driver programs, identifying best practices for youth employment transportation, and coordinating with stakeholders regularly through quarterly e-mail updates and through a volunteer driver program forum in May 2018.

Appendix A: MCOTA Members during 2017

Tim Henkel, Chair
Minnesota Department of Transportation

Joan Willshire, Vice Chair
Minnesota State Council on Disability

Vacant
Office of the Governor

Gerri Sutton
Metropolitan Council

Harlan Tardy
Minnesota Board on Aging

Peter Brickwedde
Minnesota Department of Commerce

Julie Belisle (through August 2017)
Minnesota Department of Education

Sharon Peck (since September 2017)
Minnesota Department of Education

Thant Pearson
Minnesota Department of Employment and
Economic Development

Tim Held
Minnesota Department of Health

Claire Wilson
Minnesota Department of Human Services

Ron Quade
Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs

Keith Bogut (through July 2017)
Minnesota Management and Budget

Stewart McMullen (since August 2017)
Minnesota Management and Budget

Tiffany Collins
Minnesota Public Transit Association

Appendix B: MCOTA Legislative Duties and Accomplishments

| Year(s) | Legislative Duty #1 |
|---|--|
| 2011-2015, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2016 | Compile information on existing transportation alternatives for the transit public and serve as a clearinghouse for information on services, funding sources, innovations and coordination efforts. |
| | Supporting Activities |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minnesota coordination website • Economic cost-benefit studies • Transportation section of Minnesotahelp.info • NEMT Advisory Committee support • NEMT Coordination Study • Local Transit Coordination Case Studies • Primer of funding sources for "transit public" in Minnesota • RTCC stakeholder engagement |

| Year(s) | Legislative Duty #2 |
|---|--|
| 2011-2015, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2016 | Identify best practices and strategies that have been successful in Minnesota and in other states for coordination of local, regional, state and federal funding and services. |
| | Supporting Activities |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEMT Advisory Committee support • NEMT Coordination Study • Vehicle-sharing Study • Successful Local Transit Coordination Case Studies • Minnesota mobility management case studies • Strategic planning • RTCC stakeholder engagement • Volunteer transportation programs inventory and survey |

| Year(s) | Legislative Duty #3 |
|---|---|
| 2012-2015, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2016 | Recommend statewide objectives for providing public transportation services for the transit public. |
| | Supporting Activities |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEMT Advisory Committee support • NEMT Coordination Study • Definition of coordination • Strategic planning • Olmstead Plan goals and measures • Homelessness and transportation services • RTCC stakeholder engagement |

| Year(s) | Legislative Duty #4 |
|---|---|
| 2011-2015, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2016 | Identify barriers prohibiting coordination and accessibility of public transportation services and aggressively pursue the elimination of those barriers. |
| | <p style="text-align: center;">Supporting Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEMT Advisory Committee support • NEMT Study • Synthesis of 2011 Greater MN regional transportation coordination plans • Planning guidance for the 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plans in MN • Maps of human service transportation providers' areas of service in MN • Strategic planning • Olmstead Plan goals and measures • Homelessness and transportation services • RTCC stakeholder engagement • Ways to increase vehicle sharing in Minnesota |

| Year(s) | Legislative Duty #5 |
|---|---|
| 2011-2015, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2016 | Recommend policies and procedures for coordinating local, regional, state, and federal funding and services for the transit public. |
| | <p style="text-align: center;">Supporting Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synthesis of 2011 Greater MN regional transportation coordination plans • Successful Local Transit Coordination Case Studies • Primer of funding sources for "transit public" in Minnesota • Strategic planning • RTCC stakeholder engagement |

| Year(s) | Legislative Duty #6 |
|---|---|
| 2011, 2014-2015, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2016 | Identify stakeholders in providing services for the transit public and seek input from them concerning barriers and appropriate strategies. |
| | <p style="text-align: center;">Supporting Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synthesis of 2011 Greater MN regional transportation coordination plans • Participation in the MN State Council on Disability's annual Town Hall Mtg. • Data collection and analysis of vehicle sharing • Strategic planning • Homelessness and transportation services • RTCC stakeholder engagement • Ways to increase vehicle sharing in Minnesota • Volunteer transportation programs inventory and survey |

| Year(s) | Legislative Duty #7 |
|---|--|
| 2011-2015, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2016 | Recommend guidelines for developing transportation coordination plans throughout the state. |
| | Supporting Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synthesis of 2011 Greater MN regional transportation coordination plans • Planning guidance for the 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plans in MN • Successful Local Transit Coordination Case Studies • RTCC stakeholder engagement |

| Year(s) | Legislative Duty #8 |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| None of the years between 2011-2015 | Encourage all state agencies participating in the council to purchase trips within the coordinated system. |
| | Supporting Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This model of centralized purchasing is not in place in Minnesota. • RTCC stakeholder engagement |

| Year(s) | Legislative Duty #9 |
|-----------------|---|
| 2011-2012, 2014 | Facilitate the creation and operation of transportation brokerages to match riders to the appropriate service, promote shared dispatching, compile and disseminate information on transportation options, and promote regional communication. |
| | Supporting Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobility management webinars • Planning guidance for the 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plans in MN • Successful Local Transit Coordination Case Studies • Minnesota mobility management case studies • RTCC stakeholder engagement |

| Year(s) | Legislative Duty #10 |
|---|---|
| 2011, 2015 expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2016 | Encourage volunteer driver programs and recommend legislation to address liability and insurance issues. |
| | Supporting Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful Local Transit Coordination Case Studies • A survey and selected case studies of volunteer driver programs in MN, including faith-based programs • RTCC stakeholder engagement • Volunteer transportation programs inventory and survey |

| Year(s) | Legislative Duty #11 |
|---|--|
| Expect to start the Supporting Activities in 2016 | Recommend minimum performance standards for delivery of services. |
| | Supporting Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTCC stakeholder engagement |

| Year(s) | Legislative Duty #12 |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| None of the years between 2011-2015 | Identify methods to eliminate fraud and abuse in special transportation services. |
| | Supporting Activities |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be addressed in future work plans |

| Year(s) | Legislative Duty #13 |
|---|--|
| 2013, 2015 expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2016 | Develop a standard method for addressing liability insurance requirements for transportation services purchased, provided, or coordinated. |
| | Supporting Activities |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vehicle-sharing Study RTCC stakeholder engagement Ways to increase vehicle sharing in MN |

| Year(s) | Legislative Duty #14 |
|-----------|---|
| 2011-2012 | Design and develop a contracting template for providing coordinated transportation services. |
| | Supporting Activities |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of contract template RTCC stakeholder engagement |

| Year(s) | Legislative Duty #15 |
|---|--|
| 2011, 2014 expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2016 | Recommend an interagency uniform contracting and billing and accounting system for providing coordinated transportation services. |
| | Supporting Activities |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration on the development of a Unified Transit Data Center pilot project in Scott and Carver counties. Common standards for financial records Training for common standards for financial records |

| Year(s) | Legislative Duty #16 |
|--|---|
| 2012-2015 expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2016 | Encourage the design and development of training programs for coordinated transportation services. |
| | Supporting Activities |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NEMT Advisory Committee support NEMT Study Mobility management webinars Training for common standards for financial records Minnesota mobility management case studies Minnesota Mobility Management Handbook RTCC stakeholder engagement |

| Year(s) | Legislative Duty #17 |
|---|--|
| Start the Supporting Activities in 2016 | Encourage the use of public school transportation vehicles for the transit public. |
| | Supporting Activities |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTCC stakeholder engagement |

| Year(s) | Legislative Duty #18 |
|--|--|
| 2014-2015 expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2016 | Develop an allocation methodology that equitably distributes transportation funds to compensate units of government and all entities that provide coordinated transportation services. |
| | Supporting Activities |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common standards for financial records • Training for common standards for financial records |

| Year(s) | Legislative Duty #19 |
|---|--|
| 2013, 2015 expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2016 | Identify policies and necessary legislation to facilitate vehicle sharing. |
| | Supporting Activities |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicle-sharing study • Data collection and analysis of vehicle sharing • Maps of human service transportation providers' areas of service in MN • Outreach to providers about options and benefits of vehicle sharing • RTCC stakeholder engagement • Ways to increase vehicle sharing in MN |

| Year(s) | Legislative Duty #20 |
|--|---|
| 2012-2015 expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2016 | Advocate aggressively for eliminating barriers to coordination, implementing coordination strategies, enacting necessary legislation, and appropriating resources to achieve the council's objectives. |
| | Supporting Activities |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEMT Advisory Committee support • Transportation section of Minnesotahelp.info • Primer of funding sources for "transit public" in Minnesota • Strategic planning • RTCC stakeholder engagement |

Appendix C: MCOTA Strategic Priority Related to RTCCs

From [Minnesota Council on Transportation Access: Strategic Plan and Recommendations](#).⁷

Strategic Priority 1. Develop regional organizations to help people use statewide tools.

The recommendations below are based in large part on the stakeholder feedback from the workshops, as well as further conversations. Participants generally saw the value of the role of state agencies, suggesting the need for a statewide oversight council to help direct and coordinate all of the regional councils' efforts. They recommended that the regional councils have representatives on the state council. They recognized the need for communications among the regional councils, as well as transparency of communications and decision-making. MCOTA is well positioned to fulfill these duties.

1. Move forward with developing Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils
2. Create an advisory committee to MCOTA that would be made up of reps from each RTCC (8-12). This advisory committee would meet separately from MCOTA, and be invited to attend and be on the agenda of each regular MCOTA meeting.
 - a. Travel, conference call, and meeting expenses could be covered by MCOTA funds or by the RTCC administrative funds.
3. Host an annual dialogue for all RTCCs
4. Host regional workshops for each RTCC, either annually or biannually.
5. Develop other infrastructure to facilitate communication within and between the RTCCs (e.g., meeting and conference call space, electronic discussion group(s), collaborative website).
6. Provide technical assistance to RTCCs.
 - a. Mobility management training
 - b. Other specialized training
 - c. Dealing with HIPAA
7. Develop tools/products that could be used by RTCCs; disseminate products developed by one RTCC to the other RTCCs. These could include:
 - a. Sample by-laws and other operational guidelines
 - b. Insurance agreements
 - c. Waiver templates, examples
 - d. Other templates, such as vehicle-sharing agreements, volunteer driver program information, travel training programs, commuter programs, Linkage Line and marketing/communication materials
 - e. Best practices for council member recruitment
8. Assist with resolving state and federal barriers to coordination.
 - a. Funding restrictions
 - b. Privacy regulations
 - c. Insurance regulations
 - d. Legislation
 - e. Interagency conflicts
 - f. Policy
9. Support RTCC pilot projects such as:
 - a. Surveying customers regarding future transit innovation
 - b. Testing car sharing programs in rural areas
 - c. Testing different models for volunteer driver programs

Projects could be identified through a solicitation process, with a presentation and/or report given to MCOTA or to a regional or statewide coordination event.

⁷ MCOTA Strategic Plan, June 2015. pp. 14-15.

10. With RTCC advisory committee input, develop minimum standards for outcomes/performance measures. These outcomes could include:

- Increased ridership
- Cost savings
- Reduction in service gaps
- Reduction in duplicative services
- Fewer service denials
- Consistent policies and practices among providers
- Improved outreach to potential users
- Continued success of programs that are already working well
- Stakeholder satisfaction
- Improved collaboration (such as ride-sharing) among members

One challenge for MCOTA is balancing state standards with local control and flexibility for innovation. Ideally, MCOTA will develop a framework and tools, define statewide outcomes, and allow flexibility for how the outcomes are accomplished at the local/regional level.

Appendix D: List of Abbreviations

| | |
|------------|---|
| DHS..... | Minnesota Department of Human Services |
| DTCCC..... | Dakota County Transportation Coordinating Collaborative |
| JARC..... | Job Access and Reverse Commute Program |
| MCOTA..... | Minnesota Council on Transportation Access |
| MnDOT..... | Minnesota Department of Transportation |
| PTPP..... | Public Transportation Policy Plan |
| RTCC..... | Regional Transportation Coordinating Council |
| STS..... | Special Transportation Service |