

2024 report on

Minnesota Council on Transportation Access

January 2025



**Strengthening transportation access
for all Minnesotans**

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Contents

Contents	3
Legislative Request	5
Executive Summary	6
Mission.....	6
Vision	6
Goals	6
Accomplishments.....	7
Introduction	9
MCOTA Structure.....	10
Legislative Duties	11
Fiscal Year 2024 Activities and Accomplishments	12
MCOTA’s 2020-2024 Strategic Plan Work Teams.....	13
Mobility Management and Mobility Managers.....	14
New State Laws Related to Transportation Access	19
Presentations Informing MCOTA’s Activities.....	23
Fiscal Year 2025 Strategic Direction	24
Appendix A: List of Abbreviations	25
Appendix B: 2024 MCOTA Members	26
Appendix C: MCOTA Legislative Duties and Accomplishments	27
Appendix D: Progress to Date on Top Challenges and Opportunities Identified by MCOTA Members in 2021	45
Appendix E: RTCC and TCAP Annual Reports	47
TCAPs	47
Region Five Regional Transportation Coordination Council Annual Report for July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024	48
Arrowhead Regional Transportation Coordinating Council July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024	50
Headwaters Regional Transportation Coordination Council Annual Report for July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024	54
East Central Regional Transportation Coordinating Council July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024	57

Mid-Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordinating Council July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024.....	62
Northwest Regional Transportation Coordination Council Annual Report for July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024	65
Southwest Regional Transportation Coordination Council Annual Report for July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024	68
Anoka County Transit Coordination Assistance Project Annual Report for July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024	71
GoDakota, Dakota County Transit Coordination Assistance Project Annual Report for July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024	74
Newtrax, Inc., Ramsey County Transit Coordination Assistance Project Annual Report for July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024	76
Scott County SmartLink Transit Coordination Assistance Project Annual Report for July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024	78
Washington County Transit Coordination Assistance Project Annual Report for July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024 ...	80
Appendix F: Funding Sources for RTCCs and TCAPs	82
Appendix G: MCOTA Timeline, July 2023-2024.....	83
Appendix H: Active Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils & Transit Coordination Assistance Projects Contact Persons and Counties	84

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.



A vehicle used by SmartLink to serve riders in Scott and Carver counties.

The cost of preparing this report is \$7,500.

Executive Summary

The transportation system in Minnesota plays an important role in supporting our state’s economy and connecting our communities to each other. Whether it’s access to work, school, shopping, getting medical care, or socializing with friends and family, everyone needs to be able to use and have access to our transportation system.

The Legislature formed the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (referred to as MCOTA) 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 then, MCOTA has worked to improve mobility options for those who live and visit our state.

MCOTA is led by staff from the Department of Transportation who work with partner agencies, organizations, and stakeholders to continue to reduce barriers in the transportation system. This includes working with Transit Assistance Coordination Projects (TCAPs) in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area and Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils (RTCCs) in Greater Minnesota to connect users to services throughout the state and recruit new providers, as per the [2020-2024 MCOTA Strategic Plan](#). MCOTA also works with partners to identify issues that can be improved upon through the legislative process, and endorsing and supporting legislation that improves access and mobility options. MCOTA members connect with existing and potential stakeholders and share educational and networking opportunities.

MCOTA looks forward to continuing to work on increasing capacity, serving unmet needs, improving quality of service, improving understanding and access to services by the public, and exploring new ways to expand transportation access and mobility throughout our state.

Mission

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

Vision

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

Goals

MCOTA, member agencies, and 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: identify and reduce transportation gaps, develop effective and streamlined access to transportation, and provide more transportation options.

MCOTA Transportation Goals



Identify and Reduce
Transportation Gaps



Develop Effective and
Streamlined Access to
Transportation



Provide More
Transportation Options

MCOTA's 2020-2024 Strategic Plan guided activities to achieve these three goals, including the establishment of Work Teams to make progress on specific initiatives. These Work Teams included MCOTA members and staff, content experts, and RTCC and TCAP representatives. Each Work Team addressed 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.

Accomplishments

Over the last year, MCOTA staff and representatives from RTCCs and TCAPs presented at several human services, planning, and transportation conferences. They shared how person-centered mobility management and local coordination can improve transportation options, especially for persons with disabilities and for older adults, and increased awareness of RTCCs and TCAPs as mobility management resources. MCOTA also held lunch and learn sessions to educate and inform participants.

Legislation supported by MCOTA that passed in the 2024 session included a pay raise for drivers of wheelchair accessible vehicles (or "WAVs").

With the conclusion of MCOTA's 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, MCOTA also developed its next strategic direction, with the goal of focusing on a single priority that is achievable within the next year. Based on surveys and meetings, MCOTA will "Work to identify driver shortages and address specific interventions throughout the enterprise that could aid in increasing driver availability" for fiscal year 2025. A Strategic Direction Work Team was created to support, gauge progress, and work towards meeting this goal.

Figure 1: Timeline of MCOTA activities in 2023-2024

MCOTA Timeline, July 2023 - July 2024



Introduction

Accessible and affordable transportation is essential for well-being. It provides a means to participate in the workforce, attend school, socialize with friends, worship, shop, and obtain healthcare. Transportation impacts all facets of our state’s economy, culture, and communities. Although various modes of transportation are available today, gaps in service still exist.

In 2010, the Legislature formed the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access under Minn. Stat. 174.285, to “study, evaluate, oversee and make recommendations to improve the coordination, availability, accessibility, efficiency, cost-effectiveness and safety of transportation services provided to the transit public.” Since its establishment, MCOTA has worked to expand transportation coordination at state, regional, and local levels, with a focus on improving mobility for the “transportation disadvantaged” (e.g., older adults, individuals with disabilities, individuals with low incomes).

MCOTA promotes cooperation and coordination by bringing many agencies and organizations together. It offers a venue to share information and work together to find opportunities to address transportation access issues. MCOTA, in conjunction with our member organizations, uses the following strategies to carry out the goals set forth by the Legislature:

- Provide support and technical assistance to local partners.
- Share best practices and build coalitions.
- Identify and respond to research needs.
- Engage in responsible education, communication, and advocacy activities.

MCOTA has partnered with the Greater Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils (RTCCs) and Twin Cities Transit Coordination Assistance Projects (TCAPs) to improve regional and local transportation coordination and access and pursue the following transportation goals:

- Identify and reduce transportation gaps.
- Develop effective and streamlined access to transportation.
- Provide more transportation options.

MCOTA’s 2020-2024 Strategic Plan guided activities towards the goals above, including recommending the establishment of Work Teams to make progress on specific initiatives. For Fiscal Year 2025, MCOTA is focused on identifying driver shortages and finding ways to increase driver availability. A strategic Work Team was created to support, gauge progress, and work towards meeting this goal over the next year.

The accomplishments highlighted in this report illustrate the results of improved coordination. They include strategies employed to overcome driver and vehicle shortages, volunteer driver recruitment and retention challenges, and reduce barriers to access via policy changes and legislation.

MCOTA Structure

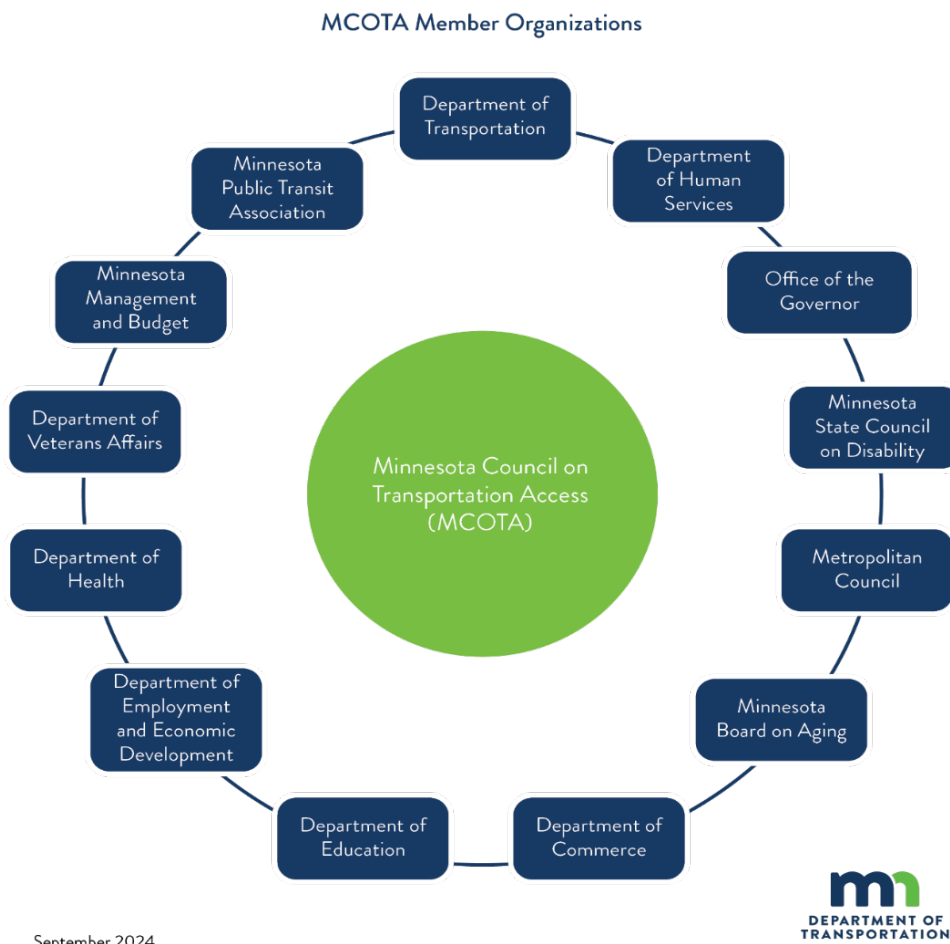
MCOTA’s structure is shown below.

Members

MCOTA membership is specified in [Minnesota statute](#). MCOTA includes senior leadership from 13 state agencies and organizations (also listed in Appendix B):

- Minnesota Departments of Transportation
- Department of Human Services
- Office of the Governor
- Minnesota State Council on Disability
- Metropolitan Council
- Minnesota Board on Aging
- Departments of Commerce
- Department of Education
- Department of Employment and Economic Development
- Department of Health
- Department of Veterans Affairs
- Minnesota Management and Budget
- Minnesota Public Transit Association

Figure 2: MCOTA Member Organizations



Executive Committee, Chair and Vice-Chair

The Chair presides at all meetings of MCOTA and its Executive Committee, acts as the liaison with the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative transportation committees, divisions, and appropriate subcommittees. The Vice-Chair assists with the Chair's duties and, in the absence of the Chair, presides at meetings of MCOTA and the Executive Committee.

Diogo Reis, the Minnesota Department of Human Services Benefit Policy Manager, became Acting Chair in March 2024. Reis is currently Vice-Chair and serves on the MCOTA Executive Committee.

Executive Director

Tom Gottfried, MnDOT Office of Transit and Active Transportation's Program Director and Transportation Mobility Manager, serves as MCOTA's Executive Director. Gottfried provides coordination and leadership for the council by building relationships between agencies and stakeholders, and by guiding the work of MCOTA's Work Teams.

Figure 3: MCOTA staff and members at a recent conference



Legislative Duties

Under [Minn. Stat. 174.285](#), the purpose of MCOTA is to “study, evaluate, oversee and make recommendations to improve the coordination, availability, accessibility, efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and safety of transportation services provided to the transit public.”

Fiscal Year 2024 Activities and Accomplishments

Since its creation in 2010, MCOTA has pursued projects and activities to improve transportation coordination throughout Minnesota. Below are brief descriptions of key council activities and accomplishments during 2024. 2024 activities are organized based on the legislative duties each activity covered. The duties numbered below in

Table 1 correspond to the duties as outlined in State statute. A full list of the legislative duties as well as current and past MCOTA activities are found in Appendix C.

Study & Evaluate
Legislative Duties: 1, 2, 4, 12, 19, 20
2024 Activities: Continued Communications with Stakeholders; Mobility Management and working with Mobility Managers; Advocating for new state laws to improve transportation access; Work Team focus on Nonemergency Medical Transportation awareness; Work Team focus on reducing insurance barriers to vehicle sharing and improving transportation access for Minnesotans who need more ride assistance.
Outreach & Advocacy
Legislative Duties: 6, 8, 10, 16, 17
2024 Activities: Presentations informing of MCOTA’s activities; Advocating for new state laws to improve transportation access; Work Team focus on Nonemergency Medical Transportation awareness; Volunteer Driver Program initiatives; Work Team focus on reducing insurance barriers to vehicle sharing and improving transportation access for Minnesotans who need more ride assistance.
Recommendations
Legislative Duties: 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 18
2024 Activities: Work Team focus on Nonemergency Medical Transportation awareness; Work Team focus on reducing insurance barriers to vehicle sharing and improving transportation access for Minnesotans who need more ride assistance; Advocating for new state laws to improve transportation access; Volunteer Driver Program initiatives.

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

MCOTA's 2020-2024 Strategic Plan Work Teams

MCOTA's 2020-24 Strategic Plan recommended the creation of several Work Teams to develop specific initiatives. The Work Teams include MCOTA members, agency staff, content experts and both RTCC and TCAP members. They supported priorities identified in the Strategic Plan and by senior leadership.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 24 active Work Teams included: Accessibility & Olmstead, Removing Barriers, Volunteer Driver Program Initiatives and Communications Work Teams. Appendix C provides more details on the accomplishments of each Work Team in FY24.

For FY25, MCOTA is streamlining the approach and moving forward with one Strategic Work Team that will lead efforts to meet the Council's goals for the next year.

Accessibility & Olmstead Work Team

The purpose of the Accessibility & Olmstead Work Team was to address accessibility issues for people with disabilities. The team's work aligned with Minnesota's Olmstead Plan. Their goal was to enable safe and accessible pedestrian and multimodal transportation facilities for all users. This included compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and user accessibility for transportation services and facilities at all levels of government. This Work Team was chaired by MCOTA member David Fenley, ADA Director with the Minnesota Council on Disability.

Removing Barriers Work Team

This Work Team's purpose was to improve the lives, connections, and health of Minnesotans by efficiently and effectively managing transportation initiatives that provide fully accessible transportation and mobility options. The team recognizes access to transportation has an impact on health outcomes throughout a person's life.

Chaired by MCOTA member Dylan Galos, a Research Scientist with the Minnesota Department of Health, followed by Brandon Nurmi, Director of the Minnesota Public Transit Association and Transportation Director for Arrowhead Transit. The Work Team explored several ideas for reducing barriers to transportation in FY24.

Volunteer Driver Program Initiatives Work Team

The Volunteer Driver Program Work Team focused on strengthening volunteer driver programs, including reducing legislative barriers and providing opportunities for networking and professional development. Co-chairs Collete Hanson, Assistant Director of Administration, Arrowhead Transit, and Beverly Sidlo-Tolliver, Principal Planner for Arrowhead Regional Development Commission Planning and Transportation Coordinator for Arrowhead RTCC, led the Work Team's efforts in FY24.

Communications Work Team

Under the leadership of Chair Jodi Yanda, Vocational Rehabilitation Area Manager at the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, the Communications Work Team worked on the MCOTA annual legislative report, provided input on quarterly newsletters and content on the MCOTA website, and produced publications such as a member guide.

Mobility Management: Collaboration Examples



What is mobility management?

As defined by the National Center for Mobility Management¹: “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.”

Mobility management in Minnesota

The Minnesota Department of Transportation provided 5310 funds from the Federal Transportation Administration to establish TCAPs in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area and RTCCs in Greater Minnesota. With this funding, mobility management must be facilitated to address transportation access for older adults, people with disabilities and low-income individuals.

Minnesota’s mobility management projects face challenges, including an unbalanced ratio of transportation resources, compared to growing transportation needs, and the need to support individual transportation situations by maximizing accessibility. To identify transportation solutions, mobility managers and community partners facilitate ongoing engagement with community partners and stakeholders who represent a cross section of public, non-profit, and for-profit organizations in the medical, human services, aging, disability services, and transportation industries. These groups also include elected representatives and transportation consumers

¹ Source: National Council on Mobility Management’s definition of mobility management (see What is Mobility Management and Mobility Managers? on the NCMM website).

Presentations showcase person-centered mobility management

As part of ongoing engagement, MCOTA, RTCC, and TCAP representatives presented at regional and national conferences. These conferences provided an opportunity to share information on improved transportation access that resulted from community involvement and the coordination/leveraging of resources.

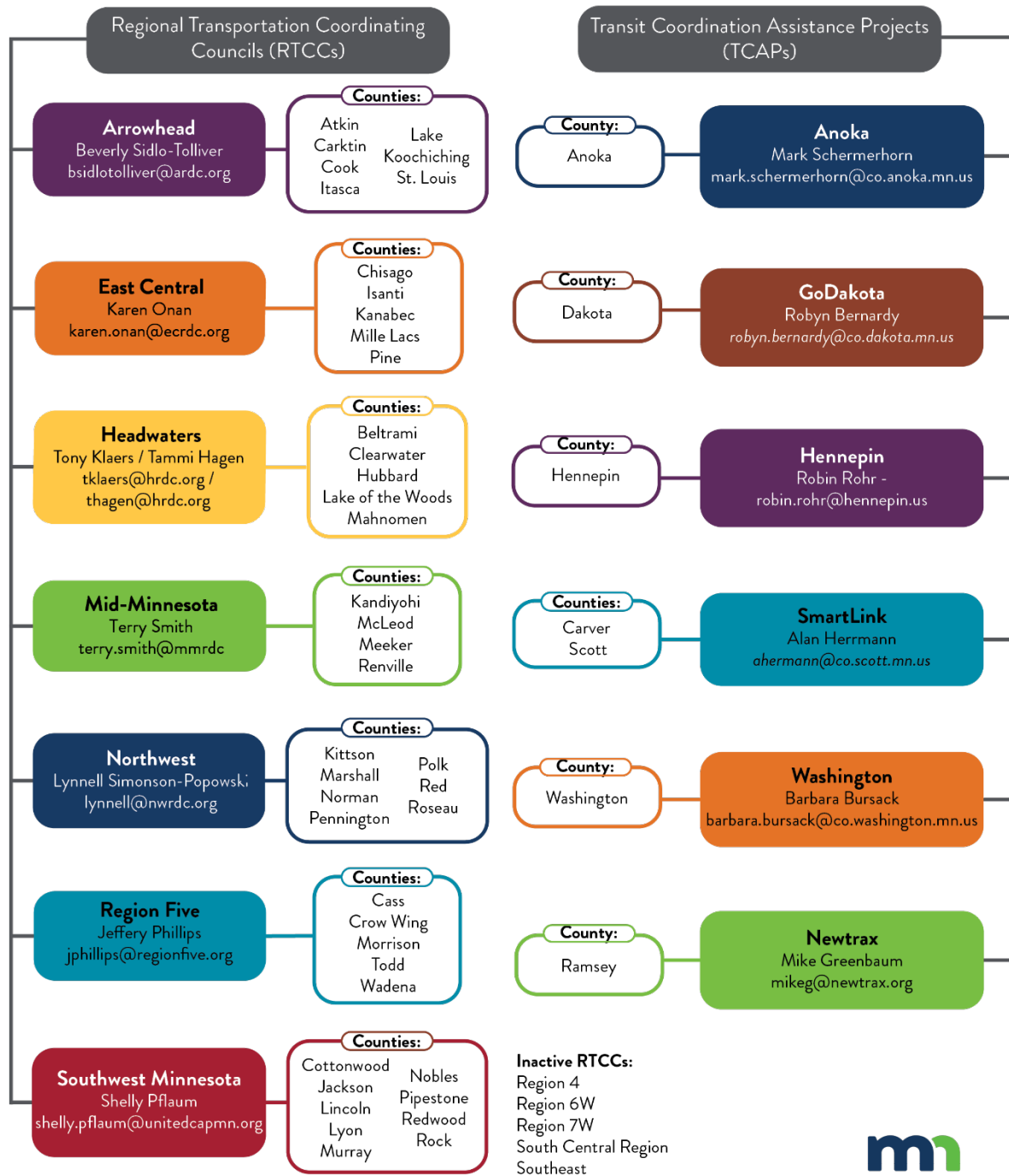
Presentations were delivered at a wide variety of conferences, including:

- Reimaging Aging Conference (September 2023)
- Association of Travel Instruction Annual Conference (September 2023)
- St. Louis County Human Services Conference (October 2023)
- Minnesota Public Transit Association Conference (October 2023)
- Grand Rapids Transportation Conference (October 2023)
- California Association for Coordinated Transportation (October 2023)
- Minnesota Social Services Association Conference (March 2024)

Greater MN Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils (RTCCs) & Twin Cities Transit Coordination Assistance Projects (TCAPs) mobility management

Regional Transportation Coordination Councils (RTCCs) and Transit Coordination Assistance Projects (TCAPs) support statewide mobility management. At their core, they focus on providing a place for community partners such as residents, agencies, and organizations (public and private) to collaborate to support the removal of barriers for people and places without transportation access. RTCCs and TCAPs have shared examples of their work with MCOTA. Further information on RTCC and TCAP projects is included in Appendix E.

Active Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils & Transit Coordination Assistance Projects Contact Persons and Counties

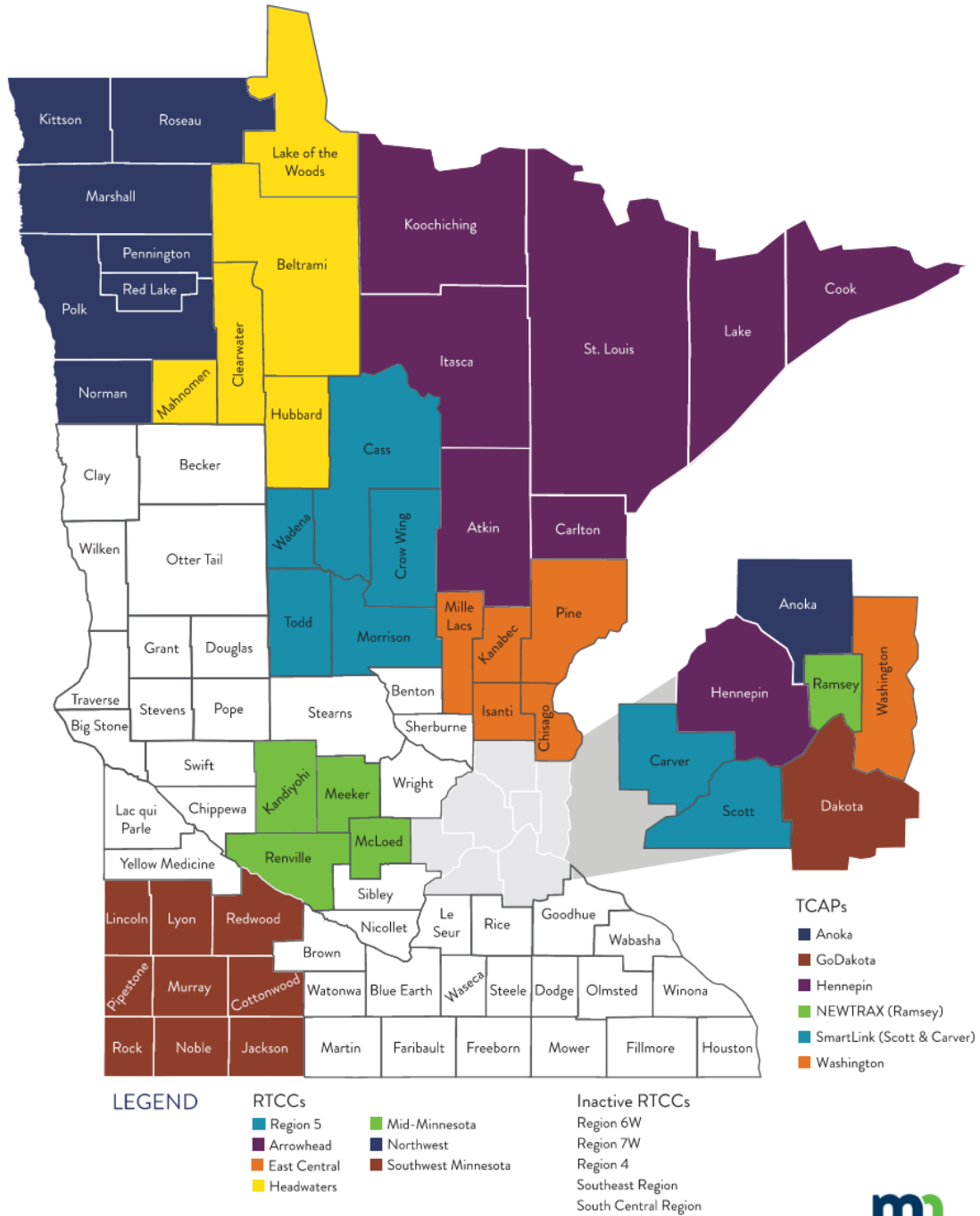


September 2024



Figure 3: Overview of RTCCs and TCAPs

Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils & Transit Coordination Assistance Projects



September 2024



Figure 4: Map of Minnesota with RTCCs and TCAPs as of June 30, 2024

MCOTA Newsletter articles about RTCCs and TCAPs

- [Dakota County TCAP solves transportation issues for recently released individuals](#)
- [Mid-Minnesota Development Commission tests fare free transit rides in Willmar](#)
- [NWRTPCC collaborations help lay foundation for funding potential volunteer driver program](#)



Figure 5: Presentation at the 2024 Minnesota Social Services Association Conference & Expo.

Left to Right: Alan Herrmann, Robyn Bernardy, Shelly Pflaum, and Mai Thor

New State Laws Related to Transportation Access

MCOTA members regularly share updates about their agencies' proposed state transportation access and mobility-related legislation.

In 2024, the following bills related to transportation accessibility and mobility became law.

- A study on dynamic transportation options and the Greater Minnesota Transit Plan with a MCOTA member the Minnesota Council of Disability (MCD) included as a stakeholder [2024 Laws of Minn., Ch. 127, Art. 3, Sec. 124](#) (Lines 131.4 through 131.20)

131.4 Study required; pilot program proposal. (a) The commissioner must study,
131.5 in collaboration with identified stakeholders in subdivision 3, increasing access to transit
131.6 and transportation options, including ridesharing or other dynamic transportation options
131.7 in rural, nonmetropolitan areas. The report must identify existing gaps in transportation
131.8 service in greater Minnesota. The commissioner may include the results of the report required
131.9 under this section in the 2025 Greater Minnesota transit investment plan provided in
131.10 Minnesota Statutes, section 174.24, subdivision 1a.
131.11 (b) The commissioner must outline and make recommendations on establishing a
131.12 proposed rural dynamic transportation options pilot program in coordination with a rural
131.13 transportation coordinating council. The proposed pilot program must attempt to increase
131.14 service in the rural transportation coordinating council's area by identifying gaps in service
131.15 and propose options to increase mobility, including but not limited to the use of transportation
131.16 network companies or taxis with access to wheelchair accessible vehicles. The proposed
131.17 pilot project plan must compare the regional transportation coordinating council's current
131.18 service area versus its proposed new service area, the cost differential, and the anticipated
131.19 new users of the pilot program. The proposed pilot project plan must include a timeline for
131.20 deployment and what resources may be needed to implement the pilot for at least two years.

- A study on enhancements to Metro Mobility, with various disability organizations, including MCD, involved. HF 5247 (Lines 133.21 through 135.7)

133.21 (a) The commissioner of transportation must, in consultation with the chair of the
133.22 Metropolitan Council, perform a Metro Mobility enhancement and service study and develop
133.23 recommendations to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, reliability, dignity, and experience

133.24 of riders of the special transportation service under Minnesota Statutes, section 473.386.

133.25 (b) The study must include:

133.26 (1) an evaluation of the Metropolitan Council's efforts to deliver improvements in the

133.27 reliability, effectiveness, and efficiency of services as required by state and federal law,

133.28 including workforce and procurement efforts to meet the demand for Metro Mobility services;

133.29 (2) an analysis of the extent to which Metro Mobility can fully meet demand for its

133.30 services in both the federally defined and state-defined services areas, including a

134.1 comprehensive examination of the Metropolitan Council's on-demand taxi alternative for

134.2 Metro Mobility-certified riders and Metro Move services;

134.3 (3) an evaluation of whether Metro Mobility met performance goals for the fulfillment

134.4 of ride requests in the state-mandated service area under Minnesota Statutes, section 473.386,

134.5 subdivision 1, paragraph (a);

134.6 (4) an analysis of whether state service requirements in law should be amended to prohibit

134.7 or restrict the denial of ride requests in the state-mandated service area and whether such a

134.8 requirement in service can be met with existing resources;

134.9 (5) suggested improvements to the Metropolitan Council's oversight and management

134.10 of its reservation and dispatch structure and a detailed analysis and recommendations on a

134.11 Metropolitan Council-operated centralized reservation system;

134.12 (6) a comprehensive analysis of the Metropolitan Council's oversight and management

134.13 of transit providers contracted to provide rides for Metro Mobility, including services plans,

134.14 payment and bonus structure, and performance standards;

134.15 (7) recommendations on the adequacy of the Metro Mobility complaints process and an

134.16 evaluation of whether the Metropolitan Council receives all rider concerns and whether

134.17 concerns are addressed appropriately;

134.18 (8) an evaluation of the Metro Mobility enhancement pilot program instituted under

134.19 Laws 2023, chapter 68, article 4, section 121;

134.20 (9) an evaluation and assessment of how to implement the use of transportation network

134.21 companies or taxi services to provide an enhanced service option in which riders may pay

134.22 a higher fare than other users of Metro Mobility services;

134.23 (10) an evaluation of the feasibility of nonsubsidized, subsidized, and tiered ride services
 134.24 handled by a dispatching service provider; and
 134.25 (11) an analysis of and recommendations for comprehensive improvements in route
 134.26 coordination, call sequencing and customer service, integration with transportation network
 134.27 company applications, and cataloging rides for maximum efficiency and driver compensation.
 134.28 (c) The Metropolitan Council must cooperate with the Department of Transportation
 134.29 and provide information requested in a timely fashion to implement and conduct the study.
 134.30 (d) The commissioner must consult with interested parties and stakeholders in conducting
 134.31 the service study and report, including representatives from the Minnesota Council on
 134.32 Disability, American Council of the Blind of Minnesota, the Minnesota DeafBlind
 135.1 Association, the National Federation of the Blind's Minnesota chapter, metro-area private
 135.2 transportation companies, identified riders of Metro Mobility, transit providers, Metro
 135.3 Mobility drivers, the Board on Aging, the Department of Human Services, and any other
 135.4 interested party with experience in providing mobility services for disabled persons.
 135.5 (e) By February 15, 2026, the commissioner must submit the report and findings to the
 135.6 chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over
 135.7 transportation policy and finance.

In 2023, the following bills related to transportation accessibility and mobility became law.

- The Minnesota Board on Aging’s priorities of a legislative task force on aging ([2023 Laws of Minn., Ch. 62, Art. 2, Sec. 120](#)), funding of the Native American Elders coordinator position ([2023 Laws of Minn., Ch. 61, Art. 2, Sec. 1](#)), continuation of the Minnesota Age Friendly Council funding ([2023 Laws of Minn., Ch. 61, Art. 2, Sec. 35](#)), expansion of the Live Well at Home Program ([2023 Laws of Minn., Ch. 61, Art. 2, Sec. 2](#)), and additional funding for the Office of Ombudsman for long-term care for additional staffing. This funding could be useful to home and community-based transportation. ([2023 Laws of Minn., Ch. 61, Art. 9, Sec. 2](#))
- The Minnesota Department of Education provided fiscal notes for an amendment to a statute that would allow school districts to provide transportation for students to area learning centers ([2023 Laws of Minn., Ch. 55, Art. 1, Sec. 36](#)) and aid for meals and transportation cost for qualifying post- secondary education students. ([2023 Laws of Minn., Ch. 41, Art. 1, Sec. 2](#))
- The Metropolitan Council’s requirement to establish the Metro Mobility Enhancement Pilot Program to enhance the existing service levels of Metro Mobility and provide service outside

of the current Metro Mobility hours of service, with a goal to provide services throughout the Metro Mobility service area until 10:00 p.m. ([2023 Laws of Minn., Ch. 68, Art. 4, Sec. 121](#))

- A 10 percent increase for nonemergency medical transportation reimbursement rates for unassisted, assisted, and lift-equipped rides. ([2023 Laws of Minn., Ch. 61, Art. 3, Sec. 5](#))
- A fuel adjustment for nonemergency medical transportation reimbursement rates when fuel costs exceed \$3 per gallon, subject to federal approval. ([2023 Laws of Minn., Ch. 61, Art. 3, Sec. 8](#))
- Personal Care Assistance Program modification regarding transportation. ([2023 Laws of Minn., Ch. 61, Art. 1, Sec. 12](#))
- Disabled relative driver's license for 15-year-olds. ([2023 Laws of Minn., Ch. 68, Art. 4, Sec. 55](#))
- Legal blindness as a qualifying condition for disability parking. ([49](#))
- Driver's Licenses for All, where proof of citizenship or lawful presence is no longer required for obtaining a driver's license. ([2023 Laws of Minn., Ch. 13, Art. 2, Sec. 7](#))
- Passenger rail from Twin Cities to Duluth. ([2023 Laws of Minn., Ch. 68, Art. 1, Sec. 2](#))

Presentations Informing MCOTA’s Activities

MCOTA regularly invites presentations from members and others to share information about programs that affect transportation accessibility and mobility.

Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility

In September 2023, the National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM) presented an update on Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM) agencies and their role in mobility management, and upcoming work ahead of the next strategic plan for MCOTA.

Mobility Managers Workshop

In September 2023, Michelle Lichtig, Project Manager in MnDOT’s Office of Transit and Active Transportation, gave an overview of the recent workshop held for mobility managers in the state. The workshop included review of the Mobility Management Work Plan, and review of the Mobility Management Sustainability Assessment tool created by the Federal Transportation Administration

Transportation Equity and Disability Justice

Mai Thor, Program Manager at MnDOT, discussed with MCOTA members in November 2023 on how disability justice relates to the field of transportation. Thor emphasized that MCOTA members, need to apply an intersectional, equity, and justice lens to their work. “When people live at the intersection of multiple vectors of oppression, unfettered access to mobility and public space are not guaranteed.”



Figure 6: A bus used by NewTrax to serve riders in Ramsey County

Fiscal Year 2025 Strategic Direction

Earlier this year, MCOTA members worked to update their strategic direction for Fiscal Year 2025, with a streamlined focus on a single priority that the Council believes to be achievable within a year.

Based on the results of surveys and discussions with MCOTA members, the consensus was to focus on “Work to identify driver shortages and address specific interventions throughout the enterprise that could aid in increasing driver availability” for fiscal year 2025.

A Work Team was created in March of 2024 to support, gauge progress, and work towards meeting this goal. In the upcoming year, our members look forward to working on opportunities that can support the number and availability of drivers across the state to serve and support transportation needs.

Appendix A: List of Abbreviations

CCAM.....	Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility
DHS.....	Minnesota Department of Human Services
FTA.....	Federal Transit Administration
MCOTA.....	Minnesota Council on Transportation Access
MnDOT.....	Minnesota Department of Transportation
MPTA.....	Minnesota Public Transit Association
NCMM.....	National Center for Mobility Management
NEMT.....	Nonemergency Medical Transportation
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: 2024 MCOTA Members

Tim Sexton, Chair (through March 2024)
Minnesota Department of Transportation

Diogo Reis, Vice Chair, Acting Chair (since March 2024)
Minnesota Department of Human Services

Brandon Kasprick
Office of the Governor

David Fenley
Minnesota State Council on Disability

Gerri Sutton
Metropolitan Council

Maureen Schneider
Minnesota Board on Aging

Peter Brickwedde
Minnesota Department of Commerce

Kelly Garvey
Minnesota Department of Education

Jodi Yanda (through April 2024)
Minnesota Department of Employment and
Economic Development

Jennifer Pelletier (through September 2024)
Minnesota Department of Employment and
Economic Development

Jon Benson (since September 2024)
Minnesota Department of Employment and
Economic Development

Shirley Schoening Scheuler
Minnesota Department of Health

Ron Quade (through April 2024)
Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs

Chris Kakos (since May 2024)
Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs

Nick Lardinois
Minnesota Management and Budget

Brandon Nurmi
Minnesota Public Transit Association

Appendix C: MCOTA Legislative Duties and Accomplishments

Year(s)
2011-2023, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
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
<p>Create a Minnesota coordination website and resource library</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation section of Minnesotahelp.info • NEMT Advisory Committee support • NEMT Coordination Study • Local Transit Coordination Case Studies • Primer of funding sources for “transit public” in Minnesota • RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance, and website assistance • Studies of economic cost-benefits of Minnesota volunteer driver programs, public-private partnerships in transit, and best practices in youth employment transportation • Periodic stakeholder e-mail communication • Volunteer Driver Program Forum

Year(s)
2011-2023, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
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"> • NEMT Advisory Committee support • NEMT Coordination Study • Vehicle-sharing Study • Successful Local Transit Coordination Case Studies • Minnesota mobility management case studies • Strategic planning • RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance, and website assistance • Volunteer transportation programs inventory and survey • Study of economic benefits of Minnesota volunteer driver programs • Study of public-private partnerships in transit • Volunteer Driver Program Forum • Study on best practices in youth employment transportation

Year(s)
2012-2023, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
Legislative Duty #3
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 development, stakeholder engagement, guidance, and website assistance

Year(s)
2011-2023, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
Legislative Duty #4
Identify barriers prohibiting coordination and accessibility of public transportation services and aggressively pursue the elimination of those barriers.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEMT Advisory Committee support • NEMT Study • Synthesis of 2011 Greater MN regional transportation coordination plans • Planning guidance for the 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plans in Minnesota • Maps of human service transportation providers' areas of service in MN • Strategic planning • Olmstead Plan goals and measures • Homelessness and transportation services • RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance, and website assistance • Ways to increase vehicle sharing in Minnesota • Study of public-private partnerships in transit • Study on best practices in youth employment transportation

Year(s)
2011-2023, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
Legislative Duty #5
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 development, stakeholder engagement, guidance, and website assistance • Study of public-private partnerships in transit

Year(s)
2011, 2014-2023, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
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"> • 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 development, stakeholder engagement, guidance, and website assistance • Ways to increase vehicle sharing in Minnesota • Volunteer transportation programs inventory and survey

Year(s)
2011-2023, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
Legislative Duty #7
Recommend guidelines for developing transportation coordination plans throughout the state.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synthesis of 2011 Greater MN regional transportation coordination plans • Planning guidance for the 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plans in Minnesota • Successful Local Transit Coordination case studies • RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance, and website assistance

Year(s)
None of the years between 2011-2023
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"> • This model of centralized purchasing is not in place in Minnesota.

Year(s)
2011-2012, 2014-2023
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"> • Mobility management webinars • Planning guidance for the 2011 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plans in Minnesota • Successful Local Transit Coordination case studies • Minnesota mobility management case studies • RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance, and website assistance

Year(s)
2011, 2015-2023, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
Legislative Duty #10
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 development, stakeholder engagement, guidance, and website assistance • Volunteer transportation programs inventory and survey • Study of economic benefits of Minnesota volunteer driver programs • Volunteer driver insurance and reimbursement issues and education • Volunteer Driver Program Forum • Volunteer Driver Program resolution, brochure

Year(s)
2016-2023, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
Legislative Duty #11
Recommend minimum performance standards for delivery of services.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance, and website assistance

Year(s)
None of the years between 2011-2023
Legislative Duty #12
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)
2013, 2015-2023 expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
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"> Vehicle-sharing Study RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance, and website assistance Ways to increase vehicle sharing in Minnesota Volunteer driver insurance and reimbursement issues and education Volunteer Driver Program resolution, brochure

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"> Development of contract template RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance, and website assistance

Year(s)
2011, 2014-2023 expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
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"> • Collaboration on development of a Unified Transit Data Center pilot project in Scott and Carver counties • Common standards for financial records • RTCC organizing and implementation

Year(s)
2012-2023 expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
Legislative Duty #16
Encourage the design and development of training programs for coordinated transportation services.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEMT Advisory Committee support • NEMT Study • Mobility management webinars • Minnesota mobility management case studies • Minnesota Mobility Management Handbook • RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance, and website assistance

Year(s)
2016, expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
Legislative Duty #17
Encourage the use of public-school transportation vehicles for the transit public.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance, and website assistance

Year(s)
2014-2015, 2023 expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
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"> • Common standards for financial records • RTCC organizing and implementation

Year(s)
2013, 2015, 2016, 2021-2023 expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2024
Legislative Duty #19
Identify policies and necessary legislation to facilitate vehicle sharing.
Supporting Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicle-sharing study • Data collection and analysis of vehicle sharing • Maps of human service transportation providers' areas of service in Minnesota • Outreach to providers about options and benefits of vehicle sharing • RTCC development, stakeholder engagement, guidance, and website assistance

Year(s)
2012-2022 expect to continue the Supporting Activities in 2023
Legislative Duty #20
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 development, stakeholder engagement, guidance, and website assistance • Volunteer driver insurance and reimbursement issues and education • Volunteer Driver Program resolution, brochure

Appendix D: Progress to Date on Top Challenges and Opportunities Identified by MCOTA Members in 2021

Progress on top transportation challenges and opportunities for MCOTA members in 2021 Senior Leadership meeting

Top Challenges & Opportunities	Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Transportation accessibility and availability ● Sufficient and affordable transportation throughout the state ● Remove transportation barriers for people to access health care and other essential needs that contribute to well-being ● Waiver Transportation Pilot 	<p>Accessibility & Olmstead and Removing Barriers Work Teams focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● NEMT awareness ● Improve transportation access for Minnesotans who need more ride assistance. <p>MCOTA Newsletter shared ways of coping with driver and vehicle shortages</p> <p>Metropolitan Council is implementing a pilot Waiver Transportation Program</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Driver shortages ● For public transit and other transportation services ● Volunteer drivers ● Low mileage reimbursement rate and tax liabilities are barriers for volunteer drivers. ● Limited/costly insurance is a barrier for volunteer drivers. 	<p>Volunteer Driver Program Initiatives Work Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MCOTA volunteer driver brochures ● Minnesota's Road to Volunteer Drivers Virtual Forum Series, 2022-2023 ● MCOTA supports federal mileage reimbursement legislation for volunteer drivers. ● New volunteer driver program resources web page ● Planning research on the value of volunteer drivers in health care access
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Legal, regulatory or policy barriers ● Challenge with long-term resource capacity to support MCOTA, RTCC and TCAP programs. ● Transportation providers serve Minnesotans in multiple programs and must meet duplicative standards. ● Service collaborations face legal, regulatory, or policy barriers that make it very complex and difficult to coordinate. 	

Top Challenges & Opportunities	Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inability to share data between state agencies is a barrier to collaboration and coordination. ● In partnering with multiple state agencies and counties to help people with employment, each has distinctions in eligibility and methods 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Insurance ● Limited/costly insurance is a barrier for volunteer drivers. ● Opportunities and challenges with automobile insurance in an evolving personal transportation environment 	<p>Removing Barriers Work Teams focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduce insurance barriers to vehicle sharing.

Appendix E: RTCC and TCAP Annual Reports

This section contains reports of FY24 activities from the Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils in Greater Minnesota and the Transit Coordination Assistance Projects in the Twin Cities. Hennepin County TCAP does not have a report but was started in 2024.

RTCCs

- Region Five
- Arrowhead
- East Central
- Headwaters
- Mid-Minnesota
- Northwest
- Southwest Minnesota

TCAPs

- Anoka County
- GoDakota - Dakota County
- Newtrax - Ramsey County
- SmartLink Mobility Management - Scott and Carver Counties
- Washington County

Region Five Regional Transportation Coordination Council Annual Report for July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

TASK 1: Transportation Guidance and Consultation

Region Five RTCC, referred to locally as R5RTCC, continued to engage with the local community through a robust marketing campaign. This campaign included social media posts, the publication of transportation newsletters, and podcasts. These marketing efforts promoted transportation opportunities within the region, as well as transportation-related success stories that occurred both within Region Five and elsewhere throughout Minnesota. Our RTCC Mobility Manager met with several transportation services (senior agencies and volunteer driver programs) to discuss joint advertising efforts that would be mutually beneficial to all agencies and the region. The groundwork was also laid to expand the advertising campaign to radio ads and interviews, community meetings, and increase the posting of RTCC flyers throughout the region.

R5RTCC improved its education and technical assistance skills by attending MnDOT workshops, which allowed staff to gain information and knowledge that would ensure RTCC subject-matter expertise is maintained.

R5RTCC also conducted robust engagement with its stakeholders by preparing, planning, and executing quarterly stakeholder meetings. R5RTCC is fortunate to have outstanding representation from transit providers, community organizations, and local government officials. This engagement allows stakeholder meetings to properly inform members of current transportation issues, and ensure information is effectively relayed to stakeholders and the public.

TASK 2: Vehicle Sharing

R5RTCC continued to collaborate with stakeholders to move forward on the shared vehicle concept. R5RTCC shared grant opportunities with stakeholders to ensure all opportunities were considered. Additionally, the RTCC continued to increase its knowledge base in this area by being involved in webcasts and discussions that relate to the coordination of how vehicle sharing would work. R5RTCC is working to pursue a shared vehicle grant through MnDOT to serve our region.

TASK 3: Stakeholder and Community Engagement

R5RTCC continued to lead an active stakeholder group throughout the last year. Several one-on-one meetings with the Mobility Manager and various stakeholders occurred; these helped focus efforts on areas where transportation needs were the greatest. Additionally, the Mobility Manager and key stakeholders engaged with community organizations outside of the RTCC to collaborate on community-level transportation issues and needs. These efforts resulted in an increased interest in the RTCC's mission and work, and allowed the RTCC to gain a new stakeholder whose area of interest has identified transportation gaps. New and current stakeholders are working with the Mobility Manager to find innovative solutions to help solve transportation gaps.

TASK 4: Volunteer Drivers

R5RTCC continued to work towards supporting volunteer drivers through recruitment, education, communications, and outreach to the public. Staff continued to help educate drivers on tax and insurance issues and worked on improving outreach to the public.

TASK 5: Training and Education

The success of R5RTCC is tied directly to the expertise of its staff. R5RTCC experienced some turnover in staffing, which promoted rigorous training for the incoming Mobility Manager. This training included high frequency one-on-one meetings with MnDOT staff to help develop institutional knowledge as quickly as possible. R5RTCC staff attended conferences, events, and workshops throughout the year, expanding its expertise in the dynamic arena of transportation and mobility management. R5RTCC staff attended the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Transportation Conference, which ensured the learning and growth of our staff. R5RTCC met individually with a multitude of transportation providers to affirm that, at the regional level, it was the go-to organization for transportation coordination.

TASK 6: Mobility Management Integration

The success of R5RTCC is tied directly to the expertise of its staff. The R5RTCC experienced some turnover in staffing, which promoted rigorous training for the incoming Mobility Manager. This training included high frequency one-on-one meetings with MnDOT staff to help develop institutional knowledge as quickly as possible.

TASK 7: MCOTA Participation

R5RTCC worked to further improve strategic-level collaboration between the RTCC and MCOTA through involvement in monthly meetings, and work group participation. Continued collaboration helps staff understand and learn of issues and policies that limit transportation coordination and access, address policies that impede transportation efforts, and increase access to transportation for residents in their regions by aligning resources and reducing gaps. R5RTCC staff was fully engaged at the strategic level of the mobility management community. R5RTCC staff were regular attendees at MCOTA meetings this past year and had the opportunity to meet directly with MCOTA leadership.

Conclusion

R5RTCC continues to make progress in reaching the goal of transportation access to all. Through its work of implementing deliverables in each area of the R5RTCC work plan, the R5RTCC continues to focus on increasing resources available to the region, as well as reducing the areas of the region that have limited transportation options.

Arrowhead Regional Transportation Coordinating Council July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

Introduction

The mission of the Arrowhead RTCC is to improve access, availability, and options for transportation services in the eight-county region of northeast Minnesota. These counties include Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, Pine, and St. Louis. Arrowhead RTCC tasks were implemented through improved communication, coordination, and collaboration.

TASK 1: Transportation Guidance and Consultation

Task #1 work during the 2023-2024 grant cycle included the following focus areas:

- Assessing community readiness and rider education
- Outreach and awareness on RTCC and regional transportation providers
- Exploring the usage of centralized systems

Arrowhead RTCC staff was utilized as advisors/TA providers to 13 regional and state level committees focused on identifying unmet personal mobility needs and facilitating the development of services responsive to those needs. RTCC staff acted as a conduit between regional entities and state entities. Our presence and engagement with the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access elevated the voices and concerns of people in the Arrowhead Region to be heard by state department leaders.

Through collaboration and information gathering, the Arrowhead RTCC updated four resources/outreach materials and created an online transportation provider tool specific to the Arrowhead Region. These resources/outreach materials were distributed to public-facing entities such as libraries, community centers, health care facilities, and RTCC council member agencies.

TASK 2: Vehicle Sharing

Task #2 work during the 2023-2024 grant cycle included the following focus areas:

- Identifying underutilized vehicles
- Identifying agencies seeking vehicle sharing opportunities
- Providing technical assistance

Arrowhead RTCC staff worked with FTA 5310 providers, nonprofits, and for-profit groups to meet the objectives outlined for this task. These groups included, but were not limited to, the Volunteer Services of Carlton County, MCOTA, Koochiching County Public Health, and Enterprise Car Rental Agency. Resources and information were regularly shared over email and the project management software BaseCamp, thus reaching a wider audience than what was manageable to track.

TASK 3: Stakeholder and Community Engagement

Task #3 work from the 2023-2024 grant cycle included the following focus areas:

- Working with Specialized Transportation Service (STS) Providers
- Engagement with healthcare facilities and hospitals
- Engagement with stakeholders and subcommittee groups
- Engagement with workforce support agencies

Connections made from the vehicle sharing and volunteer driver work task can increase transportation access to basic needs, education, and social events. RTCC staff and MnDOT project management staff facilitated conversations with regional entities seeking vehicle sharing knowledge. Throughout the year, Arrowhead RTCC staff engaged with staff from six different healthcare facilities/healthcare groups, regularly attended county-level meetings of Arrowhead Transit's Transit Advisory Committee Meetings, coordinated four meetings of healthcare staff and transportation staff, and hosted a cross-sector workshop of 30 attendees consisting of healthcare staff, planning staff, and transportation staff, all facilitated by a Coordinator from the National Center for Mobility Management.

TASK 4: Volunteer Driver Programs

Task #4 work included the following focus areas:

- Volunteer driving outreach
- Learning about waived and third-party billing
- Advocacy and training for volunteer drivers and volunteer driver agencies

Arrowhead RTCC staff held regular meetings with six different groups, and member attendance supported increased coordination between transportation providers and the cross-sector industry, all in support of volunteer driver organizations. Work with these groups included three presentations and one feasibility study. Working with the Area Agency on Aging helped the RTCC develop effective conversations regarding waived billing and third-party billing for volunteer transportation programs. Arrowhead RTCC staff continued the outreach and marketing plan that was developed the year prior, all supporting volunteer driver recruitment and retention. In addition, RTCC staff engaged in advocacy efforts supporting federal legislation changes for volunteer drivers. Acting as the Volunteer Driver Coalition Co-Chair, the Arrowhead RTCC coordinator and other co-chairs met with Congresswoman Fischbach's staff.

TASK 5: Staff Training and Education

Task #5 work included the following focus areas:

- Training on topics related to older adults and people with disabilities
- Training on transportation related topics
- Training on the interconnection of transportation, climate change, and sustainability
- Training on interconnection of transportation issues: health, food access, job security

As noted in the above outcomes, RTCC staff and council members attended trainings and conferences in both online and in-person throughout the year, with more than 50 individual training sessions being taken. Training topics include understanding of transportation issues in relation to direct services, workforce development best practices, higher level impacts such as climate change, best practices of transportation and mobility models, and funding streams for services. The gained knowledge supports the RTCC in advocating for safe, efficient, effective, reliable, and responsive transportation at a local level. The RTCC coordinator was given the opportunity to expand advocacy efforts in an advisory role with the Minnesota Rural Transit Assistance Program. The coordinator has direct engagement with transit providers in the state and can provide input on training and curriculum development.

TASK 6: Mobility Management Integration

Task #6 work included the following focus areas:

- Engagement with Mobility Manager Positions in the region
- Identifying opportunities to engage in comprehensive planning in the region
- Transit infrastructure and organizational capacity improvement

- Identifying opportunities at the intersection of transportation and climate change, disaster resiliency, and emergency preparedness

Arrowhead RTCC staff regularly engaged with six mobility management agencies and social workers/healthcare outreach staff at six different healthcare facilities. These conversations provided information to develop shared information opportunities for Arrowhead RTCC partners. Five presentations on Mobility Management Best Practices were conducted throughout the year with a cross-sector collaboration of co-presenters. Arrowhead RTCC had four different opportunities to contribute to comprehensive regional and state planning, providing a lens of mobility management and transportation access and equity. RTCC staff contributed directly to five different comprehensive planning initiatives in the region. Arrowhead RTCC staff also increased their technical knowledge of system gaps and accessibility needs in the region, resulting in working with Leech Lake on a micro-mobility pilot project and developing a scope of work for the next grant cycle's Community Transportation Navigator project.

TASK 7: Emergency Preparedness Facilitation

Task #7 work included the following focus areas:

- The MCOTA Volunteer Driver Work Team
- The MCOTA Removing Barriers to Transportation Access Work Team

Throughout the year, the Arrowhead RTCC Coordinator co-chaired the Volunteer Driver Work Team, assisting in the planning of lunch and learns (presentations/panels), and the overall scope of work items for the group. Aspects of this work included presentations on Volunteer Driver Software Coordination, novel ideas to recruit volunteers, and the sharing of ideas amongst Work Team members. Arrowhead RTCC Co-Coordinator regularly attended the Removing Barriers to Transportation Access Work Teams meetings. This work included analyzing insurance barriers to vehicle sharing models. RTCC staff continually disseminated learnings and resources from trainings to RTCC council members.

Conclusion

Arrowhead RTCC's work throughout the last fiscal year is best characterized as multifaceted in nature, with efforts ranging from support for volunteer drivers to informing and educating local and regional organizations on transportation related issues. Our RTCC coordinator continued to chair the MCOTA Volunteer Driver Program Initiatives Work Team while the RTCC co-coordinator actively maintained communications with regional volunteer driver providers for status updates about their operations. Transportation information and resources were regularly distributed at conferences, community tabling events, and among direct-service professionals. Involvement with the MCOTA Removing Barriers Work Team increased RTCC staff's understanding of insurance barriers to vehicle-sharing and strategies to overcome them. RTCC staff also made progress in establishing communications with area healthcare staff to develop solutions for transportation access to healthcare services, an endeavor that will continue throughout fiscal year 2025. To best summarize Arrowhead RTCC work over the past year, it is continuing to serve as planning and information experts for improving transportation access and equity in the Northeast Minnesota region.

Headwaters Regional Transportation Coordination Council Annual Report for July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

Headwaters Regional Development Commission is one of the hosts for Minnesota’s Department of Transportation’s Regional Transportation Coordination Council (RTCC) program. The RTCC is a 20-member advisory group composed of representatives from social, non-profit, transportation, and other agencies with a focus on improving accessibility for disadvantaged populations and enhancing transportation services. A mobility manager provides support to the RTCC and serves as the point of contact between MnDOT, local social agencies, and the community.



Transportation is a consistent barrier for many people in HRDC’s region to reach essential destinations such as healthcare, worksites, or fresh food. The RTCC and mobility manager collaborate with a variety of local and state partners to overcome these accessibility issues. Last year, the Council identified specific projects to undertake to enhance mobility and transportation in each county.

TASK 1: Transportation Guidance & Consultation

HRDC was awarded a contract for a Regional Transportation Coordinating Council (RTCC) in July of 2023 after a pause in the contract. This new contract was a new start for the RTCC in the Headwaters Region. With the new Local Human Service Plan created, the RTCC was revamped to include new council members who indicated interest through the Local Human Service Coordination Plan process.

With the creation of the new council, we started from the ground up, conducting meetings and building relationships to know the areas of mobility the council wanted to work on. These quarterly meetings were scheduled with a virtual option to accommodate all members. The last meeting of the year was one-on-one meetings with the council members via phone, teams, or in-person to get individual feedback on the direction of the RTCC. This helped ensure council members were still invested in being on the council. This reforming of the council took time, but now we believe the council consists of an eclectic group of individuals who are invested in their respective communities and are from all aspects of life, including local units of government involvement.

TASK 2: Vehicle Sharing

Due to the contract pause, our Provider Directory and information regarding the RTCC needed to be updated. With many workshops, seminars, and educational opportunities attended, the mobility manager had a clearer view of who was of importance to contact and collaborate with and the many opportunities for vehicle sharing. Conversations were had with *Plum Catalyst* and the GoMARTI autonomous vehicle program in Grand Rapids, Minnesota, and the possibility for the program to be extended into the Bemidji area.

Sharing information and funding opportunities to stakeholders was ongoing as their needs became known. Van pool ideas for the Red Lake School District with the incoming teachers from the Philippines ended up with the collaboration between Commute with Enterprise and the Red Lake School District. This collaboration worked well to ensure teachers were able to reach their place of employment while not having a license.

HRDC teamed up with Bemidji State University students to complete a study on usage of van pools. The Mobility Manager also took part in the Electrical Vehicle Working Group and the Minnesota Shared Mobility Collaborative.

TASK 3: Stakeholder & Community Engagement

This initial year was all about reaching out to stakeholders in the Headwaters Region to tell our story and to listen to theirs. A strong relationship with stakeholders is not an option but a must in the mobility/transit field. Collaboration via phone calls, emails, Teams/Zoom meetings, one-on-ones, groups, and hybrid meetings were in abundance. Concerns, barriers, and questions about mobility/transit were discussed and followed up on.

Some collaborations came from the most unusual stakeholders and became the most valuable. For example, attending a listening lunch with the Red Lake Housing Shelter, it came to our attention how individuals were overall happy with public transit but could not always depend on it. Out of this encounter, a year-long on-demand transit pilot will start providing service for an affordable housing community in our area.

Some of the stakeholders and community engagement individuals and opportunities included Commute with Enterprise, Center for Human Experience, Oshkiimaajitahdah, Red Lake Teen Parenting group, Red Lake School District, United Way, all transit and volunteer driver programs, National Association of Development Organizations (NADO), Adult Day services, Interagency meetings, Bemidji High School. ATP, RDO, RTCC, Housing navigators, Bi-Cap, Bush Foundation, Leech Lake, White Earth, County and City officials, Blandin Foundation, Otto Bremer, and many more.

TASK 4: Volunteer Driver Programs

Our Mobility Manager contacted all the volunteer programs/coordinators in the Headwaters Region; the lack of volunteer drivers available since the pandemic was evident. The Mobility Manager continued work on educating communities about the benefits of volunteering and that growing the volunteer pool is needed. Attending MAVA Greater Minnesota work groups, MCOTA Volunteer Driver Work Team and taking part in the Volunteer Driver Coalition also took place.

TASK 5: Training Education

This fiscal year brought much needed educational opportunities since a new Mobility Manager was hired. The Mobility Manager took on the task of securing a Certified Mobility Manager certificate through Easter Seals, Inc. The certification and training gave the new hire great foundational knowledge of the role of a mobility manager.

Attendance at the WI/MN Public Transit conference was a great opportunity to make connections and obtain information regarding public transit. Aging, DEI, volunteerism, ADA, resilient communities, autonomous vehicles, electric vehicles, NEMT and many others developed a wide variety of background on mobility/transit.

Applying for and receiving a scholarship for the Shared Mobility cohort between MDOT and ILT was a highlight. This educational cohort gave us the skills needed to take a “napkin” idea and make it fundable. For example, Conifer Transit was just an idea that came about as a concern from community members. After bringing this idea to the MDOT/ILT cohort, the idea was transformed into a project ready to apply for grants.

TASK 6: Mobility Management Integration

Our Mobility manager was busy in the community reaching out, making connections, and collaborating with stakeholders. Work included pilot projects for Conifer Transit, United Way’s *Shuttle to Shelter*, Lyft driver education, assisting small non-profits in finding affordable vehicles, and listening to the barriers that the region has and strategies to overcome them.

Our Mobility Manager partnered with NADO to present a ‘Wealth Creations’ training on transit for the Headwaters Region. NADO was able to tour the Oshkiimaajitahdah Community building and training facility in Redby, along with Red Lake Transit and White Earth Transit. The meeting highlighted the relationships built between our Tribal Transit partners.

Bemidji State University video marketing students and White Earth Transit collaborated to create a marketing video for White Earth Transit’s award-winning transit service. This was identified as a need by White Earth Transit, and our Mobility Manager found a creative solution to meet this need.

An invitation to participate in the Leech Lake Peer Exchange with the Assistant Secretary for Tribal Government Affairs, Arlando Teller, gave our Mobility Manager an opportunity to gain knowledge of the Tribal long-range plan for transportation. Relationships were strengthened with multiple tribal transit programs at the meeting.

An ILT and MnDOT cohort on shared mobility was another way to coordinate and make contacts with other regions and learn about the work they are doing for pilot projects while being able to receive their input on projects taking place in the Headwaters Region. N-CATT/CTAA’s ‘Technology Demonstration – State of Industry’ workshop gave the chance to continue the exploration of autonomous vehicles and the ongoing collaboration with Plum Catalyst.

Task 7: MCOTA Participation

With a renewed contract and new employees, meetings with Michelle Lichtig and MCOTA staff were valuable in the reformation of the Headwaters RTCC. The MCOTA training, workgroups, and reporting was imperative to stay focused and keep on track. Meetings with the RTCC, mobility managers, RTAP, MCOTA, coalitions and work groups kept HRDC’s mobility manager up to date, gave us a toolkit to use, and the support of others in the same position. This support for our first year was invaluable.

Conclusion

The year has been busy with making new connections, learning, strengthening partnerships, collaborating with other agencies, and working with people and groups. It has been rewarding meeting people who want to make a difference in the lives of others as much as you do, and who are willing to work with you to make the changes needed.

East Central Regional Transportation Coordinating Council July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

Introduction

Gaining ground on a horizon is futile. Finding a point on the horizon is the only way to measure headway and reach a destination.

This is what the Local Human Services Transit Coordination Plans (LCP) have driven the Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils (RTCCs) to do. The East Central RTCC has found a point and is heading right for it. The ECRTCC is measuring its course through careful means, counting successes and pitfalls – acquiring knowledge and gaining ground on its target which right now is the 2022 LCP top priority – Transportation Hubs, also called DoTS - Destination or Transfer Stations.

The ECRTCC, along with six other regional divisions of counties around the state, is operating under a grant from the FTA and MnDOT, who in 2018 created the Greater MN transportation organizations that are called Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils. The concept for these regional transportation associations came from the LCP document which is reviewed, reformed, refined and adopted in each region every 5 years. Each region completed its most recent report in 2022, but the one that determined the need for RTCCs came from the 2017 reports. LCPs have tremendous value when it comes to the work of RTCCs.



Over the course of its 6-year span, the ECRTCC has established itself as a driving force to improve transportation access for those in East Central Minnesota, especially focusing on those in the region who are transportation disadvantaged – low-income, seniors, veterans, and disabled. Each year we’ve worked to develop our foundation, established our stakeholders, gained input from partners, tested our integrity and now we stand ready to build.

Through the work of the ECRTCC Advisory Board, information gleaned from Public Outreach and

Stakeholders, some of the tasks and details below have developed into projects that have been or will be considered for completion over the next few years.

TASK 1: Transportation Guidance and Consultation

Goal: To inform people in the community about existing services

- The East Central Minnesota Transportation Provider Directory is published online, is printable, and is also distributed as hard copies. It includes information about park and ride lots as well as regional car charging stations.
- Our website <http://eastcentraltransit.com/> includes helpful and relevant information that answers questions for riders and potential new riders. Provider links are available.
- The ECRTCC has been branded with a recognizable design, to assist with marketing efforts of the ECRTCC.

- Continued collaboration with RTCCs throughout the state, networking by sharing relevant and current information in-person and online through email, Zoom meetings, Facebook and Instagram.
- Participation in statewide events including Operation Community Connect, Senior Fairs, Age Friendly events and a large Health and Human Services Conference.
- Bi-monthly meetings to update ECRDC Board Members.
- To remain top of mind, ECRTCC continues to reach out to the public through radio (KBEK 95.5fm), the Kanabec County Fair (2021, 2022, 2023, 2024) and through other local/regional expos/events/fairs, local news, and social media.

TASK 2: Vehicle Sharing

Goal: To maximize utilization of existing vehicles used by organizations, including, but not exclusively, FTA Section 5310 providers

The ECRTCC engaged potential collaborators with scenarios utilizing shared vehicles purchased through the FTA’s 5310 program, whereby the ECRTCC would assist with the application process, funding, partnerships, etc. Enterprise Commute was discussed and detailed as an avenue being explored for shared vehicle utilization. The Minnesota Shared Mobility Collaborative was established under the Twin Cities Shared Mobility Collaborative in 2022. ECRTCC is an active member of this Steering Committee, representing greater MN.

Our continued advocacy minivans available through 5310 funding culminated into a statewide 5310 funding opportunity.

Continued advocacy for insurance coverage/policy changes/options for vehicle sharing. The MCOTA Barriers Team is addressing these issues.

TASK 3: Stakeholders and Community Engagement

Goal: To use mobility management for cultivating partnerships, creating or joining collaborative efforts that include transportation providers, planners and other community stakeholders

The ECRTCC Advisory Board includes a variety of organizations and individuals interested in transportation. The group includes stakeholders through involvement with outstanding organizations throughout the region and there are many stakeholders who are informed of ECRTCCs endeavors without engaging in the Advisory Board meetings. Individuals or entities are encouraged to participate if they have any interest in regional transportation whether they are with human service organizations, health services, advocates for seniors, transit providers, schedulers, users of transportation and others.

The ECRTCC recognizes the need to deliver transportation efficiently and without complications. This means technology must come into play. Mobility as a Service (MaaS) technology was developed as a MnDOT pilot program in southern and western MN for public transit. In the east central region, Tri-CAP Public Transit is utilizing some of the properties of the program. MaaS will allow for scheduling by phone, real-time route information, and access to easy payment. Once the pilot program is concluded, more advancements will be made to enlarge the MaaS area. ECRTCC is staying abreast of these developments to be sure we are considered for participation in the next phase – especially with developments from Tri-CAP.

Serving Isanti, Pine, and Chisago Counties, SafeCab was designed as an ‘after hours’ transportation program, working to reduce the number of impaired drivers on our roads and provide a safer way home for drinking drivers. From needless death and injury to overloaded criminal justice systems, alcohol-related crashes and DWI arrests take an emotional and economic toll on our communities. Program success is due to commitment from local cab companies, partnership with local bars/restaurants, collaboration with law enforcement, and donations from private/community organizations. 1,101 rides were given in 2023 to 1,582 patrons.

As interest in passenger rail gains momentum, the Northern Lights Express Passenger Rail System has become of interest to those along its traveling route. ECRTCC/ECRDC’s engagement has been intensified due to many unanswered questions from community members.

A regional meeting was held to bring information to those officials who could disperse information and quell concerns. ECRTCC has been and will be an advocate for the NLX, willing and able to convene when necessary for project facilitators. ECRTCCs involvement in the process has been consistent and will continue with open communications with NLX, and city/county officials.

Many months of outreach, including surveys and one-on-one conversations, have solidified the answer the ECRTCC stakeholders have long understood. There is a need to travel further. As mentioned in the introduction of this document, these DoTS (hubs) are of great importance to the work of the ECRTCC. A grant for discovery service has been secured and movement is towards a pilot project within the next year.

TASK 4: Volunteer Driver Programs

Goal: To have supportive resources to develop and sustain volunteer driver programs

All volunteer driver programs in the east central region exist within the three Public Transportation programs. Each public provider recruits through their own channels.

The ECRTCCs outreach coordination is in part driven by the need to assist in recruiting volunteer drivers. A vehicle sharing concept may help alleviate some of the problems in finding volunteers whereby the use of their own vehicles wouldn’t be necessary.

The Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (MCOTA) Volunteer Driver Work Team includes ECRTCC staff. The Work Team developed webinars with panelists and presentations by professionals producing one-hour presentations over the lunch hour. https://coordinatemntransit.org/basic_page_with_colu/2022-23/ Strong participation in MCOTA (MN Council on Transportation Access) meetings which is the driving force for many legislative adjustments. <https://coordinatemntransit.org/>

RTCCs throughout the state and transportation organizations throughout the country stand with the Volunteer Driver Coalition (VDC) as the group is currently focused on changing the Volunteer Driver reimbursement rate to follow the business reimbursement rate. The VDC is actively recruiting legislators throughout the country to stand with Minnesota in changing this archaic federal law. Representative Stauber has created a bill called the “Volunteer Driver Tax Appreciation Act of 2023” in order to move his endorsement forward. Many states in the union have signed onto supporting this bill.

Regular recruitment efforts for Volunteer drivers, done through radio (KBEK 95.5fm), fairs, events, expos, social media, and local news media.

TASK 5: Staff Training & Education

Goal: RTCC staff develop and share expertise as a regional transportation resource

ECRTCC staff will stay up to date on the latest and greatest information on all transportation modalities, connectivity, and technology through webinars, conferences, networking, meetings, and trainings – many of which are suggested through MnDOT, MCOTA and other RTCCs.

ECRTCC staff continuing work through the two-year EasterSeals Mobility Management Training program. ECRTCC staff completed training with ILT Academy, which created in depth development and quantitative value towards building the DoTS Project.

TASK 6: Mobility Management Integration

Goal: To use mobility management skills and process for new, emerging local, regional and statewide issues

The ECRTCC is working to establish itself as an essential component of Emergency Preparedness Awareness and Planning organizations around the region. In addition, staff will complete Incident Command System (ICS) training (FEMA).

Multi-Regional Mobility Management Coordination is complicated when there are several providers who all work with different scheduling and routing systems. ECRTCC will continue to forge ahead considering the prospect of coordinating all systems although the Mobility as a Service (MaaS) project and its technology. As a prospective development for the east central region, MaaS would greatly enhance travel experiences – especially where it would transcend into the DoTS project.

When broadband comes to mind, transportation doesn't tend to connect with it, but it does, when Computer Automated Vehicles (CAV) are the topic. Looking towards the future is paramount. ECRTCC is also monitoring the progress of goMARTI ([Minnesota's Autonomous Rural Transit Initiative](#)) which is a pilot program taking place in Grand Rapids, MN.

TASK 7: MCOTA Participation

Goal: To collaborate with MCOTA member agencies addressing policies that impede transportation coordination and access

- ECRTCC's involvement with MCOTA allows RTCCs to voice the needs and obstacles witnessed on the ground level, to this greater organization which can bring legislative solutions to those who can change laws and reduce barriers.

Conclusion

The East Central Regional Transportation Coordinating Council's (ECRTCC) focus is to provide transportation solutions for the residents of Region 7E. To solve the issues, there must be considerable coordination between transportation providers and service agencies, filling transportation gaps, providing more service with the same or fewer resources, streamlining access to transportation, and providing customers more options for when and where to travel. The focus is particularly driven to improve mobility for the transportation disadvantaged such as older adults, individuals with disabilities, lower income individuals and/or military veterans.

The ECRTCC was approved by MnDOT to move into 2023/2024/2025 beginning on July 1, 2023. ECRTCC is now moving into the second half of this two-year grant cycle as of July 1st, 2024. Before each phase, the workplan is reevaluated, and reconstruction takes place to adjust the focus and tasks. The roots of the ECRTCC are established, and visible growth has begun.

Mid-Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordinating Council July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

Introduction

Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC) is the operator of the Mid-Minnesota Regional Transportation Coordination Council (MMRTCC), which serves the residents of Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, and Renville Counties. RTCC grant resources have increased our residents' access to transportation by reducing service gaps through improved alignment of transportation-related resources using active community and stakeholder engagement in seven task areas.

TASK 1: Transportation Guidance and Consultation

MMRTCC staff work to ensure our region's residents, including our English language learners, have access to transportation and related resources. A 'Ride Resources' webpage is continually updated and improved. In addition to area transportation information, this site provides visitors with contact information for Mobility Manager Terry Smith, who connects individuals, groups, and other organizations to appropriate transportation providers.

The website is also home to the MMRTCC-developed 'Transportation Resource Guide.' This Level 1 Transportation Management Coordination Center (TMCC) is available in English, Somali, Karen and Spanish and is regularly updated to reflect the most current provider information. It has been written for those with transportation barriers as well as those who serve them. When coupled with Mobility Manager assistance and referral, TMCC service elevated to Level 3+.

Another aspect of this work has included the education of our licensed drivers on the many driving opportunities available. MMDC works to inform on a variety of professional and volunteer positions, using print and radio media outreach as well as through video production and distribution, social media, and in-person presentations. A Trailblazer Transit video, featuring the transit service's work opportunities, was also shared. These driver recruitment campaigns have led to numerous conversations between our mobility manager and prospective drivers and have led to multiple driver referrals.



Mobility Manager Terry Smith at a recent engagement event

TASK 2: Vehicle Sharing

MMRTCC has worked to maximize the utility of vehicles by encouraging vehicle sharing among organizations that require consumer transportation. Conversations often center on how drivers might be shared, in addition to vehicles. While logistic and other barriers have prevented significant vehicle sharing to-date, conversations continue.

In 2024, Mobility Manager Terry Smith participated as a reviewer for the 5310 Shared Wheelchair Accessible Mini-Van Grant. Smith also had the opportunity to encourage organizations to apply for a shared vehicle, emphasizing the importance of coordination with other organizations.

TASK 3: Private Nonprofit and For-Profit Provider Engagement

MMRTCC visits staff from human services agencies and other helping organizations to keep them abreast of MMRTCC activities. In addition to engaging organizations via regular MMRTCC Advisory meetings, email communications and individual conversations promote awareness of MMRTCC progress while providing opportunities to discuss transportation gaps so they might be addressed via further coordination or other solutions.

TASK 4: Volunteer Driver Programs

To increase public awareness of the volunteer driver need and opportunity, MMRTCC continues to perform outreach. This includes the creation, refinement and distribution of volunteer driving-focused materials, the production of informative videos and in-person discussions with various groups and at area events. The MMRTCC has also organized media campaigns, which have included radio, print, and social media outreach, to increase awareness.

This work has led MMRTCC Mobility Manager Terry Smith to become a volunteer driver himself. In this role, Smith gains unique insights into both the benefits of and barriers to volunteer driving. Additionally, Smith promotes the use of CCT's grant-funded wheelchair accessible vehicle among other volunteer drivers, so they may transport individuals with mobility barriers. This involvement also gave him an opportunity to assist with the facilitation and promotion of a volunteer driver appreciation event and recruit several new volunteer drivers.

Additionally, Smith refers those in need of volunteer driver services to CCT, which serves Kandiyohi, Meeker, and Renville Counties so they may receive rides to important destinations. The establishment of an organized volunteer driver program to serve McLeod County is being explored.

MMRTCC continues to participate in the MN Volunteer Driver Coalition. This helps MMRTCC staff keep informed of legislative changes and provides opportunities to advocate for additional changes that would reduce financial barriers faced by volunteer drivers.

TASK 5: Training & Education

MMRTCC Mobility Manager Terry Smith has participated in panels for the regional Spring Transit Workshop as well as for the national Center for Healthy Aging and Innovation webinar. Other trainings in which Smith has participated include ADA Guidance offered by EasterSeals Inc.; Certified Mobility Manager Certification training; training offered by the National Centers for Mobility Management; attendance at the Community Transportation Association of America Expo; and other public/agency training related to the use of resources for transportation guidance.

TASK 6: Mobility Management Integration

To ensure transportation needs are addressed by other public-facing service providers, Mobility Manager Smith looks for opportunities to insert his expertise. He has worked to ensure regional emergency management officials are aware of area transportation resources. Smith has also worked with transportation providers to ensure they are providing the best access possible to important services. An example of this work has been the fostering of communication between the Kandiyohi County Food Shelf and the local transit company, and advocating for the addition of a food shelf bus stop.

For much of the program year, MMRTCC staff worked to promote a bus route in the Willmar community. To ensure local transportation access for non-drivers, including Willmar's non-licensed immigrant community, this route was made available without fare, provided riders boarded and departed the bus at a transit agency-

designated stop. This offering was made possible thanks to a generous \$20,000 grant MMDC received from the Willmar Area Community Foundation. While a small portion of this grant was used for related outreach, the vast majority was passed along to Central Community Transit (CCT) to replace fare revenue. Outreach included the production of a short video in English, Karen, Somali, and Spanish that informed Willmar’s residents on how to use the local route. Route ridership saw a significant increase (2,700 fare-free rides delivered in just the first six months), service was extended to evening and weekend hours, and mobility among Willmar’s nondrivers was improved.

The 2024 program year also brought an opportunity for Mobility Manager Terry Smith to serve as a member of the Central Community Transit Operations Board. In this capacity, Smith is working to provide guidance and suggest measures that will improve CCT efficiency and effectiveness. Smith is also in regular contact with MnDOT’s Regional Transit Project Manager, and this has made him a more informed, effective CCT Operations Board member, improving his ability to offer quality guidance.

TASK 7: MCOTA Participation

As he is determined to help individuals access essential services that contribute to well-being, during the 2024 program year, Mobility Manager Terry Smith has participated on the MCOTA Addressing Transportation Barriers Work Team. MMDC Executive Director Eric Day has participated as part of the MCOTA Communications Work Team to ensure RTCC and TCAP achievements are shared with state decision-makers.



Terry Smith assists rider Iris Smith with a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle

Northwest Regional Transportation Coordination Council Annual Report for July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

Introduction

The Mission of the NWRTPCC is to support improved access and options for transportation services in Northwestern MN through communication and creative partnerships. Our goal is to gather transportation stakeholders in a variety of ways, to explore how the resources available can be shared and utilized most effectively. Most of our work involves increasing communication and understanding throughout the region. We foster partnerships between transportation providers, local governments, nonprofits, healthcare facilities, educational institutions, and businesses to pool resources and address transportation needs more effectively. We ensure that transportation services are accessible to everyone, regardless of age, income, or ability, by addressing physical, financial, and informational barriers. We involve beneficiaries in the planning and evaluation of transportation services to better understand their needs and preferences, leading to more user-centered solutions.



TASK 1: Transportation Guidance and Consultation

To assist with transportation guidance, we continue to manage our website to communicate current events, best practices, and agency news. The website provides a centralized transportation resource that includes public transit, volunteer drivers and specialized transportation for people with disabilities, to streamline accessibility. The website also provides a comprehensive database on all transportation options in the region. By connecting with the transportation provider, they can learn the details needed to plan their trip. RTCC staff provide frequent education to the community about available transportation services, eligibility, and how to access them, increasing awareness among potential users. We support efforts to create a more enjoyable transportation experience and increase rider satisfaction. One example is a gentleman who contacted us through the website to get transportation from the local hospital to an addiction treatment center, and a ride to his home three days later. We were able to connect him with the public transit system for a demand response ride to the medical facility and a ride home using a volunteer driver. RTCC staff also attend the monthly Regional Travel Trainer meetings and provide individual and group travel training throughout the region. Congregate meal sites, senior centers and churches are some of the places they have served in this way.

TASK 2: Vehicle Sharing

One of the most obvious ways to improve efficiency is to begin sharing the resources we currently have. One partnership was developed between the Falls Corporation, a DT&H program in Thief River Falls, and a local nursing home. The DAC shares its accessible bus with the nursing home on the weekends, so they can provide social and recreational opportunities for their residents. A second partnership is being explored between the assisted living facility in Warren and a new daycare center that is being built next door. It is likely that they will formalize their partnership soon, sharing access to the van owned by the assisted living center. The daycare center was also connected with the public transit provider to arrange daily transportation to and from school.

Many volunteer driver programs are also members of the RSVP program, and that relationship provides supplemental insurance to their drivers. Through the Moving Greater Minnesota grant, NWRTPCC staff developed a model to share a Neighborhood Electric Vehicle (NEV – a road ready electric golf cart) among city residents of Warren.

Community engagement and surveys found opposition to the idea and the city backed away from the project. The model was then introduced to the city of Fosston, who also operates a transit system. They are exploring lending such a vehicle to agencies and organizations in town.

TASK 3: Stakeholder/Provider Engagement

The NWRTPCC meets bi-monthly to communicate best practices and share relevant webinars, trainings, and resources with our partners. Specialized Transportation providers attend the regular RTCC meetings along with social service providers who also transport clients to appointments. Each member provides an update on changes in service, new programs or vehicles, and the challenges and barriers encountered. RTCC staff attend the monthly meetings of the Adult Mental Health Initiative for the region and quarterly meetings of their client engagement group. They were able to bring transportation issues to the forefront of the strategic planning done this year. They attend the monthly meetings of the local Living at Home programs, who provide transportation services for local older adults. Community meetings were facilitated for them to explore various models of volunteer driver programs and design programs to meet local preferences. They met with Enterprise car rental and facilitated a meeting with several local manufacturers to explore ride share programs for their employees. RTCC staff met with Jefferson Lines to discuss transportation to medical centers in Southern Minnesota.

TASK 4: Volunteer Driver Programs

RTCC staff serves on the Advisory Council for the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of the Red River Valley and learns about volunteer transportation services being provided throughout the region. They also serve on the Volunteer Driver Coalition that is advocating for a change in the volunteer driver reimbursement rate at the federal level. They serve on the MCOTA Volunteer Driver Work Team creating professional development opportunities for volunteer driver program administrators. That Work Team also created a brochure that answers frequently asked questions about reimbursement and insurance. The RTCC has collaborated with volunteer driver programs to advertise for new drivers in local newspapers, public access channels, church bulletins, organizational newsletters, and social media. We created a video to recruit volunteer drivers and our programs have used it in their own marketing. The Warroad Senior Living Center has begun training community volunteers to give residents rides in their “Trishaw” (see photo at the end), providing recreation. Our primary volunteer driver program serves six of our seven counties and has just begun a sliding fee scale to make it more accessible/affordable for private pay individuals. This was a need first identified in 2018 and is finally being addressed.

TASK 5: Staff Training

NWRTPCC staff attended training on transportation and the social determinants of health, cultural competency training for transportation and mobility professionals, Moving Greater Minnesota Forward technology (Gather, Slack, Mural, Loom), Re-Framing Aging, and other topics relevant to mobility management. They attended the Community Transportation Association of America annual conference along with the National Center for Mobility Management Forum.

TASK 6: Mobility Management Integration

NWRTCC visits staff from human services agencies to keep them abreast of NWRTCC activities. In addition to engaging organizations via regular NWRTCC Advisory meetings, NWRTCC staff attend the Adult Mental Health Initiative, the Community Organizations Assisting in Disaster group, the Area Agency on Aging meetings, and the Advisory Council for the Retired Senior Volunteer Program.

TASK 7: Emergency Preparedness Facilitation

One of the ways the RTCC staff apply their new skills is through their participation in statewide and national Work Teams/committees. NWRTCC staff serve on the MCOTA Volunteer Driver Work Team and the MCOTA Volunteer Driver Research Work Team. In this capacity they plan and deliver presentations for the MCOTA Volunteer Driver Forum Series, including lunch and learns and webinars. NWRTCC staff also serve on the Volunteer Driver Coalition, working for national legislation to adjust the volunteer reimbursement to match the business rate. They serve on the Shared Mobility Action Team, a national effort to reduce the reliance on personal vehicles by expanding options to share vehicles and pedal options. NWRTCC staff serve on the climate committee and the finance committee for that group and represent the rural Midwest at this national forum.

Conclusion

NWRTCC staff have become integrated into the community network of transportation providers. We provide the connecting point between providers and riders who need assistance with their transportation. This year was filled with relationship building and developing new processes for sharing vehicles. A major development is the sliding fee scale made available to private pay individuals through the volunteer driver program that serves most of our region. A major project completed by the RTCC staff was the Moving Greater Minnesota Forward grant, and the Pony Express model developed for that program. While the original sponsor of the program declined to move forward, another city has expressed an interest in modifying the model to create a new system of service. This work requires flexibility and adaptability.

Southwest Regional Transportation Coordination Council Annual Report for July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

Introduction

It is impossible to fix all the struggles in rural transportation quickly. The Southwest Regional Transportation Coordinating Council (SW RTCC) is working to educate more people about existing transportation options and how to access them, as well as taking steps to slowly break down the barriers that make rural transportation difficult.

TASK 1: Transportation Guidance and Consultation

Existing transportation services are underused. One of the key strategies the SW RTCC is leveraging to tackle this problem is increasing educational outreach to minority populations. SW RTCC identified three major minority populations in the region and some of the problems they have trying to access transportation, as well as public transportation media that can be translated into additional languages. As a part of this work, our team learned that having documents translated is the second part of the process; once people understand the transportation options, they will want to access them. Most transportation trips in our region are booked over the phone. Our team identified over-the-phone translation services for users but discovered some issues. Either the person who needs a ride or the dispatcher would need to place a call to the translation service. If it is determined that the rider should call the translation service, then documentation and marketing need to be developed to communicate that, and ride booking for minority populations would have to be separated from other bookings.

For the dispatcher to place a call to a translation service when an English language learner calls for a ride, several things must fall into place. This includes buy-in from transportation providers taking the calls, enough phone lines to complete a conference call, funding to pay for translation services, and a way to communicate to the caller that the dispatcher is connecting to an interpreter.

Our coordinator has helped many people with limited English proficiency navigate this problem individually, and she is maintaining and building connections with other organizations that serve minority populations. The next step is to get translated transportation information into the hands of communities where people have been identified to help individuals navigate the entire transportation process, as the SW RTCC continues to work on broader transportation system issues.

TASK 2: Vehicle Sharing

Opening doors for collaboration is a major focus for the SW RTCC. Our staff continually seeks to provide education and trip assistance to Veterans Service Offices (VSOs) and veterans throughout the region. We have seen success in getting transportation to more veterans through ongoing collaboration with county VSOs. The RTCC coordinator was able to connect veterans throughout the region who are aged 60 or older to UCAP's Title III program, which provides assisted transportation at an affordable rate when free veteran transportation isn't available. The coordinator was also able to arrange the sharing of a UCAP wheelchair accessible van with the Lyon County Veterans Service Office, and found a solution for a veteran under 60 years old who couldn't use veterans' transportation or Title III. By using the hired Veteran Services Office van driver as a volunteer, the veteran was able to access transportation at no cost to him.

The vehicle sharing systems already in place work very well with a little bit of planning, creativity, and willing partners, but our team is still working to get this kind of partnership to be standard practice. In the meantime, our RTCC coordinator provided county VSOs and veterans' hospitals guidance on the best transportation options when Veterans Services cannot assist them. This work will continue into the next year, with the goal of giving veterans a way to access any kind of transportation they need with a single phone call.

Opening doors for collaboration also requires providers to collaborate with. Our RTCC Coordinator was a resource to help two entities who wanted to begin or expand their transportation operations. Much time was spent researching definitions, requirements, and guidelines to help them understand what is needed and how to navigate the process. SW RTCC and our coordinator will continue to advocate to get more people interested in becoming transportation providers in the region, and stay on top of legislation that affects transportation.

TASK 3: Private Nonprofit and For-Profit Provider Engagement

SW RTCC serves as a conduit for communities to learn about their transportation options. Our team decided that a social media page was the best way to start getting information about all types of transportation to people. Over the last year, we created operations, procedures, and a process for transportation providers to submit information to be shared. We are now beginning to educate providers about how the RTCC can help them educate the public about their services.

It is also important for the RTCC to stay connected to what is going on with transportation providers and other service providers throughout the region. Our RTCC coordinator regularly attended meetings with human and aging services providers. Through these meetings, a need for protected transportation was identified; our coordinator partnered with a local human service agency to apply for grant funding to create a new program to provide protected transportation. The program is now in development.

Additionally, the SW RTCC worked with Special Transportation Services providers to continue educating the public about the need for an STS rate increase from the State. This work will continue throughout the next year.

TASK 4: Volunteer Driver Programs

The SW RTCC Coordinator actively participated in the Volunteer Driver Coalition and shared information with RTCC members, other national organizations, local transit advisory committees, local legislators, regional volunteer drivers and others through meetings, events, and social media. Education is the most important part of supporting volunteer driver programs, and volunteer driver programs remain critical for rural communities, so participation in the Coalition is ongoing.

Additionally, the RTCC coordinator helps administer a volunteer driver program that provides thousands of rides every year. This includes connecting people interested in driving to programs where they can volunteer. Potential volunteers were connected to either UCAP's volunteer options, or surrounding programs, depending on where the volunteers lived.

TASK 5: Staff Training

It is important for our RTCC and staff to stay up to date on what is happening in all types of transportation. To do that, the RTCC coordinator attended a wide variety of webinars and trainings on transportation topics. The coordinator attended MnDOT trainings and meetings aimed at supporting and improving the work of the RTCC, and shared knowledge with other Mobility Managers through group gatherings and one-on-one conversations. In addition, the volunteer specialist who works alongside the RTCC coordinator completed Travel Trainer certification and turned travel training into mobility management solutions for area residents and users.

TASK 6: Mobility Management Integration

Agencies and RTCCs must have a better understanding of the issues and barriers that regularly make travel difficult in our region. We also need to know the factors causing these barriers, so that we can make real, lasting changes. To that end, the RTCC coordinator provided education and assistance to a large variety of organizations over the last year. This included community events, meetings, and one-on-one discussions with the Department of Human Services, Department of Veterans Services, local educators, the City of Marshall, healthcare providers, Pipestone County, and Older Adult groups. Our RTCC coordinator also helped other mobility managers present to a statewide group of about 200 people at the Minnesota Social Services Association conference.

Education does not mean anything to people if they cannot get a ride. The coordinator assisted on specific difficult-to-fill trips about 4 times per month, often using RTCC members as resources to help. The coordinator also oversaw a program that allows older adults to access an average of 200 trips per month; this program will continue into the next year.

TASK 7: MCOTA Participation

MCOTA is an important statewide support system for RTCCs, and the SW RTCC is committed to being a regional partner for MCOTA. Over the last year, our RTCC Coordinator was active in three different MCOTA workgroups. This participation led to providing input to regional partners on how Human Service clients are educated about NEMT benefits and leading efforts to create an RFP for a study on the ROI of volunteer drivers.

Conclusion

To conclude, it is important not to lose heart when change doesn't come quickly in rural transportation. It is an ongoing effort that requires relentless determination that will eventually lead to change. As our march continues, the SW RTCC will continue to provide the education and expertise needed to make system changes. Most importantly, we will continue helping people get to where they need to go.

Anoka County Transit Coordination Assistance Project Annual Report for July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

Introduction

The basis for Anoka County TCAP activity is the 2020 Transit Needs Study (TNS) conducted by Anoka County Transit, MnDOT and WSB. Broadly, the identified needs for the county include address expanding Transit Link service, identifying gaps in fixed route services, and engaging and communicating with internal and external partners. TCAP activities looked to take the planning and early-stage implementation accomplished since the study to the next level.

TASK 1: Transportation Guidance and Consultation

Past development of orientation material and subsequent outreach to senior and other facilities continued to be a focus of the TCAP. Partnering with regional Transportation Management Organizations for the metro-wide CarfreeMSP month in September was one catalyst for this effort. Classroom travel trainings were held at four senior apartment locations reaching 43 residents and apartment managers during the month. Information about Anoka County Traveler Transit Link, Metro Mobility, area fixed routes, future BRT F-Line and Commute Solutions was presented. One of these facilities reached out for an additional training and possible group ride. The previously developed infographic was updated and distributed. Through this partnership, the TCAP was able to give Go-to cards to those interested in trying out fixed route and dial-a-ride service.

Phone consults for new passengers continued at a similar pace to 2022. Medlink averaged 15 new passenger phone consults per month and Transit Link averaged nine a month. Passengers per month were also like 2022 efforts with Medlink averaging 412 a month and Transit Link averaging 2,023. Referrals came from a vast array of sources including Cities, senior help lines, nursing homes, clinics and hospitals, veteran service organizations and CAP agencies.

Tabling events during hiring events at Blaine Human Services continued. A focus of these events was to make Metro Transit's \$1 per ride TAP pass available to those that qualify and use fixed routes. This was an effective way to give out information on various fixed routes and to job seekers as well as others in the building looking for services. Similar opportunities to host tables happened at career fairs and Earth Day events at community and technical colleges and high schools.

TASK 2: Vehicle Sharing

Anoka County continues to look for coordination opportunities with available resources and identify new funding where necessary. This straddles a couple recommended next steps from the TNS. First, it will help grow the existing ride-hailing pilot program and expand Transit Link service. Through attending Anoka County/ Washington County/ Rise Inc./ Lyft pilot meetings, familiarity grows, and gaps are defined. An example would be work like the transfer sites between Anoka and Sherburne County (on the western border). This previous effort led to the Met Council opening the two-mile area to all businesses in the buffer not just approved medical locations. As pointed out last year, Anoka County looked to duplicate this process through coordinating with Washington County TCAP, East Central RTCC and Arrowhead RTCC. Driver shortages have eased enough for initial discussions to take place including identifying locations regarding the possibility of becoming a transfer site. Finally, discussions are ongoing with the Metropolitan Council about expansion of Transit Link hours.

TASK 3: Private Nonprofit and For-Profit Provider Engagement

Private non-profit and for-profit provider engagement continues with the Lyft meetings that includes Anoka County, Washington County and Rise Inc.; this group continues to grow. Part of the discussion is the availability of resources and how demand can be met. These opportunities may help fill gaps identified in the Transit Needs Study, including areas of the county where fixed routes make sense and evening/weekend dial-a-ride service. This effort will introduce providers to one another, create coordination opportunities and increase ridership.

TASK 4: Volunteer Driver Programs

A key takeaway of the TNS was a list of strengths that included the Anoka County Medlink volunteer driver program. Anoka County can help build Medlink and other programs through involvement in the Volunteer Driver Coalition and MCOTA Volunteer Driver Forum Series. The coalition has worked to define what a volunteer driver is and does, pass legislation for an income tax subtraction tied to mileage reimbursement and raise the charitable mileage rate to match the business rate. The forum series is promoted to county officials, residents, and current drivers so all can gain knowledge on volunteer programs and how they help folks age in place.

Past orientations at multiple senior facilities and county departments led to increased demand for Medlink service and the need for continued driver recruitment in 2023. The year before, efforts included advertising in city and county newsletters, newspapers, and advertising on Meta. There was also an article in the *Minnesota Star Tribune* interviewing a driver and passenger. This was read by a local TV reporter who wanted to do a story to help the program. A driver was interviewed who talked about the satisfaction gained as a volunteer driver providing rides to community members. He stated, while wearing a “Be Nice” stocking cap, that he felt he had gained many additional grandparents. He feels great helping others. This story assisted the volunteer recruitment effort and led to 35 interested residents going through the orientation process in 2023.

[Driver shortage hits volunteer-run services, including Anoka County's Medlink \(startribune.com\)](https://www.startribune.com/driver-shortage-hits-volunteer-run-services-including-anoka-county-s-medlink/)

[Volunteers needed for popular transportation service in Anoka County - KSTP.com 5 Eyewitness News](https://www.kstp.com/story/news/local/transportation/2023/11/15/volunteers-needed-for-popular-transportation-service-in-anoka-county/7047823002/)

Research into a software upgrade of the existing Medlink database continued. There were discussions with MnDOT IT, Anoka County IT, Three Rivers Transit, Scott/Carver County TCAP, Wecab, Ridescheduler, Met Council, SW RTCC, Central Community Transit and Mid-Minnesota RTCC seeking to increase the efficiency for passenger requests, placing of rides and reporting, including mileage reimbursement. While reaching out to these organizations a comment received stated that hopefully these partnerships with limit individual efforts and at the end of the day “accomplish more.”

A scope of work, RFP and other procurement documents were submitted for a project. A vendor was sought to help draft a proposal and technical specifications to make the current Medlink database more efficient. A vendor was procured, and meetings were held to understand the current database capabilities and requirements of the new software. Demonstrations were held with products that are currently available and some of these capabilities were built into the technical specifications and RFP to be released in 2024.

TASK 5: Staff Training

Insight into best practices was gained through attending trainings, webinars, conferences, and workshops available from:

- MCOTA- meetings and volunteer forum series, RTCC/TCAP Mobility Manager meetings
- MN RTAP Scholarships to Minnesota Public Transit Assoc. Conference, not attended in 2023 but plan to in the future.
- Easterseals- Travel Training Certificate ongoing for one staff
- Easterseals- Volunteer Transportation Manager Certification ongoing for one staff

- Commute Solutions- Webinars
- Possible CTAA or ATI Conferences in the future.

Conclusion

Anoka County saw many continued partnerships and developments in the TCAP work for 2023. Expansion of travel training and other collaborations will help to expand services continue to be a strong part of TCAP activities. This work is essential to meeting the needs of our community members. Looking forward, the software project will be the highlight of the coming funding cycle. Anoka will focus on upgrading the Medlink volunteer driver software and subsequent implementation. Training material will be developed to help passenger's login and request their own trips. Drivers will also be trained to login, accept rides and report mileage.

GoDakota, Dakota County Transit Coordination Assistance Project Annual Report for July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

Introduction

Dakota County’s TCAP program, GoDakota, collaborates with stakeholders to reduce transportation barriers for individuals with disabilities and older adults in Dakota County.

TASK 1: Transportation Guidance and Consultation

For Dakota County residents to be able to use available transportation options, they need to know what those options are and how to use them. To provide information about what transportation options are available, GoDakota staff continually update and distribute the GoDakota Transportation Resource Guide and a GIS tool, the GoDakota Transportation Finder. In 2023, GoDakota staff created transportation resource document for each Dakota County library to help residents learn how to effectively get to and from each library location. In addition, GoDakota staff continue to hold monthly virtual “Transportation 101” trainings.

GoDakota Travel training services help to support individuals to teach them how to use existing transportation options safely and independently. Through one-on-one, group, and train-the-trainer training options, GoDakota staff supported 752 individuals to learn the transportation options they have available to them. In addition, 2342 individuals received transportation technical assistance from GoDakota staff. One rider, who completed travel training on how to use the Lyft app and the Lyft service said the “training felt personalized and was able to be customized to my needs.” Another individual said, “without travel training, I wouldn’t have felt comfortable using the bus by myself.” That trainee now takes the bus to and from their job 3 days each week!

TASK 2: Vehicle Sharing

In FY 24, GoDakota continued to find ways to use existing transportation resources in innovative ways to reduce transportation barriers.

The GoDakota Lyft program provided transportation services for individuals open to Home and Community Based Service (HCBS) waivers through Dakota County. In 2023, over 1550 individuals were eligible for this service, providing over 320,000 rides to work and community locations. 88% of riders say that using Lyft has reduced their transportation barriers. GoDakota Lyft riders report many accomplishments in their life thanks to the additional transportation option of Lyft such as:

- “I have successfully maintained employment!”
- “Lyft has enabled me to get out of my home safely.”
- “It has helped me apply for jobs in different areas without buses.”
- “I’ve started online dating with confidence that I can meet people on time and take rides on short notice.”
- “I’m able to volunteer more out in the community.”
- “I scored and kept a job as a cashier.”

Lyft currently does not have a wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV) option available in the Twin Cities area. Dakota County has partnered with Lyft and Mobility 4 All to provide WAV service to those eligible for the GoDakota Lyft program. Last year, Dakota County received an Innovations Grant from the Minnesota Department of Human

individuals are currently eligible for this Lyft WAV service. While individuals would love to be using Lyft WAV more often, riders appreciate the option and say that they “like that they let you know they are there with text and calls.”

In addition, the Dakota County Jail Transportation Pilot utilized Lyft Concierge to help provide rides to individuals recently released from the Dakota County Jail to their homes. In 2023, there were over 3600 calls to the call center to set up rides, and 1596 individuals completed a ride. Sixty-five percent of riders said they had no other way home, or they did not know how they would be getting home without this option. This innovative program was awarded a National Association of Counties (NACo) award in 2023.

TASK 3: Private Nonprofit and For-Profit Provider Engagement

The GoDakota Advisory Group continued to share and provide guidance for GoDakota activities at bimonthly meetings. In 2023, partnerships were formed that will continue to help increase transportation access for individuals with disabilities and older adults, including:

- Continuation of a Department of Human Services Innovation Grant to Dakota County in partnership with Lyft and Mobility 4 All
- Five walk audits conducted with city and county planners to improve safe pedestrian access
- Continued partnership with Metro Transit as a TAP pass partner
- Monthly Regional Travel Trainer Meetings, facilitated by GoDakota staff and attended by other TCAP/RTCCs, school districts and transit agencies to support best practices in travel training.

TASK 4: Volunteer Driver Programs

Volunteer Drivers provide an important gap-filling transportation service for individuals in Dakota County. Dakota County executed contracts with two volunteer driver agencies in FY 24. Through those two contracted agencies, volunteer drivers provided 4,070 rides to individuals, totaling 88,499 miles driven. One rider said of their driver from Hastings Family Service, “Thank you so much for all of the time and kindness your drivers give me through all of my appointments.” GoDakota staff supported those programs through legislative support and developing tools to help the organizations manage their reporting and data collection methods.

TASK 5: Staff Training

GoDakota Go Dakota staff continued growth in their knowledge of Travel Training and Mobility Management methods, tools, resources, and best practices. In 2023, GoDakota staff attended and presented in person at the Association of Travel Instruction (ATI) conference, the Minnesota Social Service Association (MSSA) Conference and the St. Louis County Health and Human Services Conference. GoDakota staff also attended a variety of virtual travel training and mobility management trainings and presentations throughout the year through statewide and national organizations.

In addition, GoDakota staff continued to organize and facilitate monthly Regional Travel Trainer meetings, held to support growth and best practices in travel training for TCAPs, RTCCs, Transit Agencies, schools, and support organizations/agencies across Minnesota.

Conclusion

Activities undertaken by GoDakota staff and advisory members in 2023 and 2024 increased transportation access and transportation options for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and those with low income in Dakota County and beyond. GoDakota looks forward to further serving the area in the next fiscal year.

Newtrax, Inc., Ramsey County Transit Coordination Assistance Project

Annual Report for July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

Introduction

Newtrax, Inc. serves as Ramsey's County's TCAP provider and is unique as a TCAP as it serves as both a Mobility Management program and service operator. We serve the citizens of Ramsey County in both areas trying to identify and reduce transportation gaps in our community focused on people with disabilities and seniors.

TASK 1: Vehicle-Sharing

Newtrax serves as a model in this area for using buses for multiple organizations and multiple purposes. Newtrax uses its fleet of vehicles to serve the primary population of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities providing more than 1,200 daily rides for partner organizations. We then use these same vehicles during the mid-day and evenings and weekends to serve seniors and other communities with transportation gaps. Once a bus has passed its useful life as a primary vehicle (usually 6-7 years and nearing 200,000 miles) it serves as a back-up and community outing bus.

During 2023 Newtrax was able to take numerous steps in our vehicle sharing efforts. Newtrax is moving into more normal operations after the COVID time period and established new, more efficient routing for its shared routes with [Merrick](#) and [PAI](#). Newtrax also established new safer loading and unloading procedures for all locations; we worked with Merrick to create routes and traffic flow for the new site. Newtrax also assisted the White Bear Area School District with its transportation challenges to provide two routes for its transition program for students with disabilities between the ages of 18-21.

In addition to the work and growth of existing vehicle sharing, Newtrax worked with other organizations to ensure that the 5310 buses were being fully used. It leased three 5310 vehicles owned by NCSI to use the program buses for its transportation along with other Newtrax partner rides and moved toward the completion of the transfer of six of their 5310 buses to Newtrax completely.

TASK 2: Maximize Resources

It is Newtrax's goal to use 5310 buses to assist people with disabilities and seniors in as many ways and areas as possible. Newtrax does this by utilizing the vehicles as many days a week and as many hours a day as we can to help fill transportation gaps.

One significant way we look to maximize resources is through our Senior Circulator loops during the midday period of our disability transportation. During 2022, we started a senior circulator loop in the East side of St. Paul, one in Maplewood/N. St. Paul. We also added a second bus to the White Bear Lake/Mahtomedi/Vadnais Heights North loop and added health care clinics to a few of the routes to make medical appointments more available. Over the last year, we worked on increasing capacity and awareness to include seniors living in their homes into the circulator loops.

We also increased other transportation options for seniors during non-peak times. We have taken over regular transportation services for six new senior residential facilities, and have increased availability of Sunday faith service transportation in several communities and increased assistance to seniors with food insecurity. We also established a partnership with Envoy America to provide group transportation services to six senior community centers all around the Twin Cities Metro area.

TASK 3: Filling Additional Transportation Gaps

Our third task was to create solutions for seniors and people with disabilities who do not have equitable access to transportation. This is an area that we look to meet this goal through the mobility management in Ramsey County and as a service provider.

From a service provider standpoint, we added over 20 people living independently and health care stops into our Senior Circulator loops. We started partnerships with several after-school programs for at-risk youth such as CoMUSICation, Vocal Essence, and Project Success to assist them to get students to their programs and back home. We worked with Fairview Health Services to assist with solutions for food insecurity.

From a Mobility Management perspective, we also served on numerous boards and work groups and created various partnerships to connect people. We joined the Age Friendly Alliance of Ramsey County to help identify transportation needs within the community. We started a partnership with Prosperity Ready (Immigrant Work Development) to understand the needs in more underserved areas and lastly started a partnership with ALIGHT (former ARC – American Refugee Committee) to assist new immigrants to the area.

Conclusion

As we move towards the next fiscal year, Newtrax continues to build capacity in the transportation system through vehicle sharing and maximizing resources. We will continue to increase our reach throughout the county both through our own services and through mobility management through the numerous partnerships and committees we serve on.

Scott County SmartLink Transit Coordination Assistance Project Annual Report for July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

Introduction

Fiscal Year 2024 was a year of trying more new strategies and procedures to increase use of current transportation resources in Scott and Carver Counties. Transportation options like Transit Link, NEMT services, Hop Scott, and Norwood Young America (NYA) bus all had better trip counts for 2023 over 2022, some with almost 20% increases. This continues to show the slow but steady climb out of the post pandemic decline in ridership. Local transportation continues to climb while the commuter transportation in our area, that at one time was thriving, continues to be under 50% of pre-pandemic levels.

TASK 1: Transportation Guidance and Consultation

A key component of mobility management is understanding the resources in any geographic area and being able to guide citizens on the best resources for their needs. Some accomplishments over the last twelve months are:

- 115 in-person consultations/presentations to seniors, human services workers, and [ProAct](#) staff.
- 500 flyers handed out at events such as the Scott County fair, and Project Community Connect.
- 250 phone conversations with consultants on best options for individual needs, or consulting with human services workers on best forms of transportation for their clients.
- Three new volunteers recruited, trained, and involved in our *Hop Scott Volunteer* driver program.
- Presenting at Carver County meetings to discuss expansion of transportation services.
- Participation at the 2024 Minnesota Social Services Association conference.
- Work with the Renaissance Festival to increase public transit and decrease on-site parking.
- Explore expansion of Mobility management to nearby Sibley, McLeod, and Wright Counties.

TASK 2: Vehicle Sharing

SmartLink continues to conduct vehicle sharing programs and has two major models of shared vehicle – Norwood Young America (NYA) bus and the Hop Scott Volunteer driver program. The following are some of the activities that were performed in FY 24:

- Discussed more ways to explore using the City of NYA bus and partner with the county to ask cities like Cologne and Mayer if there is need for more transporting in their communities.
- Moved one of the Hop Scott vans to City of Jordan which provided a heated single car garage. The city will plow snow and give access until at least 2026. The city food shelf started using van immediately.

TASK 3: Private Nonprofit and For-Profit Provider Engagement

Engagement is a major part of the Mobility management spectrum. Sharing of tested and proven concepts, ideas, and current practices gets results directly to the people who need transportation services. Below is some of that engagement over the last twelve months:

- Sharing Scott County's NOVUS MED software with Anoka County, Wecab volunteers, and Trailblazer transit to look at how can we have them use our "instance" of a software to be used by other entities, and yet not be able to see any of their data.
- Shared information with a transition class at School District 288 about transportation options they can use in their specific geographic areas - 18 students from both Scott and Carver Counties were present.

- Scott/Carver Counties hosted an engagement event that focused on the needs of the homeless. About 300 people attended. Hop Scott volunteers brought 11 people to the event, and staff discussed transportation needs to approximately 60 participants.

A presentation was conducted on mobility management at the Minnesota Social Service Association (MSSA) Conference, which was attended by approximately 150 people. A presentation was also conducted at the Minnesota Public Transit Association Conference in La Crosse, WI, with 77 people present. The information highlighted how providers of transportation transitioned into the work of mobility management. Another presentation was given at the Mental Health Center in Shakopee with 18 people in attendance, including 9 from Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. The topic was about specific solutions to their needs.

TASK 4: Volunteer Driver Programs

Hop Scott volunteers performed over 1,000 trips in calendar year 2023 - 700 for food distribution and 300 for passenger transports. Other developments and activities include:

- Provided up to 18 rides per week at the Anchor Center for mental health (depending on demand and availability of drivers). There were also 6-10 medical trips performed by Hop Scott.
- Food distribution with SHIP from the Minnesota Arboretum- 22 delivers/week from July- October with menus on how to use fresh produce.
- Presented the success of Hope Scott and NYA bus to the Minnesota Legislative Task force on Aging Population.

TASK 5: Staff Training

Staff training and development are continuing efforts of Scott and Carver County to provide mobility management services that best fit the needs of community members. Some highlights are:

- Metropolitan Council Travel demand group – Working with 21 organizations to improve access to existing services and market and communicate these services better in the Region.
- Trailblazer Transit – looking at a coordinated model to expand SmartLink into Sibley, McLoed, and Wright counties.
- Final decision by Scott County was that there was no benefit to Scott/Carver at this time.
- Presented two volunteer driver solutions to the Washington County TCAP.
- Four mobility Board Meetings with members of the mobility board regarding non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) and conducted a bus/vehicle open house that focused on five configurations of vehicles used to transport in Scott and Carver Counties.

Conclusion

The fiscal year 2024 ended with progress being made in the Hop Scott volunteer driver program, many more “in person” presentations and engagement opportunities for citizens to hear about the current or upcoming options for them to get their needs met. There are aspects like Metro Move, fixed route shopping loops, Veteran engagement, senior population, and Veterans helping veterans. Scott and Carver Counties continues to move forward to meet the ever-changing needs of the citizens we serve.

Washington County Transit Coordination Assistance Project Annual Report for July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

Introduction

This past year was a transition back to pre-pandemic ridership patterns, with an increased focus on implementing the lessons learned during previous grant cycles. Outreach has expanded, new tools are being used, and efforts to coordinate outreach & engagement are having a positive impact on county residents. Changes within county work processes and teams have built pathways for increased internal collaboration. The mobility staff at Washington County has evolved with the transition to a new transportation navigator and has worked hard to sustain momentum, bridge gaps, and deepen its knowledge itself through the mission and guidance of the TCAP coordination structure. The team applied and successfully received Section 5310 funding to operate through the next cycle 2024-2025.

TASK 1: Transportation Guidance and Consultation

[GoWashingtonMN.com](https://www.gowashingtonmn.com) was created in 2021 to address the resident and employee need for a one-stop resources hub that would both direct residents to accurate information and help to alleviate capacity strain on human services staff. After its official launch to staff, partners, and the public in the spring of 2022 (by the present Mobility Manager) – this site has been re-vamped, improved, and is now accessible in four-languages with new accessibility features (brochures also available in an additional language). Site traffic is consistent at around 300 users a month and coordinating print materials (in five languages) are being used in community outreach activity with residents and valued partners. Transportation training curriculum has been re-vamped and tailored to meet staff and partner needs per the feedback received from 2021 & 2022 participant surveys, service providers, and meetings with departments regarding specific content needs. These pieces are all working together to move toward the goal of residents and caregivers being able to easily get the information they need.

TASK 2: Vehicle Sharing

Washington County does not provide transportation or maintain a fleet of vehicles for public transport. Mobility Management in the county is primarily comprised of coordinating service referrals and communication among local partners, internal departments, private ride-share services, and the Metropolitan Council. We continue to work with these invested groups to provide reliable assistance with Metro Mobility and Transit Link, city circulators, and ride-hail options. We have gathered feedback from community listening sessions and continue to advocate for improved service. Community Services caseworkers coordinate with various providers who coordinate transportation through waiver-paid/provider-arranged Lyft rides. The county also uses Lyft for crisis teams and court-ordered appointment transportation; 1368 rides were provided to residents in 2023. Our NEMT service is contracted through Hennepin County and over 13,000 rides were provided to residents in 2023.

TASK 3: Private Nonprofit and For-Profit Provider Engagement

The city circulators continue to be a popular life essentials & social link for county residents. More routes are in the planning stages in multiple municipalities. The Washington County Transportation Consortium (WCTC) has completed a successful year and grown in participation (report sent to all participants and Section 5310 project manager). The group explored new providers, examined ridership data, and learned about statewide programs. The county is proposing new ideas for person-centered solutions that came in part from expanding circulator rider surveys and the completions of transportation focus group activity in 2023. We are expanding our outreach efforts to reach not only aging adults in residential housing communities, but we are planning for work with our

nine school district transitions programs for younger-adults living with disabilities, and aging adults living in multi-generational communities through senior center and faith community outreach.

TASK 4: Volunteer Driver Programs

Community Thread in Stillwater implemented a new membership model of service delivery through its THRIVE program in 2022 and has attempted to expand service and recruit larger numbers of volunteers. This past year, 2023, was a big one for this valued partner (service expansion plans in progress) and Washington County is working alongside them to provide more rides for our most vulnerable and isolated aging residents, assist with grant research and volunteer recruitment, and continue to find meaningful ways to work together with intention and efficiency to achieve our shared goals. A pilot program was started in December of 2022 and successfully ran through 2023; it has been extended through the end of 2024 and we are in the process of drafting an agreement to sustain our partnership as a continuing program.



GoWashington staff presenting at a conference.

TASK 5: Staff Training

Washington County added a Transportation Navigator and hired a new Mobility Manager in 2022. Both staff members worked to bridge knowledge gaps and participate fully in professional networks. The Transportation Navigator completed the Easter Seal Travel Training Certification in 2022, and the Mobility Manager continues extensive learning in mobility and transit to fulfill the responsibilities of this role and to complement her rich career experience in diversity, equity, and inclusion, training & engagement, and communications work. The original navigator retired in the first quarter of 2023, and a new navigator came aboard in quarter three. He intends to complete the Easter Seals Travel Instructor Certification Program in 2024. The new team is committed to innovation and long-term work supporting the Gold Line, and the changes to come from the Tax Revenue Proposal of 2024. The Mobility Manager participates in a number of internal cross-department planner teams to improve communication and coordination.

Conclusion

Through many changes, Washington County has maintained coordination channels, expanded outreach, and planned for future improvements through resident and partner collaboration.

Appendix F: Funding Sources for RTCCs and TCAPs

This chart provides an overview of the funding distributions for RTCCs and TCAPs.

2024	Total Budget	Federal (Amount and % of total budget)		State (Amount and % of total budget)		Local (Amount and % of total budget)	
RTCCs	\$1,337,550	\$1,089,040	80%	\$136,130	10%	\$136,130	10%
TCAPs	\$1,529,605	\$1,223,684	80%	\$0.00	20%	\$305,921	20%

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
United Community Action Partnership	Southwest RTCC
Mid-Minnesota Regional Development Commission	Mid-Minnesota RTCC
East Central Regional Development Commission	East Central RTCC
Headwaters Regional Development Commission	Headwaters 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

Appendix G: MCOTA Timeline, July 2023-2024

July 2023

2023 MCOTA Senior Leadership Meeting held
MN's Road to Volunteer Drivers Lunch & Learn Session held

September 2023

Presentation at the Association of Travel Instruction Conference
Presentation at the Reimagine Aging Conference

October 2023

MN Mobility Managers' Workshop presentation at St. Louis County
Presentation at the Minnesota Public Transit Association (MPTA) Conference
Presentation at the Grand Rapids Transportation Conference
Presentation at the California Association for Coordinated Transportation (CALACT) Fall conference

November 2023

New research needs statement approved for Volunteer Driver Program Initiatives work team

January 2024

2023 MCOTA annual report published
Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM) roundtable held
Election of Chair & Vice Chair for calendar 2024 held

February 2024

What's new in Transportation Access Lunch & Learn held
Member survey for FY 25-26 priorities sent

March 2024

MCOTA Member Guide updated
Strategic Direction of FY 25-26 updated

April 2024

Shared Vehicles Lunch & Learn held

May 2024

Strategic Work Plan Work Team established

Appendix H: Active Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils & Transit Coordination Assistance Projects Contact Persons and Counties

Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils (RTCCs)

Arrowhead

Beverly Sidlo-Tolliver
bsidlotolliver@ardc.org

Atkin
Carlton
Cook
Itasca
Lake
Koochiching
St. Louis

East Central

Karen Onan
karen.onan@ecrhc.org

Chisago
Isanti
Kanabec
Mille Lacs
Pine

Headwaters

Tony Klaers and Tammi Hagen
tklaers@hrdc.org and thagen@hrdc.org

Beltrami
Clearwater
Hubbard
Lake of the Woods
Mahnomen

Mid-Minnesota

Terry Smith
terry.smith@mnrhc.org

Kandiyohi
McLeod
Meeker
Renville

Northwest

Lynnell Simonson-Popowski
lynnell@nwrhc.org

Kittson
Marshall
Norman
Pennington
Polk
Red
Roseau

Region Five

Jeffery Phillips
jphillips@regionfive.org

Cass
Crow Wing
Morrison
Todd
Wadena

Southwest Minnesota

Shelly Pflaum
shelly.pflaum@unitedcapmn.org

Cottonwood
Jackson
Lincoln
Lyon
Murray
Nobles
Pipestone
Redwood
Rock

Inactive RTCCs:

Region 4
Region 6W
Region 7W
South Central Region
Southeast

Transit Coordination Assistance Projects (TCAPs)

Anoka

Mark Schermerhorn

mark.schermerhorn@co.anoka.mn.us

Anoka

GoDakota

Robyn Bernardy

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Dakota

Hennepin

Robin Rohr -

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Hennepin

SmartLink

Alan Herrmann

aherrmann@co.scott.mn.us

Scott

Carver

Washington

Barbara Bursack

barbara.bursack@co.washington.mn.us

Washington

Newtrax

Mike Greenbaum

mikeg@newtrax.org

Ramsey