

2022 report on

# Minnesota Council on Transportation Access

January 2023

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**Strengthening transportation access  
for all Minnesotans**

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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 \$11,458.*

# Executive Summary

Minnesota recognizes the challenges that its people face. Transportation plays a vital role in the overall health of the state's economy and its communities. Minnesota also values effectively coordinating and using existing transportation options, as well as exploring new ways to expand transportation access.

The Legislature formed the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (under [Minn. Stat. 174.285](#)) 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." Since its establishment, MCOTA has worked to expand state and local transportation-related coordination, with a focus on improving mobility for "transportation disadvantaged" populations (e.g., older adults, individuals with disabilities, individuals with low incomes).

This annual report highlights the ways MCOTA is addressing transportation barriers. Examples include:

- Updating guidance on mileage reimbursement for volunteer drivers to reflect 2021 Minnesota legislation on the definition of volunteer drivers, a state income tax subtraction and federal regulations.
- Endorsing the [Volunteer Driver Tax Appreciation Act of 2022](#) (U.S. House File 7432), a bill to raise the charitable mileage reimbursement rate for volunteers from 14 cents per mile to equal the rate for business travel as set annually by the IRS (currently 62.5 cents per mile).
- Establishing work teams to develop strategic priorities that focus on removing barriers to transportation access, especially for people with disabilities.
- Reducing barriers to volunteer driving and sharing new approaches to recruiting volunteer drivers.

MCOTA will continue this work by:

- Endorsing legislation that strengthens volunteer driver programs
- Enhancing transportation coordination and increasing access within the state
- Addressing the barriers to transportation coordination and access within the state
- Offering educational and networking opportunities
- Supporting the development and sharing of ideas and information
- Expanding relationships and partnerships throughout the state

MCOTA and its partners will work toward strengthening the foundation required to address challenges and increasing transportation access throughout the state.

# Introduction

Transportation coordination in Minnesota involves many partners. These include state agencies, public transit organizations, regional and local transportation providers, consumers and state and local programs. At the federal level, eight departments (throughout a variety of agencies) administer 62 transit programs.

Even with significant investment in transit at all levels, gaps in service still exist in many communities. These gaps in service may result in situations where older adults can no longer remain in their homes, become obstacles for people with disabilities to work or reduce opportunities for people with low incomes.

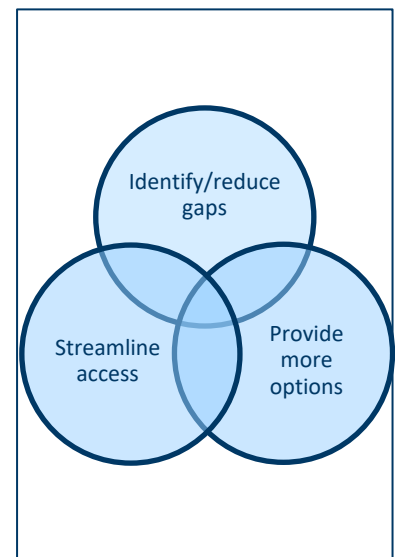
MCOTA promotes cooperation and coordination by bringing many agencies and organizations together. It offers a venue for constituencies to work together and find opportunities to increase capacity, serve unmet needs, improve quality of service, improve understanding and access to services by the public and achieve more cost-effective service delivery.

The council partners with Greater Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils and Twin Cities Transit Coordination Assistance Projects (to improve regional and local transportation coordination and access. Together, MCOTA and its partners work toward a vision where Minnesotans benefit from access to coordinated transportation services that meet their mobility needs. MCOTA pursues three key transportation goals:

1. Identify and reduce transportation gaps.
2. Develop effective and streamlined access to transportation.
3. Provide more transportation options.

The 2020-2024 Strategic Plan guides MCOTA activities to achieve these three goals. The work teams, which include MCOTA members and staff, content experts, and RTCC and TCAP representatives, address strategic priorities through policy, legislative, research recommendations and communications. Thanks to the strength of its partnerships, MCOTA continues to make progress in coordinating and improving transportation access for Minnesotans.

The accomplishments highlighted in this report illustrate the impact of improved coordination, including bolstering the economy with more workers, improving health with greater access to care, and strengthening communities by reducing the isolation that comes with limited transportation access.



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## MCOTA Structure

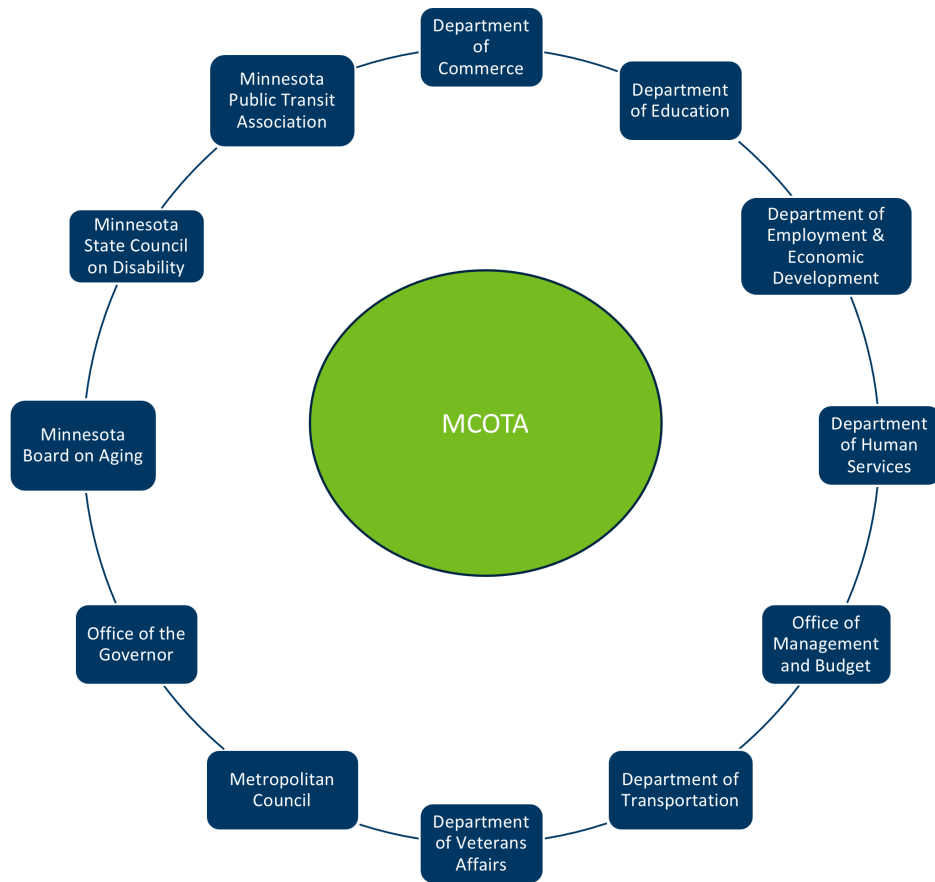
MCOTA’s structure includes the following entities:

### Members

MCOTA includes senior leadership from 13 state agencies and organizations (listed in Appendix B): Minnesota Departments of Commerce, Education, Employment and Economic Development, Human Services, Management and Budget, Transportation and Veterans Affairs; the Metropolitan Council; the Office of the

Governor; the Minnesota Board on Aging; Minnesota State Council on Disability; and the Minnesota Public Transit Association. The membership is defined in the legislation.

*Figure 1: Chart illustrating MCOTA's organizational membership structure*



## Executive Director

Tom Gottfried, program director and transportation mobility manager for the MnDOT Office of Transit and Active Transportation, is the executive director of MCOTA. In this role, Gottfried provides coordination and leadership functions for the council by building relationships between agencies and stakeholders and guiding the work of MCOTA work teams.

Gottfried is assisted by other staff in the MnDOT Office of Transit and Active Transportation, including Michelle Lichtig, the MCOTA project manager for and the MnDOT program manager for the Greater Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils and the Transit Coordination Assistance Projects.

## Work Teams

MCOTA’s Strategic Plan recommended the creation of several work teams to develop specific initiatives. The work teams include MCOTA members, agency staff, content experts and RTCC/TCAP members. The current work teams are listed starting on p. 10.

## MCOTA Mission

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

## MCOTA Vision

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

## MCOTA Legislative Duties

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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 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 providing services for the transit public and seek input from them concerning barriers and appropriate strategies.
7. Recommend guidelines for developing transportation coordination plans throughout the state.



8. Encourage all state agencies participating in the council to purchase trips within the coordinated system.
9. Facilitate the creation and operation of transportation brokerages to match riders to the appropriate service, promote shared dispatching, compile and disseminate information on transportation options and promote regional communication.
10. Encourage volunteer driver programs and recommend legislation to address liability and insurance issues.
11. Recommend minimum performance standards for delivery of services.
12. Identify methods to eliminate fraud and abuse in special transportation services.
13. Develop a standard method for addressing liability insurance requirements for transportation services purchased, provided or coordinated.
14. Design and develop a contracting template for providing coordinated transportation services.
15. Recommend an interagency uniform contracting billing and accounting system for providing coordinated transportation services.
16. Encourage the design and development of training programs for coordinated transportation services.
17. Encourage the use of public-school transportation vehicles for the transit public.
18. Develop an allocation methodology that equitably distributes transportation funds to compensate units of government and all entities that provide coordinated transportation services.
19. Identify policies and necessary legislation to facilitate vehicle sharing.
20. Advocate for eliminating barriers to coordination, implementing coordination strategies, enacting necessary legislation and appropriating resources to achieve the council's objectives.

# MCOTA 2022 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 2022. The numbers referenced in Table 1 are the numbers of the duties in the statute and listed on p. 8-9 of this report.

**Table 1: Key MCOTA 2022 activities and accomplishments**

Activity	Legislative Duties Addressed Under <a href="#">Minn. Stat. 174.285</a>
Work Teams: New teams formed to address pressing challenges	All
Volunteer Driver Program initiatives: Legislation, fact sheet	10, 13, 20
Stakeholder communications	1
Local innovations and partnerships by RTCCs and TCAPs	1-11, 13-14, 16-17, 19-20

See Appendix C for a list of all initiatives grouped by legislative duty.

## Work Teams

MCOTA’s Strategic Plan recommended the creation of several work teams to develop specific initiatives. The work teams include MCOTA members, agency staff, content experts and RTCC/TCAP members. The work teams support priorities identified in the Strategic Plan and by senior leadership.

At MCOTA’s Senior Leadership Meeting held on Oct. 1, 2021, members and senior leaders identified and ranked their top transportation challenges and opportunities (see Appendix D for list of themes). MCOTA then conducted an engaged process with members and partners to identify and prioritize proposed suggestions to address these challenges and opportunities, resulting in updated focus areas and the establishment of two additional work teams to advance these priorities: the Accessibility & Olmstead and the Removing Barriers Work Teams. These work teams join the Volunteer Driver Program Initiatives and Communications Work Teams.

In identifying their priorities for developing their FY23-24 work plans, each team considered and discussed:

- Resources needed for each activity
- Intended goals and outcomes
- Timeline considerations
- Who needs to be involved (stakeholders and partners)

## Accessibility & Olmstead Work Team

The purpose of the Accessibility & Olmstead Work Team, as one of the two new work teams established this year, is to address issues related to accessibility for people with disabilities, including parallels with Minnesota’s Olmstead Plan. The objective is to enable safe and accessible pedestrian and multimodal transportation facilities for all users. This includes compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and user accessibility for transportation services and facilities at all levels of government.

Chaired by MCOTA member David Fenley, ADA director with the Minnesota Council on Disability, the work team is focused on easier ways to find wheelchair-accessible transportation, building awareness with eligible individuals about Nonemergency Medical Transportation Services and improving the accessibility of rural transportation services.

## Removing Barriers Work Team

The Removing Barriers Work Team’s goal is to help people use transportation to access health care and other essential needs (e.g., food and groceries, pharmacies, socializing, recreation, etc.) that contribute to well-being. This includes seeking additional funding and diversification of funding sources and/or policy changes to support this need, especially for rural Minnesota.

Chaired by MCOTA member Dylan Galos, a research scientist with the Minnesota Department of Health, the work team is considering the following focus areas:

- ensuring that people with behavioral and accessibility challenges have meaningful access to transportation services and are involved in planning
- reducing barriers to vehicle sharing
- recommending reimbursement rates that will incentivize equitable and better transportation services, especially for people with disabilities

## Volunteer Driver Program Initiatives Work Team

The Volunteer Driver Program Work Team focuses on strengthening volunteer driver programs, including reducing legislative barriers and providing opportunities for networking and professional development.

Co-chairs Tiffany Collins, director, Minnesota Public Transit Association and Transit Director of Central Community Transit, and Beverly Sidlo-Tolliver, mobility manager for Arrowhead RTCC, led the work team’s efforts to update mileage reimbursement guidance for volunteer drivers and requested MCOTA’s endorsement for proposed federal mileage reimbursement legislation.



**Volunteer Mileage Reimbursement**

MENU Volunteer drivers may exclude mileage reimbursement payments from their income only to the extent they would be able to deduct the expense as a charitable contribution.

They may exclude one of these amounts for each mile driven, including unreimbursed miles:

- Optional, standard mileage rate for charitable activities of 14 cents per mile.
- Actual vehicle expenses, such as gas and oil, directly related to the charitable purpose

**Note:** Beginning with tax year 2021, you may be able to subtract reimbursements exceeding 14 cents per mile on your Minnesota income tax return.

Who Is a Volunteer Driver	[+]
If I'm a Volunteer Driver	[+]
If I Reimburse a Volunteer Driver	[+]
Volunteer Mileage Reimbursement Subtraction	[+]

*Volunteer driver mileage reimbursement website*

## Volunteer driver mileage reimbursement fact sheet

The Volunteer Driver Program Initiatives Work Team coordinated with the Minnesota Department of Revenue to develop a fact sheet and webpage with key information about mileage reimbursement for volunteer drivers. It reflects 2021 Minnesota legislation on the definition of “volunteer drivers” and a state income tax subtraction. It also includes guidance for federal regulations.

- [Volunteer Mileage Reimbursement Fact Sheet \(PDF\)](#)
- [Minnesota Department of Revenue Volunteer Mileage Reimbursement website](#)

## MCOTA members endorse federal mileage reimbursement legislation for volunteer drivers

In May 2022, MCOTA members endorsed the [Volunteer Driver Tax Appreciation Act of 2022](#) (U.S. House File 7432), a bill to raise the charitable mileage reimbursement rate for volunteers from 14 cents per mile to equal the rate for business travel as set annually by the IRS (currently 62.5 cents per mile).

Dawn Simonson, Trellis president/CEO and co-chair of the [Volunteer Driver Coalition](#), provided an update on the coalition's advocacy for the bill, which was introduced by U.S. Rep. Pete Stauber (MN-08).

National organizations supporting the bill include the Community Transportation Association of America, the National Association of Towns and Townships, the National Council of Nonprofits, as well as from organizations in other states, such as the California Association of Nonprofits and the Illinois Association of Area Agencies on Aging.

## Communications Work Team

The Communications Work Team, under the leadership of Chair Jodi Yanda, Vocational Rehabilitation Area Manager at Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, proposes content for and reviews the MCOTA annual legislative report, newsletter, website (including RTCC and TCAP sections) and other products such as a member guide.

## MCOTA Newsletter

MCOTA continues to produce a quarterly email newsletter, which started in 2017 in response to requests from stakeholders. The distribution list includes people who were invited to or attended the workshops, transit stakeholders and those who self-register on the [CoordinateMNTransit.org](#) website.

The newsletter included updates about new resources, highlights from individual RTCCs and TCAPs, and articles about equity, automated vehicles and technology related to transportation coordination. The readership statistics are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: MCOTA newsletter readership statistics**

	December 2021	February 2021	March 2022	June 2022
Recipients	760	757	750	741
Open rate	25.5%	24.2%	28.9%	27.3%
Unique click-through rate	12.8%	8.5%	7.8%	13%

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

## Leadership Changes

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Tim Henkel, longtime MCOTA chair and MnDOT assistant commissioner, announced his retirement in May 2022. He stated that it truly was a privilege and an honor to facilitate the work of MCOTA and that it was one of the most rewarding activities of his career.

Henkel led MCOTA since before its establishment in 2010, through community engagement, strategic planning and development. This development includes work on local coordination plans and creating a statewide network of RTCCs and TCAPs. It also includes research on policies and practices to inform transportation coordination and access in Minnesota.



*Tim Henkel*

Tim Sexton, interim assistant commissioner for Sustainability, Planning, and Program Management at MnDOT, was elected as the new MCOTA Chair in September 2022. Sexton has been with MnDOT since 2014 serving in multiple roles leading environmental, transit and active transportation, and sustainability programs. Prior to joining MnDOT, he directed environmental and sustainability policy for the Washington State DOT, managed construction of vegetated/green roofs in Germany, and co-founded a land use planning firm in Iowa.



*Tim Sexton*

# Regional Coordination Progress

MCOTA member agencies MnDOT and the Metropolitan Council continued their development of a statewide network of regional mobility management organizations. Greater Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils and Twin Cities Transit Coordination Assistance Projects are made up of local agencies, transportation providers and community members. These partner groups are interested in expanding transportation options to those most in need, such as older adults, people with disabilities, low-income adults and veterans. RTCCs and TCAPs are primarily funded through Federal Section 5310 funds and are required to serve older adults, people with disabilities, and low-income populations. See Appendix E for more funding details.

## Overview

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RTCCs and TCAPs build on the service delivery foundation of public transit systems and seek to expand service options with community partners. Each RTCC and TCAP has a coordination plan among providers and service agencies to achieve outcomes that align with MCOTA's vision of reducing transportation gaps and improving access and options.

## Current Status of RTCCs as of July 1, 2022

Eight RTCCs are in the implementation phases:

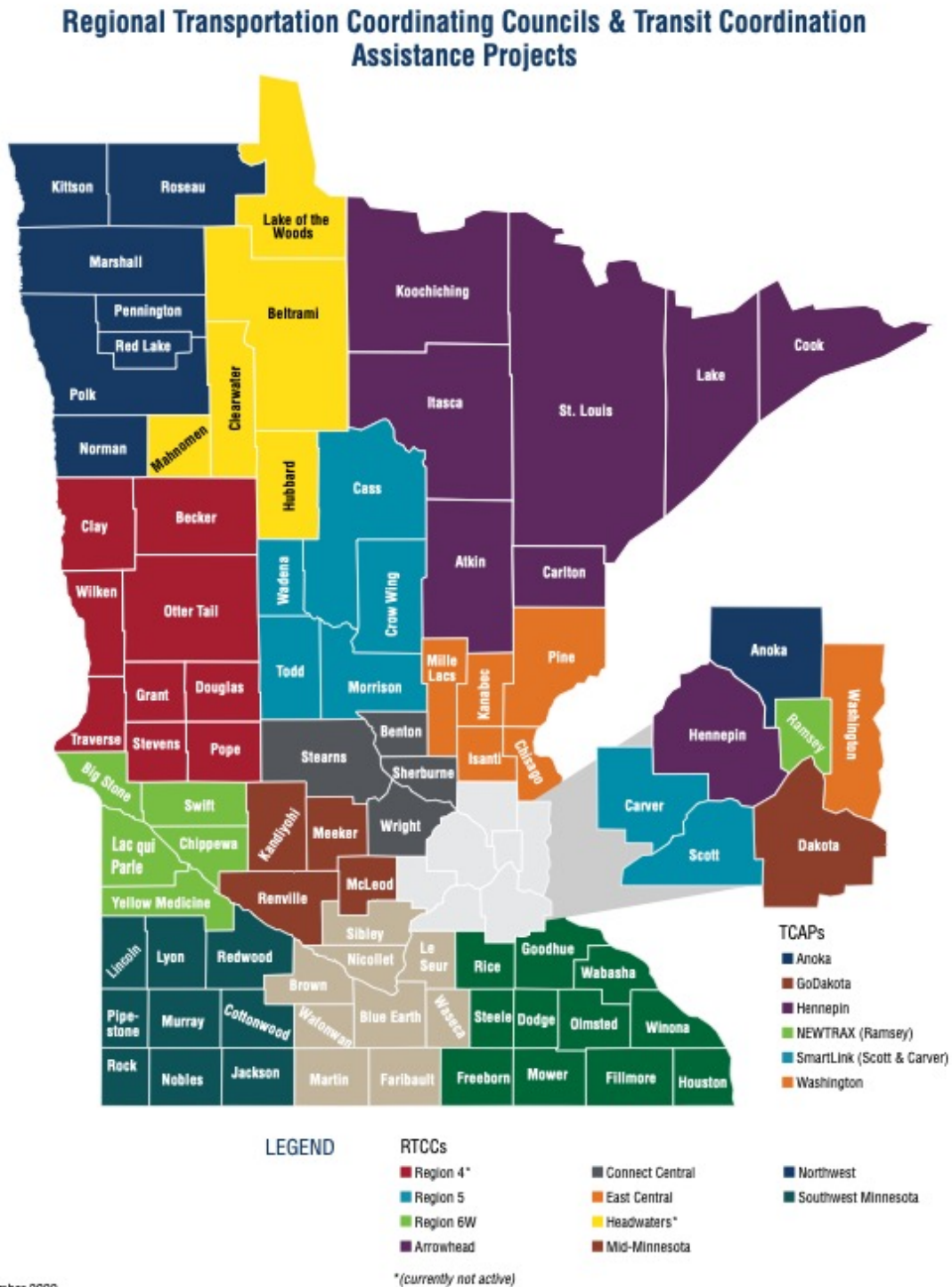
- **Phase 1: Organizational Plan:** Work includes identifying an organization to start the Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils.
- **Phase 2: Operational Implementation Plan:** For applicants engaged in tasks outlined in Greater Minnesota regions. During this phase, RTCCs formally establish councils, proceed with gaps analysis and create a transportation providers' inventory.
- **Phase 3: Implementation of Comprehensive Work Plan:** Continued stakeholder engagement, which may involve development of committees. Work includes publishing and distributing a transportation directory, and establishing relationships with transportation providers, health care organizations and consumers. Identify community partners and support regional collaborative efforts. Those in Phase 3 include: Connect Central and 6W RTCC.
- **Phase 4: Implementation of Five Focus Tasks:** Work includes focusing on transportation guidance and consultation, vehicle sharing, private nonprofit and for-profit providers engagement, volunteer driver programs, and coordination with emergency operations centers. Those in Phase 4 include: Arrowhead RTCC, Region Five RTCC, Northwest RTCC, East Central RTCC, Mid Minnesota RTCC and Southwest RTCC.

## Current Status of TCAPs as of July 1, 2022

Six TCAPs are involved in planning and implementation:

- Organizational Plan: Work includes identifying an organization to get transit coordination assistance projects through the planning process. Includes one TCAP, Hennepin County.
- Operational Implementation Plan: For applicants who are working on the tasks in the metro area. During this phase, TCAPs formally establish councils, proceed with gaps analysis and create a transportation providers' inventory. Includes one TCAP, Anoka County.
- Implementation of Comprehensive Work Plan: Work includes focusing on transportation guidance and consultation, vehicle sharing, private nonprofit and for-profit providers engagement, volunteer driver programs. Four TCAPs, Washington County, Dakota County, Scott/Carver Counties and Ramsey County/Newtrax, are implementing their work plans.

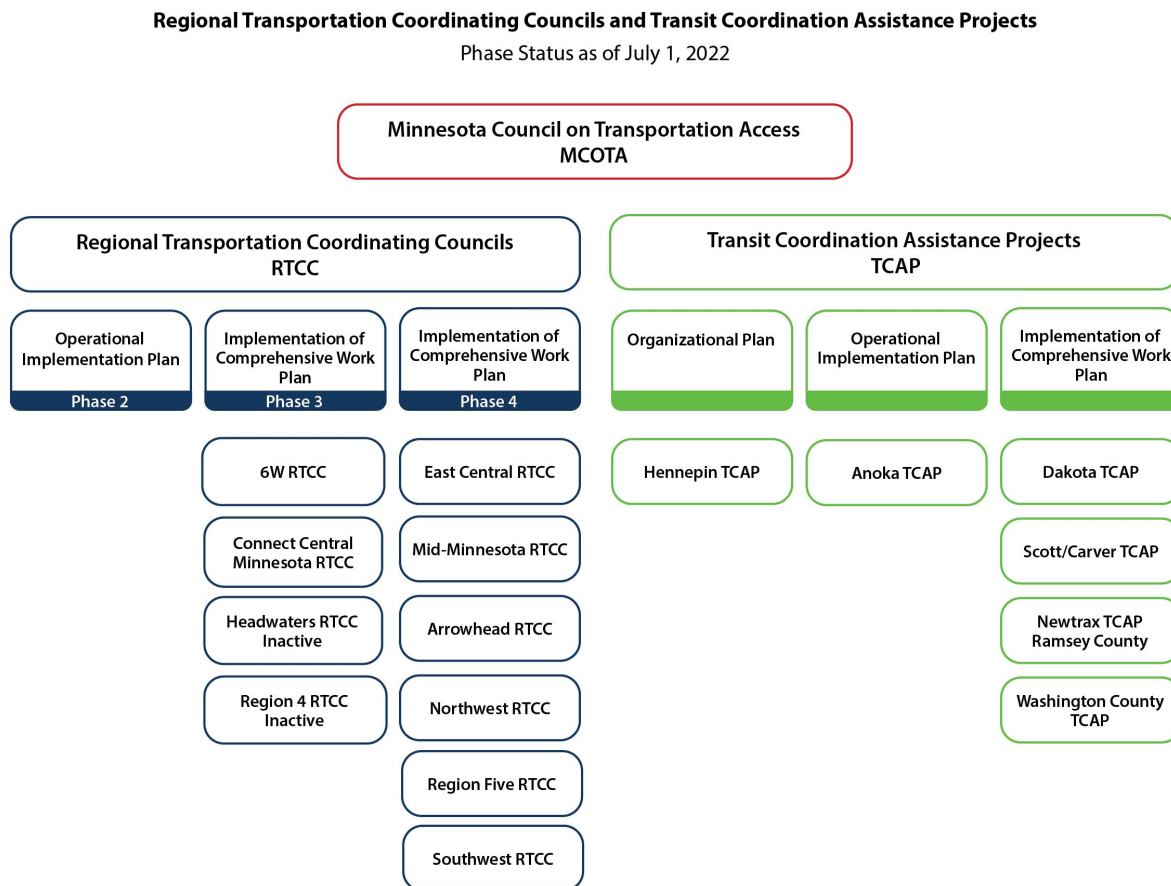
Figure 2: Map of Minnesota with RTCCs and TCAPs as of July 2022



September 2022



Figure 3: Chart showing status of RTCCs and TCAPs as of July 1, 2022



## Mobility Management

RTCCs and TCAPs use mobility management to coordinate the expansion of transportation service options with transit agencies and community partners. A recent example illustrates how mobility management works and how it can dramatically improve individuals’ daily lives.

A person involved in a supportive employment situation requested a ride to their job, which requires traveling between Sherburne and Anoka counties. It doesn’t sound complicated, but transportation services often end at county lines; therefore, the request requires locating a transfer site and identifying how to transfer between services.

Fulfillment of this person’s transportation request involved collaboration among the following partners: Connect Central Minnesota RTCC, ConnectAbility of Minnesota serving Sherburne County, Tri-CAP, Anoka County TCAP, Traveler Transit Link, Metropolitan Council, MnDOT, city and county representatives and others.

This example illustrates the complexity of the task and exemplifies mobility management, defined by the National Center for Mobility Management as follows:

*“Mobility management is an approach to designing and delivering transportation services that starts and ends with the customer. It begins with a community vision in which the entire transportation network—public transit, private operators, cycling and walking, volunteer drivers, and others—works together with customers, planners, and stakeholders to deliver the transportation options that best meet the community's needs.”*

*— National Center for Mobility Management*

RTCCs and TCAPs form the foundation for mobility management in the state. At their core, they focus on providing a place for all those agencies and organizations (public and private) to join forces. That foundation makes transportation possible for people in places without it and makes it easier for people who struggle with consistent access.

# Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils and Transit Coordination Assistance Projects Highlights

The following highlights of RTCCs and TCAPs illustrate their recent accomplishments in these areas.

- Partnerships to improve access
- Increased awareness to expand community transportation access
- Transportation services to enhance lives
- Strategies to strengthen volunteer driver programs

## Partnerships to improve access

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These examples highlight how TCAPs and RTCCs successfully multiplied impact and leveraged available resources and funding through partnerships.

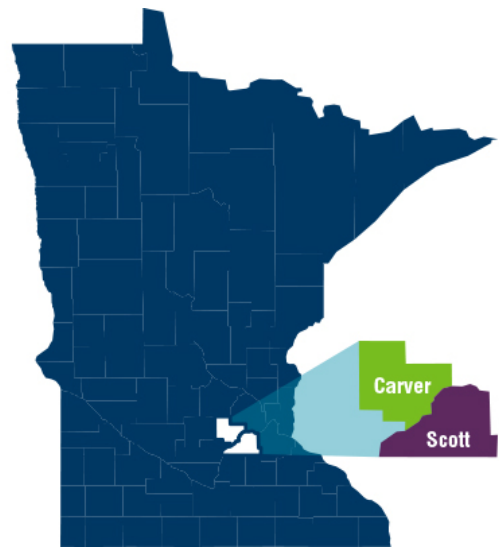
### Scott/Carver County TCAP update: Hop Scott finds novel ways to deliver access

When Scott County noticed a drop in the numbers of its volunteer driver program, it wanted to know why.

The Scott/Carver County TCAP learned of driver frustration. Insurance companies classified them as paid drivers. They had responsibility for handling passenger fares. Volunteers with more than \$600 a year in reimbursements also were liable for federal taxes.

“We looked for a different model that could eliminate these barriers,” said Alan Herrmann, Scott/Carver County TCAP mobility manager and SmartLink supervisor.

Hop Scott eliminated barriers by offering a service to improve transportation in the county’s more rural areas, where public transit may be limited. The program relies on volunteer drivers, a much less costly alternative than subsidized transit. It addresses driver obstacles by providing the vehicles for volunteers, and instead of fees encourages donations by including pre-stamped envelopes in the van.



## 2022 Hop Scott Ridership

January: 4

February: 25

March: 27

April: 33

May: 65

June: 84

“So far, we have used Hop Scott to deliver goods from food shelves, transport clients to mental health centers, transport non-emergency medical transportation clients to medical appointments, and some miscellaneous needs that citizens could not find using public transportation,” Herrmann said.

Scott County built Hop Scott on the foundation of partnerships with community organizations and volunteer drivers.

“As mobility managers, linking the transportation resources in a geographic area with the needs of the citizens in those areas is what it is all about,” Herrmann said.

Currently, Hop Scott works with food shelves and Scott County Human Services. The food shelf partnerships started when public transit was no longer available to deliver food.

Other partnerships with local Lions clubs, churches, Nextdoor and Facebook focus on driver recruitment. The efforts help promote the good work of the volunteers as “Hometown Heroes,” a graphic that appears on the driver-side door of every van. City libraries and cities also contribute by lending their parking lots to vehicles and a hosting key boxes for volunteer drivers to check out vehicles.

Hop Scott launched in late 2021, but the pandemic and struggles with purchasing vans slowed down the effort. This year, though, trips rose from four in January to 84 in June.

“It took a long time to get going because of COVID, but all of the Scott County commissioners are excited about its potential and have decided to help fund it with transportation sales tax dollars through 2024,” Herrmann said.

The county purchased the Hop Scott vans and a Live Well at Home Grant funded 50% of the cost. The county insures and maintains the vans and uses software to track all trips for easy reporting. Scott County covers most administrative costs, with supplements from the Scott County transportation sales tax. Donations help support vehicle maintenance.

Work continues to attract volunteers. With transportation to regularly scheduled events, Hop Scott has attracted a new source of volunteers: 20-year-olds who can deliver food after work or transport people to their medical appointments on their day off.



*Scott/Carver County TCAP mobility manager and SmartLink supervisor Alan Herrmann, with the Hop Scott van.*

“Recruitment and retention have always been the biggest challenge to any volunteer program, but hopefully this different approach will make a difference in this challenge.”

## Dakota County and Washington County TCAPs update: Lyft ride-sharing program frees riders

Dakota County TCAP launched its Lyft ride-sharing program in March 2019 with 23 riders. The program now has 1,100 riders and counting.



In 2022, building on its success, the program received an innovation grant from the Minnesota Department of Human Services to help expand on-demand service to riders who use mobility devices. The grant provides financial incentives to attract drivers with wheelchair-accessible vehicles to the Lyft platform and, once on the platform, to keep them driving, said Robyn Bernardy, county transportation coordinator and TCAP mobility manager.

“We want to have enough drivers and WAV vehicles available to meet demand,” she said. “Right now, we have 33 people who need WAVs and are eligible, but we think there are more.”

Currently, Lyft subcontracts with Mobility for All for wheelchair-accessible services, which requires riders to call for rides rather than use the Lyft app. Lyft is working on adding the WAV option to its platform.

“That change and increasing the number of drivers with WAV vehicles would help improve service to riders with wheelchairs,” Bernardy said.

The idea for Lyft dates to 2017, when lack of transportation lowered employment rates among those receiving human services. The Dakota County team saw the need for a ride-sharing option, and they chose Lyft as a provider. The county received DHS backing and a 2018 DHS innovation grant.

The program requires participants to live in Dakota County, work with a case manager, qualify for a home and community-based service waiver, and have a smartphone as well as a Lyft account. Participants can use the Lyft app to request transportation, see the cost of rides and view the balance of their available funding.

“It’s very seamless on the rider side,” Bernardy said.

It’s also very popular with riders. In a rider survey, the county asked new participants how happy they were with their transportation options before Lyft. Fifteen percent said they were satisfied or extremely satisfied, and 85% of same people responded that they were satisfied or extremely satisfied six months after using Lyft.

“It flipped,” Bernardy pointed out, “which is really fun to see.”

Those surveyed also indicated Lyft reduced their dependence on family and friends for rides, reduced the stress of waiting for transportation, improved reliability and helped increase their flexibility in accommodating employer requests.

The county compares the cost of rides with other services, and Lyft proves economical.

“Right now, it’s less costly than those options,” Bernardy said, “and also gives people that independence and that choice.”

In Washington County, a Lyft partnership was encouraged by the TCAP collaborative structure and by Dakota County’s willingness to consult with other counties, said Barbara Bursack, community services and TCAP mobility manager for the county.

“Washington County has few public transportation options,” Bursack said. “It’s really filling an important need that couldn’t be filled by other means at this time.”

Users logged 61 Lyft rides in Washington County during the two-week period at the beginning of August.

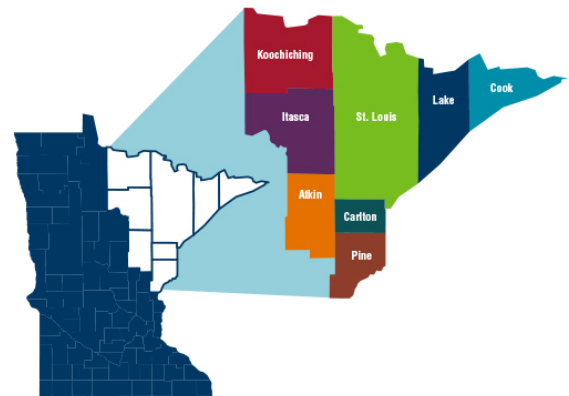
**Dakota County Lyft**  
Current ridership: **1,100** eligible for program  
July 2022: **850** took a ride (78% of eligible people)  
Average trips per month: **22**  
Average cost per ride: **\$17.50**

### Arrowhead RTCC facilitates vehicle sharing among community agencies to expand capacity and resources

“Sharing vehicles maximizes the use of a vehicle in service to a population,” said Karen Herman, executive director of Udac Inc., a Duluth-based nonprofit that assists individuals with disabilities through employment and civic life to advance community inclusion. “Transportation is one of the biggest, if not the biggest barrier to community participation and access to resources. Multiple organizations using vehicles helps address these issues.”

The structure and coordination provided by the Arrowhead RTCC made it possible to take the idea and turn it into a ride-sharing project.

“The RTCC sets the foundation for coordination by cultivating ‘buy-in,’” said Beverly Sidlo-Tolliver, Arrowhead RTCC mobility manager. “One of the intentions of the RTCC is to break past the long-standing silos and identify the incentives to make changes and work with different stakeholders.”





*Bois Forte Reservation and Big Woods Transit vehicle*

After Herman discussed vehicle sharing at the board level, those discussions expanded into the community, and led to conversations with a regional health provider and a vehicle-sharing solution. Since Udac’s day service programs remained closed or very limited because of the pandemic, their vehicles were available. The regional health center found an important use for the vehicles.

“Partnering with the regional healthcare provider to use the day service provider vehicles allowed for the rapid mobilization of vaccine clinics,” Herman said. “This process supported rural and marginalized communities to have access to vaccines more rapidly and without additional wait time and expense to purchase vehicles.”

Similarly, the Bois Forte Reservation and Big Woods Transit also launched a community vehicle-sharing initiative in the Arrowhead region by using a wheelchair-accessible van for non-emergency medical transportation.

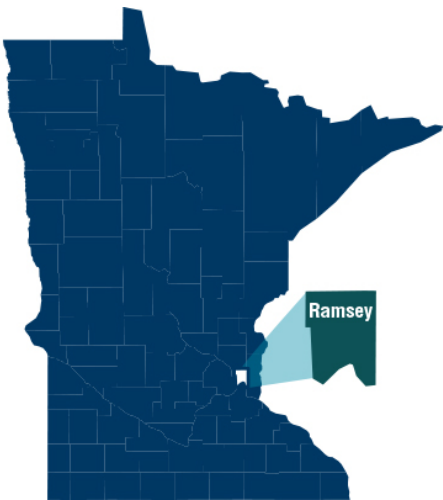
“More vehicle-sharing opportunities offer the potential to offset challenges with evening and after-hours non-emergency transportation in rural areas,” Herman said. More shared-vehicle opportunities also help organizations learn more and share their successes with these types of programs.

“Vehicle sharing makes sense to expand capacity and resources to populations and communities,” Herman said. “Maximizing the use of vehicles to make transportation more accessible to more people and with expanded hours is a win-win.”

With the increasing demand for transportation, the Arrowhead RTCC encourages new avenues to strengthen transportation options.

“The RTCC supports organizations to explore possibilities and assists with problem-solving the challenges to find solutions that exist to make vehicle sharing possible,” Herman said.

### **Ramsey County TCAP Newtrax pilots automated Bear Tracks shuttle bus**



Passengers in White Bear Lake embarked on a special journey launching a yearlong pilot to test the performance of the [Bear Tracks](#) automated shuttle bus in all four seasons of weather.

The research and demonstration project involves a host of partners, including Ramsey County TCAP Newtrax, which operates and houses the shuttle. Newtrax has been a key contributor to the project from its start.

The shuttle, with a top speed of 15 mph, transports passengers at no charge on a 1.5-mile route with four stops: the White Bear Area YMCA, two senior housing developments and a day program for adults with developmental disabilities. A Newtrax

certified driver serves as the shuttle’s safety officer during operations. The shuttle can carry up to 12 passengers, including a person in a wheelchair.

Bear Tracks offers a glimpse into the evolution of transportation and possible solutions to current transportation barriers. “There are so many significant gaps in transportation for people with disabilities and seniors that I hope this is part of the future to reduce some of those challenges,” said Mike Greenbaum, Newtrax executive director and TCAP mobility manager.

Newtrax and the White Bear Area Chamber of Commerce led a group of organizations to pursue a MnDOT grant for piloting an automated vehicle in a suburban community. The group, which included the White Bear Lake Area Schools, the city of White Bear Lake, the White Bear Lake Chamber, and Newtrax, explored a possible route as a key initial step.

The selected route serves many community members in buildings who had previously used Newtrax’s transportation services.

“This has been a nice addition to give them this pilot opportunity,” said Scott Olson, Newtrax community transportation coordinator.

The project partners include:

- AECOM, an engineering consultant firm, as the project manager
- Navya, the automated shuttle manufacturer
- MnDOT Connected and Automated Vehicle Office, the project sponsor and lead
- University of Minnesota, lead evaluator of the pilot
- Minnesota State Transportation Center of Excellence
- Ramsey County



*Bear Tracks automated shuttle bus in White Bear Lake*

Based on the first week of operation, which averaged 20 riders a day, the shuttle will be busy.

“From our perspective it was a huge success,” Greenbaum said. “We want anyone and everyone to experience riding this over the next 12 months and encourage people to come and give it a try.”

## Increased awareness to expand community transportation access

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Transit coordination assistance projects and regional transportation coordinating organizations are getting the word out in their communities, as well as throughout the state, to increase the use of public transit and other transportation options.



## Region Five RTCC grant targets a more livable community through better access for all

Region Five RTCC received an AARP Community Challenge grant for their proposal to provide transit passes, transit training and memberships to a local health and wellness center for low-income seniors, veterans and members of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe.

The highly competitive AARP program provides small grants to fund quick-action projects that can help communities become more livable for people of all ages.

With their winning grant award, the RTCC produced five short transit training videos, provided gym memberships in partnership with local gyms for six months and offered transportation on an as-needed basis. It promoted and increased awareness about the project by printing and distributing flyers, emailing various groups, producing a video, promoting it on the radio and boosting Facebook posts.

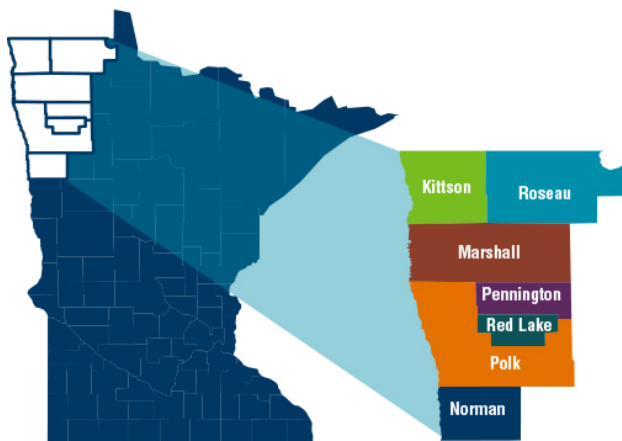


The project garnered more than 100 participants, ranging in age from 12 to 85. It offered some community members their first-ever gym membership, for others the opportunity to rejoin a gym, and for many, the opportunity to make new friends and pursue a healthier lifestyle.

The project also helped bring new riders to transit services. It also supported the development of educational tools, such as videos on how to ride the bus,

which will continue to help community members gain access to existing transportation options.

## Northwest RTCC provides free event rides to cultivate more transit users



In 2021, the Northwest RTCC provided free rides to support the first annual mental health and suicide awareness event in Thief River Falls, but no one took advantage of the expanded service.

In hopes of crafting a different approach this year, Lynnell Simonson Popowski, RTCC mobility manager for the Northwest Regional Development Commission, turned to the RTCC network for ideas and assistance.

Popowski consulted behavioral health service providers and consumers for ways to improve ridership to this important community event. They suggested that anxiety over calling for a ride and waiting for a bus might have

prevented potential attendees from participating. Others indicated that waiting as a group could increase comfort in riding the bus.

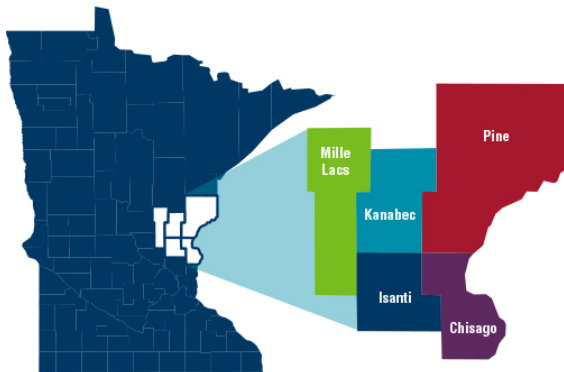
“This time, we have arranged three stops at specific times at locations that have low-income housing, senior housing, or people who are less likely to have transportation,” she explained, noting that one bus will service the route.

The Tri-Valley Opportunity Council offered the free transportation. A volunteer also offered to help with travel training and describe what to expect with the bus experience. In addition, a case manager helped to identify community members possibly interested in travel training, and the agency advertised the availability of free rides, which were tracked for later analysis.

The Northwest RTCC hosted a booth at the event to help increase awareness about transportation options.

“Efforts such as providing free rides to an event offer the potential to pave the way for more regular use of transit,” Popowski said. “If they get the first time free, maybe they sense they can do this and it’s not as scary as they may have thought.”

## East Central RTCC: Building awareness through marketing and promotion



The East Central RTCC, which covers the counties of Pine, Isanti, Chisago, Kanabec and Mille Lacs, is continuing to build awareness about the transportation options available to local community members and to recruit volunteer drivers. The RTCC uses its brand identity in correspondence, online presence and for in-person events such as county fairs, expos and conferences.

Karen Onan, RTCC coordinator and community development planner for the region’s development commission, conducts twice-monthly interview segments with a host on a popular regional radio station. Interviews included a bus driver from Arrowhead Transit; Sheri Wegner, executive director at

ConnectAbility of Minnesota; the region’s three public transit managers or directors (Arrowhead Transit, Timber Trails Transit and Tri-CAP Transit); the community liaison for Jefferson Lines; the transit manager for Groome Airport Transportation; the region’s RTCC co-chair (also executive director of DT&H provider PHASE-Industries); the region’s veteran service providers; Ken Buehler, Northern Lights Express Technical Advisory Committee chair; Tom Gottfried, MCOTA executive director, and others.

The radio interview segments are shared on the station’s website and podcast, and on the RTCC’s YouTube channel, website and Facebook page, resulting in more views, engagement and followers. In addition to the interviews, the RTCC advertises its services and need for volunteer drivers on the radio station at no charge as public service announcements.



## National and statewide presentations showcase the Minnesota approach to transportation access

MCOTA staff and RTCC and TCAP representatives showcased the Minnesota approach to improving transportation options and supporting independence among persons with disabilities and older adults. The presenters shared information about person-centered mobility management and transportation coordination initiatives in their communities with audiences in Minnesota and nationally.

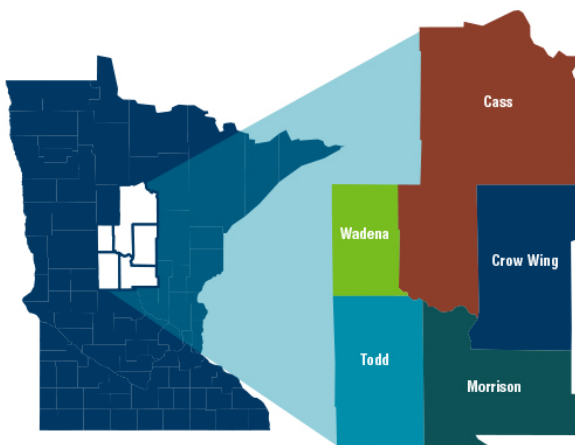
Raising awareness at the local, statewide and national levels supports improvements to transportation access in the state and influences conversations and practices beyond Minnesota. Audiences included the Minnesota Social Service Association Conference, American Public Transportation Association, National Association of Development Organizations, Minnesota Association of Development Organizations, National Aging and Disability Transportation Center, Regional Lions Clubs and the Twin Cities Shared Mobility Collaborative.

## Transportation services to enhance lives

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Partnerships are at the heart of regional transportation coordinating organizations. RTCCs and TCAPs build networks, strengthen relationships and join together to accomplish what was not possible without collaboration. They make possible the transportation services and innovations that enhance the lives of community members throughout the state.

### Region Five RTCC ties rural communities together



It takes 30 minutes to drive from the Central Lakes College campus in Brainerd to the Central Lakes College campus in Staples, a trip that involves passing through five counties and several small towns.

No one transit system serves the route, though, creating a barrier to easy access.

“You’d have to make five calls to go 30 minutes,” said Cheryal Lee Hills, executive director of the Region Five Development Commission and North Central Economic Development Association. “People don’t do that.”

The lack of connections also reduces the possible employment pool of small towns along the route and limits their ability to grow.

“All those towns between there suffer,” Hills said. “Our economy is not realizing the advantages it could if we had interconnected systems that made it user friendly.”

It was the close alignment of transportation with its regional development strategies that prompted the Region Five to bring together stakeholders for a discussion about forming an RTCC for the region. Those stakeholders asked Region Five to take the lead in moving RTCC goals forward, and the commission agreed.

“This process allowed for local places to make decisions about how RTCCs would be formed, and it leaned into organizations that had really deep relationships across private, public and nonprofit sectors to create really robust RTCC networks that are doing some pretty amazing work,” Hills said.

Commission staff started by gathering ideas and perspectives from around the region, including riders. Those efforts helped shape work to secure ride-sharing vehicles that transcend county lines, to support volunteer driver programs and volunteer driver recruitment, to offer travel training that helps community members access available transit, and to leverage the RTCC for funding from other sources.

“There are lots of assets that people don’t think about through the RTCCs that we’re building for rural communities,” Hills said. “It’s not just creating that one-stop for travel information. That one-stop to help people access transportation is one tool, but there are lots of other tools, like ride-share programs, volunteer driver programs and recruitment for riders.”

Region Five RTCC consists of 20 different agencies and organizations working together and reaching out to RTCCs in other regions.

While the pandemic slowed progress, Hills looks forward to taking transit ridership to new levels, increasing ride-sharing availability, developing an online platform for easy transportation access, leveraging funding sources for new initiatives and more.

RTCC programs also help communities in other less visible ways, such as reducing social isolation, opening opportunities for work and education not previously available, and improving health and well-being.

“This isn’t just about going from Point A to Point B,” Hills said. “When you are able to bring people together, even on a bus, you are creating community and culture.”

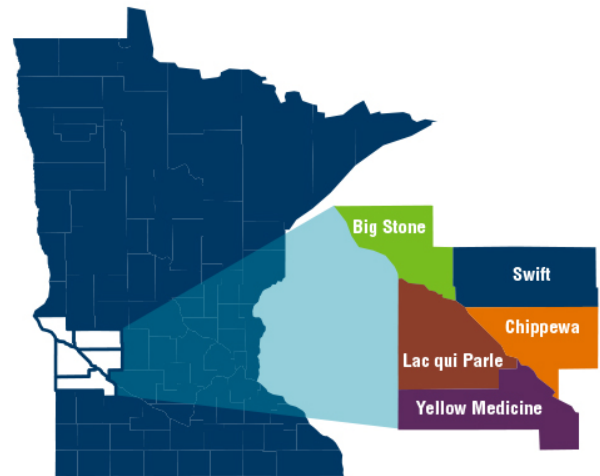


*Region Five Development Commission executive director Cheryal Lee Hills testifies at a Congressional select committee hearing.*

## Growing 6W RTCC coalition improves coordination at all levels

A new wheelchair-accessible van began transporting veterans to medical appointments in summer 2022, thanks to partnerships that resulted from forming the 6W RTCC.

Noting the struggles of veterans in the region to find such rides, veteran service officers brought their concern to other members of the 6W RTCC. Starting in October 2021 the 6W RTCC staff coordinated community discussions and they identified a grant opportunity through the “Support Our Troops” license plate program at the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs. The RTCC wrote and submitted the grant application to purchase a vehicle, which was awarded in June 2022.



RTCC partners are promoting the service, visiting VFWs and American Legions in the region with the van and producing a brochure.

“All that wouldn’t have come about without the RTCC,” said Ted Nelson, associate director of Prairie Five Community Action, which leads the region’s RTCC efforts. “There’s no doubt in my mind that the RTCC is the one that pushed that through.”

The Minnesota DVA and Prairie Five initially covered the cost to purchase the Support Our Troops van. Prairie Five is working with MnDOT to help cover operating cost of the van within the public transit system, Prairie Five RIDES.



*Prairie Five RIDES Support Our Troops van*

Prairie Five Community Action provides an array of programs from childcare to food shelves to its Prairie Five RIDES program. The desire to reach even more community members who need transportation prompted Prairie Five to take the lead in organizing the 6W RTCC.

Building from its own network, Prairie Five keeps expanding the RTCC coalition in the region. The list of participants currently includes Area Agency on Aging, workforce development, regional development commission, transportation providers, human services agencies, transportation and human service advocates,

centers for independent living, Minnesota continuum-of-care coordinators, veteran services offices, health care systems, public and private funders of transportation services, tribal representatives and city and county representatives.

“Where I feel the RTCC has been successful is being able to bring all those entities to the table,” Nelson said. “Those relationships help in identifying transportation gaps and finding ways to fill them.”

“I feel like everybody has a gap,” he said. “Everybody hears about somebody not getting a ride or struggles trying to get someone a ride. The question becomes, ‘How [do we] fill those voids,’ and building more relationships and partnerships helps make better solutions for all.”

Another RTCC initiative — a web resource — makes it simpler for community members to access rides.

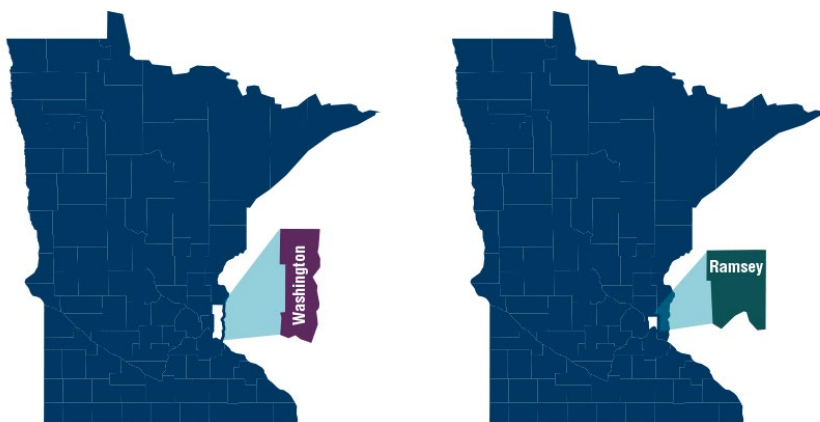
“The RTCC itself makes it easier to coordinate efforts at all levels,” Nelson said. We’re not going to fix everything today, but hopefully it’s building that foundation to fix a lot of it in the future.”

## Washington County and Ramsey County TCAPs update: Reimagined transportation service upcycles food to meet continuing need

As a senior environmental specialist for Washington County, Rob Murray looks for ways to reduce food waste. When the pandemic forced restaurants to quickly shut their doors, he and his Washington County food security unit colleagues knew the amount of food waste could increase significantly.

Was there a way to distribute the food before it went to waste, they asked, while, at the same time, restocking food shelves also facing numerous obstacles from the pandemic?

It turns out the answer to that question was a resounding yes, and the Washington County TCAP was there to bring the players together and ensure efficient and smooth coordination.



Born from a crisis and realized by community partnerships, the food delivery program launched in April 2020. It filled an important need during the pandemic — a need that continues.

Pre-pandemic, transportation providers focused on bringing people to food shelves. The shutdown flipped that approach, with transportation providers delivering food to people’s doorsteps.

The delivery program also returned pandemic-sidelined vehicles from Metropolitan Council transit and nonprofit transportation provider Newtrax.

But instead of ending as the pandemic has eased, the program continues to grow.

“There was even more demand than we had thought,” Murray said.

By August 2022, transportation providers made close to 10,000 deliveries. Washington and Ramsey County residents can request free food pack deliveries from local food shelves through the [Valley Outreach website](#).

In the evaluation of the program, Washington County learned more about its popularity:

- 78% of survey respondents said they would have used the delivery service if it had been available pre-pandemic.
- 77% of respondents anticipate needing the service moving forward.
- 90% of respondents agreed the process to request food was easy or somewhat easy.

The report cited the program’s innovation, flexibility, strong communication among partners and Washington County’s single point of entry as factors in its success.

The food-pack delivery partnership includes the county, Valley Outreach, Open Cupboard (formerly Christian Cupboard), White Bear Lake Emergency Food Shelf, Metropolitan Council-contracted Transit Link Services and Newtrax, which runs Ramsey County’s TCAP. The program has received funding from the Minnesota Department of Health Statewide Health Improvement Partnership, Trellis, St. Croix Valley Foundation, the CARES Act and others.

The investment in sustaining and enhancing the service continues. Toward that end, Washington County has transitioned its customer service and system management roles to local food shelves. In addition, the program now partners with DoorDash for food delivery. DoorDash provides the added benefit of real-time delivery information for those community members who order a delivery.

Creativity and nimbleness all helped bring the program to life and change the delivery of the food to those in need, Murray said. “We’re excited to see the innovation move forward.”

Washington County DOORDASH

CCEFS CHRISTIAN CUPBOARD EMERGENCY FOOD SHELF Valley Outreach White Bear Lake Emergency Food Shelf

Our delivery program will be partnering with DoorDash to deliver food to those in Washington and Ramsey County.

Starting July 11th, we will be changing our delivery days. We will now offer deliveries:  
Monday 11:00am-3:00pm  
Tuesday 11:00am-3:00pm  
Wednesday 11:00am-3:00pm

By partnering with DoorDash, you will receive quick, up-to-date information about your delivery time.

Please be patient with us during this transition period and reach out with any questions you have about this change.

651-390-6507  
foodshelfdeliverrymn@gmail.com  
https://bit.ly/foodshelfdeliverrymnrequest

*DoorDash provides food-pack delivery for the multiagency partnership.*

## Metro Transit micro expands access through a new on-demand service option

Metro Transit launched Metro Transit micro, its first on-demand ride service, on Sept. 22, 2022. The service covers a 2.5-square-mile area that includes parts of the Near North, Bryn Mawr and Harrison neighborhoods in north Minneapolis and the edge of downtown Minneapolis.

Metro Transit micro works much like other ride-sharing services. Community members in the area can request a ride directly from their smartphone app or phone, track the vehicle’s location and view an estimated pick-up time. Riding Metro Transit micro costs the same as regular bus fare and transfers are free.

Metro Transit micro’s fleet differs from the conventional ride-sharing services, such as Uber and Lyft, because each of the five vehicles can accommodate 10 to 12 passengers. Their smaller-than-a-bus size, though, makes it easier for them to access more locations directly than fixed-route transit. The ADA-accessible vehicles include wheelchair lifts, bike racks and priority seating areas for those with mobility aids.

With this new service, Metro Transit wants to improve access to high-frequency routes and increase mobility choices in historically underserved communities. Based on those goals, Metro Transit selected the area for a



*Metro Transit micro provides on-demand service to north Minneapolis (Photo: Metro Transit)*

pilot of a new and convenient transportation option for residents. During the pandemic, the Metro Transit system experienced an overall ridership decline, a trend also consistent nationwide. This area of north Minneapolis, though, had a different story. The METRO C line retained 60% of its ridership — one of the highest in the system.

The pilot will run for a minimum of one year. Passengers can take Metro Transit micro anywhere within the service zone. Metro Transit expects the project to:

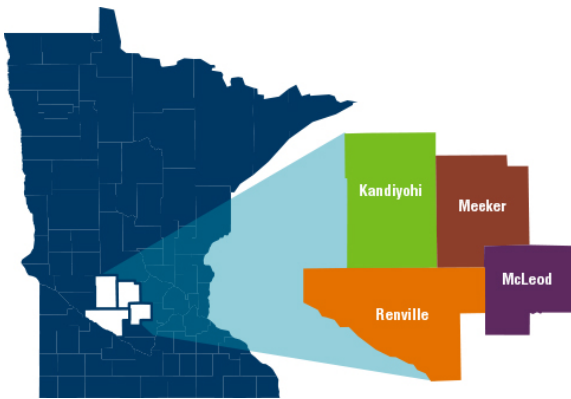
- Expand mobility choices for residents and workers within the service zone
- Increase access to high-frequency METRO C Line service between Brooklyn Center and downtown Minneapolis
- Demonstrate an innovative service model in an area with a high propensity for transit
- Make a transit investment in low-income and historically underserved communities
- Add a new service to a transit corridor where ridership remained resilient during the pandemic

## Strategies to strengthen volunteer driver programs

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Volunteer drivers are essential to Minnesota’s transportation system, especially in rural areas. In this time of extreme driver shortages, transit coordination assistance projects and regional transportation coordinating organizations are finding ways to attract new drivers and to reduce the barriers to volunteering.

### Mid-Minnesota RTCC tests new volunteer driver recruitment strategies



In its continuous search for fresh ways to attract more volunteer drivers, Terry Smith, Mid-Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordinating Council mobility manager, worked with members on new ways to increase awareness about the critical shortage of volunteer drivers. Recent MMRTCC efforts involved Minnesota media and the region’s drivers.

A national news report featuring a high-profile school bus driver prompted a Mid-Minnesota Development Commission discussion about the value of reaching out to news media.

Smith contacted a WCCO-4 TV News reporter originally from the region about the critical shortage of volunteer drivers at Central Community Transit and throughout the state. Smith collaborated with Tiffany Collins, CCT executive director, to develop talking points for an interview and to ensure that volunteer driver representatives would be available to answer questions. The resulting



news report featuring a CCT volunteer driver, which aired in February, highlighted significant transportation gaps in the region and the pressing need for more volunteer drivers.

Another strategy Smith used to reach potential volunteer drivers involved sharing driving opportunities with students of local mature driver accident prevention classes, sometimes referred to as “55-Alive” classes. The safety-focused classes help older drivers — who often can receive auto insurance discounts by attending — improve their driving skills. Smith discovered that most participants are completely unaware of the volunteer driver program, let alone the opportunity to volunteer themselves. For MMRTCC, the success of this strategy hinges on establishing good relationships with course instructors. Though the instructors may have some initial skepticism, Smith has found that they have come to see his short presentation as a nice course enhancement.

“While they believe it’s valuable for their classes to know there is a volunteer driver service available for them when they need it,” Smith said, “they’re also happy to present their classes with the opportunity to help their non-driving neighbors while they’re still feeling comfortable and competent behind the wheel.”



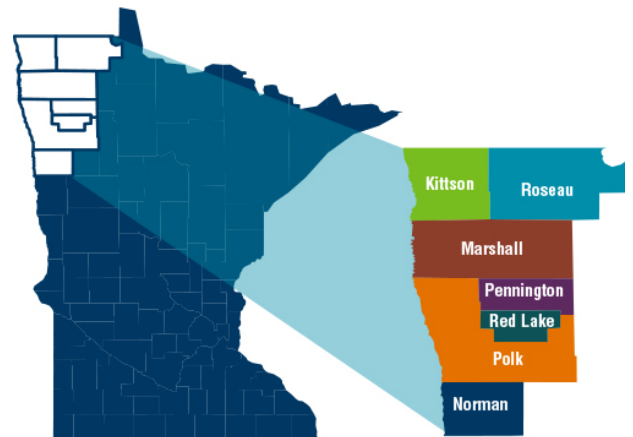
Supporting volunteer drivers and volunteer driver programs is one of several initiatives undertaken by the Mid-Minnesota Rural Transportation Coordinating Council, which is funded by a MnDOT grant (both state and federal dollars) with a 10% program match from the Mid-Minnesota Development Commission.

### Northwest RTCC develops ride-sharing program using senior van

Northwest RTCC provided more options — including volunteer drivers — to make use of an underused Warroad Senior Living Center van.

“Because of the staff shortages with COVID, it was difficult to have staff provide transportation,” said Lynnell Simonson Popowski, RTCC mobility manager for the Northwest Regional Development Commission.

Ride sharing fit the bill as a solution, but the center also needed help developing a volunteer driver program to find the drivers. To start, the RTCC sponsored an open house at the center in spring to explain the opportunity to potential volunteers. The event resulted in the first three volunteer drivers, all who had family members living at the center.



Most van trips take the seniors to the health center in Roseau. The bus also goes there, but community members often experience long waits.

“A ride-share program would give them better access,” Popowski added.

In addition, the Northwest RTCC volunteer work team is planning a video about volunteer driving that features the Warroad Senior Living Center, which funds the center’s volunteer driver program.

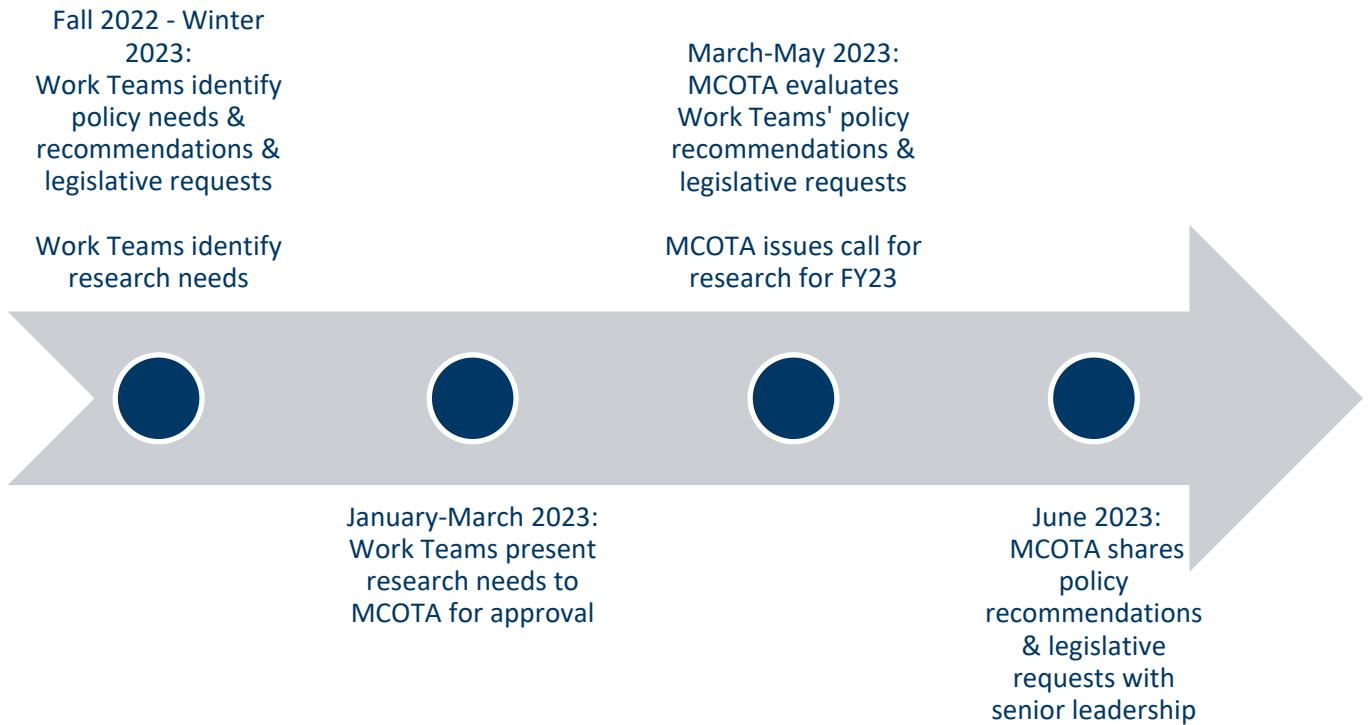
“The hope would be that if we get enough volunteers, we would be able to offer rides to the public,” Popowski said.

The senior center also needs volunteers for a “trishaw bike,” another new vehicle which is basically a rickshaw powered by electricity. A grant funded the trishaw, which can take seniors for a ride or short trips.

# FY23 Priorities

The four MCOTA work teams intend to make progress on their FY23-24 work plans, with the goal of submitting legislative recommendations to MCOTA by March 2023, for consideration and approval by May 2023 and to share with senior leadership in June 2023. Other policy recommendations will be submitted to MCOTA as they are finalized.

*Figure 3: Timeline for policy and research recommendations and approval by MCOTA*



## Conclusion

As the COVID-19 pandemic has continued, the year 2022 again demonstrated the importance of access to transportation and exposed the gaps in access as well as the impact of those gaps on people's lives.

From turning food delivery during the pandemic into an ongoing program and expanding ride-sharing, to launching vehicle-sharing projects, helping remove the barriers to volunteer driving, and helping pilot an automated shuttle, TCAPs and RTCCs have shaped solutions that are helping to reduce those gaps in access.

RTCCs also laid the foundation for future efforts with the development of local human service public transit coordination plans, which help identify strategic priorities and workplans for the next wave of projects.

Looking forward, MCOTA will continue to work with its partners to identify ways to strengthen the volunteer driver pool throughout the state. The volunteer driver shortage, exacerbated by the pandemic, hits particularly hard in rural areas where many community members depend on volunteers as a primary source of transportation.

Other key steps involve supporting RTCCs as they complete work on their Local Coordination Plans and implement strategies and action plans, as well as continuing to develop and implement the 2023-2024 workplans of the four MCOTA work teams. Those work teams hope to have legislative recommendations for MCOTA by March 2023 and present other policy recommendations when they are finalized.

As partnerships grow, so too does the potential for further success in eliminating barriers, developing new approaches and launching life-changing projects. The MCOTA foundation of collaboration, together with TCAP and RTCC partnerships, paves the way for increased accessibility and even more progress in meeting the transportation needs of all Minnesotans.

# Appendix A: List of Abbreviations

DHS.....	Minnesota Department of Human Services
DTCCC.....	Dakota County Transportation Coordinating Collaborative
FTA.....	Federal Transit Administration
MCOTA.....	Minnesota Council on Transportation Access
MnDOT.....	Minnesota Department of Transportation
MPTA.....	Minnesota Public Transit Association
NEMT.....	Nonemergency Medical Transportation
PTPP.....	Public Transportation Policy Plan
RTCC.....	Regional Transportation Coordinating Council
STS.....	Special Transportation Service
TCAP.....	Transit Coordination Assistance Project
TNC.....	Transportation Network Company (e.g., Lyft, Uber, etc.)

## Appendix B: 2022 MCOTA Members

Tim Henkel, Chair (through May 2022)  
Minnesota Department of Transportation

Tim Sexton, Chair (since September 2022)  
Minnesota Department of Transportation

Diogo Reis, Vice Chair  
Minnesota Department of Human Services

At-Large Representative: Mark Nelson  
Minnesota Department of Transportation

Rachel Dame (since September 2021)  
Office of the Governor

Alexis Donath (through August 2021)  
Office of the Governor

David Fenley  
Minnesota State Council on Disability

Gerri Sutton  
Metropolitan Council

John Doan (through November 2021)  
Minnesota Board on Aging

Maureen Schneider (since December 2021)  
Minnesota Board on Aging

Peter Brickwedde  
Minnesota Department of Commerce

Kelly Garvey  
Minnesota Department of Education

Jodi Yanda  
Minnesota Department of Employment and  
Economic Development

Dylan Galos (since December 2021)  
Minnesota Department of Health

Susan Bishop (through December 2021)  
Minnesota Department of Health

James A. Miller (since April 2022)  
Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs

Rolando Sotolongo (through April 2022)  
Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs

Nick Lardinois (since September 2021)  
Minnesota Management and Budget

Elizabeth Connor (through August 2021)  
Minnesota Management and Budget

Tiffany Collins  
Minnesota Public Transit Association

## Appendix C: MCOTA Legislative Duties and Accomplishments Since Inception

Year(s)
2011-2022, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2023
Legislative Duty #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.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minnesota coordination website</li> <li>• Economic cost-benefit studies</li> <li>• Transportation section of Minnesotahelp.info</li> <li>• NEMT Advisory Committee support</li> <li>• NEMT Coordination Study</li> <li>• Local Transit Coordination Case Studies</li> <li>• Primer of funding sources for “transit public” in Minnesota</li> <li>• RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> <li>• Study of economic benefits of Minnesota volunteer driver programs</li> <li>• Study of public-private partnerships in transit</li> <li>• Periodic stakeholder e-mail communication</li> <li>• Volunteer Driver Program Forum</li> <li>• Study on best practices in youth employment transportation</li> </ul>

Year(s)
2011-2022, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2023
Legislative Duty #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.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEMT Advisory Committee support</li> <li>• NEMT Coordination Study</li> <li>• Vehicle-sharing Study</li> <li>• Successful Local Transit Coordination Case Studies</li> <li>• Minnesota mobility management case studies</li> <li>• Strategic planning</li> <li>• RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> <li>• Volunteer transportation programs inventory and survey</li> <li>• Study of economic benefits of Minnesota volunteer driver programs</li> <li>• Study of public-private partnerships in transit</li> <li>• Volunteer Driver Program Forum</li> <li>• Study on best practices in youth employment transportation</li> </ul>

Year(s)
2012-2022, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2023
Legislative Duty #3
Recommend statewide objectives for providing public transportation services for the transit public.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEMT Advisory Committee support</li> <li>• NEMT Coordination Study</li> <li>• Definition of coordination</li> <li>• Strategic planning</li> <li>• Olmstead Plan goals and measures</li> <li>• Homelessness and transportation services</li> <li>• RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> </ul>



<b>Year(s)</b>
2011-2022, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2023
<b>Legislative Duty #4</b>
Identify barriers prohibiting coordination and accessibility of public transportation services and aggressively pursue the elimination of those barriers.
<b>Supporting Activities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEMT Advisory Committee support</li> <li>• NEMT Study</li> <li>• Synthesis of 2011 Greater MN regional transportation coordination plans</li> <li>• Planning guidance for the 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plans in Minnesota</li> <li>• Maps of human service transportation providers' areas of service in MN</li> <li>• Strategic planning</li> <li>• Olmstead Plan goals and measures</li> <li>• Homelessness and transportation services</li> <li>• RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> <li>• Ways to increase vehicle sharing in Minnesota</li> <li>• Study of public-private partnerships in transit</li> <li>• Study on best practices in youth employment transportation</li> </ul>

<b>Year(s)</b>
2011-2022, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2023
<b>Legislative Duty #5</b>
Recommend policies and procedures for coordinating local, regional, state and federal funding, and services for the transit public.
<b>Supporting Activities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Synthesis of 2011 Greater MN regional transportation coordination plans</li> <li>• Successful Local Transit Coordination Case Studies</li> <li>• Primer of funding sources for "transit public" in Minnesota</li> <li>• Strategic planning</li> <li>• RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> <li>• Study of public-private partnerships in transit</li> </ul>

Year(s)
2011, 2014-2022, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2023
Legislative Duty #6
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"> <li>• Synthesis of 2011 Greater MN regional transportation coordination plans</li> <li>• Participation in the MN State Council on Disability's annual Town Hall Mtg.</li> <li>• Data collection and analysis of vehicle sharing</li> <li>• Strategic planning</li> <li>• Homelessness and transportation services</li> <li>• RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> <li>• Ways to increase vehicle sharing in Minnesota</li> <li>• Volunteer transportation programs inventory and survey</li> </ul>

Year(s)
2011-2022, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2023
Legislative Duty #7
Recommend guidelines for developing transportation coordination plans throughout the state.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Synthesis of 2011 Greater MN regional transportation coordination plans</li> <li>• Planning guidance for the 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plans in Minnesota</li> <li>• Successful Local Transit Coordination case studies</li> <li>• RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> </ul>

Year(s)
None of the years between 2011-2021
Legislative Duty #8
Encourage all state agencies participating in the council to purchase trips within the coordinated system.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This model of centralized purchasing is not in place in Minnesota.</li> </ul>

Year(s)
2011-2012, 2014-2022
Legislative Duty #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.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobility management webinars</li> <li>• Planning guidance for the 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plans in Minnesota</li> <li>• Successful Local Transit Coordination case studies</li> <li>• Minnesota mobility management case studies</li> <li>• RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> </ul>

Year(s)
2011, 2015-2022, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2023
Legislative Duty #10
Encourage volunteer driver programs and recommend legislation to address liability and insurance issues.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful local transit coordination case studies</li> <li>• A survey and selected case studies of volunteer driver programs in MN, including faith-based programs</li> <li>• RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> <li>• Volunteer transportation programs inventory and survey</li> <li>• Study of economic benefits of Minnesota volunteer driver programs</li> <li>• Volunteer driver insurance and reimbursement issues and education</li> <li>• Volunteer Driver Program Forum</li> <li>• Volunteer Driver Program resolution, brochure</li> </ul>

Year(s)
2016-2022, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2023
Legislative Duty #11
Recommend minimum performance standards for delivery of services.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> </ul>

Year(s)
None of the years between 2011-2022
Legislative Duty #12
Identify methods to eliminate fraud and abuse in special transportation services.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be addressed in future work plans</li> </ul>

Year(s)
2013, 2015-2022 expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2023
Legislative Duty #13
Develop a standard method for addressing liability insurance requirements for transportation services purchased, provided or coordinated.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vehicle-sharing Study</li> <li>RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> <li>Ways to increase vehicle sharing in Minnesota</li> <li>Volunteer driver insurance and reimbursement issues and education</li> <li>Volunteer Driver Program resolution, brochure</li> </ul>

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

Year(s)
2011, 2014-2022 expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2023
Legislative Duty #15
Recommend an interagency uniform contracting and billing and accounting system for providing coordinated transportation services.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration on development of a Unified Transit Data Center pilot project in Scott and Carver counties</li> <li>• Common standards for financial records</li> <li>• RTCC organizing and implementation</li> </ul>

Year(s)
2012-2022 expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2023
Legislative Duty #16
Encourage the design and development of training programs for coordinated transportation services.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEMT Advisory Committee support</li> <li>• NEMT Study</li> <li>• Mobility management webinars</li> <li>• Minnesota mobility management case studies</li> <li>• Minnesota Mobility Management Handbook</li> <li>• RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> </ul>

Year(s)
2016, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2023
Legislative Duty #17
Encourage the use of public school transportation vehicles for the transit public.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> </ul>

Year(s)
2014-2015 expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2023
Legislative Duty #18
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"> <li>• Common standards for financial records</li> <li>• RTCC organizing and implementation</li> </ul>

Year(s)
2013, 2015, 2016 expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2023
Legislative Duty #19
Identify policies and necessary legislation to facilitate vehicle sharing.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vehicle-sharing study</li> <li>• Data collection and analysis of vehicle sharing</li> <li>• Maps of human service transportation providers' areas of service in Minnesota</li> <li>• Outreach to providers about options and benefits of vehicle sharing</li> <li>• RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> </ul>

<b>Year(s)</b>
2012-2022 expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2023
<b>Legislative Duty #20</b>
Advocate aggressively for eliminating barriers to coordination, implementing coordination strategies, enacting necessary legislation and appropriating resources to achieve the council's objectives.
<b>Supporting Activities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEMT Advisory Committee support</li> <li>• Transportation section of Minnesotahelp.info</li> <li>• Primer of funding sources for “transit public” in Minnesota</li> <li>• Strategic planning</li> <li>• RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance and website assistance</li> <li>• Volunteer driver insurance and reimbursement issues and education</li> <li>• Volunteer Driver Program resolution, brochure</li> </ul>



# Appendix D: Top Challenges and Opportunities of Members

## Oct. 21, 2021 MCOTA Senior Leadership Meeting: Top Challenges and Opportunities, as ranked by senior leaders and members

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### #1 Theme: Transportation accessibility and availability

1. **Sufficient and affordable transportation** throughout the state (DHS, MDVA)
2. Remove transportation barriers for people to **access health care and other essential needs** (social, groceries) that contribute to well-being (DHS, MDH)
  - o MCOTA's role: Encourage state agencies that fund transportation for Minnesotans to offer flexible transportation funding options. i.e., Dakota County developing contract with Lyft to transport people with disabilities to and from the workplace. (DEED)
3. Remove barriers to enable **safe and accessible pedestrian facilities** for all users (MDH)
  - o Greater compliance with ADA requirements for bus stops is needed
4. **Buy-in at all levels of government** that **ADA compliance AND accessibility and usability** are **essential** for all projects, programs & services, including requiring that Transportation Network Companies such as **Lyft and Uber offer accessible vehicles and be accessible** for people with disabilities. (MCD, MDVA)
5. Ease of connecting to rides for "**just-in-time service**" (MDH)
6. **Equity initiative**: potential state-wide adoption of [Transit Assistance Program \(TAP\)](#) modeled after the Council's program. (Met Council)
7. **Waiver Transportation Pilot** (Met Council)

### #2 Theme: Driver shortages

1. **Driver shortages** for public transit and other transportation (Met Council)
2. We need more **volunteer drivers** due to fewer available people and increasing demand for senior transportation, including wheelchair accessibility. (Bd on Aging, MDVA)
  - o MCOTA's role: MPTA would like MCOTA and MnDOT to carry the lead on the Volunteer Driver Program. Specifically, we are requesting that your federal liaison work directly with congressional staff with hopes of raising the IRS charitable mileage reimbursement rate to match the federal business rate.
3. **Low mileage reimbursement rate** and tax liabilities are barriers for **volunteer drivers**. (Board on Aging, MPTA)
  - o MCOTA's role: MPTA would like MCOTA and MnDOT to carry the lead on the Volunteer Driver Program. Specifically, we are requesting that your federal liaison work directly with congressional staff with hopes of raising the IRS charitable mileage reimbursement rate to match the federal business rate.
4. **School bus driver shortage** (Education)
5. **Limited/costly insurance** is a barrier for **volunteer drivers**. (Board on Aging)

- MCOTA's role: Carry the lead on the Volunteer Driver Program. Specifically, working on reducing insurance rates for volunteer drivers and volunteer driver programs.

### #3 Theme: Public transit

1. **Additional funding and diversification of funding sources for rural transportation** (MPTA)
2. Rebuild **passenger confidence in safety** of transit service in the pandemic environment. (MnDOT)
3. Change in 5,310 recipients' services require smaller vehicles to be flexible and responsive to serve more community-based jobs and bring more effective services to customers. Change program to enable smaller vehicles. (MnDOT)

### #4 Theme: Legal, regulatory or policy barriers

1. Challenge with **long-term resource capacity** to support MCOTA, RTCC and TCAP programs (MnDOT)
2. Transportation providers serve Minnesotans in multiple programs and must meet **duplicative standards**. (DHS)
3. Service collaborations face **legal, regulatory or policy barriers** that make it very complex and difficult to coordinate. (MnDOT)
4. **Inability to share data** between state agencies is a barrier to collaboration and coordination. (Met Council)
5. In partnering with multiple state agencies and counties to help people with employment, **each has distinctions in eligibility and methods**. (DEED)

### #5 Theme: Insurance

1. **Limited/costly insurance** is a barrier for **volunteer drivers**. (Board on Aging)
2. Opportunities and challenges with automobile **insurance** in an **evolving personal transportation environment** (Commerce)

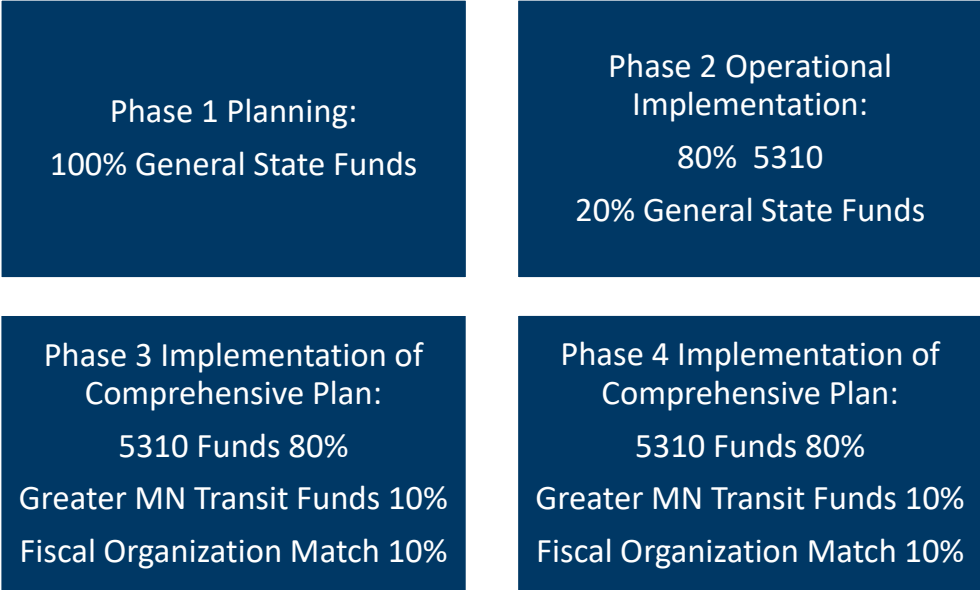
### #6 Theme: Climate change

1. **Climate resiliency and adaptation** will impact transportation and transit choices and options such as electric vehicles. (Commerce)

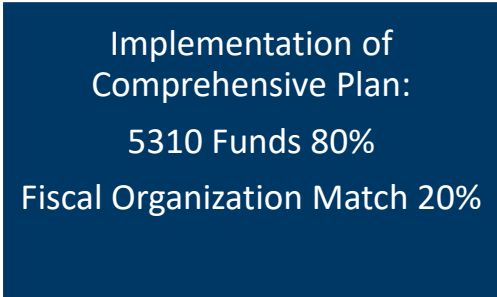
# Appendix E: Funding Sources for RTCCs and TCAPs

These charts show the funding distributions for RTCCs and TCAPs.

## Regional Transportation Coordinating Council (RTCC) funding:



## Transit Coordination Assistance Projects (TCAPs) funding:



**RTCC Fiscal Organizations**

Fiscal Organization	RTCC
Northwest Regional Development Commission	Northwest RTCC
Arrowhead Regional Development Commission	Arrowhead RTCC
Region Five Regional Development Commission	Region Five RTCC
Prairie Five Action Council	6W RTCC
United Community Action Partnership	Southwest RTCC
Mid- Minnesota Regional Development Commission	Mid-Minnesota RTCC
East Central Regional Development Commission	East Central RTCC
ConnectAbility of MN	Connect Central Minnesota RTCC

**TCAP Fiscal Organizations**

Fiscal Organization	TCAP
Scott County	Scott/Carver Counties TCAP
Dakota County	Dakota County TCAP
Hennepin County	Hennepin County TCAP
Anoka County	Anoka County TCAP
Newtrax	Newtrax TCAP (Ramsey County)
Washington County	Washington County TCAP