



## Kansas Transit Profile: An interview with Claire Mullen, Director of Mobility Management, North Central Kansas Coordinated Transit District

*By Lisa Harris-Frydman, Director, Kansas RTAP*

This article will introduce you to Claire Mullen and her position as mobility manager, based out of OCCK, Inc., in Salina, KS; [cmullen@occk.com](mailto:cmullen@occk.com).

### **How long have you been a mobility manager?**

I have been a mobility manager for a little over a year.

### **What does a mobility manager do?**

Mobility managers use all available resources, and develop new ones as needed, to improve mobility for riders of all ages and needs, promoting collaboration among providers and reducing costs in the region.

### **Is your job part of a bigger plan for coordinating transit in Kansas? If yes, please explain.**

Mobility management is a strategic approach to service coordination and customer service. When implemented, mobility management will move transit agencies away from their roles as separate service operators, and toward collaboration with other transportation providers. The idea behind this approach is to create a full range of well synchronized mobility services within a community, county, region or state.

### **What size service area do you cover?**

North Central Kansas.

### **Who is included in your clientele?**

The general public.

### **What goals for improved mobility have been achieved in your service area since your area has had a mobility manager?**

We have started the “81 Connection” transit service that runs from Belleville to Salina, three round trips a day, Monday-Friday. We also developed KANcycle, which is the first regional rural bike share program in Kansas. It serves eight communities in North Central Kansas: Salina, Minneapolis, Concordia, Belleville, Mankato, Beloit, Lincoln, and Ellsworth. This is a cooperative effort with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas and Zagster, Inc., the company that owns the bicycles.

### **What are some of the biggest challenges in your job?**

The biggest challenge is when someone calls and needs transportation, but there is not a provider that is able to give that ride.

**What are some of the biggest rewards of your job?** One of the biggest rewards is when someone finds out that there is transportation available and they are able to get out of their home for the first time in ages. We had a lady who lived in Ellsworth who had lost her vision and was not able to drive. She didn't know about OCCK offering transportation in her town. We were able to share that information with her and she was able to come to Salina and go to medical appointments she hadn't been able to go to for years, and also do shopping while she was in town. Without transportation that lady would not have been able to do any of that.

**What strides would you like to see in mobility management in your area in the next five years?**

I would like to see complete coordination between all providers in North Central Kansas, and additional routes from Salina to Manhattan, Salina to Wichita, and Salina to Hays.

**What strides would you like to see in mobility management in the State of Kansas in the next five years?**

I would like to see mobility managers in every region, creation of a mobility management association, and coordination between all providers across the state.

**Do you work with other mobility managers in the state?**

Yes, I work with the mobility managers in the Flint Hills region and the Topeka area.

**From whom do you receive your funding for mobility management?**

Our largest source of funding is federal funds administered by the Kansas Department of Transportation. A local match is required. OCCK, Inc. is the largest funder to my match and Ottawa County Transportation and Solomon Valley Transportation provide smaller amounts.

**How is mobility management organized in your area?**

I report to a council that is made up of the providers in my region. The providers that contribute to my match, however, are the decision-makers and vote on any matters that I am working on.

**What is your background and how did it prepare you for your job?**

I graduated with my Bachelor's degree in General Studies from Fort Hays State University. I was in sales during college and after college for a period of time in the health care field. Transportation plays a huge part in that field. Following that I was a district manager for a very large retail company in Wichita. In both positions I worked very closely with decision-makers and also with clients, so I have a lot of experience having to advocate for what people need.

**Are you originally from the area? If not, what brought you to the area?**

I was born and raised in Hays, KS and then lived in Wichita for four years before moving to Salina. My husband is from Salina and his family still lives here, so this is the best of both worlds. We are able to live close to his family and then my family is only an hour away in Hays.

**What do you do in life when you are not at work?**

My husband and I have one son and two Labrador Retrievers. We always spend our evenings doing some outdoor activity whether it be bike riding, going swimming during the summer, or playing golf. I play competitive volleyball during the week. We love spending time with our families.