

2016 Report on the

Minnesota Council on Transportation Access

January 2017



Prepared by

The Minnesota Council on Transportation Access on behalf of the Minnesota Department of Transportation

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Legislative Request

This report is issued to comply with [Minn. Stat. 174.285, subd. 5](#):

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 under \$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 2016 activities that advance MCOTA's legislatively outlined duties to improve transportation coordination throughout the state.

The planning and development of Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils was a significant focus for MCOTA this year. RTCCs will serve as the primary local drivers for transportation coordination. By its nature, coordination needs to occur at the local level, and RTCCs are a mechanism used successfully in many other states, as referenced in last year's annual report.¹

Activities around RTCCs included developing concepts for the planning and the implementation of the RTCCs, sharing those concepts with stakeholders throughout Greater Minnesota, defining MCOTA's role and emphasis areas for RTCCs, learning about the metro coordination efforts, and identifying ways the RTCCs will support the Olmstead Plan goals. The Minnesota Department of Transportation, the Minnesota Department of Human Services and the Metropolitan Council want RTCCs to help achieve the transportation access goals in the Olmstead Plan. Most of the organizations helping to shape the RTCCs, work directly with individuals with disabilities.

This year, another focus for MCOTA was volunteer driver programs. University of Minnesota researchers have nearly completed a study of volunteer driver programs in Minnesota; this study is expected to be published in March 2017. The goal was to survey and develop an inventory of case studies of volunteer driver programs in Minnesota, including faith-based programs. The volunteer driver programs represented in the survey provide a total of 32,000 volunteer hours per month, and are a significant and lowest-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, including updating a brochure to educate insurance companies about volunteer driver programs, requesting legislation that clarifies the distinction between a sub-contractor and a volunteer, providing guidance about the insurance liability of volunteer drivers, and describing insurance requirements for organizations providing volunteer riders.

In 2017, MCOTA plans to continue organizing and supporting the development of RTCCs, encouraging the development of and reducing barriers to volunteer driver programs, and coordinating with stakeholders more regularly through quarterly e-mail updates.

¹ [2015 Report for Minnesota Council on Transportation Access](#)

Introduction

Transportation continues to provide the essential connectivity for communities, and MCOTA continues to work on improving access to transportation through coordination among providers. Minnesota's Olmstead Plan is designed to make it possible for individuals with disabilities to live and work in the setting they choose. The Plan facilitates the cooperation of state agencies working toward this common goal. MCOTA's vision provided a starting point for the Olmstead Plan's transportation goals, and MCOTA plays a critical role in improving access to transportation throughout the state for people with disabilities as well as others who may not have or want a personal vehicle. The only way the Olmstead Plan will be effective is if access to transportation services is improved. 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. In addition, MCOTA agencies are working to develop local-level solutions to improve transportation access through coordination. Major efforts this year were to strengthen local involvement in coordination and to better understand the extent of and impact of volunteer driver programs in Minnesota, including barriers to the programs.

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.

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 and 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, and the top five most important priorities for MCOTA are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: MCOTA's five strategic priorities, approved January 27, 2015, 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

MCOTA 2016 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 2016.

Table 2: Key MCOTA 2016 Activities and Accomplishments

Activity	Legislative Duties Addressed Under Minn. Stat. 174.285
Regional Transportation Coordinating Council stakeholder engagement and development	1-11, 13-14, 16-17, 19-20
Olmstead Plan: progress toward goals	3, 4
Volunteer Driver Program Study	10, 13
Volunteer Driver Insurance Brochure	10, 13, 20

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

Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils

The MnDOT Office of Transit, DHS and Metropolitan Council continued to explore and begin the development of Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils in the state to serve as the primary mechanisms for transportation coordination. By its nature, coordination needs to occur at the local level, and RTCCs are a mechanism used successfully in many other states.

RTCCs are a strategy to facilitate coordination between transportation providers and service agencies, breaking down transportation barriers, streamlining administration, and offering customers a seamless system of transportation services throughout the state. Coordination can make transportation easier to use and give customers more options of where and when to travel. Coordination includes, but goes beyond, Americans with Disabilities Act transportation services.

Two state agencies, MnDOT and DHS, are investigating methods to support the creation of a statewide framework of eight to 10 RTCCs throughout Greater Minnesota. The RTCCs will be responsible for coordinating transportation services through a network of existing public, private and non-profit transportation providers.

The planning and development of RTCCs was a significant focus for MCOTA this year. Activities included:

- Developing concepts for the planning and the implementation of the RTCCs
- Sharing those concepts with stakeholders throughout Greater Minnesota
- Defining MCOTA's role with and emphasis areas for RTCCs
- Learning about the Metro Coordination efforts
- Identifying ways the RTCCs will support the Olmstead Plan goals

The Project Management Team leaders also met with regional county social service directors and county administrators to communicate information on the RTCC initiative, the stakeholder workshops and to continue building relationships.

Greater Minnesota RTCC stakeholder engagement

MCOTA held seven stakeholder workshops throughout Greater Minnesota in June and July 2016. The workshops followed an initial set of workshops held in 2015. In the 2015 workshops, participants identified features they would like to include in a potential transportation coordinating council for their regions. Based on input from the first set of stakeholder workshops, draft concepts for planning and implementing RTCCs were developed and shared for comment and feedback at the latest workshops, specifically to help shape the organizing and implementation phases of RTCC development. Over 100 participants, primarily representing transportation providers, social services and government agencies, provided detailed feedback.²

This round of workshops was held in the following locations:

1. Rochester: June 1, 2016
2. Marshall: June 6, 2016
3. Bemidji: July 11, 2016
4. Duluth: July 14, 2016
5. Mankato: July 18, 2016
6. Fergus Falls: July 20, 2016
7. St. Cloud: July 21, 2016

RTCC organizing and implementation timeline

The PMT decided on a two-phase approach for RTCC development: an organizing phase and an implementation phase. The proposed timeline below was shared with stakeholders in the regional workshops.

1. Fall 2016: Issue grant applications for RTCC organizing and implementation
2. Winter 2017: RTCC organizing phase with state assistance (up to one year)
3. Fall 2017: RTCC implementation applications due
4. Winter 2018: RTCC implementation begins

The PMT is supportive of funding RTCCs, and is currently exploring ways to provide funding. One of the key issues to be resolved is the funding of transportation operational costs.

In the organizing phase, each RTCC will develop a structure and operations plan, including a definition of the geographic region for the RTCC, commitments to participate in the RTCC from a majority of counties in the region and from essential transportation providers in the region, and a governance structure, legal authority, performance measures, budget, and quality assurance methods. The expected timeline is one year.

The implementation phase where the RTCCs start to carry out their defined functions is expected to start in early 2018.

² [2016 Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils Workshop Summary](#)

RTCC regional map

In general, workshop participants liked the Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators regional map that was presented for consideration. Minor tweaks were suggested, with four of the more common suggestions noted in Figure 1. MCOTA would like the RTCCs to cover all of Greater Minnesota. The counties will be given an opportunity to align themselves locally, and if a county is not incorporated into a region, MCOTA will work with the regions to ensure the county is included.

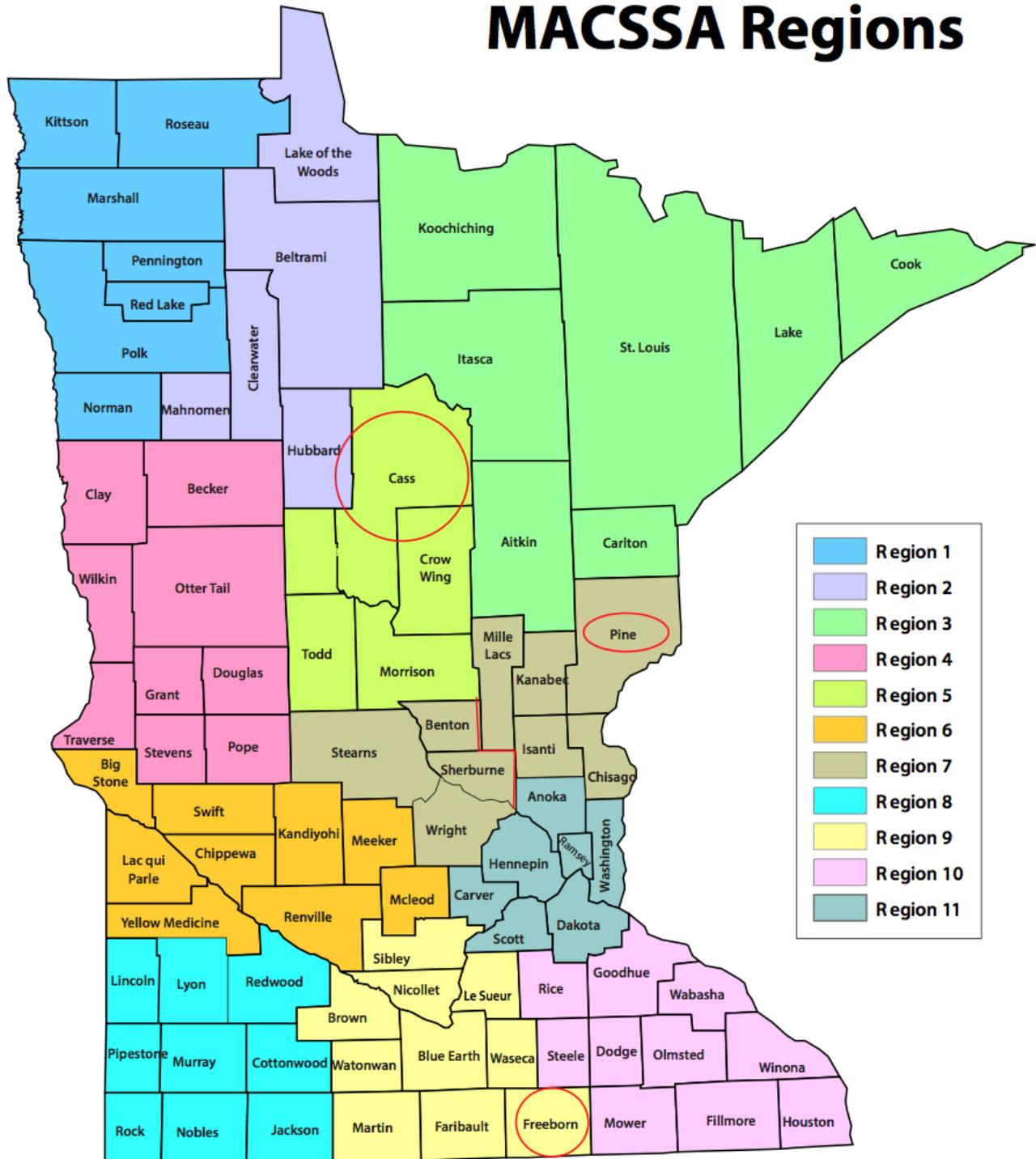
The changes suggested are:

1. Cass County moves to either Region 2 or 3.
2. Pine County moves to Region 3.
3. Region 7 splits into an east and a west region.
4. Freeborn County moves to Region 10.

Figure 1: MACCSA regional map with suggested changes in red

Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators

MACCSA Regions



Coordinating Councils in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area

The Metropolitan Council focuses on assisting counties in the seven-county Twin Cities Metropolitan Area to advance transportation coordination. It convenes a Coordination Advisory Committee of social services and transportation providers for periodic meetings. Four counties- Dakota, Scott and Carver (working jointly), and Washington-applied for and received Federal Transit Administration Section 5310 – Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities – funds to establish coordinating councils or collaboratives. Counties need to apply for the funds annually.

Dakota County is setting its collaborative’s 2017 work plan to include travel training and vehicle sharing. The Dakota plan is viewed as a pilot project for the Olmstead Plan, and has a mobility manager on staff. Below are some examples of what the other Twin Cities area counties are doing.

- Scott and Carver counties have organized a user group, a provider group and a mobility manager.
- Washington County is in the organizing stage and has engaged a consultant to identify the gaps and opportunities in its system.
- Hennepin and Anoka counties have been encouraged to apply for 5310 funds to get efforts started in their counties.
- Ramsey County has not been actively involved in coordination efforts. Newtrax is an active mobility management organization coordinating needs in Ramsey County using 5310 grant awards

MCOTA involvement with RTCCs

This year, MCOTA defined its role with the RTCCs in two primary ways: 1) Identifying some common statewide objectives (see emphasis areas), and 2) Conducting activities that support communication and cooperative efforts of the RTCCs.

MCOTA reiterated agreement for its role in supporting RTCCs as outlined in its 2015 Strategic Plan.³ See Appendix C for the full list of potential activities.

Emphasis areas

MCOTA has drafted statewide objectives through emphasis areas. The emphasized objectives encourage RTCCs to give priority to particular issues in their work programs. Below is a table that provides guidance on the emphasis areas for each of the RTCCs 2018 - 2023 Work Programs. Listed within each emphasis area are potential projects and activities MCOTA has identified for local consideration.

³ [June 2015 MCOTA Strategic Plan](#)

Table 3: MCOTA's recommended emphasis areas for RTCCs

Emphasis Areas	Activities
Short Term (1-2 years)	
Regional Coordination	Engage with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation stakeholders (public transit, human service, school, private transportation, employers, veterans, etc.) • Organizations serving individuals needing transportation services • Funders of transportation services
Regional Mobility Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a regional travel counseling program • Integrate Olmstead population (persons with disabilities) into range of coordinated transportation options • Expand commuter programs • Address recruitment for volunteer driver programs • Develop regional travel training program
Regional Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead implementation of Local Human Service-Public Transit Coordination Plan • Develop and implement regional routes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Identify Non-Emergency Medical Transportation needs and identify providers to plan for future NEMT Coordination o Identify driver pool for transportation services (public transit, human service, school, etc.) o Identify potential areas for coordination between public transit and schools (daily service, special education, foster care, etc.) • Develop and implement transportation services for employment-related and education-related activities
Reporting/Performance Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure and report at least the following outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased ridership • Cost savings • Reduction in service gaps • Reduction in duplicative services • Increased awareness of transportation services • Increased user satisfaction • Increased collaboration, coordination and consolidation
Mid-Term (3-5 years) <i>Short-term activities +</i>	
Regional Mobility Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include NEMT and managed care transportation in coordination efforts
Long-Term (5+ years) <i>Short- and mid-term activities +</i>	
Regional Mobility Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate vehicle sharing • Consider using vehicles owned by and insured through RTCC
Regional Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead development of Local Human Service-Public Transit Coordination Plan update

This project 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.

Olmstead Plan: Progress Toward Goals

Minnesota's Olmstead Plan greatly influences the work of MCOTA and the RTCCs. RTCCs are an important mechanism for advancing Olmstead's goals.

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.”⁴

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.”⁵

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.”⁶

The transportation section has four specific and measurable goals that were determined with input from MCOTA (Table 4).

⁴ United States Department of Justice, Americans with Disabilities Act website, [About Olmstead](#)

⁵ Minnesota Governor's press release: [Minnesota's new Olmstead Plan improves opportunities for people with disabilities](#), Nov. 1, 2013

⁶ mn.gov/olmstead

MnDOT, DHS and the Metropolitan Council intend for the RTCCs to help achieve the transportation access goals in the Olmstead Plan. Most of the organizations that have helped shape the planned RTCCs in the stakeholder workshops work directly with individuals with disabilities.

- Human/social service organizations*
- State agencies*
- Transportation providers*
- Counties: social services, public health, administrators*
- Metropolitan Planning Organizations
- Regional Development Commissions
- Tribal representatives*
- Emergency medical & trauma services*
- Schools*
- Cities*
- Health insurance companies*

**Organizations that work with individuals with disabilities*

Table 4: Transportation section goals from Minnesota's Olmstead Plan

Topic	Goals	Agency*
Transportation	<p>Goal One: By December 31, 2020 accessibility improvements will be made to 4,200 curb ramps (increase from base of 19% to 38%) and 250 Accessible Pedestrian Signals (increase from base of 10% to 50%). By January 31, 2016, a target will be established for sidewalk improvements.</p>	MnDOT and Metropolitan Council
	<p>Goal Two: By 2025, service hours offered by Greater Minnesota public transit will increase by approximately 43% to 1,713,000.</p>	
	<p>Annual Goals to increase the annual number of passenger trips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2015 the number of trips will increase to 13,129,593 • By 2020 the number of trips will increase to 16,059,797 • By 2025 the number of trips will increase to 18,800,000 	
	<p>Goal Three: By 2025, expand transit coverage so that 90% of the public transportation service areas in Minnesota will meet minimum service guidelines for access.</p>	
<p>Goal Four: By 2025, transit systems' on time performance will be 90% or greater statewide.</p>		

Volunteer Driver Program Study

University of Minnesota researchers have nearly completed a study of volunteer driver programs in Minnesota; this study is expected to be published in March 2017. The goal was to survey and develop an inventory of case studies of volunteer driver programs in Minnesota, including faith-based programs. Researchers identified 221 transit providers, most in greater Minnesota. 188 email addresses were identified and of these there were 45 survey responses. From the 45 responses, it was determined that 30 providers had volunteer drivers. The group of 30 providers with volunteer drivers was studied in depth. Findings include:

- 221 transit providers were identified, most in greater Minnesota. 188 email addresses were identified and of these there were 45 survey responses. Of the 45, 30 providers had volunteer drivers. This group of 30 was studied in depth.
- Volunteer drivers provide a valuable and useful service.
- Volunteer drivers are becoming harder to find: two-thirds felt they did not have enough volunteer drivers and 75 percent had difficulty finding volunteer drivers.
- More than 900 individual drivers are represented among the 30 providers. The average age is 65 with more than half age 65-69. Each driver provided 17 trips on average a month. There were more than 1,500 trips per month provided and 180,000 trips per year.
- A total of 32,000 volunteer hours are provided per month. This number includes the hours while transporting and any waiting time prior to return trip.
- Reimbursement rate regulation (including lack of no-load reimbursement) is one additional disincentive for potential volunteer drivers, and confusion over proper insurance coverage (especially if volunteer driver reimbursed for no-load mileage) is another.

Recommendations of the study:

- Update the volunteer driver brochure.
- Explore the potential for requesting legislation that:
 1. Clarifies the distinction between sub-contractor and volunteer (beyond just reimbursement rates - e.g., add language that distinguishes volunteer drivers from those driving for "transportation network companies" by noting eligible provider types and trip purposes), and
 2. Provides guidance about the insurance liability of volunteer drivers and insurance requirements for organizations providing volunteer riders.

This project relates to MCOTA legislative duties 10, 13, and 20 by identifying barriers to volunteer driver programs and recommending steps, including legislation and advocacy, to address the barriers, including liability and insurance issues.

Volunteer driver insurance brochure update

In 2015, the Minnesota Legislature passed a law requiring “transportation network drivers” to carry additional insurance. It seems the authors of the legislation intended to exempt volunteer drivers from this law, but because the intent is unclear, the Department of Commerce and Minnesota Board on Aging are seeking clarifying legislation to provide guidance about the insurance liability of volunteer drivers and insurance requirements for organizations providing volunteer riders.

The volunteer driver program study (referenced above) 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 the state agencies, updated and presented the draft brochure at the September MCOTA meeting. It is expected to be finalized in the spring of 2017.

This project relates 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.

Other MCOTA Activities/Discussions

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.

Veterans Transportation Project in northern Minnesota

MCOTA members learned about the medical appointment transportation services that are available for veterans. Approximately 29,000 veterans across the state have been transported since the Veterans Transportation Project began about three years ago.

This program involves the Disabled American Veterans purchasing vehicles and giving them to the Veterans Administration medical centers in northern Minnesota. The group finds volunteers to operate the vehicles and encourage veterans to use this mode of transportation. The DAV has coordinators to answer calls from veterans and schedule their rides. The organization also coordinates closely with counties and other organizations. This year they hope to expand to southwest Minnesota.

Changes in vehicle inspection requirements under STS

MCOTA members were informed about the changes in vehicle inspection requirements under Special Transportation Services, or STS, laws. MCOTA approved requesting changes to Minnesota Statute 174.30, Subdivision 1-1 to broaden the definition of applicability, including taxis, to include all forms of public transportation in Minnesota.

Heading Home: Minnesota's Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness

The Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness is a cabinet-level council that is overseeing the plan to end homelessness by 2020. The statewide plan to end homelessness, *Heading Home Minnesota*⁷, is now being implemented. MnDOT is involved with MICH and is helping to implement the plan.

Members of MCOTA noted that the RTCCs could play a key role in the local implementation of Heading Home Minnesota, given the relationship between homelessness.

Panel discussion on state agency program reporting

Last year, MCOTA hired the University of Minnesota to examine and report on the collection and reporting of transportation-related data across agencies.⁸ At the March 2016 MCOTA meeting, several panel members discussed how their agency handles reporting. The state agencies report on a variety of information including miles, hours, health care reporting, monthly statistical reports, etc. The future RTCC staff will need to be aware of and involved these systems.

⁷ [Heading Home: Minnesota's Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness, January 2016](#)

⁸ [Common Standards for Reporting Financial Information for Transportation](#), by Jerry Zhao, University of Minnesota, 2015.

- **Julie Belisle, Department of Education:** For children who are homeless, the transportation goal is keep the child at the school they have been going to, per McKinney-Vento legislation. School districts have to absorb these added expenditures. Belisle explained how the school district gets reimbursed for the transport of school children who are experiencing homelessness.
- **Diogo Reis, Department of Human Services:** Reis's office operates the Non-Emergency Medical Transportation program. Data is collected in a health care claims type of system. There are geographic boundaries for how far people can travel within the Medicaid system. Day Training & Habilitation programs use a similar process. The rates for reimbursement are calculated by state statute.
- **Tom Gottfried, Department of Transportation:** Gottfried explained how MnDOT gathers operational information from Greater Minnesota public transit providers. The Office of Transit receives state and federal funds and then grants the funds to recipients (the transit providers) through a budget review process. The operational information the transit providers provide is required per statute.

Medicaid Program (Managed Care and Fee-for-Service) Policies and the Impacts on Volunteer Driver Programs

Craig Rempp, President of the Minnesota Public Transit Association and Tiffany Collins, MPTA Representative on MCOTA, brought an issue to the council. The issue was about Medicaid policies that negatively impact volunteer driver programs. The MPTA is trying to address the effects Medicaid has on volunteer driver programs and wants MCOTA's support in this effort. The issues involve two segments of volunteer driver program – managed care and fee-for-service rides under the Medicaid program. MCOTA expressed support for addressing these issues. The issues include contract terms, differences in providers' fee structures, payment errors and burdensome recordkeeping.

Greater Minnesota Transit Investment Plan

As MnDOT finalized its 2016 Greater Minnesota Transit Investment Plan, which is focused on ways to improve mobility for the general public with emphasis on seniors, low-income populations, homeless populations, individuals with disabilities, veterans, new Americans and commuter consumer groups, MCOTA members received an overview of the plan, and provided ways to share feedback and comments on the plan.

MCOTA Priorities for 2017

RTCC Organizing and Implementation

As noted on pp. 10-11, a major focus for MCOTA in 2017 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.

Table 5: MCOTA's Priority Activities for RTCCs

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

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.

Study on Medicaid Program Policies and the Impact on Volunteer Driver Programs in Minnesota

A University of Minnesota research team will investigate the extent to which Medicaid-funded transportation services are provided by volunteer driver programs, including: the extent of the services throughout the state, how much the programs cost and how much those services would cost without volunteer drivers. Also, this study will explore the regulatory environment, looking at how insurance requirements and other regulations affect the services for Non-Emergency Medical Transportation and managed care clients, in particular. This study builds on the 2016 MCOTA volunteer driver program survey and is expected to involve interviews with transportation providers, volunteer drivers and health insurance/care providers. The goals are to identify hurdles for volunteer driver programs in order to inform policymakers, share best practices for the networks and strengthen the volunteer programs.

This project relates to MCOTA legislative duties 10, 13, and 20 by identifying barriers to volunteer driver programs and recommending steps, including legislation and advocacy, to address the barriers, such as liability and insurance issues.

Volunteer Driver Insurance Legislation

This project relates to MCOTA legislative duties 10, 13, and 20 by identifying barriers to volunteer driver programs and recommending steps, including legislation and advocacy, to address the barriers, such as liability and insurance issues.

In 2015, the Minnesota Legislature passed a law requiring “transportation network drivers” to carry additional insurance. It seems the authors of the legislation intended to exempt volunteer drivers from this law, but because the intent is unclear, the Department of Commerce and Minnesota Board on Aging are seeking legislation to clarify the distinction between a sub-contractor and a volunteer, that provides guidance about the insurance liability of volunteer drivers and states the insurance requirements for organizations providing volunteer riders. MCOTA supports this clarifying legislation.

Communications Plan

Through the RTCC stakeholder workshops conducted in the past two years, MCOTA members heard from stakeholders that they would like more communication about the progress of activities. MCOTA decided to add a quarterly e-mail communication to its annual work plan as a test for fiscal year 2017. The e-mail communication will include updates on activities and link to the CoordinateMNTransit.org website for details. The mailing list will include the stakeholders invited to the RTCC workshops and others who sign up. In addition to the quarterly e-mail communication, MCOTA will redesign the website to have a more modern look and also to be easily accessible from any-sized device, such as phones, tablets, laptops and desktops.

This project relates to MCOTA legislative duties 1 and 20 by sharing information with stakeholders on coordination efforts in the state.

Conclusion

Transportation continues to provide the essential connectivity for communities, and MCOTA is advancing the goals of improved transportation services and access through coordination, especially at the local level through the development of RTCCs. MnDOT, DHS and the Metropolitan Council want the RTCCs to help individuals with disabilities to live and work in the setting they choose by helping to meet the transportation access goals in the Olmstead Plan. Most of the organizations that have helped shape the planned RTCCs work directly with individuals with disabilities. Local coordination through RTCCS will also expand mobility and access for seniors, low-income populations, homeless populations, veterans, New Americans and commuters.

Volunteer driver programs are one of the cornerstones of transportation services, especially in rural Minnesota. MCOTA studied the extent and impact of volunteer driver programs in Minnesota, including barriers to the programs and is supporting efforts to reduce the barriers to volunteer driver programs.

In 2017, MCOTA plans to continue organizing and supporting the development of RTCCs, do additional work to encourage and reduce barriers to volunteer driver programs, and coordinate with stakeholders more regularly through quarterly e-mail updates.

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.

Appendix A: MCOTA Members during 2016

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 (since September 2016)
Minnesota Department of Commerce

Julie Belisle
Minnesota Department of Education

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Appendix B: MCOTA Legislative Duties and Accomplishments

Year(s)	Legislative Duty #1
2011-2016, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2017	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
2011-2016, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2017	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
2012-2016, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2017	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
2011-2016, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2017	Identify barriers prohibiting coordination and accessibility of public transportation services and aggressively pursue the elimination of those barriers.
	Supporting Activities
	<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 Minnesota • Maps of human service transportation providers' areas of service in Minnesota • 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
2011-2016, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2017	Recommend policies and procedures for coordinating local, regional, state, and federal funding and services for the transit public.
	Supporting Activities
	<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, 2014-2016, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2017	Identify stakeholders in providing services for the transit public and seek input from them concerning barriers and appropriate strategies.
	Supporting Activities
	<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 meeting. • 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
2011-2016, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2017	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 Minnesota • Successful local transit coordination case studies • RTCC stakeholder engagement

Year(s)	Legislative Duty #8
None of the years between 2011-2016	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, 2014-2016	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 Minnesota • Successful local transit coordination case studies • Minnesota mobility management case studies • RTCC stakeholder engagement

Year(s)	Legislative Duty #10
2011, 2015-2016, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2017	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 Minnesota, including faith-based programs • RTCC stakeholder engagement • Volunteer transportation programs inventory and survey

Year(s)	Legislative Duty #11
2016, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2017	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 2011-2016	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, 2015-2016, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2017	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 Minnesota

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 2017	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 • RTCC organizing and implementation

Year(s)	Legislative Duty #16
2012-2016, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2017	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 • Minnesota mobility management case studies • Minnesota Mobility Management Handbook • RTCC stakeholder engagement

Year(s)	Legislative Duty #17
2016, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2017	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 2017	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 • RTCC organizing and implementation

Year(s)	Legislative Duty #19
2013, 2015, 2016, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2017	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 Minnesota • Outreach to providers about options and benefits of vehicle sharing • RTCC stakeholder engagement • Ways to increase vehicle sharing in Minnesota

Year(s)	Legislative Duty #20
2012-2016, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2017	Advocate 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](#).⁹

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 [MCOTA Strategic Plan, June 2015, pp. 14-15.](#)

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.

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.