



Kansas RTAP Fact Sheet

A Service of the Kansas Rural Transit Assistance Program — for Transit Agencies

Mobility Management

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Introduction

Getting access to transportation is not as easy for some Kansas residents as it is for others. This can be due to the times of day residents attempt to find rides, lack of transit coverage in their area, lack of accessible vehicles, or other reasons. To improve access to transportation and provide mobility to all residents, mobility management/managers have been added to transit agencies and state/local governments. But what exactly do mobility managers do? This fact sheet will explain what their daily activities might look like, and what mobility management looks like in Kansas.

What is Mobility Management?

The National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM) describes mobility management as, “helping communities and individuals create and manage their mobility options”. Mobility management is working with transit agencies and other public and private transportation providers in the community, compiling service information, and educating the community on how to use the various service providers. Mobility managers vary their focus depending on the type of community (urban vs. rural). The primary focus for those working in mobility management is learning about the community needs for transportation and where and why there are gaps in accessing transportation.



Who are Mobility Managers?

Transit agencies and local governments can hire mobility managers to design and implement mobility management strategies. Mobility managers are financed through federal funding from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). In Kansas, the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) administers those funds through its Public Transportation office. Although hired at the local level, mobility managers are responsible for following FTA initiatives and state initiatives.

Mobility managers do not have to be transportation professionals; many have experience in health care or other social services. Some mobility managers in Kansas have backgrounds in the tech industry and in management services. Mobility managers have often been described as community travel agents; managers provide information to community

members on how to get from point A to point B using all transportation options in the community.

One of the bigger tasks for mobility managers is to establish working relationships with all area's transportation providers. Managers want to get information on how to use each provider's services and how they can provide better connectivity to any existing transit system(s). Managers work with transportation providers to conduct community outreach to learn about the transportation issues and needs and what community members want to see done. Another major task is to work with transit agencies to ensure that providing transportation is cost effective and sustainable.

Mobility managers do not work for a specific transit agency. In most cases mobility managers are not authorized to sign documents for transit agencies, fundraise or sell, and they are not allowed to write or apply for funding on behalf of an agency.

Assistance for Mobility Managers

Mobility managers have broad and challenging responsibilities. The FTA and NCMM are aware that not all mobility managers start out as transportation professionals, and both organizations provide technical assistance. The NCMM maintains a website that provides online webinars about how to connect to other mobility managers. The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) created the "Mobility Hub," a section of their website dedicated to mobility managers. The site provides information on software that helps with data management, reports on transportation trends, and acts as a platform for mobility managers to upload plans and projects.

Who do Mobility Managers Work With?

Mobility managers have a unique job in the transportation industry. Managers do not work on behalf of a single transportation agency; rather they work with state and local agencies and public and private providers, using guidelines set by the state and federal funding. So, who do they interact with on a daily basis?

Mobility managers keep in constant contact with different types of transportation providers in their area, like non-emergency medical transportation providers, volunteer transportation services run by local organizations, and taxi companies. Mobility managers also work with other community stakeholders (i.e. economic development groups, social services in the area, and resource councils). The continuous stream of communication keeps agencies engaged in working with the community. Mobility managers are also talking to their network of mobility managers to connect ideas and resources. Some managers reach beyond their service area to begin helping regional connectivity for longer trips. Mobility managers communicate with the community to help teach them about services in their area and how to maximize their experience.

Mobility managers in Kansas have said that half of their work week is spent out of the office. The managers explained that they are either in meetings with community members to learn of the changing travel needs, meeting with transportation providers, or running events for the community, for example, workshops with senior residents on how to use on-demand transportation, and with transportation providers helping them market themselves better.

Mobility Management in Kansas

In 2012, the Kansas Department of



Transportation (KDOT) created their own Regional Business Model Plan for public transportation. A major outcome of the plan was introducing mobility managers to the state. The goal is to use mobility managers to help inter-agency relationships, reduce duplication of services in the transit network, and to educate decision makers on transportation needs. The ultimate goal is to create a network of mobility managers throughout the state in all 10 Coordinated Transit Districts (CTD's). KDOT explains in their Public Transportation Policy Manual the guidelines for the mobility management program; KDOT requires an agency to host the mobility manager but they are not responsible for financing the manager in the first year. After the first year, mobility managers are responsible for finding local funds to support the program. A board of directors is then created to manage the program. KDOT requires that managers send to them an annual report that outlines their work for the year, a SWOT analysis, and performance measures. The 2018 manual does not outline specific performance measures since the program is so new.

Michael Spadafore is a mobility manager for the greater Shawnee and Topeka metro area. He describes his role as a transportation advocate rather than a lobbyist. In a presentation to the Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation Services (ACATS) he explained that he wants all transportation agencies (public and private) to be successful. In his presentation he outlined some items that he is currently working on. Most items revolve around more community outreach with different agencies in his region; other items were related to funding research and innovative solution research.

Claire Mullen is the former mobility manager working in the CTD region surrounding Salina. Mullen

views mobility management as a strategic approach toward greater transportation connection in the state of Kansas. Her goal was to create a full range of synchronized mobility in her community so that all residents can get to where they need to be. Mullen 's role was to educate her region on the importance of transportation- more specifically public transit. "Helping people who don't use or think public transportation is important to understand how much it impacts everything from the health of our communities, access to food, access to work, the impact it makes on our economy and so much more," she said. Michelle Griffin has now taken the role as the Director of Mobility Management.

Michael Wilson, another mobility manager located in the Flint Hills region, describes his role similarly to Spadafore. He defines his position as a transportation advocate who provides technical assistance and community feedback to transportation providers in his area. His goal is to be someone in the community that residents immediately reach out to, to help with their transportation needs. He goes on to explain that being a mobility manager comes with some challenges. One major challenge he currently faces is convincing rural private transportation providers the importance of mobility management. With providers being skeptical of mobility management it can get in the way of collaboration between agencies, one of the main goals for mobility managers.

What Does the Future of Mobility Management Look Like in Kansas?

Currently, there are only three mobility managers in the state of Kansas. They are working hard to provide the framework of what mobility managers can do for transportation in Kansas. So what can we expect mobility management to look like in the coming years?



to hire more mobility managers within the next few years, perhaps as many as five more. Current mobility managers are excited to welcome new managers to their network. Wilson hopes that the addition of mobility managers will bring more collaboration between the CTD's. He mentioned that each mobility manager may define his or her position differently and prioritize different goals; this can bring new ideas and programs for other mobility managers to try. Mullen said that mobility management may move transit agencies away from seeing themselves as a separate service, instead, seeing it as a larger service that includes other transportation providers in the area.

With the goals of growing the mobility management program and strengthening collaboration between CTDs, it will be exciting to watch how transportation changes in Kansas.

The program will be expanding. KDOT intends

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