

Minnesota Council on Transportation Access

May 12, 2021

Senators Nelson, Weber, Miller, Bakk and Rest and
Representatives Marquart, Youakam, Van Her, Lislegard and Davids

On behalf of the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access, we thank you for the opportunity to provide input on those elements of the omnibus bill that affect volunteer driver programs throughout the state.

Minnesota's volunteer driver programs are finding it increasingly difficult to retain and attract volunteer drivers which provide an important service to many residents of our state.

The Minnesota Council on Transportation Access adopted support for two legislative items this year in an effort to protect and strengthen volunteer driver programs and help to ensure that volunteers can continue to transport older adults, people with disabilities and those with limited access to transportation to medical appointments and community services across Minnesota.

- Creation of an income tax credit for volunteers who receive more than the 14-cent federal mileage reimbursement provided. (included in the Senate side of the tax bill)
- Creation of a definition of a volunteer driver in state statute to prevent volunteer drivers from being considered a "for-hire" carrier for simply receiving reimbursement (included in the House side of Commerce bill).

Volunteers should not be penalized financially for transporting neighbors who cannot drive to health care services. Without passage of this legislation, nonprofit volunteer driver programs will continue to struggle to retain current volunteers and recruit new volunteers. The end result when volunteer driver programs do not have sufficient volunteers is that older adults and others who do not drive cannot get needed medical care.

MCOTA respectfully requests your support for volunteer driver programs by adopting the Senate language in HF0991/SF0961, Article 2, Section 4, that creates a state income tax subtraction to lessen the unfair tax liability faced by volunteer drivers for receiving mileage reimbursement that exceeds the very low federal charitable rate.

The Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (MCOTA) was established by the Minnesota Legislature in 2010 (Minn. Statute 2010 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.

Tim Henkel, Assistant Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Transportation
MCOTA Co-Chair

Diogo Reis

Diogo Reis, Rates and Policy Manager, Health Care Administration, Department of Human Services
MCOTA Co-Chair