KANSAS TRANSIT REPORTER

RTAP
KANSAS RURAL TRANSIT
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Newsletter for Kansas Rural and Specialized Transportation Providers • University of Kansas Transportation Center

INSIDE THE ISSUE

RTAP
KANSAS RURAL TRANSIT
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

By Kara Cox, Kansa RTAP

Autumn is right around the corner, and we find ourselves asking, "HOW?!" This year has been flying by!

It was a joy seeing many of you at the KPTA Annual Meeting earlier this month! Thank you to everyone who stopped by our booth for a chat – it was great to catch up!

Some updates and reminders:
As a reminder, we launched our photo library last fall and would love to have photos to add to the collection! This collection showcases donated photos from across Kansas that agencies and partners can use for free. We encourage agencies to contribute everything from buses and bus stops to agencies and ADA compliance examples.

The new demographic estimates report will be published next week! Keep an eye out for it on our website and in your emails.

Looking ahead, we'll be turning our attention to the 2026 edition of the *Transit Manager Handbook* to include updates from KDOT's policy manual.

Finally, we encourage all agencies to check and update their information on the Kansas Transit Provider Directory Map. An Agency Information Update Request Form is available at the bottom of the webpage for your convenience!

As always, please reach out if you need any assistance from KS RTAP! You can contact me at kara.cox@ku.edu.

Let's Connect
KANSAS RTAP SOCIAL

@ksrtap

@ksrtap

@Kansas RTAP

@University of Kansas Transportation Center

LEADERSHIP THAT MOVES RURAL AMERICA

By Nikhila Gunda, KS RTAP

The leader of a rural transit agency does much more than manage daily operations—they set the tone for organizational culture, performance, and community impact. Whether serving a single town or an entire region with diverse mobility needs, strong leadership is essential for long-term success. This Kansas RTAP factsheet summarizes the National RTAP technical brief "Leading the Rural Transit Agency," offering key principles to help transit managers lead with purpose. It highlights how to integrate vision and values into everyday decision-making, set meaningful goals and priorities, and ensure the agency's mission is reflected in both strategy and service.

As a rural transit manager, you are not just overseeing logistics—you are shaping the future of mobility in your community. This guide provides practical insights to help you lead with confidence, clarity, and compassion.

FROM MANAGER TO LEADER: EXPANDING YOUR ROLE

In rural transit, managers wear many hats. But great leadership involves more than operations—it's about setting direction, inspiring teams, and building a strong, values-based culture.

- **Leadership = Empowerment:** True leadership empowers others to perform their best. Your influence should foster growth, trust, and initiative in your staff.
- **Be a communicator:** Engage with your employees, your board, your riders, and your community partners often. Clear, transparent communication earns support and drives alignment.

BUILD A BUSINESS MODEL THAT PRIORITIZES PEOPLE AND PURPOSE

Borrowing from Total Quality Management (TQM), the best rural transit agencies are built on thoughtful, human-centered practices:

- **Put customers first:** Understand rider needs and shape services accordingly.
- **Focus on processes:** Smooth internal operations—dispatching, maintenance, scheduling—make the rider experience seamless.
- **Use data to drive decisions:** Combine ridership metrics with rider and employee feedback to guide decisions.
- **Be a learning organization:** Reflect on past challenges. Promote continuous improvement at every level.
- **Empower your team**: Equip employees with tools, training, and confidence. Recognize and reward innovation and excellence.
- **Promote collaboration:** Involve frontline staff in decisions to boost morale and effectiveness.

DEFINE AND LIVE YOUR VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

These three pillars serve as your agency's compass. Every decision you make—hiring, service changes, community outreach—should reflect these elements.

- **Vision:** A bold statement of where your agency is headed. Example: "To become a model rural transit system, known for innovation, collaboration, and excellent service."
- **Mission:** A concise explanation of your agency's purpose. It should be:
    - Clear and actionable
    - Written in active voice
    - Focused on results, not activities
- **Values:** Your agency's guiding principles—like safety, integrity, accessibility, and innovation. These must be consistently modeled by leadership to gain credibility.

Pro Tip: Involve your staff in creating or revisiting these statements. Make them visible—on walls, websites, staff handbooks—and part of performance conversations.

SET STRATEGIC GOALS WITH MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES

Once your vision is clear, break it into long-term goals and short-term objectives. For example:

- **Goal:** Enhance customer satisfaction.
    - Objective: Launch annual rider surveys and set benchmarks for satisfaction.
    - Objective: Reduce rider complaints by 20% through training and process improvements.

Use **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** to track progress. Review and revise goals regularly in collaboration with your board, staff, and stakeholders.

BUILD STRONG COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

As a rural transit manager, community engagement is vital. Many community members might not realize the range or importance of transit services.
Start by identifying your key stakeholders:

- Local governments and elected officials
- Human service agencies
- Healthcare providers
- Employment offices and workforce development boards
- Schools, colleges, and vocational programs
- Faith-based and nonprofit organizations

Engage them through:

- Speaking at civic meetings and schools
- Hosting open houses and facility tours
- Offering shuttle services for local events
- Joining local boards or chambers of commerce
- Promoting your system on social media and through public events

A strong community presence earns political and public support, increases ridership, and positions your agency as a vital resource.

Embody Leadership: Noel's Ladder of Leadership

Leadership trainer Michael Noel outlines eight principles that define effective transit leadership. Use them as daily reminders:

- Be present: Visit staff regularly. Ride the bus. Show genuine appreciation.
- Stay positive: Even in tough times, be the voice of resilience and hope.
- Promote your system's value: Understand and share how vital transit is to riders' lives.
- Help others succeed: Share credit. Take responsibility.
- Act with integrity: Be consistent, fair, and respectful—even under pressure.
- Balance people and policies: Enforce rules compassionately and fairly.
- Maintain your well-being: Self-care enables you to lead with clarity and stamina.
- Lead with kindness: Be empathetic and respectful, regardless of the situation.

PLAN AND EVALUATE COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Develop a yearly community engagement plan. Include goals, target audiences, communication channels, and evaluation metrics. Adjust based on feedback and changing community needs.
Sample outreach activities include, but not limited to,

- Newsletters, emails, or direct mail

- Partnerships with schools, senior centers, and health facilities
- Social media updates with real-time service info
- Promotional events like "Try Transit Week"

CONCLUSION

Strong rural transit leadership blends people-centered values, strategic planning, and community connection. Leaders should inspire, build trust, adapt to change, and serve as the guiding light for their organization's future. Rural transit leaders are uniquely positioned to shape the quality of life in their communities. By combining vision, strategic thinking, human-centered leadership, and community connection, you can transform your agency from a transportation provider into a cornerstone of mobility, equity, and opportunity.

Remember the Stephen Covey quote: "The key is not to prioritize what's on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities."

Make leadership your priority—your agency, your team, and your riders will thrive because of it.

A PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO CYBER RESILIENCE IN TRANSIT: CLOSING THE GAP FOR SMALL AND RURAL AGENCIES

By Anne Lowder, KS RTAP

Despite increasing cyber threats across critical infrastructure, 95 percent of small to mid-sized transit agencies remain unprepared for a cyberattack, according to Project 2405 by Mineta Transportation Institute, San Jose State University. As technology evolves, the risks grow more severe. The need for small and rural agencies is to develop a collaborative approach to cybersecurity.

Cybersecurity: It's Everyone's Responsibility
Too often, cybersecurity is treated like a "Fight Club" topic that you just don't talk about. Silence has allowed vulnerabilities to grow within transit agencies. The causes include rising threats from abroad, the increasing

use of AI by bad actors, and persistent underfunding in government sectors.

The cost of recovering from an attack is not just money but lost service, trust, and operational time. Even more concerning are that most transit executives acknowledge frequent attempts but underestimate their agency's exposure. The reality is clear is cybersecurity is not just a tech issue. It's a shared, organization-wide responsibility from the boardroom to the bus garage.

FIVE COMMON MISTAKES TRANSIT AGENCIES MAKE

Lack of Written and Implemented Policies
Without a data management and backup plan, recovery from an attack is slow, if not impossible. Small agencies often lack the resources to invest in the necessary infrastructure, but even basic steps can provide vital protection.

Failure to Address Vendor Risk
Vendors must be held to the same cybersecurity standards. Yet many transit systems operate software that is 15+ years old, with little or no ongoing support due to budget constraints and FTA funding limitations.

Poor Data Governance
Some data is stored indefinitely, while other data is deleted daily. Agencies need clear policies on what data is kept, how long, and who can access it. This includes User Lease Policies (ULP) that ensure no one retains more access than they need.

Inadequate Frontline Training
The most vulnerable employees are often those who receive the least cybersecurity training. These workers are the first line of defense, yet 44% of agencies provide no cybersecurity training at all.

No Unified Response Strategy
Most agencies lack a business continuity plan and coordinated response approach. Without a unified strategy, recovery becomes disorganized, expensive, and lengthy.

BUILDING A COLLABORATIVE, ACTIONABLE FRAMEWORK

Belcher and Ward propose a replicable, group-based cybersecurity assessment methodology specifically designed for small and rural transit operators. The concept is simple. Transit agencies facing similar challenges can assess, plan, and implement together.

Four Phases to Resilience:
1. Initial Assessment – Determine your agency's current cybersecurity maturity.
2. Action Planning – Workshops to develop practical policies and review results with leadership, ending in a tailored improvement plan.
3. Implementation and Follow-Up – Agencies address key issues and conduct a second assessment.
4. Final Report and Training Manual – Each agency receives actionable recommendations and a manual they can reuse and share.

A NEW PLATFORM FOR TRANSIT CYBERSECURITY

To support these efforts, Cyberbase is developing a TurboTax-like platform based on the NIST Cybersecurity Framework (CSF) 2.0, (Cybersecurity Framework | NIST) available to the public. This tool includes:
- Maturity baseline assessments
- Cross-agency collaboration features
- Executive dashboard reporting
- Guided action plans to close the maturity gap

PEOPLE, POLICIES, AND PLATFORMS

Cyber resilience isn't just about locking the digital door. It's about making sure the door stays locked, even when someone tries to walk out with the keys. Human factors are critical. That means:
- Ensuring accounts can be shut off remotely
- Avoiding single-person control over critical systems
- Managing cloud and operational technologies with clarity

- Breaking down siloed ownership between IT, operations, and leadership

SUMMARY

As cybersecurity threats increase in complexity and frequency, transit agencies can no longer afford to ignore the risk — or isolate the response. The good news is, with pragmatic steps, collaboration, and shared accountability, a more cyber-resilient future is within reach.

RESOURCES

- Belcher, S, JD, MPP., Belcher, T., Grimes, J., Holmstrom, L., & Souders, A. (2025, May 1). Does the transit industry understand the risks of cybersecurity and are the risks being appropriately prioritized? Mineta Transportation Institute. https://transweb.sjsu.edu/research/2405-Transit-Industry-Cybersecurity-Risks

- Belcher, S and Ward, R. with Cybrbase (June 1, 2025) A Pragmatic Approach to Cyber Resilience [Conference presentation] Community Transporation Association of America (CTAA) Expo 2025, San Diego, California, United States. Community Transportation

ETHICAL WRITING FOR TRANSIT AGENCIES

By Megan Tester, KS RTAP

When writing for any audience, it is important to ensure that not only what you are writing is ethical, but also how you are writing is ethical. Many writers go through extensive editing to ensure no accidental plagiarism or bias is present in what they are writing, and to make sure what they are writing is accurate and truthful. There has been an increase in instances of plagiarism, bias, and inaccuracy with the rise of AI, so it is important to make sure you are doing your due diligence when writing. There are quite a few ways to make sure you are writing ethically.

First, make sure you are using accurate sources. Both Kansas' RTAP website and the National RTAP website are great places to start when looking for information. We also send out regular email blasts with information that can be included in local newsletters. Using these sources for information ensures your writing is as accurate as possible. This also makes sure you are being truthful about the funding sources, events, seminars, and more that are available to your agency and the people you serve.

However, when using these sources, it is important you do not plagiarize. Plagiarism can be easily avoided by

checking that you are citing the sources you use properly. There are many websites that will walk you through creating your citations or that will even create the citations for you. PurdueOwl is the most commonly recommended website for checking that your citations are correctly done. It is a free resource offering the most up-to-date information on how to cite sources when you are writing. If you choose to use a citation generator, they are typically free with ads. You should always double check the citation created to ensure that it is accurate and follow correct citation rules.

Citation generators are a type of AI, however, there are other types of AI commonly used. Many people use ChatGPT to write short articles or emails. However, there are negative ethical effects of doing this. Using ChatGPT, or other generative AI, opens you and your agency up to accusations of plagiarism. When you do not know where the program is getting information from, you cannot properly cite it. This also means that you cannot ensure that the information you are putting out is accurate or correct. Generative AI programs are often very inaccurate or completely incorrect. If you choose to use these programs, it is important to read through and double check all information is correct. Additionally, these AI programs are shown to have many biases. As

these programs pull information from all over the internet, they are open and vulnerable to societal biases specifically: racism, sexism, etc. If this is not checked, it could alienate a portion of the community your agency seeks to serve. To read more about bias in AI programs, the University of Kansas has put out an article on addressing bias in AI here: https://cte.ku.edu/addressing-bias-ai .

Overall, it is important that the information you are putting out is accurate and truthful and free of plagiarism or bias. By writing your own work and properly citing credible sources, you can easily avoid writing unethically, fostering a better relationship with employees and customers alike.

HOW AI IS QUIETLY TRANSFORMING RURAL TRANSIT

By Kara Cox, KS RTAP

For years, rural transit agencies have struggled with common challenges: long distances, sparse populations, and limited budgets. Artificial intelligence (AI) is helping to bridge those gaps by optimizing routes instantly, predicting maintenance before breakdowns, and piloting autonomous shuttles on gravel backroads. This article takes a look at how transit agencies are implementing AI to help streamline their processes.

AI-POWERED, ON-DEMAND MICROTRANSIT

Today's on-demand systems can use AI to dispatch and route trips in real time, direct vehicles dynamically, and balance wait times against detours. Riders book through apps or call centers and algorithms handle the rest.

- **Wilson, North Carolina (RIDE, City of Wilson):** Wilson replaced its fixed-route buses with a citywide microtransit service in September 2020. Using Via's platform (which applies AI for dynamic routing and pooling), Wilson expanded coverage by ~150% with no increase in operating budget, earned a 4.9/5 rider rating, and tripled ridership compared to the old bus network, according to case studies and independent reporting. Via TransportationSUMC Mobility Learning CenterAP News

- **Hall County, Georgia (WeGo, Hall Area Transit):** In a largely rural county, WeGo launched in late 2020 to replace underperforming fixed routes. Hall County reports cost per trip was cut roughly in half and average waits dropped by about 30 minutes once dispatching switched to AI-routed microtransit. Via Transportation

- **Rural Virginia pilots (Bay Transit Express & MEOC "MetGo!"):** The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation studied two rural microtransit pilots serving the Northern Neck and coalfield region. The report documents service patterns, costs (e.g., ~$18 per ride for Bay Transit Express during FY 2022) and demand profiles enabled by on-demand, app-based dispatch and same-day booking. DRPT

- **Central Texas (The HOP / Hill Country Transit District):** To better cover small cities and rural communities, The HOP moved from fixed commuter routes to an integrated, Spare-powered microtransit system that combines on-demand rides, regional connections, and TNC partnerships inside one platform. All of this was coordinated by AI for trip planning and vehicle assignment. Spare

Why it works for rural geographies: AI dispatchers continuously weigh thousands of possible pick-ups, drop-offs, and road segments. In areas where demand is too thin for buses every 30–60 minutes, software can group riders in real time, direct vehicles toward emerging demand "hot spots," and keep average waits reasonable without running mostly empty vehicles all day.

PREDICTIVE MAINTENANCE FOR SMALL FLEETS

A single bus down in a rural system can mean a missed dialysis trip or an entire town losing service for the day. AI-based predictive maintenance analyzes vehicle sensor data and flags likely failures early, so agencies can fix issues during planned downtime.

- Dutchess County Public Transit (NY): While not completely rural, the county's mix of small towns and exurban areas resembles many rural operations. By deploying Preteckt's AI diagnostics, the agency reported fewer road calls. This evidence shows that predictive alerts helped catch problems before they sidelined vehicles. For rural agencies with tight spares ratios, this kind of uptime protection is consequential.

AUTONOMOUS SHUTTLES MEET RURAL ACCESSIBILITY

Autonomous vehicles aren't just a big-city experiment. One of the nation's most closely watched AV pilots is rural—and accessible.

- Grand Rapids, Minnesota (goMARTI): In partnership with MnDOT, May Mobility, and Via, the City of

Grand Rapids is running an on-demand autonomous shuttle service across a 17-square-mile area. The fleet includes wheelchair-accessible vehicles. Riders can book via an app or call 211. State evaluations describe goMARTI as a first-of-its-kind rural AV deployment focused on accessibility and winter operations, with expansion across Itasca County now underway.

WHAT THESE TOOLS CHANGE FOR RIDERS AND AGENCIES

- Service coverage and equity: AI lets agencies reach mobile homes, farm roads, and dispersed neighborhoods that fixed routes struggle to serve. Wilson (NC) reports ~150% more coverage with the same budget; Virginia's pilots show consistent daytime access in areas with few transportation options. Via TransportationDRPT
- Wait times and reliability: Hall County's shift cut waits by roughly half an hour and enabled countywide, curb-to-curb rides. In Virginia, same-day booking reduced the need to schedule rides days in advance. Via Transportation
- Cost control and flexibility: Several agencies report lower cost per trip versus fixed routes in low-density areas, because vehicles move when and where demand appears. This is guided by routing/pooling algorithms rather than static timetables. Via Transportation
- Uptime and safety: Predictive maintenance lowers surprise breakdowns for fleets that can't afford spares. Spare

THE BOTTOM LINE

AI isn't an immediate implantation, but it is already expanding coverage, improving reliability, and protecting scarce resources in rural transit. Whether through smarter microtransit dispatch, predictive maintenance, or accessible autonomous shuttles, the pattern is the same: use data and algorithms to add flexibility where traditional fixed routes fall short.

CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGIES FOR RURAL TRANSIT PROVIDERS

By Nikhila Gunda, KS RTAP

Customer service is critically important in rural transit because it directly impacts rider satisfaction, system reliability, and community trust. In many rural areas, public transit is a lifeline for individuals who rely on it to access essential services like healthcare, employment, and groceries. High-quality customer service ensures that these riders feel respected, heard, and supported - making them more likely to use the service regularly and recommend it to others. Unlike urban systems with larger budgets and ridership, rural transit often depends on strong community relationships and positive word-of-mouth. By delivering courteous, responsive, and consistent service, rural transit systems can build loyalty, attract new riders, and demonstrate their value to funders and stakeholders. This Kansas RTAP factsheet summarizes National RTAP technical brief, Customer Service in Rural Transit: How to Identify and Meet Customer Needs, that emphasizes the growing importance of adopting a customer-focused mindset in today's transit industry.

WHY CUSTOMER SERVICE MATTERS

You're not just working in transportation—you're in the people-moving business. For many riders in rural communities, transit is their only link to work, medical care, food, and more. That means your attitude, service, and care directly affect lives. Great customer service:
- Increases rider satisfaction and loyalty
- Boosts ridership through word-of-mouth
- Helps prevent and manage complaints
- Makes your job more rewarding

7 KEY RULES FOR MEETING CUSTOMER NEEDS

1. Customer Service Starts With Everyone—Especially You
- Leadership sets the tone, but every staff member represents the agency.
- Whether you're behind the wheel, on the radio, or answering the phone—how you treat people matters.
- Be courteous, helpful, patient, and solution-oriented.

2. Think of It As a Promise
- Many transit systems now use a "Customer Bill of Rights"—a list of what every passenger deserves (courtesy, timeliness, safety, cleanliness, etc.).
- Think of every ride as a chance to deliver on that promise.
- Treat customers with dignity—especially seniors, people with disabilities, or new riders.

3. Know Every Touchpoint
- Customers interact with the system in many ways: buses, phone calls, websites, brochures, signs, etc.
- Be aware of how every interaction impacts the rider experience.
- If you see something confusing, unhelpful, or broken—speak up! It all affects service.

4. Listen to Rider Feedback
- Feedback matters—and it's how service gets better.
- Encourage riders to share suggestions and concerns. If you're given a complaint, listen calmly, thank them, and pass it along appropriately.
- Simple tools like rider surveys or "seat drop" forms help gather input.

5. Use What You Learn to Improve
- Data from feedback, complaints, and compliments can point out patterns or gaps.
- For example: If multiple people say the bus is always late in one neighborhood, there may be a fixable issue.
- Be open to changing routines or practices when needed to better serve customers.

6. Identify Unmet Needs
- Keep your eyes and ears open. You might notice:
- Riders struggling with schedules or stop locations
- People unsure how to board or pay
- Gaps in service for certain areas or times
- Share what you see with supervisors. You're the eyes on the ground.

7. Customer Service Is 24/7/365
- It's not just about being nice—it's a daily mindset.
- Every shift is a chance to make a positive impact.
- Stay calm under pressure, and remember: you're someone's lifeline today.

Practical Tips for Transit Workers

- Greet passengers with a smile—even a small "good morning" makes a big difference.
- Stay alert for needs—offer help with wheelchairs, walkers, or directions.
- Handle complaints respectfully—listen, empathize, and report.
- Keep your vehicle clean and safe—riders notice the details.
- Know your route and schedule well—confidence builds trust.
- Work as a team—dispatch, drivers, and support staff all contribute to good service.

CONCLUSION

Every ride matters. Every rider matters. You play a vital role in delivering safe, respectful, and responsive service. When something goes wrong—and it will—how you respond can either build trust or break it.

Ask yourself regularly:

"How can I help make this rider's day easier?"

"How can I represent our agency with pride?"

By keeping the customer at the heart of what you do, you not only serve your community—you strengthen it.

UNDERSTANDING KDOT'S VEHICLE PROCUREMENT PROCESS

By Kara Cox, KS RTAP

The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) has developed a detailed process to ensure that vehicle procurement for transit agencies is transparent, consistent, and federally compliant. From the initial cost estimate to delivery and inspection, each step is designed to protect both agencies and vendors while keeping the process fair and competitive.

STEP ONE: INDEPENDENT COST ESTIMATE (ICE)

Every procurement begins with an Independent Cost Estimate (ICE). This estimate sets a baseline for determining fair pricing. An important note, if a vendor provides a quote that is used in the ICE, that same quote cannot later be used for purchasing the vehicle.

When agencies purchase through an existing KDOT contract, however, they are not required to prepare an ICE themselves. KDOT has already completed this process, allowing agencies to purchase directly through the contract.

STEP TWO: TIMELINE AND PRELIMINARY SPECIFICATIONS

A realistic procurement timeline must be established. This includes adequate time for public notices, vendor questions, bid preparation, and review. Rushing the schedule can create problems later in the process.

Preliminary specifications are also drafted at this stage. Often, these are based on the previous year's specifications but updated to reflect federal regulation changes, agency feedback, and vendor exceptions. Specs should be reviewed by mechanics, posted online, and made available for vendors. Vendors bear the responsibility of reviewing the posted specifications.

STEP THREE: PUBLIC NOTICE

- Transparency begins with a thorough public notice process.
- Vendor lists must be up to date.
- A news release should be issued with bid details, published in both newspapers and the State Register.
- Bid letters are sent to all vendors with links to online information.
- A Courtesy Bid Notice is posted on KDOT's website, which includes all parameters and a signature page vendors must return acknowledging their understanding of the bid.

STEP FOUR: PRE-BID MEETING

KDOT and the Kansas Coordinated Transit District Council (KCTDC) host a pre-bid meeting to review specification updates, manufacturer changes, and agency requests. Vendors use this time to raise concerns or propose exceptions. Attendance and comments are documented for the official record.

STEP FIVE: SPECIFICATION AMENDMENTS

Following the pre-bid meeting, KDOT and KCTDC review vendor input and determine if changes are warranted. Amendments are posted online along with a summary explaining which comments resulted in changes and which did not. Vendors must certify that they have read and understood these updates before submitting bids.

STEP SIX: QUESTION PERIOD

Vendors are given a set period to submit written questions, typically in Word or Excel format. KDOT

provides responses after the question period closes, posting all Q&As online to ensure fairness. During this stage, communication is kept strictly in writing to avoid giving any vendor an unfair advantage.

STEP SEVEN: CLOSED BID MEETING

Bids must be submitted in sealed envelopes by the published deadline. During the bid meeting, KDOT opens the bids, reads pricing aloud, and records attendance. Vendors may take notes using distributed pricing worksheets.

STEP EIGHT: DETERMINATIONS AND AWARDS

KDOT and KCTDC evaluate bids based on:
- Accepted Exceptions (materials & build quality)
- Completed Certifications
- Past Performance (responsible bidder)
- Price

"The two lowest responsible bidders will be determined by taking the sum total of the base vehicle price plus the process for all optional equipment items as-bid for that vehicle. However, the KCTDC reserves the right to remove any non-responsive (as-bid) vehicle optional equipment items from the final determination formula for that vehicle type. In the case of a single bid only being received for a vehicle type, the KCTDC reserves the right to determine if the bid price is reasonable before designating the single vendor involved as a responsive and responsible bidder."

An award summary of all vendors will be created and posted on the website and will include:
- Awarded vendors in the category
- Completed certification
- Price of each vehicle that was bid
- If exceptions were not accepted
- Accepted TVM (Transit Vehicle Manufacturer) per FTA

Awarded vendors will be sent an award letter. Unsuccessful vendors will be sent a letter that details the reason their bid was not awarded based on the categories listed above.

Award letters will be posted to the website for agencies to see their options.

STEP NINE: PROTESTS

Vendors may protest aspects of the bid such as specifications, procedures, or contract awards. KDOT takes protests seriously, reviewing them against the bid documents. If a protest reveals unfair specifications or awards, the bid process may be postponed or canceled, with all vendors notified.

STEP TEN: TVM REPORTING AND DOCUMENTATION

Federal Transit Administration (FTA) rules require Transit Vehicle Manufacturer (TVM) reporting within 30 days of award. Reports are based on potential vendor profits, not actual orders.

KDOT also compiles a comprehensive bid binder containing all notices, specs, attendance sheets, amendments, protests, certifications, and correspondence. This serves as the official record of the procurement.

STEP ELEVEN: PRELIMINARY FORMS AND PURCHASE ORDERS

Once awards are finalized, KDOT prepares preliminary order forms for each vehicle type and vendor. These forms detail pricing, optional equipment, and customization options. Agencies sign and return forms, which are then reviewed and converted into purchase orders. Vehicles are not officially ordered until KDOT sends the signed purchase order to the vendor.

STEP TWELVE: DELIVERY AND INSPECTIONS

The first vehicle of each type must be inspected by KDOT, KCTDC, and the agency before additional deliveries are allowed. This ensures that specifications, exceptions, and quality standards are met. Agencies must also inspect each subsequent vehicle before signing acceptance paperwork. Payment is due within 45 days of acceptance, regardless of KDOT reimbursement timing.

If the first vehicle needs any repairs due to quality, or specification failures, the repairs will be made to all subsequent vehicles before they are delivered to the agencies.

STEP THIRTEEN: NEW VEHICLE ISSUES

If a vehicle does not meet specifications at delivery, agencies can reject it until repairs are completed. Issues discovered after delivery should be reported to KDOT using the new vehicle issue form. This documentation not only assists in resolving the problem but also informs future procurement processes.

A Transparent, Fair Process

KDOT's vehicle procurement process is thorough and deliberate, balancing the needs of agencies, vendors, and federal oversight.

KANSAS RTAP TRAINING, TRAINING RESOURCES AND CONFERENCES

By Anne Lowder, KS RTAP

Below are training courses available from Kanas RTAP and other sources through October of this year. If you are interested in hosting a training class, I am still scheduling for 2025. Please contact Anne Lowder at alowder@ku.edu if you would like to host a training course at your agency. 2025 Kansas RTAP Trainings can be found at KUTC - RTAP

KANSAS RTAP TRAINING

2024/2025 KANSAS RTAP TRAINING DEFENSIVE DRIVING AND PASSENGER ASSISTANCE/WHEELCHAIR SECUREMENT

https://www.events-kutc.ku.edu/assnfe/CourseView.asp MODE=VIEW&clCourseID=591

September 18 | Emporia, KS
October 8 | Hays, KS
October 23 | Hutchinson, KS
October 29 | Garden City, KS
October 30 | Dodge City, KS
December 18 | Hutchinson, KS

RESOURCES FOR TRANSPORTATION AGENCIES

EasterSeals Project Action Consulting
https://www.projectaction.com/
Easterseals Project Action Consulting provides instruction in a variety of formats to meet your community's needs and budgets.

National RTAP eLearning Transit Resources
https://www.nationalrtap.org/
- Training Modules
- eLearning Courses
- Technology Tolls
- Webinars
- Toolkits
- Topic Guides
- Technical Briefs
- Spotlight Articles

National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM)
https://nationalcenterformobilitymanagement.org/
Promoting Customer-Centered Mobility strategies that advance good health, economic vitality, self-sufficiency, and community.

National Center for Applied Technology
https://n-catt.org/
Providing small-urban, rural, and tribal transit agencies with practical resources for replicable technological solutions and innovations. The site shares case studies, research, technologies, and provides information on technologies that enable solutions that solve problems and enable goals to be reached.

Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) Resources
- Legislative and Federal Policy priorities
- Crime and Human Trafficking Prevention
- Census Issues 2020 Urban Area Determinations
- CT Reader Regular Updates
- Training Calendar

U.S Department of Transportation
'Back to Basics' for Service Agents | US Department of Transportation
The Office of Drug and Alcohol Policy and Compliance (ODAPC) is introducing a short series of reminders called "Back to Basics" for service agents (e.g., collectors, Medical Review Officers, etc).

Federal Transit Association
De-Escalation Training Resource Directory | FTA (dot.gov)
De-Escalation Training Resource Directory
De-escalation training is one component of a multi-faceted Safety Management System (SMS) that can also include other measures such as mirrors, signage, security cameras, and working with law enforcement.

APTA (American Public Transportation Association) Workforce Summit
Home - American Public Transportation Association
APTA is the only association in North America that represents all modes of public transportation, including bus, paratransit, light rail, commuter rail, subways, waterborne services, and intercity and high-speed passenger rail. More than 90 percent of the people using public transportation in the United States and Canada ride APTA member systems.

National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (nadtc)
National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (nadtc.org)
Resources that include Driver Training Videos and Transportation Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA initiative.

WEBINARS AND CONFERENCES

Preparing for the Certified Community Transit Manager (CCTM) and Certified Transit Program Administrator (CTPA) Exam
September 10 -11, 2025
CCTM/CTPA Virtual Training – CTAA Training & Certifications Shop

Leading with Emotional Intelligence: Changing Leadership in a Changing World
September 24, 2025
Leading with Emotional Intelligence: Changing Leadership in a Changing World – CTAA Training & Certifications Shop

Kansas RTAP Approved Trainer Workshop Current Approved Trainers Only
November 12, 2025
Salina, Kansas

2025 Midwest Transit Conference
Kansas City, MO September 3-5
Home

6th National RTAP Conference
December 6-10, 2025 APTA (American Public Transportation Association)
Austin, TX
National RTAP 2025 Conference in Austin, TX

SHARE!

If you know individuals who would like to receive our newsletter, please have them go to: www.ksrtap.org and sign up for the Kansas RTAP email list. There is a box to check to request electronic notification of each new issue of the TransReporter. Back issues are available at our website in the newsletter archives section.

KANSAS
TRANSIT REPORTER

The Kansas Transit Reporter is an educational and technology transfer newsletter published quarterly by the University of Kansas Transportation Center (KUTC). The newsletter is free to rural and specialized transit providers and others with an interest in rural and specialized service.

The Kansas Transit Reporter is co-sponsored by the Federal Transit Administration under its Rural Transportation Assistance Program (rtap) and the Kansas Department of Transportation. The purposes of the RTAP program are to:

1) educate transit operators about the latest technologies in rural and specialized transit; 2) encourage their translation into practical application; and 3) to share information among operators.

Summer 2025. Copyright © Kansas University Transportation Center. All rights reserved. Reproduction of material appearing in the Kansas TransReporter requires written permission of the editor at kara.cox@ku.edu