



2015 Report on the

Minnesota Council on Transportation Access

January 2016



Prepared by

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Contents

Minnesota Council on Transportation Access 1

Contents..... 3

Legislative Request 4

Summary 5

Introduction 6

MCOTA Mission..... 6

MCOTA Vision 6

MCOTA Duties 7

The Transportation Coordination Environment 9

MCOTA 2015 Activities and Accomplishments..... 10

Strategic Action Plan..... 10

Strategic Plan Recommendations 12

Immediate next steps from strategic plan 16

RTCC stakeholder engagement 16

Implications for the roles of MCOTA and state agencies..... 17

Next Steps 18

Primer of Transit Funding Sources..... 18

Common Standards for Reporting Financial Information for Transportation..... 18

Potential Methods for Increasing Vehicle Sharing in Minnesota..... 19

Olmstead Plan goals and measures 19

Homelessness and transportation services 21

Conclusion..... 22

Appendix A: MCOTA Members during 2015..... 23

Appendix B: MCOTA Legislative Duties and Accomplishments 24

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

The Minnesota State Legislature created the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access in 2010 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. See [Minn. Stat. 174.285](#).

In this annual report, the council provides a summary of 2015 activities that advance MCOTA's legislatively outlined duties to improve transportation coordination throughout the state.

The need for greater transportation coordination in Minnesota continues, and the opportunities for accomplishing it are better than ever. MCOTA's strategic plan, the potential development of regional transportation coordination councils, the implementation of Minnesota's Olmstead Plan, and the 2016 Greater Minnesota Transit Investment Plan are all aligning to expand mobility and access for all Minnesotans with emphasis on seniors, low-income populations, homeless populations, individuals with disabilities, veterans, new Americans and commuter consumer groups.

This year, MCOTA provided funding for initial stakeholder engagement around a concept developed by Minnesota departments of Transportation and Human Services and the Metropolitan Council. The concept was the creation of regional transportation coordination councils, or RTCCs. A statewide webinar and workshops in seven regional locations provided the local guidance and buy-in for the regional councils, if implemented, to be successful.

MCOTA also developed a set of strategic priorities for the next two years. The strategic priorities include the development of regional organizations to implement transportation coordination throughout the state. MCOTA also finished a primer of transit funding sources in Minnesota in order to make sense of the myriad funding sources and requirements and to identify opportunities for streamlining and coordination.

To address a longstanding need expressed by local and state planners, MCOTA identified options for the development of a consistent method to estimate, report, track and record transportation-related costs. Multiple agencies would use the method, which would implement standard reporting practices in the state. MCOTA conducted research on potential methods for increasing vehicle sharing in Minnesota, finding that there are low-cost opportunities for improvements.

Introduction

The ability to get where one needs to go is crucial in all aspects of life. MCOTA and its predecessor, the Interagency Committee on Transit Coordination, have worked on improving access to transportation through coordination since 2005. 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 and others who may not have or want a personal vehicle.

Transit services are costly to operate. The high operating costs are sometimes exacerbated by inconsistent, duplicative or restrictive federal and state rules and regulations. In some cases, transportation services are simply not available to meet the public's needs. This is especially true in rural areas, where many residents lack access to public transportation. Improving coordination and efficiencies among transportation providers is critical to helping older adults, persons with disabilities, persons with low incomes, veterans and others enjoy independence and participate fully in the state's economy.

Fostering communication and cooperation among different governmental agencies and stakeholder groups can enhance transportation services and enable the more efficient use of public resources. To better coordinate public transit and human service transportation activities, most states have coordinating councils at one or more levels of government.

In Minnesota, the state-level coordinating council is the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access. MCOTA serves as an advisory group and a clearinghouse to address transportation coordination topics from a statewide perspective.

The Minnesota State Legislature established the group 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 MCOTA is to work together to remove obstacles that prevent the successful coordination of transportation programs and resources among its respective customers.

MCOTA Vision

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

MCOTA 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 accomplish the purpose of improving 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 aggressively for eliminating barriers to coordination, implementing coordination strategies, enacting necessary legislation and appropriating resources to achieve the council's objectives.

The Transportation Coordination Environment

Transportation is recognized as a critical component to living a full life for all, including individuals with disabilities, older adults and those with lower incomes. Several developments this year reinforced MCOTA's vision that "Minnesotans will have access to coordinated transportation services to meet their mobility needs."

2015 marked the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Minnesota State Council on Disability hosted several events to celebrate the anniversary, concluding with "The ADA at 25: Minnesota Moving Forward, Employment Dialogue."

The Minnesota Age and Disabilities Odyssey Conference was held in June 2015. The purpose of the conference is to promote best practices and to provide training and technical assistance about DHS programs and services for older adults and individuals with disabilities. MnDOT staff presented information about the Greater Minnesota Transit Investment Plan and the concept of Regional Transportation Coordination Councils.

The Non-Emergency Medical Transportation Advisory Committee proposed legislation that passed in 2015 and will take effect on July 1, 2016. Counties will continue as the primary administrators of the program, which will provide a broader range of service, simplify the administrative requirements and make it easier for clients.

Minnesota's revised Olmstead Plan¹, "a broad series of key activities our state must accomplish to ensure people with disabilities are living, learning, working, and enjoying life in the most integrated setting," was approved by the court in September. The new plan employs specific measurable goals for compliance, rather than more general aspirational goals. MCOTA's role within the transportation section of the Olmstead Plan is as a recommending body to state agencies. More on MCOTA's role within the transportation section of the Olmstead Plan is discussed below.

MnDOT's 2016 Greater Minnesota Transit Investment Plan 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.

In Minnesota, the state-level coordinating council is the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access. MCOTA serves as an advisory group and a clearinghouse to address transportation coordination topics from a statewide perspective.

¹ Putting the Promise of Olmstead into Practice: Minnesota's Olmstead Plan, Aug. 10, 2015 revision, mn.gov/olmstead

MCOTA 2015 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 2015.

Table 1: Key MCOTA 2015 Activities and Accomplishments

Activity	Legislative Duties Addressed Under Minn. Stat. 174.285
Development of strategic action plan	All, especially 2-6, 20
Regional Transportation Coordination Council stakeholder engagement	1-11, 13-14, 16-17, 19-20
Primer of transit funding sources in Minnesota	1, 5
Common standards for financial data collection related to transportation coordination	15, 18
Potential methods for increasing vehicle sharing in Minnesota	4, 6, 13, 19
Olmstead Plan goals and measures	3, 4
Homelessness and transportation services	3, 4, 6

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

Two of the duties specified in legislation have not been addressed by MCOTA:

- Legislative duty 12: “Identify methods to eliminate fraud and abuse in special transportation services.” The NEMT Advisory Council is addressing ways to eliminate fraud and abuse in human services transportation services, so MCOTA does not need to duplicate efforts.
- Legislative duty 17: “Encourage the use of public school transportation vehicles for the transit public.” The local school districts determine the use of the school transportation vehicles under [Minn. Stat. 123B.88](#); so, any use other than transporting students would have to be addressed by the local districts.

Strategic Action Plan

Since 2004, MCOTA made progress in the areas of research, best practices, and technical assistance toward its legislative mandate 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.” However, to see greater progress in transportation coordination throughout the state, MCOTA members decided to develop a strategic plan.

MCOTA contracted with the University of Minnesota to conduct stakeholder engagement and to develop a clear strategic action plan for its role in transportation coordination throughout the state.

As part of the strategic planning effort, MCOTA re-examined the 2005 study that shaped MCOTA’s direction². The council found that the conditions and barriers identified in that study largely still exist, and that the strategy of relying on local transit providers to coordinate services has not worked. There are some successful examples of coordination efforts, but they are not replicated throughout the state and there are many inefficiencies and gaps in service. In the next 10 years, MCOTA members would like to be able to look back and see more significant improvements in Minnesota’s transportation coordination landscape than it has seen in the past 10 years.

MCOTA members participated in a strategic planning workshop in November 2014. The workshop was facilitated by Steve Kelley of the University of Minnesota’s Humphrey School of Public Affairs and hosted by the Center for Transportation Studies.

The five most important priorities for MCOTA that emerged from the workshop and were confirmed by its members in January 2015 are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: MCOTA’s five strategic priorities, approved Jan. 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

² MCOTA Strategic Plan, June 2015, Appendix B, <http://www.coordinateMNTransit.org/MCOTA/documents/2015ActionPlan.pdf>

Strategic Plan Recommendations

Below are recommended actions within each of the top five strategic priorities.

Generally, MCOTA may want to consider requesting changes in legislative language to align its duties with these priorities. And, MCOTA may want to assign members and staff to task forces or subcommittees to move each priority forward.

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

After MCOTA's strategic planning effort, MnDOT, DHS and the Met Council developed a concept to create regional transportation coordination councils. The MnDOT, DHS, and Met Council Program Management Team recognized that RTCCs are a great way to improve transit coordination and services, but that they needed to be created with active participation and input from local stakeholders. The program management team requested funding from MCOTA to conduct initial stakeholder engagement to get feedback on the concept. Four workshops were held across the state in April and May of 2015. Participants primarily representing transportation providers, social services and government agencies were asked to provide insight about several aspects of this concept.

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.

Below is a list of recommendations from stakeholders:

1. Move forward with developing Regional Transportation Coordination Councils RTCCs
2. Create an advisory committee to MCOTA that would be made up of representatives from each RTCC. 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 likely could be covered by MCOTA funds or by RTCC administrative funds.
3. Host an annual dialogue for all RTCCs in conjunction with events such as the MPTA Annual Conference or as a standalone event.
4. Host regional workshops for each RTCC, either annually or every other year.
5. Develop other infrastructure to facilitate communication within and between the RTCCs (e.g., meeting and conference call space, electronic discussion groups, collaborative website).
6. Provide technical assistance to RTCCs.

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, and marketing/communication materials.
8. Assist with resolving state and federal barriers to coordination.
 - a. Funding restrictions
 - b. Privacy regulations
 - c. Insurance regulations
 - d. Legislation
 - e. Interagency conflicts
9. Support RTCC pilot projects such as:
 - a. Surveying customers regarding: Uber, Lyft, or autonomous vehicles
 - 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:

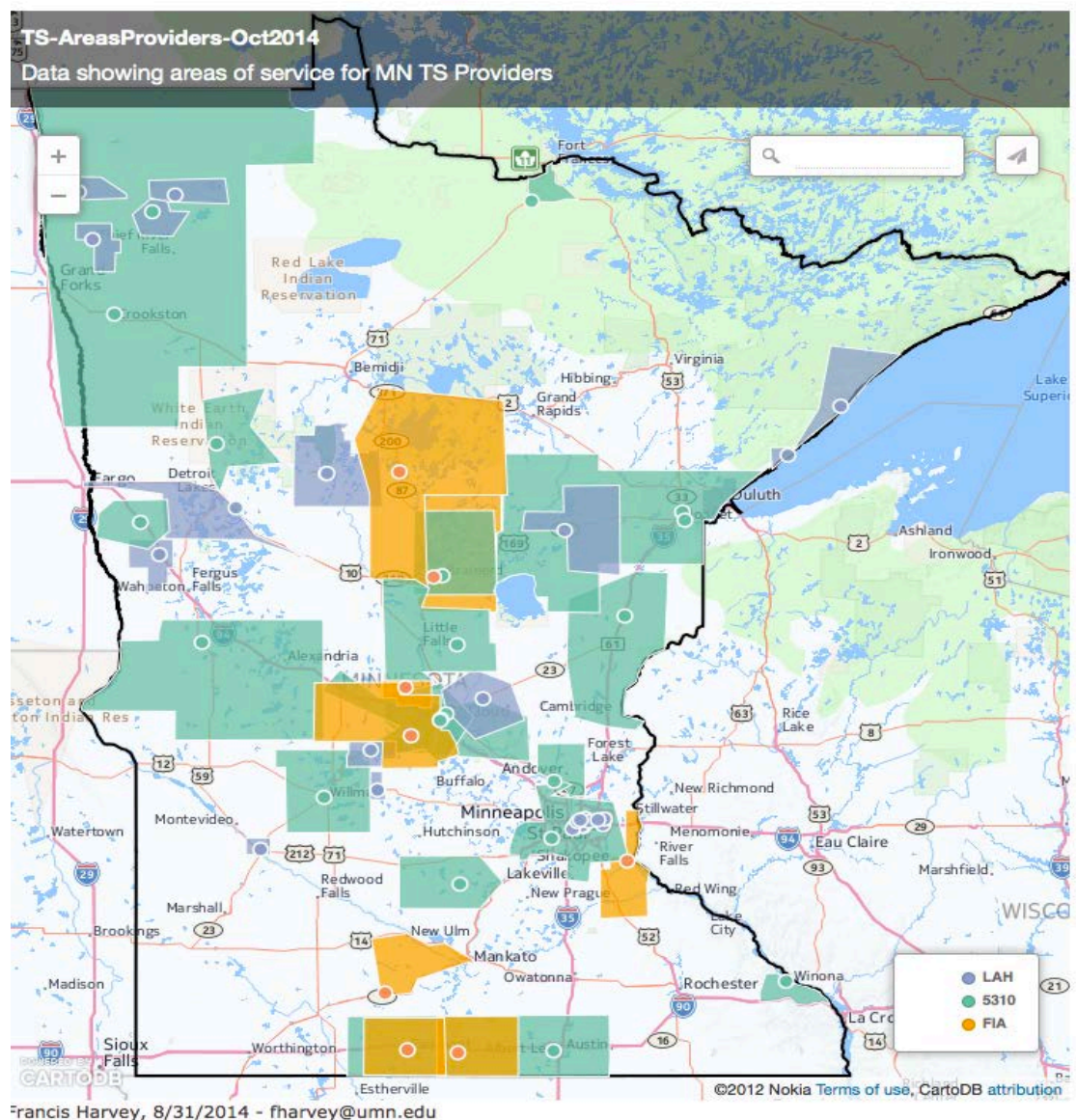
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased ridership • Cost savings • Reduction in service gaps • Reduction in duplicative services • Fewer service denials • Consistent policies and practices among providers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

Strategic Priority 2: Optimize the number of service providers and agencies within the state.

There are significant service gaps in many areas of the state, but there are also some areas with duplicate services. See Figure 1, the transportation provider map from the [Coordinate MN Transit website](http://www.coordinatemn.org). Resources can be used for service expansion, in hours and/or geographical areas through the reduction of duplicate services. The RTCCs are then able to develop a clear understanding of the extent of the transportation service networks in their regions, and to identify opportunities for reducing duplication and also increasing access. One way to reduce duplication is for MCOTA and the RTCCs to clearly define the standards for the service area and population served by providers.

Figure 1: Screenshot of Minnesota human services transportation provider map. The interactive map can be viewed on the [CoordinateMNTransit.org](http://www.coordinatemn.org/directories/index.html) website at www.coordinatemn.org/directories/index.html.



Strategic Priority 3: Use common tools to standardize recordkeeping and reporting.

MCOTA has a project team that is examining ways to standardize recordkeeping and reporting at the state level. The adoption of standardized reporting is a huge task, and will likely require legislative/regulatory, system and process changes, and training for staff. The project team identified the following next steps for MCOTA, and a set of recommendations for each of the state agencies involved in transportation services reporting.

1. Minnesota's Office of the State Auditor maintains the Government Accounting Standards Board. The office developed a chart of accounts for cities and counties to follow. The MCOTA project panel can meet with the Office of the State Auditor to learn about the chart of accounts, benefits and challenges of using common reporting standards, and any recommendations on implementation.
2. Develop a policy or a statute to make collection and reporting of financial data related to public transit and human service transportation a requirement for participating agencies. This action may require legislation to be effective, or a directive or guidance to MCOTA. The development of a policy or statute would need decision makers from participating agencies to address financial reporting information within each agency and to agree on a system for reporting financial information. An example of a policy statement could be the requirement to use the common standards chart of accounts that was developed by the project's Technical Working Group.
3. Use the RTCCs as a method to support common reporting standards. One activity of the RTCCs may be to ensure that local agencies and systems have the same standards and requirements to report financial information.

Strategic Priority 4: Eliminate funding silos or find a way to share funds.

Funding regulations and restrictions are significant barriers to coordination. MCOTA can explore the options for simplifying funding identified in MCOTA's funding primer. One option is to provide "a role for MCOTA in the processing of Human Services Transportation funds." Rather than having funds from the differing sources flow directly to specific providers, which, as a result, tailor their services to the needs of that funder, the funds flow to MCOTA, which then allocates them to the providers based upon the level of service provided. Ultimately, this may result in a more uniform invoicing system that would allow providers to focus on providing rides to those that need them, regardless of the funding source covering the cost."

In conjunction with the funds flowing through MCOTA, the RTCCs would serve as the mechanism for greater local coordination, leading to lower operational costs and easier client access to transportation.

Strategic Priority 5: Offer state-supplied dispatch software and/or enable coordination between dispatch software programs throughout the state.

For providers, access to online databases and communication tools make it easier to share information among agencies. It would be helpful to have a common web-based platform/format for information, such as transit routes and schedules. MCOTA and the RTCCs could evaluate the current transit-scheduling vendors used by providers in Minnesota and determine whether to consolidate with a single vendor or identify ways for the systems to communicate with each other.

These systems could also be used for dispatch services, perhaps in conjunction with GPS technology in vehicles. In addition, using common customer payment systems for multiple purposes would assist customers and facilitate cross-boundary travel.

Immediate next steps from strategic plan

These are actions for MCOTA to accomplish in the next two years:

1. Have the RTCC Program Management Team, made up of representatives from MnDOT, DHS and the Met Council, report to MCOTA.
2. Continue to align MCOTA's activities with its list of legislative duties and with tactics identified in the strategic plan, which correspond to all but one of the legislative duties.
3. Follow the recommendations of the "MCOTA Funding Primer 2015" by determining how to streamline human services transportation funding by having funds flow through MCOTA and then through the RTCCs to providers.
4. Identify incentives for counties and providers to participate in coordination efforts.
5. Follow-up on the recommendations from the 2015 MCOTA "Common Standards for Reporting Financial Information for Transportation" report to begin developing common reporting standards.
6. Work with legislative liaisons from other state agencies to develop a comprehensive package of legislative changes to support the activities outlined in the strategic plan.
7. Identify and disseminate ways to enhance cross-boundary coordination.
8. Hold a strategic planning workshop every two years to confirm and adjust strategic priorities and engage all members. Include RTCC advisory committee members.

Strategic planning addresses all MCOTA legislative duties laid out in the statute, especially 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 20, by identifying best practices, recommending statewide objectives, identifying barriers and ways to eliminate barriers, encouraging training, and advocating for implementation of recommendations.

RTCC stakeholder engagement

The transportation system is complex; there is no single network, but rather multiple networks that may or may not connect smoothly to each other. Coordination of transportation services offers many benefits for transportation users and for providers—cost savings, better service delivery and greater mobility. To better coordinate public transit and human service transportation activities, most states created coordinating councils at one or more levels of government.

The concept of regional transportation coordination councils was brought up in last year's annual report; MCOTA followed up on the concept and advanced it further this year.

MCOTA brings all the transportation agencies together to work on the same issues. It is clear that local organizations are the key to implementing coordination efforts, and discussions about the Olmstead Plan served as the catalyst to get the discussions about the idea of regional councils started. Fourteen other states have local or regional coordination councils, and it was helpful for MCOTA to learn from their experiences and to determine the best approach for Minnesota. The end result of regional councils will be focused on what is best for the customers and clients.

MnDOT and DHS, in collaboration with other state agencies, are proposing to work with the Met Council and other local governments and organizations to create regional transportation coordination councils. The purpose of RTCCs is to help transportation providers and service agencies fill transportation gaps, by helping agencies make more rides available using the same or fewer resources, making transportation easier to use, and giving customers more options of where and when to travel. Coordination includes, but goes beyond, ADA transportation services.

MnDOT, DHS and Met Council's Program Management Team recognized that RTCCs might be a great way to improve transit coordination and services, but that they needed to be created with active participation and input from local stakeholders. The PMT requested funding from MCOTA to conduct initial stakeholder engagement to get feedback on the concept. To gather feedback, MCOTA hosted a webinar and held seven workshops across the state in the spring and fall of 2015. Participant, primarily representing transportation providers, social services, and government agencies, were asked to provide insight about several aspects of this concept.

MCOTA hosted a webinar on April 16, 2015 that outlined the concept of regional coordination councils and offered several examples of successful RTCC's. The recording is available at CoordinateMNTransit.org.

The purpose of the regional workshops was for participants to share their perspectives on what activities potential regional coordination councils might undertake to implement and/or oversee the coordinated transportation system. Altogether, the results and feedback from these meetings will inform MnDOT, DHS and the Met Council as they develop application criteria for the creation and operation of regional coordinating councils.

Coordination councils, or collaboratives, in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area may look different than they do in greater Minnesota. For example, Dakota and Scott counties started coordination councils using 5310 grants.

Workshops took place in:

- Duluth: April 23, 2015
- St. Cloud: April 30, 2015
- Mankato: May 13, 2015
- Twin Cities: May 14, 2015
- Marshall: Oct. 5, 2015
- Rochester: Oct. 26, 2015
- Bemidji: Nov. 2, 2015

Implications for the roles of MCOTA and state agencies

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 RTCCs' efforts. They recommended that the regional councils have representatives on MCOTA. They recognized the need for communications among the regional councils, and transparency of communications and decision-making. MCOTA is well positioned to fulfill these duties, if RTCCs are created.

Across the state, workshop participants expressed cautious optimism and enthusiasm for the council concept. Many attendees noted that this level of coordination is long overdue and that they have had many previous discussions about coordination efforts that never came to fruition. They hope for a better outcome this time.

Attendees demonstrated a readiness to move forward quickly and requested state support and funding to do so. However, they cautioned that they need a structure that creates less red tape, not more, for them to champion this effort.

Next Steps

The PMT will use attendees' ideas to begin drafting a structure for the coordination councils, followed by a second round of workshops in the same locations, to gather feedback about the structure. Following that round of workshops, it is expected that the RFP(s) for the implementation of the RTCCs will be issued and the initial RTCCs formed.

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

Primer of Transit Funding Sources

A University of Minnesota research team developed an inventory of the transportation funding programs available from the federal and state governments, including funding levels and details about the administration of each program. The study identified options for the streamlining of funding to enable greater coordination (see Strategic Priority 4 above).

This project relates to MCOTA legislative duties 1 and 5 by compiling information about existing processes and by recommending alternatives that will enhance coordination throughout the state.

Common Standards for Reporting Financial Information for Transportation

The purpose of this research project was to develop a consistent method for multiple agencies to estimate, report, track and record transportation-related costs, specifically:

- Develop a common set of terms and financial concepts that will identify categories for the chart of accounts because not all state and local agencies use the same definition to describe their transportation services.
- Identify a common set of data categories that agencies use to measure their transportation services. Specific categories and terms will lead to development of the chart of accounts.
- Identify a common set of evaluation criteria for participating agencies. Standards may be different between the state and local agencies and data collection and analysis have different results and significance. The criteria will contribute to the chart of accounts.

Recommendations from this study are included in MCOTA's Strategic Plan (see Strategic Priority 3 above).

This project relates to MCOTA legislative duties 15 and 18 by recommending a uniform accounting and reporting system and developing a consistent allocation methodology for transportation services.

Potential Methods for Increasing Vehicle Sharing in Minnesota

Building upon a 2013 MCOTA study, Frank Douma from the University of Minnesota Humphrey School of Public Affairs conducted a survey of human service transportation providers to learn how barriers to vehicle sharing could be effectively reduced. The specific objectives of this study were to improve the understanding of the nature of demand for vehicle sharing, identify which barriers would most likely increase openness to vehicle sharing if addressed, and identify the best methods for getting the information about addressing these barriers to providers.

To accomplish these objectives, an online survey of 100 Human Service Transportation providers in Minnesota was conducted in June 2015. A response rate of just less than 30 percent was obtained, with respondents representing a wide range of different sized providers, offering different types of services and from locations all around the state.

The survey results included:

- Continued resistance to sharing by some providers
- The greatest interest lies in addressing insurance barriers, followed by addressing mechanical/logistical issues, and then safety regulations that may be barriers to vehicle sharing
- Providers see a role for government regulators in addressing these barriers

The research team believes that even greater insight could be obtained through more a larger and more rigorous survey. Further work in this area is suggested, as well as continued outreach and education about the benefits of vehicle sharing. The vehicle sharing outreach and education should develop materials that focus on addressing insurance issues, training about best practices regarding the mechanics involved in vehicle sharing and addressing safety regulations.

Olmstead Plan measurable 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.”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 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

³ United States Department of Justice, Americans with Disabilities Act website, [About Olmstead](#)

⁴ Minnesota Governor’s news release: [Minnesota’s new Olmstead Plan improves opportunities for people with disabilities](#), Nov. 1, 2013

remains unchanged, which is to “ensure people with disabilities are living, learning, working and enjoying life in the most integrated setting.”⁵

The transportation section has four specific and measurable goals that were determined with input from MCOTA (Table 3).

Table 3: Transportation section goals from Minnesota's Olmstead Plan

Topic	Goals	Agency*
Transportation	<p>Goal One: By Dec. 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 Jan. 31, 2016, a target will be established for sidewalk improvements.</p>	MnDOT and Metropolitan Council
	<p>Annual Goals to increase the number of APS installations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By Dec. 31, 2015, there will be an additional 50 APS installations • By Dec. 31, 2016, there will be an additional 50 APS installations • By Dec. 31, 2017, there will be an additional 50 APS installations • By Dec. 31, 2018, there will be an additional 50 APS installations • By Dec. 31, 2019, there will be an additional 50 APS installations 	
	<p>Goal Two: By 2025, additional rides and service hours will increase the annual number of passenger trips to 18.8 million in Greater Minnesota (approximately 50% increase).</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 2020, 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 2020, transit systems' on time performance will be 90% or greater statewide.</p>	

⁵ mn.gov/olmstead

Homelessness and transportation services

Amy Stetzel, project manager at the Minnesota Office to Prevent and End Homelessness, attended two MCOTA meetings and provided information on the activities related to transportation and homelessness. The goal set forth in the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness' "Heading Home Minnesota plan"⁶ is to prevent and end homelessness in Minnesota. State agencies are tasked in assisting with this goal. Homeless individuals have a very difficult time with transportation; a number of stakeholder meetings around this issue took place in the development of "Heading Home: Minnesota's Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness," and goals from the Olmstead Plan are going into the updated 2016-2017 Heading Home Plan. MnDOT's 2016 Greater Minnesota Transit Investment Plan is engaging homeless individuals and advocates as stakeholders in the development of its plan.

MnDOT is working to identify and remove barriers to transportation for those experiencing housing instability. Removing transportation barriers will improve access to necessary amenities for stable living including access to housing, employment, food, health care, social services, education and child care.

MnDOT identified the following as the primary barriers and developed an action plan to address them. These are the same issues that MCOTA is working on, with effective synergies from both efforts.

1. Coordination

- Better coordination and connections are needed between transportation providers, services providers (social services, child care, medical services), employers, affordable housing (existing and in development), and government (local, county, state).

2. Cost

- Transportation can be expensive for low-income individuals and families; this includes public transportation options and the ownership and maintenance of vehicles.

3. Transit Access and Availability

- Public transit options, which are typically the most affordable options, can be inconvenient, unreliable and have service gaps. These include:
 - Gaps between the time of transit services and employment start and end times
 - Gaps in routes that may not cross county boundaries, extend to low-income housing, or include stops at reliable child-care and basic necessity shopping

⁶ *Heading Home: Minnesota's Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, December 2013, <http://www.headinghomeminnesota.org/sites/default/files/MICHPLAN.pdf>

Conclusion

Through its ongoing efforts as a state-level coordinating council, MCOTA continues to advance the goal of transportation coordination in Minnesota. This year was significant in determining ways to build the capacity for a more coordinated transportation system to serve all Minnesotans where they live. Following its action plan, including the exploration and implementation of RTCCs, MCOTA is poised to lead the state in the implementation of coordinated transportation.

Appendix A: MCOTA Members during 2015

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

Vacant
Minnesota Department of Commerce

Kelly Wosika through September 2015
Minnesota Department of Education

Julie Belisle since September 2015
Minnesota Department of Education

Thant Pearson
Minnesota Department of Employment
and Economic Development

Tim Held
Minnesota Department of Health

Steve Masson retired September 2015
Minnesota Department of Human
Services

Vacant October 2015-present
Minnesota Department of Human
Services

Ron Quade
Minnesota Department of Veterans
Affairs

Keith Bogut
Minnesota Management and Budget

Tiffany Collins
Minnesota Public Transit Association

Appendix B: MCOTA Legislative Duties and Accomplishments

MCOTA legislative duties and corresponding accomplishments/activities

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

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

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

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

Year(s)	Legislative Duty #5
2011-2015, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2016	Recommend policies and procedures for coordinating local, regional, state, and federal funding and services for the transit public.
	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, 2014-2015, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2016	Identify stakeholders in providing services for the transit public and seek input from them concerning barriers and appropriate strategies.
	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 Mtg. • Data collection and analysis of vehicle sharing • Strategic planning • Homelessness and transportation services • RTCC stakeholder engagement • Ways to increase vehicle sharing in Minnesota • Volunteer transportation programs inventory and survey

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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