

### **New Beginnings**

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Hello! I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself and let you know about all of the exciting changes that are taking place this year at the University of Kansas Transportation Center (KUTC). In November I became the newest Director of the KUTC—the center within KU’s School of Engineering that houses the LTAP and RTAP (transit assistance) programs. I have the role formerly held by Tom Mulinazzi, providing a faculty and research presence and overall direction for the Center. Lisa Harris directs both the LTAP and RTAP Programs. I am pleased to be working with her and our staff to further our mission of fostering safety, efficiency, environmental sustainability, and innovation in Kansas transportation agencies.

A little about me: I am an Associate Professor in the Department of Civil, Environmental, and Architectural Engineering (CEAE) at KU, and I have been here since 2006. I received my bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Iowa State University and subsequently received my Ph.D. from Texas A&M. My research has primarily focused on improving highway safety, with a special emphasis on work zone traffic control. Since 2015 I have also been active with the Traffic Assistance Services for Kansas (TASK) program, a partnership led by Kansas State University to teach short courses on the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* to field technicians across Kansas.



This year will bring other new faces to the Center and Kansas LTAP. We plan to fill two positions: the Road Safety Resources Coordinator, and a newly created Local Field Liaison (“circuit rider”-type) position. Both positions are intended to be resources for local agencies with specific roadway safety and operations questions. The main difference between the positions is that while the Road Safety Resources Coordinator will be based in Lawrence with some travel, the Local Field Liaison will regularly travel across Kansas to work directly with you. Both jobs will be half-time contractor-type positions, so we hope to find two self-starters with a wealth of prior experience in roadway safety (such as for KDOT or a local government), who are looking for a part-time position to share their expertise. We will be advertising both positions soon, so if you know anyone who would be a good fit for either position, please encourage them to contact me.

In addition to Lisa Harris, our experienced staff provide the backbone for the work we do in serving local transportation agencies around the state. Kristin Kelly, Alice Kuo, Anne Lowder (RTAP), and all of our course instructors are still with the Center, so you will still recognize a lot of familiar faces. However, Mehrdad Givechi retired in December 2017 after 26 years with KUTC and a decade as LTAP's first Road Safety Resource Coordinator. I say retired, but like many engineers his passion is still to be of service, so you may still see his name in our newsletter from time to time. Mehrdad, thank you for your long service to Kansas local governments, and best of luck in retirement!

Finally, I want to ensure that we are providing the kind of services you need. I am new to this role, and I am still learning the best ways to serve you. If you think there is something we should be doing to help your agency be more effective, please let me know. Feel free to contact me anytime at (785) 864-3418 or at [schrock@ku.edu](mailto:schrock@ku.edu).