



2018 report on

Minnesota Council on Transportation Access

January 2019

Prepared by:

The Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155-1899

Phone: 651-296-3000

Toll-Free: 1-800-657-3774

TTY, Voice or ASCII: 1-800-627-3529

To request this document in an alternative format, call 651-366-4718 or 1-800-657-3774 (Greater Minnesota).

You may also send an email to ADArequest.dot@state.mn.us

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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 2018 activities that advance MCOTA's legislatively outlined duties to improve transportation coordination throughout the state.

MCOTA continued to focus on the urgent issues and opportunities for volunteer driver programs, which provide a significant number of trips and cost savings for communities in rural Minnesota. Specific activities this year included supporting changes to federal rates of volunteer driver mileage reimbursement and holding a statewide forum for volunteer driver programs.

Volunteer drivers serve a vital role in helping seniors and those with disabilities retain their independence and they also represent a huge budget savings to Minnesotans. Minnesota spends more than \$88 million annually on nonemergency medical transportation, with reimbursement to volunteer drivers accounting for a third of those funds. Last year's MCOTA study on volunteer driver programs found that, on average, volunteer driver services can save from \$18 to \$185 for each round-trip and the annual savings of the six programs in the study ranged from about \$75,000 to as much as \$1,480,000.¹

MCOTA convened a statewide Volunteer Driver Program Forum on May 9, 2018, in St. Paul, Minn. It brought together those running volunteer driver programs and other stakeholders to share information and to maintain and strengthen the programs. The 140 participants overwhelmingly expressed a desire to have a similar forum again, and to follow up on tax and insurance topics. A summary of forum highlights and presentations from the event is available on the [Volunteer Driver Forum on MCOTA website](#).

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 to serve as the primary local drivers for transportation coordination, with guidance from MCOTA. In July, the MnDOT Office of Transit and Active Transportation awarded the first round of planning grants for RTCCs in Greater Minnesota to nine regional organizations that cover most counties in Greater Minnesota. And five coordination initiatives in the Twin Cities metro region continue to develop and mature with support from the Metropolitan Council and MnDOT.

This year, MCOTA published a study of the current state of youth employment transportation issues in Minnesota along with recommendations for improvement. Researchers from the State and Local Policy Program at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs conducted a survey of youth in employment and training programs throughout Minnesota and also documented examples of innovative programs meeting the transportation needs of working youth (ages 14-24). They found that

¹ Jerry Zhao, 2017, [Cost-Benefit Analysis of Volunteer Driver Programs: Minnesota Case Studies](#)

youth throughout the state are likely to face employment transportation issues. Fewer youths in urban areas reported transportation barriers than youths in suburban and rural areas of the state. Unemployed youths with disabilities, particularly in suburban and rural areas, were most likely to report transportation barriers to their employment. The full report is available online and is entitled, "[Best Practices for Addressing Youth Employment and Training Transportation.](#)"

Finally, MCOTA continued to inform stakeholders about its activities and meetings through email updates and through its website, [CoordinateMNTransit.org](#).

MCOTA is at a crossroads. While there has been some improvement in access, transportation services are still inadequate for transit-dependent residents, including persons with disabilities. In rural and suburban areas especially, it can take a disabled person three hours to get to work.

MCOTA is ready to move into more implementation activities and determine and prioritize those activities. , MCOTA plans to engage with stakeholders and update its strategic plan in early 2019. In addition to updating its strategic plan in 2019, MCOTA plans to:

- Formalize MCOTA's role in organizing and supporting the development of RTCCs
- Consider MCOTA's role in the testing and deployment of automated vehicles in Minnesota
- Encourage the development of and reduction of barriers to volunteer driver programs
- Communicate with stakeholders through quarterly e-mail updates and the website

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.

In 2018, MCOTA focused on connecting volunteer driver programs with the people and information they need, including through the statewide Volunteer Driver Program Forum in May. In addition, the first round of Greater Minnesota RTCC planning grants were awarded. MCOTA also sponsored and published a research study on youth employment transportation in Minnesota, including innovative practices in Minnesota and elsewhere.

MCOTA is at a crossroads. While there has been some improvement in access, transportation services are still inadequate for transit-dependent residents, including persons with disabilities. In rural and suburban areas especially, it's common to take three hours to get to work.

MCOTA is ready to move into more implementation activities, and determine its priorities. MCOTA plans to engage with stakeholders and update its strategic plan in early 2019. Members recognize that volunteer driver programs need continued attention. Other areas addressed in the plan will include defining MCOTA's role and relationship with RTCCs (Greater Minnesota and metro), determining MCOTA's role regarding the adoption of automated vehicles in the state and looking at its role with other statewide initiatives such as DHS' MN2030 plan and the Olmstead plan.

MCOTA Mission

The mission of 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. MCOTA will update its strategic plan in 2019.

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 2018 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 2018.

Table 2: Key MCOTA 2018 Activities and Accomplishments

Activity	Legislative Duties Addressed Under Minn. Stat. 174.285
Held statewide Volunteer Driver Program Forum	1, 2, 10
Participated in Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils development: planning phase 1 grants awarded	1-11, 13-14, 16-17, 19-20
Published report on best practices in youth employment transportation	1, 2, 4
Continued stakeholder communications: website and 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.

Volunteer Driver Program Forum

MCOTA focused on the urgent issues and opportunities for volunteer driver programs, which provide a significant number of trips and cost savings for communities in rural Minnesota. Specific activities this year included supporting changes to federal rates of volunteer driver mileage reimbursement and holding a statewide forum for volunteer driver programs.

Minnesota spends more than \$88 million annually on nonemergency medical transportation with reimbursement to volunteer drivers accounting for a third of those funds. Last year’s MCOTA study on volunteer driver programs found that, on average, volunteer driver services can save from \$18 to \$185 for each round-trip and the annual savings of the six programs in the study ranged from about \$75,000 to as much as \$1,480,000.²



Volunteer drivers transport seniors or individuals with disabilities to healthcare appointments or to other destinations, such as the grocery store. Volunteer drivers serve a vital role in helping seniors and those with disabilities retain their independence and they also represent a huge budget savings to Minnesotans.

² Jerry Zhao, 2017, [Cost-Benefit Analysis of Volunteer Driver Programs: Minnesota Case Studies](#)

MCOTA convened a statewide Volunteer Driver Program Forum on May 9, 2018, in St. Paul, Minn. It was a full-day event that brought together those running volunteer driver programs and other stakeholders to share information and to maintain and strengthen the programs. Topics included:

- Current State of Volunteer Drivers in Minnesota
- How to Handle Insurance and Tax Issues
- MN2030: Looking Forward
- Mobility Management, including RTCCs
- Emerging Topics + Technologies

The 140 participants overwhelmingly expressed a desire to have a similar forum again and follow up on tax and insurance topics.

The MN2030: Looking Forward section of the program was an interactive mini-workshop.

MN2030: Looking Forward

By the year 2030, Minnesota’s demographic makeup will look quite different. Baby boomers will begin turning 85. That year will also mark the first time in Minnesota history that residents age 65 and over will outnumber school children.

Those numbers will certainly affect state social services. The Minnesota Board on Aging and the state’s Department of Human Services have partnered on MN2030: Looking Forward, an initiative to envision how those state services should look by that significant year and to put in place goals and strategies to get there.

The agencies are getting feedback from Minnesota service providers—and Minnesotans themselves—about issues they expect to see in light of the state’s aging population. Also, the partners are asking the providers for ideas on how best to address those issues.

Transportation is included within the initiative. Service providers expect that greater numbers of volunteer drivers will be needed to drive older Minnesotans to medical appointments, stores and churches.

With those thoughts in mind, DHS staff asked forum attendees to participate in a visioning exercise. Participants identified ways to overcome challenges that volunteer driver programs typically face.

DHS summarized the ideas of forum participants into priorities in three key areas: mileage reimbursement, insurance and service coordination.

MN2030 Priorities: Mileage reimbursement

- Raise livery/for-hire exclusion dollar limit
- Simplify billing system
- Establish a state council of volunteer driver programs
- Develop Volunteer Driver Manual
- Raise volunteer mileage reimbursement rate to business rate

- Conduct study to identify cost and formula for volunteer driver expenses and calculate the return on investment of volunteer driver programs
- Conduct a public awareness campaign
- Modify Medical Assistance so that it covers no-load miles
- Clarify IRS Form 1099 tax rules

MN2030 Priorities: Insurance

- Define volunteer driver in state statute. Differentiate between volunteer drivers and for-profit drivers
- Protect volunteer drivers from livery exclusion
- Establish a comprehensive network of volunteer drivers
- Share information through brochures, webinars, social media and navigators
- Increase collaboration with insurance companies
- Create a state mandate that requires insurance policies to cover volunteer drivers
- Increase volunteer recruitment training
- Create a resource directory
- Expand Senior Care for programs that already coordinate it and are exempt

MN2030 Priorities: Service coordination

- Use Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils
- Increase county-to-county transportation
- Increase knowledge of transportation services
- Share county resources
- Establish a local community outreach/task force
- Increase use of mobility management organizations
- Create an organized, volunteer program database
- Remove barriers to services caused by county borders (funding, insurance, turf issues, client)

A summary of forum highlights and presentations from the event is available on the [MCOTA website](#). MCOTA is using this summary to inform policymakers and to share best practices to strengthen the volunteer programs.

These tasks relate to MCOTA legislative duties 2 and 10 by encouraging and sharing of best practices for strengthening volunteer driver programs and for recommending steps, including legislation and education, to address barriers such as insurance and reimbursement issues.

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/or military veterans. RTCCs will provide coordinated transportation services among stakeholders to create more transportation options and hopefully more cost-effective service for those needing transportation.

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, and the following organizations were awarded Phase 1 Organizational Planning funds from the MnDOT Office of Transit and Active Transportation:

- Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency, Inc.
(Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, Pine and St. Louis — Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators Region 3)
- East Central Regional Development Commission
(Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs and Pine — MACSSA Region 7)
- Headwaters Regional Development Commission
(Beltrami, Clearwater, Hubbard, Lake of the Woods and Mahnommen — MACSSA Region 2)
- Mid-Minnesota Development Commission
(Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, Renville and Sibley — MACSSA Region 6)
- Northwestern Regional Development Commission
(Kittson, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk and Roseau — MACSSA Region 1)
- Region Five Development Commission
(Cass, Crow Wing, Morrison, Todd and Wadena — MACSSA Region 5)
- St. Cloud Area Planning Organization
(Benton, Sherburne, Stearns and Wright — MACSSA Region 7)
- Three Rivers Community Action, Inc.
(Goodhue, Olmsted, Rice, Wabasha and Winona — MACSSA Region 10)
- West Central Community Action, Inc.
(Becker, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens, Traverse and Wilken — MACSSA Region 4)

These organizations are eligible for phase 2 implementation grants beginning in July 2019.

Coordination projects in the Twin Cities metro area

Five counties in the Twin Cities metropolitan area are currently working on transportation coordination. Dakota County and the Scott and Carver County partnership presented their current initiatives at the Volunteer Driver Program Forum.

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

GoDakota

The three-year-old Dakota County Transportation Coordination Collaborative includes representation from the Metropolitan Council, MnDOT, Dakota County Community Development Agency and three volunteer organizations. Its aim, like all RTCCs, is to coordinate transportation services and programs to increase efficiency. The result is the GoDakota Mobility Management Model.

Dakota County is conducting a pilot partnership with Lyft to supplement Metro Mobility for door-to-door service for individuals with disabilities. When the full GoDakota effort—beyond the pilot—is up and running, a rider will contact a call center to request a ride. From there, the request will be moved into a software system that determines the best provider for the specific request. The Lyft project will also help GoDakota determine how to bill using a software system

Another initiative connects newly released inmates with transportation. The Dakota County jail in Hastings had no transit service. But starting in July 2018, buses began stopping at the county jail twice each day to transport recently released inmates to an existing fixed-route transportation system.

Software speeds ride requests in Scott and Carver counties

SmartLink Transit, serving Scott and Carver counties, uses a ride-scheduling software system that includes an accounting function. SmartLink helps administer nonemergency medical transportation. The software allows riders to request a trip by phone call or online.

The software upgrade will include an invoicing component, so each transit service is invoiced for the trip. The accounting aspect gives SmartLink the true costs of providing transportation services across the region broken down by each provider, including costs for volunteer trips.

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.

Study on best practices in youth employment transportation

One of the biggest barriers that youth employment and training program graduates face is 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.

This year, MCOTA published a study of the current state of youth employment transportation issues in Minnesota along with recommendations for improvement. Researchers from the State and Local Policy Program at the



Best Practices for Addressing
Youth Employment and
Training Transportation

Charles Noble and Frank Douma
Humphrey School of Public Affairs
University of Minnesota
JUNE 2018
Final Report MCOTA-2018-01

MINNESOTA COUNCIL ON TRANSPORTATION ACCESS

University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs conducted a survey of youth in employment and training programs throughout Minnesota and also documented examples of innovative programs meeting the transportation needs of working youth (ages 14-24).

Frank Douma and graduate research assistant Charles Noble found that youth throughout the state are likely to face employment transportation issues. Fewer youths in urban areas reported transportation barriers than youths in suburban and rural areas of the state. Unemployed youths with disabilities, particularly in suburban and rural areas, were most likely to report transportation barriers to their employment.

Recommendations

- Maintain and support transit, walking and biking in urban areas.
- Develop innovative programs for the way transit and other single-occupant vehicle alternatives are offered in suburban and rural areas so youths no longer feel that they must rely on their own cars.
- Provide individualized ride options (e.g., carpooling, ride sharing, car sharing, Lyft, and Uber) or vehicles to youths in rural and suburban areas.
- Expand and invest in Transportation Coordinating Councils.

The full report is available online and is entitled, "[Best Practices for Addressing Youth Employment and Training Transportation](#)." MCOTA will use this study to inform policymakers, employers, employment and training programs and transportation providers.

This project relates to MCOTA legislative duties 1, 2 and 10 by compiling information on the current situation for youth transportation, innovations and identifying ways to strengthen youth transportation in Minnesota.

Olmstead Plan Progress Updates

Olmstead Plan: 2019 accessible pedestrian signal goal met

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 updated about the implementation, goals and measures of the Olmstead Plan at every monthly meeting.

The plan includes measurable goals from the relevant state agencies. One Minnesota Department of Transportation goal was to install 250 additional accessible pedestrian signals on MnDOT-owned and operated signals by Dec. 31, 2019, bringing the system percentage up to 50 percent. MnDOT already met that goal and will propose an adjustment to the measurable goal to the subcabinet for approval.

Olmstead Implementation Office quality-of-life survey

Darlene Zangara, from the Olmstead Implementation Office, gave a presentation to MCOTA on the Olmstead Implementation Office quality of life survey. The survey is designed to track the quality of life

for persons with disabilities. Of those who completed the baseline survey (2,005 individuals statewide), 100 were selected for a follow-up survey.

The baseline survey report is available on the [Olmstead Plan website](#). The Olmstead Implementation Office staff meets with the Olmstead Subcabinet regularly. The next survey results and next steps will be available in December 2018.

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.

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

Stakeholder communications

Website

MCOTA continued to update its CoordinateMNTransit.org website, and it added a section for the Greater Minnesota RTCCs to use for their contact information, basic information about their organizations and to publicize stakeholder meetings.

Stakeholder e-mail update

MCOTA also continued the periodic (approximately quarterly) email communication that began in 2017 in response to requests from stakeholders.

The distribution list includes people who were invited to or attended the workshops, other transit stakeholders and those who signed up on the CoordinateMNTransit.org website.

The contents included announcements about the RTCC grant application and awards, the Volunteer Driver Program Forum, new MCOTA reports and notices of upcoming meetings. The readership statistics are shown in Table 3.



Figure 1: Screenshot of August 2018 issue of the MCOTA e-mail update

Table 3: MCOTA e-mail update readership statistics

	January 2018	March 2018	August 2018	November 2018
Recipients	526	790	662	623
Open rate	26.0%	18.6%	27.2%	21%
Unique click-through rate	10.2%	5.0%	11.7%	5.2%

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

Other MCOTA Activities

An important function of MCOTA is keeping members informed about issues that affect transit and other forms of accessible transportation. Below are brief summaries of topics MCOTA members discussed this year.

Metro Mobility task force report

Last year, the state legislature required a task force to look into how Metro Mobility (the Metropolitan Council's paratransit service) could better meet the growing demand for services effectively and efficiently. Metro Mobility has experienced a 7 percent average annual growth in ridership for the last several years while the last fare increase was in 2008, resulting in an increasing funding deficit.

Christine Kuennen of the Metropolitan Council gave a presentation on the Metro Mobility Task Force report at the February MCOTA meeting. The goals of the task force were to: identify options and methods to increase program effectiveness and efficiency, minimize program costs and improve service including potential partnerships with taxi service providers and transportation network companies.

The task force made separate recommendations for the Metropolitan Council and the Minnesota Legislature in three areas:

1. A system that includes more service options.

Recommendation for Metropolitan Council

- Negotiate agreements by March 31, 2019, to pilot and promote an on-demand service provision, to include:
 - ♦ Metro Mobility ADA Base Service (existing service)
 - ♦ Shared Ride Special Transportation Service Opt-in (as market allows, consumer selected)
 - ♦ Shared Ride Not-STS Opt-in (as market allows, consumer selected, includes Taxi and/or TNC)
 - ♦ Premium, non-shared ride, STS Opt-in (consumer selected)
 - ♦ Premium, non-shared ride, not-STS Opt-in (consumer selected, includes Taxi and/or TNC)

Recommendations for Legislature

- Provide funding to study and invest in technology innovations such as single-point reservation system to allow the customer to self-choose. Fund staffing to support recommendations from this study.
- Provide incentives to increase the number of on-demand accessible vehicles operated by private companies to increase availability to persons with accessibility needs and provide an equivalent response time for all customers using on-demand services.

2. A system that maximizes all potential funding sources.

Recommendations for Metropolitan Council

- Explore creating a service specifically for DHS/County waived clients and medical assistance transportation program post 2020, which would require legislative support.
- Evaluate options available for increased flexibility on Metro Mobility Non-ADA trips such as conditional eligibility of customers, differential fares, service quality standards and span of service that could improve ADA service and overall system performance.

Recommendation for Legislature

- Facilitate collaboration between DHS and Metro Mobility by modifying Data Practices language to allow the agencies to share available non-medical data for limited purposes, including leveraging available federal funding.
- Fund a study to determine how County/DHS and Metro Mobility can coordinate services and funding to capture all eligible federal dollars for waived service and medical assistance client transportation.

3. A system that complies with federal and state requirements and meets the needs of people with disabilities

Recommendation for Metropolitan Council

- Invest in robust public information and outreach to explain the current and new service options.
- Conduct routine market analysis to evaluate the effect of driver wages on workforce stability and service quality and performance and adjust as warranted and funding allows.

Recommendation for Legislature

- Establish a dedicated funding source to ensure Metro Mobility demand is met

The Metro Mobility Task Force report and presentation are available on the Metropolitan Council's website.

DHS transportation waiver program study

Matt Knutson from the Department of Human Services provided information to MCOTA on the legislatively-mandated study of the DHS transportation waiver program. A DHS gaps analysis was completed for every two year period and transportation was identified as a significant gap. Olmstead requires that this gap be addressed.

A redesign of the transportation waiver system, including payment and coordination changes, and a study are in progress. The goal is to increase transportation access for more individuals to more providers, and to have these experiences be positive. A report and recommendations will be sent to the legislature in January 2019.

MCOTA Priorities for 2019

Strategic plan update

MCOTA plans to update its 2015 Strategic Plan through a membership survey, stakeholder input, engagement with RTCC representatives (including both Greater Minnesota and the Twin Cities Metropolitan area collaboratives) and a strategic planning workshop. The goal is to confirm or update MCOTA's mission, vision, goals, strategies, tactics and to identify ways to accomplish the strategies, including potential changes to MCOTA's meeting format and staffing structure. MCOTA members will also take part in disability awareness and sensitivity training to increase their understanding of the impacts that transportation policies and decisions have on persons with disabilities.

Some questions MCOTA is grappling with:

1. How can MCOTA improve the perennial issues identified in surveys and in workshops, such as the challenges of inter-jurisdictional transportation and reducing the time it takes people with disabilities, especially in rural and suburban areas, to get to their destinations?
2. What is MCOTA's role in Minnesota's testing and deployment of automated vehicles?
3. What legislation is needed?

RTCC organizing and implementation

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 continuing to develop RTCCs to serve as the primary local driver 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 RTCCs generally include representatives from a wide range of agencies and interests.

In 2019, MCOTA will continue to work with the RTCCs in Greater Minnesota in their organizing and implementation phases. Each RTCC will complete its structure and operations plan and then apply for implementation grants starting in July 2019. The MnDOT Office of Transit and Active Transportation is funding both the Phase 1 Organizational Planning grants and the Phase 2 Implementation grants.

In addition, the transportation collaboratives and mobility management initiatives occurring in the seven-county Twin Cities Metropolitan will be involved with MCOTA and with the Greater Minnesota RTCCs. These initiatives are funded with Federal Transit Administration Section 5310 funds and Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities funds. The metro counties with collaboratives or mobility management projects include:

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

MCOTA will guide 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 4). These activities were first identified in the MCOTA 2015 Strategic Plan⁶, and were modified and approved by MCOTA in 2016.

In addition, MCOTA will continue working with the RTCCs to formalize and communicate a framework for MCOTA’s relationship with them, as well as roles for MCOTA and RTCCs (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Draft MCOTA - RTCCs Roles and Relationship Framework

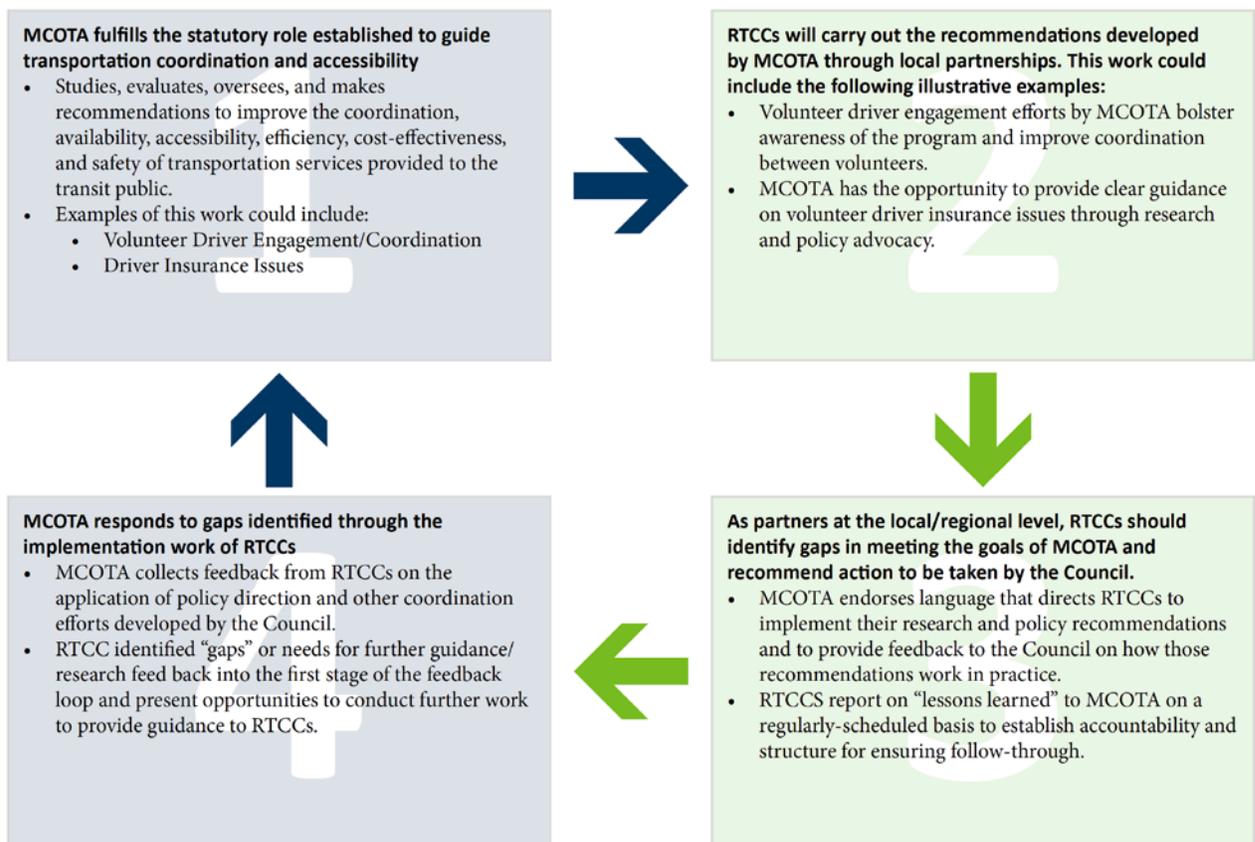


Table 4: MCOTA's Priority Activities for RTCCs (see Appendix C for full list)

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 programs

Following two studies of volunteer driver programs that documented the value and benefits of these programs and the enthusiastic response to the Volunteer Driver Forum, MCOTA intends to continue its efforts for the development of and reduction in barriers to volunteer driver programs in four ways:

1. Update state's volunteer driver brochure
2. Bring stakeholders/interested parties together to resolve insurance issues
3. Continue to advocate for federal legislation to increase the mileage reimbursement rate for volunteer drivers
4. Update state legislation to define 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 barriers that currently exist. Education is also an important role that MCOTA is well-positioned to lead.

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.

Continued stakeholder communications

As RTCCs continue to develop in 2019 and because regular communication with stakeholders throughout the state will be critical to keeping everyone informed, MCOTA plans to continue sending periodic (approximately quarterly) e-mail updates. It will also continue updating the CoordinateMNTransit.org website and begin developing pages for each RTCC on its website.

Conclusion

Transportation is an essential element for Minnesotans access to work, school, shopping, health care and recreation. Volunteer driver programs are one of the cornerstones of transportation services, especially in rural Minnesota. Following two studies of volunteer driver programs this year, MCOTA focused on connecting volunteer driver programs with the people and information they need. MCOTA held a statewide Volunteer Driver Program Forum in May that attracted 140 participants from around the state and included important information from state agencies as well as planning and networking. MCOTA is also addressing the two most substantial barriers to volunteer driver programs - volunteer driver insurance liability and volunteer driver reimbursement.

MCOTA will continue to advance 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. The first round of planning grant awards was announced in July, awarded to nine regional organizations that cover most counties in Greater Minnesota. And five coordination initiatives in the Twin Cities metro region continue to develop and mature with support from the Metropolitan Council and MnDOT.

In 2019, MCOTA will continue its progress to advance transportation access and coordination and significantly improve transportation services for rural residents, MCOTA wants to focus on implementation activities. One important area is to guide and facilitate local coordination through the organization and implementation of RTCCs in Greater Minnesota and the Twin Cities metropolitan area. MCOTA plans to continue to connect with, and advocate for, volunteer driver programs and communicate regularly with stakeholders.

Appendix A: MCOTA Members during 2018

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

Kelly Garvey
Minnesota Department of Education

Thant Pearson
Minnesota Department of Employment and
Economic Development

Tim Held (through April 2018)
Minnesota Department of Health

Susan Bishop (since May 2018)
Minnesota Department of Health

Claire Wilson
Minnesota Department of Human Services

Ron Quade
Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs

Laura Logsdon
Minnesota Management and Budget

Tiffany Collins
Minnesota Public Transit Association

Appendix B: MCOTA Legislative Duties and Accomplishments

Year(s)	Legislative Duty #1
2011-2018, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2019	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 development and stakeholder engagement • Study of economic benefits of Minnesota volunteer driver programs • Study of public-private partnerships in transit • Periodic stakeholder e-mail communication • Volunteer Driver Program Forum • Study on best practices in youth employment transportation

Year(s)	Legislative Duty #2
2011-2018, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2019	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 and development • Volunteer transportation programs inventory and survey • Study of economic benefits of Minnesota volunteer driver programs • Study of public-private partnerships in transit • Volunteer Driver Program Forum • Study on best practices in youth employment transportation

Year(s)	Legislative Duty #3
2012-2018, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2019	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 and development

Year(s)	Legislative Duty #4
2011-2018, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2019	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 and development • Ways to increase vehicle sharing in Minnesota • Study of public-private partnerships in transit • Study on best practices in youth employment transportation

Year(s)	Legislative Duty #5
2011-2018, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2019	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 and development • Study of public-private partnerships in transit

Year(s)	Legislative Duty #6
2011, 2014-2018, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2019	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 and development • Ways to increase vehicle sharing in Minnesota • Volunteer transportation programs inventory and survey

Year(s)	Legislative Duty #7
2011-2018, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2019	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 and development

Year(s)	Legislative Duty #8
None of the years between 2011-2018	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.

Year(s)	Legislative Duty #9
2011-2012, 2014-2018	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 and development

Year(s)	Legislative Duty #10
2011, 2015-2018, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2019	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 and development • Volunteer transportation programs inventory and survey • Study of economic benefits of Minnesota volunteer driver programs • Volunteer driver insurance and reimbursement issues and education • Volunteer Driver Program Forum

Year(s)	Legislative Duty #11
2016, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2019	Recommend minimum performance standards for delivery of services.
	Supporting Activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTCC stakeholder engagement and development

Year(s)	Legislative Duty #12
None of the years between 2011-2018	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, 2015-2018 expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2019	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 and development • Ways to increase vehicle sharing in Minnesota • Volunteer driver insurance and reimbursement issues and education

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 and development

Year(s)	Legislative Duty #15
2011, 2014 expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2019	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 2019	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 and development

Year(s)	Legislative Duty #17
2016, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2019	Encourage the use of public school transportation vehicles for the transit public.
	Supporting Activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTCC stakeholder engagement and development

Year(s)	Legislative Duty #18
2014-2015 expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2019	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 2019	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 and development

Year(s)	Legislative Duty #20
2012-2018 expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2019	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 and development • Volunteer driver insurance and reimbursement issues and education

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
TNC.....	Transportation Network Company (e.g. Lyft, Uber, etc.)