



KANSAS TRANSIT REPORTER

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Hello, Kansas Transit Community!

This is my first opportunity to write a message to the wonderful transit community that I truly enjoy serving. While Kansas RTAP Director Kara Cox is on maternity leave enjoying precious time with her son, I'm honored to share this message on behalf of Kara and the entire Kansas RTAP team. We wish you a joyful holiday season and a wonderful close to the year.

As 2026 comes to an end, I'm proud to reflect on what we accomplished together.

This year, Kansas RTAP published four newsletters, hosted six webinars, shared monthly resource roundups, more than 40 in-house trainings and provided timely news and updates through social media. If you haven't already subscribed or followed us, we invite you to connect with us and explore the many resources we share throughout the year.

We also recently published the 2025 Kansas Transit-Dependent Demographics in two formats: an overview and a detailed report. Please use whichever version best meets your needs. The second edition of the Kansas Transit Manager Handbook and the Kansas RTAP Compendium of Policy Guidance are also available, along with many other helpful Kansas RTAP publications.

At the 2026 Kansas Public Transit Association Conference in Hutchinson, Kansas RTAP hosted a Transit Manager Training that received strong attendance and positive feedback. We look forward to building on that momentum and continuing to provide meaningful resources, training, and technical assistance to Kansas transit agencies. We welcome your ideas and suggestions as we plan for the coming year.

Also, do not forget to sign up for the Kansas Mobility Week (Nov 01 – 07, 2026) where communities join together across Kansas to celebrate the many ways people move safely, independently, and efficiently every day. Registration is open now!

Thank you for everything you do to keep Kansans connected. We hope you'll continue taking advantage of Kansas RTAP's resources and training opportunities. As always, if there is anything we can do to support you or your agency, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Warm wishes for a joyful holiday season and a successful new year!

10 YEARS OF CONNECTING PEOPLE TO OPPORTUNITY: CELEBRATING A DECADE OF MOBILITY MANAGEMENT IN KANSAS

By Michelle Coats, Kansas Mobility Manager CTD 7

In October 2016, Kansas took an important step toward improving transportation access across the state when Michelle Coats began working full-time as a Mobility Manager in CTD 7. What started as a role focused on connecting people with transportation options has grown into a broader network of collaboration, innovation, and community-driven solutions. Along the way, Mike Wilson, Mike Spadafore, DreVel Taylor and Misty Norton have all begun working in their respective regions.

Ten years later, Kansas mobility management continues to evolve, helping more Kansans get where they need to go and connecting people to the opportunities that make a difference in their lives. The theme of this milestone says it all: 10 Years of Connecting People to Opportunity. 10 Years of Impact.

WHAT DOES MOBILITY MANAGEMENT LOOK LIKE AFTER 10 YEARS?

Mobility management is about much more than providing a list of transportation options. It means understanding the needs of a community, bringing the right people to the table, identifying gaps, and working together to find practical solutions. Across Kansas, mobility managers connect residents with existing transportation services, help communities explore new options, support public transit providers, coordinate regional efforts, and build partnerships that strengthen local transportation systems. The work looks different in every community because every community has different needs.



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In rural Kansas, where distances are long and resources can be limited, building connections between people, organizations, and transportation providers can be especially important. Over the past decade, mobility management in Kansas has contributed to a growing range of activities and initiatives, including:

- Connecting thousands of people to public transportation and other mobility options.
- Building hundreds of community partnerships.
- Expanding travel training to help people use transportation more confidently and independently.
- Supporting new transit services and amenities.
- Advancing bike share and other multimodal transportation options.
- Strengthening regional coordination among transportation providers and community partners.
- Increasing the use of technology to improve transportation access and information.
- Developing community coalitions focused on transportation and accessibility.
- Expanding statewide outreach and public awareness.
- Establishing Kansas Mobility Week as an opportunity to highlight transportation options, partnerships, and the importance of mobility.

Each accomplishment represents more than a program or project. It represents people working together to address barriers, expand choices, and make it easier for Kansans to reach employment, healthcare, education, essential services, and their communities.

10 YEARS! 10 FAVORITE THINGS!!

To celebrate this milestone, the Kansas mobility managers are sharing ten favorite things from their work over the past decade. These favorites reflect the personal side of mobility management: the partnerships that made something possible, the projects that changed how a community thinks about transportation, the moments when someone gained independence, and the unexpected opportunities that emerged from simply bringing people together.

Michelle's Favorites

- The projects that turned ideas into impact. I have had the opportunity to work on projects that turned ideas into real solutions for communities. Some projects had been discussed for years before the right coordination, partnerships, and dedicated focus helped move them forward. 81 Connection, the Kansas Rides website, Mobility Week, KANcycle bike share, travel training and community engagement are just a few examples. When I started, we had no idea what mobility management was, but we've created a path forward by bringing people together, thinking differently, connecting resources, and making things happen.
- The people and partnerships along the way. The projects are memorable, but the people are what make the work meaningful. Over the past decade, I've had the opportunity to meet and work alongside transportation providers, community leaders, state partners, advocates, nonprofit organizations, and people who are passionate about helping others get where they need to go. I've learned from colleagues across Kansas and the country, worked through challenges with community partners, and seen what can happen when people with different perspectives come together around shared goals. Some of the most important progress happens behind the scenes, through conversations, relationships, collaboration, and the willingness to keep working toward a solution. Over time, those individual connections become stronger networks and create opportunities that reach far beyond any one project. And I've made some great friends along the way.

Mike Wilson's Favorites

- One of my favorite things about being a Mobility Manager is helping people gain independence through travel training. Seeing riders stand proudly beside the bus, ready to travel on their own, reminds me that this work is about more than routes and schedules. It's about building the confidence to get to work, school, and the community, and helping people overcome barriers so they can live more independently.

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Mike Spadafore's Favorites

- Bringing together partners to develop solutions to the mobility needs of our community. I'm always excited to see the variety of stakeholders that are passionate about transportation and the very real need their customers have for affordable, accessible options. A group of committed individuals with a variety of points of view can bring about some really creative solutions to shared problems!
- Teaming up with agencies to advance the efficiency of their system. Front line service providers often have the greatest insights into how things can be improved because they handle the daily activities of the system. They know their company's strengths and opportunities well and are willing to work as a team and share their ideas to broaden the reach transit can provide to riders in the region.

DreVel's Favorites

- I really enjoy getting a community partner to the table and having really honest and engaging conversations with them. Those conversations help us build trust, understand different perspectives, and find opportunities to work together on solutions that might not have happened otherwise.
- I also really love seeing the calm and confidence on community member's faces after we've finished a travel training. Knowing that someone feels more comfortable using transportation independently and has a better understanding of their options is a reminder of how much a little knowledge and support can change someone's experience.

Misty's Favorites

- I enjoy the people. All have a story. Many who ask for help are always grateful for the assistance. Kids enjoy learning with physical activity, and older adults are appreciative for the assistance and sometimes just having someone to converse with.

- I enjoy the creativity and coming up with solutions. Bringing the KSHB Channel 41 to Louisburg to promote public transportation was a highlight. It allowed a wide audience to get a view on the individuals that are going above and beyond for their community members that have become a second family.

Together, these ten favorites tell a story that statistics alone cannot capture. Mobility management is built on relationships, persistence, creativity, and a willingness to look beyond traditional transportation boundaries. Sometimes the impact is a new service or a community-wide initiative. Sometimes it is helping one person discover a transportation option they did not know existed. Both matter.

LOOKING AHEAD: THE NEXT DECADE

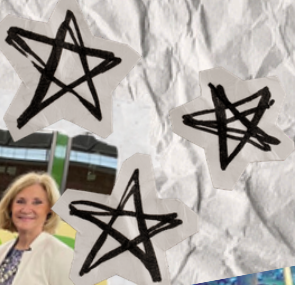
While the ten-year milestone is an opportunity to celebrate how far Kansas has come, it is also a reminder of the work still ahead. Transportation needs continue to change as communities grow, populations age, technology advances, and funding and service challenges evolve. Mobility managers will continue to play an important role in helping communities respond to those changes, strengthen partnerships, and develop solutions that reflect local needs.

Ten years ago, the full-time mobility management role in Kansas was just beginning. Today, the work reaches across communities and transportation systems, creating connections that help move ideas into action and turn individual efforts into broader impact. As Kansas celebrates ten years of mobility management, the goal remains the same: connect people to opportunity, strengthen communities through collaboration, and help more Kansans get where they need to go. Here's to ten years of impact and to the next decade of connecting people, communities, and possibilities across Kansas.

To find out more about Kansas Mobility Management, visit the Kansas Rides website at www.ksrides.org.



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TRANSIT DESERTS IN RURAL KANSAS

By Dr. Anna Faith, VP of Operations, Revolt Battery Technology

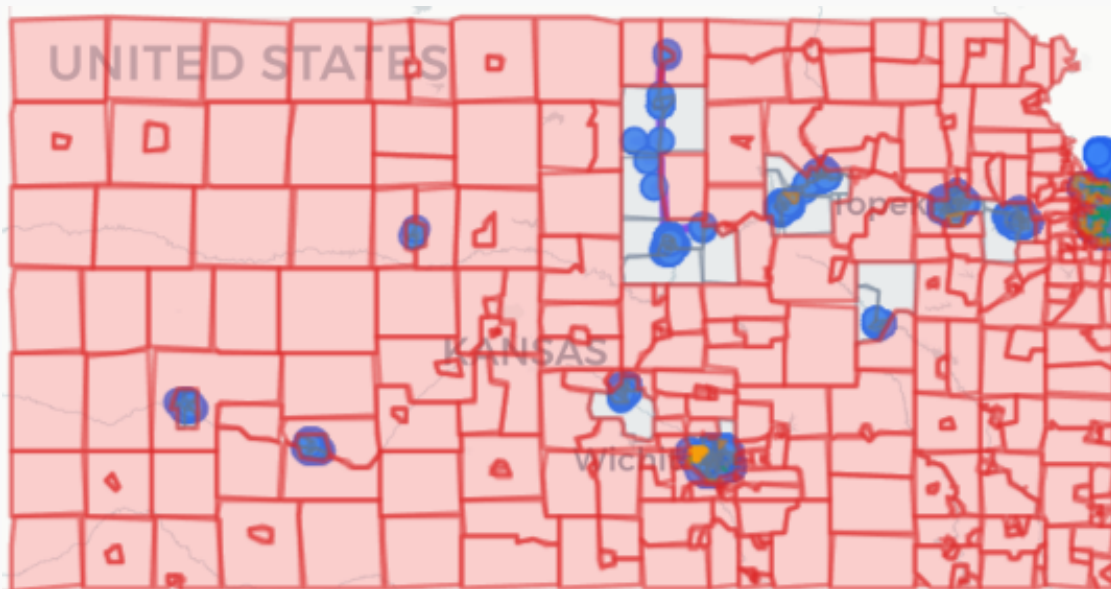
Kansas is a state defined by distance. Fifty of its 105 counties are classified as 100 percent rural. In these communities, the nearest hospital may be 40 minutes away, the closest mental health provider an hour, and the only grocery store in the next county over. For residents who own a car and can drive, these distances are an inconvenience. For those who cannot—seniors who have surrendered their licenses, workers without reliable vehicles, people with disabilities, low-income families stretched beyond what a second car payment allows—distance becomes isolation, and isolation becomes crisis.

Researchers call these places transit deserts: geographic areas where populations that depend on public transportation lack adequate access to it. The term was formalized by Junfeng Jiao and Maxwell Dillivan in their 2013 study, which developed a quantitative framework for measuring the gap between transit demand and transit supply across American cities. Their methodology—comparing standardized scores for transit-dependent populations against scores for service provision at the census block-group level—revealed that the mismatch between need and access is not random. It concentrates in low-income and historically underserved communities. In rural Kansas, that concentration is not a pocket within a larger system. It is the landscape itself.

WHAT THE DATA SHOWS: A STATE OF COMPOUNDING DEFICITS

The transportation deficit in rural Kansas does not exist in isolation. It compounds every other deficit these communities face, creating a cascading failure across healthcare, employment, education, and housing.

Healthcare access is the most acute pressure point. Ninety-two of Kansas's 105 counties lack adequate medical care. Rural counties have 0.8 physicians per 1,000 residents, half the urban rate. Of 124 Kansas hospitals, 82 are Critical Access facilities with fewer than 25 beds; in 2023, 82 percent recorded financial losses. Eighty-five counties lack adequate mental health professionals, the rural suicide rate runs nearly double the urban rate, and only 29 percent of rural residents with mental illness receive psychiatric treatment. When the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services solicited bids for statewide crisis transportation in 2026 at \$2.5 million, it acknowledged what providers had known for years: people experiencing mental health emergencies in rural Kansas often have no way to reach help.



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Employment, education, and housing suffer the same structural barrier. Workers without vehicles cannot reach jobs in neighboring towns; students cannot access vocational training or community colleges. The Kansas Health Institute has documented that immigrant populations and households below the federal poverty level face the steepest transportation barriers—the very populations workforce programs are designed to serve. Affordable housing in rural Kansas tends to sit where transit does not, trapping families who can afford rent but not a second vehicle: unable to commute, unable to reach appointments, unable to participate in the broader economy. The result is self-reinforcing—the communities that most need connectivity are the least likely to have it.

ON THE GROUND: WHAT TRANSIT DESERTS LOOK LIKE IN KANSAS

The human dimension of these statistics is visible in communities across the state. In Tribune, the seat of Greeley County—the state's least populated—one in five residents is over 65. There is no public transportation. The senior center shares a single bus with the local nursing home, a vehicle that gets seven or eight miles to the gallon. When an 84-year-old Tribune resident with pending cancer treatment in Garden City lost access to her vehicle, she had no way to get there. Rideshare services like Uber have declined to operate in the area.

Grant County offers a counterexample. Its senior center operates four vehicles funded through FTA Section 5311 grants administered by KDOT, county contributions, and rider fees, extending service up to 90 miles outside county lines. It works because it has county-level commitment and a service model scaled to the geography. But it is an exception. The Kansas RTAP Summer 2026 newsletter documented that 96 percent of transit agencies reported workforce shortages, with an aging driver pool compounding the service gap. Where technology has been deployed, it helps: three Kansas agencies—Marshall County, Clay County, and Osage County—adopted dispatching software, and Clay County grew ridership from 150 passengers per month in 2021 to over 700 by early 2024. Most rural agencies, however, have not yet had the resources to deploy it.

MEASURING THE GAP: APPLYING THE FRAMEWORK TO KANSAS

The Jiao-Dillivan methodology was originally applied to mid-size and large cities where the question was which neighborhoods within a system were underserved. In rural Kansas, the question is more fundamental: entire counties have no system at all. Census data shows rural Kansas counties have higher shares of residents over 65, higher rates of zero-vehicle households, and higher poverty concentrations than the state's metropolitan areas. The supply side, in many counties, is zero: no fixed routes, no demand-responsive service, no scheduled transit of any kind. In Charlotte, a transit desert might mean a 20-minute wait for a bus. In Greeley County, it means there is no bus—and the nearest alternative may be 60 miles away.

A SCALABLE SOLUTION: THE TRANSIT GAP ATLAS

Closing these gaps requires tools that match the scale of the problem—tools that can operate across county lines, integrate with state-level planning, and provide actionable intelligence without requiring every small agency to build its own GIS capability. ReVolt Transportation, in collaboration with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) and with input from the Kansas Department of Transportation, has developed the Transit Gap Atlas (web-production-34d88.up.railway.app), an open interactive platform that operationalizes multi-state transit gap analysis and energy planning for the communities that need it most.

The platform integrates GTFS route and stop data with demographic indicators to map coverage gaps at the stop, route, and regional level. Stops are classified by connectivity—isolated local stops, major stops served by two or more routes, and hubs where three or more routes converge—giving planners an immediate picture of where the network thins. Additionally, the tool incorporates NREL's FASTSim energy modeling, enabling planners to evaluate not only where service is missing but how efficiently existing service operates and where fleet electrification or right-sizing could reduce operating costs.

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For rural agencies running aging vehicles at seven miles per gallon across 90-mile service radii, the energy dimension is the difference between a sustainable service model and one that bleeds money on fuel.

The Transit Atlas currently serves KDOT, Coordinated Transit Districts, and individual rural agencies alike, enabling cross-jurisdictional visibility that Kansas's fragmented transit landscape currently lacks. A KDOT planner evaluating FTA Section 5311 allocations can identify where demand is highest and supply lowest across the entire state. And because the platform runs on open web infrastructure rather than proprietary GIS licenses, it is accessible to agencies that could never afford an ArcGIS deployment—the very agencies serving the communities where the gaps are deepest.

THE PATH FORWARD

Transit deserts in rural Kansas are not inevitable. They are the product of decades of underinvestment in a mode of transportation that most policy has treated as an urban concern. Rural Kansans face longer distances to care, fewer providers when they arrive, and higher mortality rates when they cannot get there at all. What has been missing is the analytical layer—the ability to see, measure, and act on the gaps systematically. Jiao and Dillivan demonstrated that transit deserts can be identified and compared using publicly available data.

Tools like the [Transit Gap Atlas](#) extend that capability to the state level, adding energy planning and sustainability metrics that align with KDOT's operational priorities and federal performance requirements under the IIJA. The question is no longer whether rural transit deserts can be mapped. It is whether Kansas will use the map.

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BACK TO THE BASICS: WHAT TECHNOLOGY IS RIGHT FOR YOUR AGENCY?

By Megan Tester, Kansas RTAP

In a world of ever changing and ever growing technology and platforms, it is important to figure out the best fit for your agency to ensure you are not wasting time and money on technology that is not the right fit.

First, it is important to ask yourself: “What problem is my agency trying to solve?” Are you wanting better scheduling? Some way to track your rate of use or who is using the transportation service? Answering this question will allow you and your agency to narrow down the technology to those that will solve the problem. This ensures you are not bogged down by salesmen and promises of more than your agency needs.

Another resource that agencies can use is the [Technology Readiness and Resilience Assessment](#) offered by the National Center for Applied Transit Technology (NCATT). This assessment “provides [agencies] with insight into key areas of technology readiness and resilience.” The assessment focuses on five areas: contract management & organization, systems & culture, performance measurement, organizational resilience, and cybersecurity.

At the end of the day, it is important to remember that there is no “one size fits all” for technology and technology systems. Your agency’s size and individual needs will dictate the technology you invest in!



HOW CAN TRANSIT AGENCIES STAY AHEAD OF VEHICLE MAINTENANCE?

By Nikhila Gunda, Kansas RTAP

Preventive maintenance (PM) involves scheduled inspections and servicing to identify and address wear and deterioration before they lead to vehicle failure. An effective PM program helps protect passengers, reduce avoidable service interruptions, and extend vehicle life. It begins with a clear maintenance schedule, timely defect reporting, and documented follow-through on repairs. This factsheet provides practical guidance to help your agency strengthen its maintenance management practices.

Specific service intervals and repair procedures should follow the applicable chassis, body, conversion, and equipment manufacturers’ guidance, along with current KDOT agreements and other applicable requirements.

1. BUILD A MAINTENANCE PLAN AROUND YOUR FLEET

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Develop a written maintenance plan that reflects your vehicles, installed equipment, and operating conditions. The Federal Transit Administration's FY2026 review guidance addresses maintenance plans, preventive maintenance intervals, implementation, accessibility equipment, warranties, and oversight. KDOT's public transportation resources include a [Vehicle Preventive Maintenance Checklist](#); confirm which requirements apply to your agency's agreement. [1, 2]

- **Assign a maintenance coordinator and backup.** Define responsibilities: drivers inspect vehicles and report defects; dispatch schedules service around maintenance appointments; qualified technicians diagnose and repair problems; and management provides resources and oversight.

Bus & Transit Fleet Preventive Maintenance Program Guide



Cover page of bus and transit preventive maintenance program guide; Source - Oxmaint

- **Keep an up-to-date fleet inventory.** Record each vehicle's VIN, model, mileage, and engine hours, where applicable, along with model and serial numbers for lifts, ramps, and other installed equipment. Keep manuals, warranty information, and maintenance records readily accessible.
- **Establish vehicle-status procedures.** Identify who may remove a vehicle from service, who authorizes its return, and how those decisions reach dispatch. Arrange accessible replacement transportation before scheduled downtime.

2. SCHEDULE MAINTENANCE BEFORE IT BECOMES OVERDUE

Set maintenance intervals for each vehicle using the applicable manufacturer's guidance. When both mileage and elapsed time are specified, service the vehicle at whichever limit comes first. Track engine hours and equipment cycles when required. Low-mileage and spare vehicles still need calendar-based maintenance.

Adjust schedules for operating conditions that require additional attention. Ford's 2022 Transit manual, for example, identifies extensive idling, short trips, and dusty-road operation as conditions that may require additional

maintenance. Use the instructions for your vehicle and engine rather than copying another model's service intervals. [3]

- **Review upcoming work weekly.** Compare projected mileage and service deadlines with shop availability. Allow enough time to order parts, schedule appointments, and arrange replacement vehicles.
- **Use reminders to meet deadlines.** Set alerts before maintenance is due; an alert or scheduled appointment does not extend the service interval.
- **Resolve missing records and overdue work.** Have qualified personnel determine and document the necessary action. Do not assume past service dates or reset maintenance deadlines without a documented basis.

3. TURN DRIVER INSPECTIONS INTO COMPLETED REPAIRS

Give drivers adequate time, training, and a vehicle-specific checklist. Drivers should perform only tasks they are trained and authorized to complete. Include the following pre-service checks, plus any additional requirements for the vehicle and service:

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Transit staff inspecting tires; Source - Transdev

- **Exterior and visibility:** Damage, visible leaks, tires, wheels, lights, mirrors, windshield, wipers, and washers.
- **Vehicle operation:** Warning indicators, fuel or battery charge level, heating, cooling, defrosting, and approved brake and steering checks.
- **Passenger areas and emergency equipment:** Doors, steps, handrails, seats, flooring, emergency exits, communication equipment, and required emergency supplies.
- **Accessibility equipment:** Lift or ramp operation, wheelchair securement equipment, occupant restraints, and unobstructed accessible paths.
- **Report defects clearly and promptly.** Report safety concerns immediately. Document other new symptoms or damage before ending the shift so staff can respond before the next departure. Include the vehicle number, mileage, time, warning messages, and conditions when the problem occurred. "Scraping near the right rear wheel when braking at about 25 mph" is more useful than "Bus sounds bad."
- **Follow every report through to resolution.** Record the defect, assess its urgency, assign the work, determine vehicle availability, complete and verify repairs, and document authorization to return to service when applicable. Dispatch and maintenance should use a shared vehicle-status list. Tell drivers what was found, what was corrected, and whether further monitoring is needed.

- **Respond immediately to potential safety failures.** Suspected brake or steering failure, fuel leakage, smoke, overheating, a seriously damaged tire, or an unsecured passenger door calls for a safe stop or withholding the vehicle from service pending qualified assessment. Follow vehicle instructions and agency emergency procedures. Intermittent problems require a documented follow-up decision even when technicians cannot reproduce them.

4. GIVE ACCESSIBILITY EQUIPMENT DEDICATED MAINTENANCE ATTENTION

Include lifts, ramps, securement devices, and other required accessibility features in the maintenance program. Under 49 CFR 37.161, covered public and private transportation entities must maintain required accessibility features in working conditions, repair failures promptly, and take reasonable steps to accommodate affected riders. [4]

For public entities operating lifts on non-rail vehicles, 49 CFR 37.163 requires regular, frequent operational checks and immediate reporting of lift failures. A vehicle with an inoperative lift generally must be removed before its next service day and repaired before returning to service.

A limited exception applies when no spare vehicle is available and removing the vehicle would reduce service. Continued operation is permitted for no more than five days in areas with populations of 50,000 or fewer, or three days in larger areas, beginning on the day the failure is discovered. On fixed routes, the entity must promptly provide alternative transportation for affected riders when the next accessible vehicle is more than 30 minutes away. These limits are conditional exceptions, not repair targets. Confirm which requirements apply to private or contracted services. [5]

- **Track equipment maintenance.** Keep service histories and cycle counts where relevant. Follow model-specific inspection, lubrication, and repair instructions.
- **Use appropriately qualified technicians.** Follow manufacturer requirements for technician qualifications or authorization. BraunAbility, for example, provides manuals by product and series. [6]

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- **Inspect securement systems and restraints.** Follow their manufacturers' instructions in addition to lift or ramp requirements.
- **Plan accessible alternatives.** Arrange appropriate replacement transportation when equipment is unavailable; never improvise unsafe boarding methods.

5. PROTECT THE WHOLE VEHICLE THROUGH KANSAS SEASONS

Maintain all vehicle systems under the applicable schedule, including brakes, steering, suspension, fluids, cooling, electrical systems, doors, HVAC, body components, and equipment attachments. Have qualified technicians investigate recurring fluid loss, battery discharge, unusual wear, and repeated repairs.



Diver conducting bus pre-trip inspection; Source - BusCMMS

Make tire care a routine priority. Follow the vehicle's specified tire size, load rating, and inflation guidance. NHTSA recommends checking cold tire pressure against the vehicle label or owner's manual—not the maximum pressure printed on the tire sidewall. Tire-pressure monitoring systems do not replace direct checks. Record pressure and wear measurements by wheel position, including inner dual tires when fitted. [7]

- **Before winter:** Check batteries, charging systems, tires, heaters, defrosters, wipers, appropriate fluids, doors, and accessibility equipment. Confirm breakdown-response and replacement-vehicle arrangements.
- **During and after winter:** Clear snow and ice from entry areas, remove deicing residue using approved cleaning methods, and inspect the underbody, lines, equipment mounting points, and areas vulnerable to water intrusion.
- **Before summer:** Service driver and passenger air conditioning and inspect engine cooling systems, belts, hoses, and tires. Consider passenger needs and trip duration when assessing whether a vehicle with inadequate climate control can operate safely.
- **After unusual operating conditions or incidents:** Follow special-service guidance for dusty roads. Report curb strikes, severe pothole impacts, collisions, and flood exposure for appropriate assessment.

Support vehicle longevity through smooth acceleration, controlled braking, careful maneuvering, and prompt damage reporting. Reduce avoidable idling while maintaining passenger comfort, safety, and equipment operation. Stay within approved load limits and keep spare vehicles ready. For long rural trips, plan ahead for distant repair facilities and accessible backup transportation.

6. USE REPAIR PROVIDERS AND RECORDS TO PREVENT REPEAT PROBLEMS

Choose repair providers that can service your vehicle sizes and specialized equipment. Establish expectations for estimates, repair approvals, turnaround times, documentation, and after-hours support.

- **Provide complete information.** Share the PM checklist, current mileage, open driver reports, and warranty details. Request itemized work descriptions, relevant measurements, unresolved findings, and verification of completed repairs.
- **Maintain one service history for each vehicle.** Link inspections, work orders, invoices, warranty claims, recall repairs, and return-to-service decisions. Record service dates, mileage or other applicable readings, costs, responsible personnel, and upcoming tasks.

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- **Keep a separate list of upcoming work.** Invoices document completed services but do not reliably identify what is due next.
- **Assign responsibility for recall monitoring.** Check NHTSA resources and manufacturer notices for the chassis, body, conversion, and installed equipment. Document completed recall repairs and follow any operating restrictions. [8]
- **Address electric-vehicle maintenance needs.** Include charging equipment, thermal-management systems, and propulsion-specific training. Restrict high-voltage work to appropriately trained and authorized personnel. Follow manufacturer charging and storage instructions; electric vehicles still require scheduled maintenance. [9]

7. MEASURE PERFORMANCE AND PLAN FOR REPLACEMENT

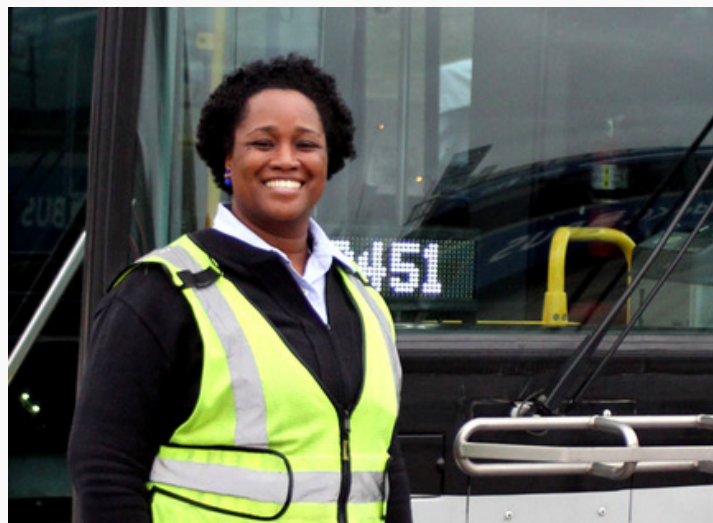
Review maintenance results regularly to identify recurring problems and guide spending. Track overdue tasks, road calls, downtime, repeat defects, accessibility-equipment failures, and maintenance cost per mile. Compare similar vehicles and examine trends over several months.

Track on-time preventive maintenance consistently:

On-time PM (%) = (Tasks due during the reporting period that were completed on time ÷ All tasks due during that period) × 100

Keep tasks that remain unfinished in the denominator for the period in which they were due. Track overdue work carried forward from earlier periods separately so it remains visible.

- **Budget for the full cost of reliable service.** Include scheduled maintenance, repairs, tires, towing, technician and driver training, and accessible replacement transportation during downtime.
- **Base replacement decisions on condition and performance.** Consider reliability, parts availability, recurring failures, and anticipated repair costs. The goal is to extend safe, useful service. A grant useful-life benchmark alone does not determine mechanical fitness or authorize disposal; confirm applicable replacement and disposition procedures with KDOT.



KCATA Driver; Source - RideKC

CONCLUSION

Preventive maintenance is an ongoing commitment to safe, reliable, and accessible transit service. By following vehicle-specific schedules, responding promptly to driver reports, maintaining accessibility equipment, and tracking repairs, agencies can address small problems before they become costly disruptions. Clear responsibilities, complete records, and regular performance reviews support better maintenance and replacement decisions. For Kansas transit agencies, these everyday practices help extend vehicle life, protect public investments, and keep riders connected to the places they need to go.

RESOURCES

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- [3] Ford Motor Company. 2022 Transit Owner's Manual, Special Operating Conditions Scheduled Maintenance. Model-specific example.
- [4] Electronic Code of Federal Regulations. 49 CFR 37.161, Maintenance of accessible features: General.
- [5] Electronic Code of Federal Regulations. 49 CFR 37.163, Keeping vehicle lifts in operative condition: Public entities.
- [6] BraunAbility. Commercial Product Manuals for lifts, ramps, and accessible vehicles.
- [7] National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. TireWise tire safety and maintenance guidance.
- [8] National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Vehicle and equipment recall information and search tools.
- [9] National RTAP, SUMC, and Transit Workforce Center. Electric Vehicle Maintenance Best Practices. Updated May 15, 2026.

ACCEPTING VEHICLES: WHAT AGENCIES CAN AND CANNOT DO

By Nikhila Gunda, Kansas RTAP and Taylor Zortman, KDOT Public Transportation

Accepting a new transit vehicle is more than a formality—it confirms that the vehicle meets all required specifications and is ready for service. Before accepting delivery, agencies should carefully inspect the entire vehicle and review all accompanying paperwork using the specifications, applicable amendments, and inspection forms included in the KDOT delivery packet. A vendor-provided checklist may be helpful, but it does not replace KDOT's required inspection materials.

ACCEPTANCE DECISION

- Accept only after the full inspection is complete, all applicable specifications are met and required delivery paperwork is present.
- Do not sign acceptance paperwork while the vehicle is still on its way. A vehicle and its paperwork must be reviewed together before acceptance.
- If the vehicle or paperwork is incomplete, notify the vendor and reject the delivery. The vendor must correct the deficiencies before redelivery; you do not have to pay for a rejected vehicle before you determine it is acceptable.
- After acceptance, the agency has 45 days to pay the vendor, regardless of when KDOT reimbursement is processed.

BEFORE AND DURING INSPECTION

- Print and review the KDOT delivery packet before the vehicle arrives. Compare the vehicle with the bid specifications, applicable amendment, and any notes or exceptions submitted with the bid.
- Use KDOT's Post-Delivery Visual Inspection and Post-Delivery Road Test forms. Mark items that do not apply as N/A. Ignore a vendor-provided inspection checklist when KDOT has supplied its more detailed forms.
- The vendor is responsible for providing all required paperwork when the vehicle is delivered. If any documents are missing, the agency may reject the vehicle as incomplete or enter into a written agreement requiring the vendor to provide the missing paperwork within two business days.

- Because the agency must accept or reject the vehicle on the day of delivery, it should consider carefully whether conditional acceptance is appropriate.
- Inspect the vehicle before signing acceptance documents. If the vendor presents paperwork while the vehicle is still in transit, do not sign it.

PAPERWORK AND FOLLOWUP

Keep a clearly labeled agency file with the complete delivery packet and inspection record for future KDOT review or audit. The electronic packet may arrive across several emails; check that you received all seven attachments. Unless a submission below specifically calls for a form, retain the inspection materials rather than returning them to KDOT.

Use these inspection materials:

- Vehicle specifications used for the bid, including the final spec for your vehicle type, and any applicable amendment, plus bid notes and exceptions.
- Complete the inspection form that includes the Post-Delivery Visual Inspection and Post-Delivery Road Test and retain it in the agency file.
- The vendor's sales invoice and the manufacturer's Certificate of Origin (front and back). Confirm that delivery paperwork is complete.

After inspection, notify KDOT and submit documents. Once the vehicle meets all specifications, notify KDOT in writing that it has been inspected and found satisfactory. Email the required documents to Taylor Zortman at taylor.l.zortman@ks.gov within two weeks of delivery:

- Written letter stating that the vehicle was inspected and found to meet the specifications.
- Post-delivery Buy America documentation showing part content and final assembly location. Contact Taylor Zortman at KDOT if the vendor does not provide it.
- Certificate of Origin, including both front and back sides

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- Vehicle Status Change Form if the vehicle is a replacement through BlackCat. More information about [disposal process](#) can be found online under the [KDOT Public Transportation Resources](#).
- Confirm whether the new vehicle will be kept as a backup. A backup is used incidentally when another vehicle is being repaired; it is not used for regular service. A backup vehicle still has to meet KDOT requirements, including minimum mileage requirements. They can be used when their active vehicles are out of service for repairs, when service is at a higher than normal level, or for various other situations. The [disposition process](#) has more information on the disposal types, including backup.

Additional checklist routing:

- Grant-funded purchase: return the completed inspection checklist to the KDOT Grant Manager with the rest of the completed delivery packet. Reimbursement will not be processed until the required packet is submitted.

- Purchase without a grant: if the vehicle was procured by KDOT, send the checklist to the KDOT program administrator for BlackCat inventory. Only vehicles procured by KDOT can be added to that inventory. If you are unsure which route applies, contact KDOT.
- A vehicle used in a KDOT program may still require the requested paperwork even when KDOT is not reimbursing the agency for the purchase.

NEED HELP WITH A DELIVERY OR INSPECTION?

Contact Taylor Zortman right away about vendor, inspection, paperwork, or delivery-driver issues:

- (785) 296-2552
- taylor.l.zortman@ks.gov
- Send an instant message on Slack

BUILDING TOMORROW’S TRANSIT LEADERS: WHY GEN Z NEEDS MORE THAN “BECAUSE I SAID SO”

By Anne Lowder, Kansas RTAP

At the Community Transportation Association of America Expo 2026 (CTAA), Kristen Joyner (KJ Backpack) presented a leadership discussion focused on emerging professionals in transit, one message came through clearly: developing the next generation of leaders requires a different approach than many organizations have used in the past.

The session opened with a simple but powerful challenge to senior leadership — listen first.

Leaders were encouraged not only to ask employees what they need, but to pause long enough to truly hear the answer. More importantly, leadership development was framed as an ongoing conversation rather than a top-down directive. The emphasis was on follow-up, curiosity, and understanding the struggles younger employees face as they enter leadership roles.

Participants from several discussion tables shared common themes around preparedness, communication, and organizational support.

THE LEADERSHIP SITUATIONS NEW LEADERS FEEL LEAST PREPARED FOR

One of the strongest themes was discomfort with difficult conversations and high-level decision-making environments.

Several emerging leaders described feeling intimidated when navigating executive or tribal council discussions and noted how valuable mentorship can be in those moments. Having experienced leaders available to step in, clarify expectations, or provide guidance was described as essential for building confidence.

Another major topic was expectation management. Participants emphasized that leaders must clearly communicate not only what is expected, but also how employees can successfully meet those expectations. The discussion highlighted that expectation management applies equally to riders, teams, and leadership staff. When expectations are unclear, conflict and frustration tend to follow.

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WHY “THE WHY” MATTERS MORE THAN EVER

The conversation then shifted toward motivation and generational differences in the workplace.

For many younger employees — especially Millennials and Gen Z — understanding the purpose behind the work is critical. Participants stressed that younger workers are far more likely to invest themselves fully when they understand why a process exists, how decisions are made, and how their role contributes to the larger mission. This represents a cultural shift from previous generations.

Older leadership styles often prioritized compliance first and explanation later. One speaker humorously contrasted this by describing being raised by a Marine Corps drill sergeant where the expected response to “jump” was immediately asking “how high?” rather than “why?”

Today’s workforce operates differently. Organizations may still achieve short-term compliance without explanation, but they are unlikely to gain long-term commitment or engagement unless employees understand the purpose behind the work.

For transit agencies and public organizations especially, connecting employees to the mission of serving the community becomes a powerful retention and leadership development tool.

COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWNS START AT THE TOP

Another discussion table focused on organizational communication challenges.

Participants identified gaps in two-way communication, coaching, and executive-level alignment. Some noted that when leadership lacks a clear direction or fails to communicate goals effectively, uncertainty filters throughout the organization.

Trust between departments was also identified as a key factor in organizational success. Employees want leadership to establish expectations while also trusting departments and teams to perform their responsibilities without excessive micromanagement.

The discussion suggested that leadership credibility is built not only through oversight, but through empowerment.



UNDERSTANDING THE GEN Z WORKFORCE

One of the more candid moments of the session centered on how educational and societal changes have shaped Gen Z employees differently from previous generations.

Speakers noted that many younger workers came through educational systems that emphasized flexibility, extensions, and accommodation — trends accelerated further during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, some employees may enter the workforce with less experience managing strict deadlines, accountability structures, or long-term planning expectations. Rather than criticizing this reality, the discussion focused on adaptation.

The consensus was that organizations must intentionally create structures that help younger employees succeed rather than assuming they will automatically adapt to traditional workplace models.

This means providing clear pathways, consistent mentorship, and strategic development opportunities.

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A STRUCTURED LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MODEL

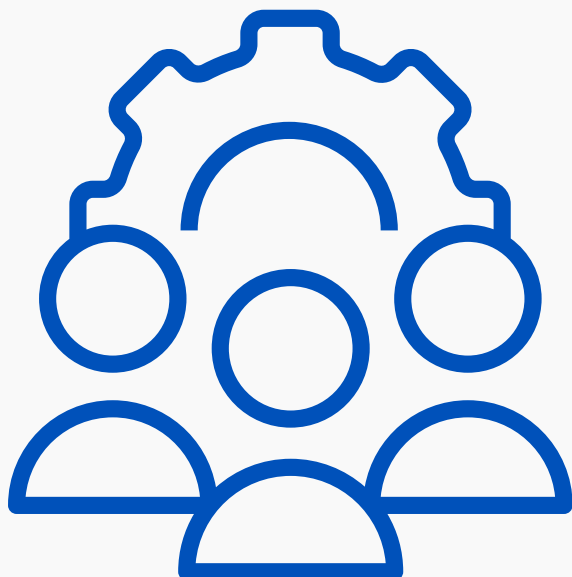
One of the most practical takeaways from the session was a proposed step-by-step leadership development framework designed specifically for emerging employees.

The model outlined progressive stages of growth:

- **0–6 months:** Learn the job and understand performance expectations.
- **6–12 months:** Develop understanding of the broader business and organizational mission.
- **12–18 months:** Receive intentional leadership development and training.
- **18–24 months:** Participate in leadership shadowing opportunities with experienced leaders.

The approach emphasized that leadership growth should not be accidental. Instead, organizations should intentionally guide employees through a structured process that builds competence, confidence, and purpose over time.

Participants stressed that employees are more likely to stay engaged when they can clearly see a future path within the organization.



LEADERSHIP GAPS ARE FIXABLE

The session closed with an important reminder: leadership gaps are not failures.

They are predictable, and more importantly, they are fixable.

Success depends on intentional development, strong communication, and shared responsibility between the organization and the individual employee. Leadership is not solely the responsibility of management, nor is growth solely the responsibility of the employee. Sustainable development happens when both sides actively invest in the process.

The final challenge to attendees was personal reflection:

- What skill do you need to improve?
- What action will you take next?
- And most importantly — why does it matter to you?

In the end, the discussion reinforced a growing reality across industries: organizations that invest in listening, mentoring, and intentional development will be the ones most successful at preparing the next generation of leaders.

RESOURCES

Joyner, Kristen. (Wednesday, May 13, 2026). Skills for the next generation of transit leaders. [Conference Presentation]. CTAA Expo 2026, Omaha, Nebraska.

THE MIRROR EFFECT: MASTERING SELF-AWARENESS AS A LEADERSHIP MULTIPLIER

By Anne Lowder, Kansas RTAP

Leadership is often discussed in terms of strategy, technical expertise, and decision-making ability. Yet the difference between leaders who inspire loyalty and those who unintentionally create toxic environments rarely comes down to technical skills alone. More often, the deciding factor is self-awareness.

In his workshop at the CTAA Expo 2026, *The Mirror Effect: Mastering Self-Awareness as a Leadership Multiplier*, Dan Mulraney challenged leaders, supervisors, and frontline professionals to confront a difficult truth: many leadership failures begin not with bad intentions, but with blind spots.

The workshop explored self-awareness not as a personality trait someone either possesses or lacks, but as a practical leadership skill that can be strengthened over time. Through storytelling, reflection, and emotional intelligence principles, Mulraney argued that understanding our impact on others is the foundation of effective leadership.

THE WALMART STORY: A LEADERSHIP WARNING SIGN

Mulraney opened with a simple story from a Walmart auto shop that perfectly illustrated the hidden cost of poor self-awareness.

While waiting for his truck to be serviced, he observed a mechanic walked into the office holding a broken tool. The employee approached a supervisor named Rick and said: “Nobody wanted to come out here and tell you this, but we broke this.”

Rick calmly solved the problem by instructing the employee to replace the tool from inventory. Operationally, the issue was resolved. But Mulraney focused on something deeper. Why did the employee begin with “Nobody wanted to tell you”?

That single sentence revealed a culture problem. The staff feared approaching their supervisor. The issue was not the broken tool—it was the relationship between the leader and the team.



Mulraney emphasized that moments like this should immediately trigger reflection in leaders:

- Why are people hesitant to approach me?
- What am I saying or doing that discourages openness?
- Am I unintentionally creating fear or discomfort?
- Are conversations happening about me that I'm not invited to?

The danger, he explained, is that many leaders never recognize these warning signs. They assume everything is functioning well because no one openly complains.

SUCCESS IS MORE THAN TECHNICAL SKILL

One of the workshop's central themes was the distinction between technical competence and emotional intelligence.

Mulraney argued that technical skills, education, and experience account for only a small percentage of professional success. The majority comes from emotional intelligence—the ability to understand emotions, regulate behavior, communicate effectively, and recognize the impact we have on others.

He referenced the work of Daniel Goleman, author of the influential book *Emotional Intelligence*, who identified five core components of emotional intelligence:

- Self-awareness
- Self-regulation
- Motivation
- Empathy
- Social skills

Among these, Mulraney argued that self-awareness is the most important because it serves as the foundation for all the others. **He defined self-awareness as: *Recognizing and understanding your emotions—what you are feeling and why—as well as appreciating how those emotions affect those around you.*** Without this understanding, even strong leadership traits can become liabilities.

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THE LEADERSHIP BLIND SPOT

A recurring idea throughout the workshop was that many struggling leaders do not realize they are struggling. “Do some leaders even know that they are struggling?” Mulraney asked. “Is that even possible?” The answer, according to him, is absolutely yes.

People are often remarkably skilled at evaluating others while remaining blind to themselves. A leader may believe they are approachable while their team experiences them as intimidating. Another may believe they are “detail-oriented” while employees experience constant micromanagement. This disconnect is what psychologists call a blind spot.

Mulraney encouraged leaders to practice honest self-reflection daily. During his time as a transit director in New Jersey, he developed a routine during his commute home. Instead of turning on the radio, he reflected on questions like:

- What did I do well today?
- What did not go well?
- Did I unintentionally embarrass someone?
- Is there a conversation I need to repair tomorrow?
- How did my words affect others?

This type of reflection requires radical honesty. Leaders must resist the temptation to justify every action and instead ask whether their behavior strengthens or damaged trust.

THE POWER OF REPAIR

One of the most practical lessons from the workshop centered on accountability and repair. Mulraney described correcting an employee publicly and later recognizing it was the wrong approach. Rather than ignoring the incident, he advocated directly acknowledging the mistake:

“I corrected you in front of your peers, and I should not have done that. I apologize.”



Importantly, he also suggested addressing the wider team to reinforce accountability and authenticity. This kind of leadership behavior accomplishes several things simultaneously:

- It models humility
- It builds credibility
- It demonstrates emotional maturity
- It increases trust and psychological safety

Leaders often assume admitting mistakes weakens authority. In practice, the opposite is usually true. Teams tend to trust leaders more when they demonstrate accountability.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AND THE “OPEN DOOR” ILLUSION

Mulraney also challenged the common leadership claim of having an “open door policy.” An open door means very little if employees are afraid to walk through it. True psychological safety exists when employees feel comfortable:

- disagreeing respectfully,
- offering unconventional ideas,
- admitting mistakes,
- asking difficult questions,
- and providing honest feedback without fear of retaliation.

Leaders who unintentionally punish disagreement often create silent organizations where innovation disappears, and resentment grows. Mulraney stressed that respectful disagreement is not disrespect. Confusing the two can shut down communication entirely.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AND THE “OPEN DOOR” ILLUSION

To further explain self-awareness, the workshop introduced the Johari Window, developed by psychologists Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham in 1955.

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The Johari Window divides self-awareness into four areas:

- Open Self—What both you and others know about you.
- Blind Self—What others see in you is that you do not recognize about yourself.
- Hidden Self—What you know about yourself but choose not to share.
- Unknown Self—Traits or potential unknown to both you and others.

The goal of leadership growth is to expand the “Open Self” area by:

- seeking feedback,
- increasing transparency,
- and becoming more aware of blind spots.

Mulraney emphasized that trusted feedback is essential because people rarely see themselves clearly without an outside perspective.

He shared his own experience as a police academy instructor trainee. During evaluations, peers repeatedly described him as “arrogant”—something he had never perceived in himself. Rather than rejecting the feedback, he chose to reflect on it and improve.

That willingness to hear uncomfortable truths is what separates growing leaders from stagnant ones.

LISTENING VS. WAITING TO SPEAK

Another major theme was communication. Mulraney argued that many people are not truly listening—they are simply waiting for their turn to talk.

Employees can immediately sense when a leader is distracted, multitasking, or disengaged. He shared a personal story about approaching a county administrator to discuss a serious medical issue, only to find her focused on emails during the meeting. Feeling unheard, he left without ever having the conversation.

The lesson was clear: attention communicates value; Leaders who fail to listen lose trust quickly; Delegation, Growth, and Permission to Fail.



Effective delegation was another example of how self-awareness shapes leadership behavior. Delegation is not simply about assigning tasks. It is about empowering people.

Mulraney explained that leaders should delegate with trust, autonomy, and support—not fear. Telling an employee, “Don’t screw this up,” instantly destroys psychological safety and discourages creativity. Instead, leaders should communicate:

- confidence
- support
- growth opportunity
- and permission to learn through mistakes.

People grow when they feel trusted. This approach also requires leaders to examine their own tendencies. Are they checking in supportively, or micromanaging? The answer often depends less on intent and more on how employees experience the interaction.

WHY PEOPLE LEAVE LEADERS

Perhaps one of the workshop’s most sobering observations was this: People often leave managers, not jobs.

Employees may love their work, coworkers, and mission, yet still resign because they feel unappreciated, unheard, or emotionally drained by leadership behavior.

Mulraney stressed that appreciation costs nothing, yet its impact is enormous. A simple handwritten note thanking an employee for stepping up during a difficult day became deeply meaningful because it communicated recognition and value. Leaders frequently underestimate how small moments matter.

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SELF-AWARENESS AS A LEADERSHIP MULTIPLIER

At its core, The Mirror Effect argued that self-awareness multiplies every other leadership skill.

Without self-awareness:

- communication breaks down,
- delegation becomes control,
- confidence becomes arrogance,
- accountability becomes blame-shifting,
- and authority becomes intimidation.

With self-awareness:

- teams feel safe,
- trust grows,
- communication improves,
- conflict becomes productive,
- and leadership becomes transformational.

Self-awareness does not mean perfection. It means consistently examining how your behavior affects others and being willing to improve. Mulraney concluded with a challenge for leaders at every level:

- Reflect honestly.
- Seek feedback.
- Listen carefully.
- Repair mistakes quickly.
- Help others grow.

Because leadership is not just about managing performance, it is about understanding the reflection you create in the people around you.

RESOURCES

Mulraney, Dan. (Wednesday, May 13, 2026) The Mirror Effect: Mastering Self-Awareness as a Leadership Multiplier [Conference presentation]. CTAA Expo 2026, Omaha, Nebraska

KANSAS RTAP TRAINING, TRAINING RESOURCES AND CONFERENCES

By Anne Lowder, Kansas RTAP

Below are training courses available from Kansas RTAP and other sources through November of this year. If you are interested in hosting a training class, I am still scheduling for 2027. Please contact Anne Lowder at alowder@ku.edu if you would like to host a training course at your agency. Current Kansas RTAP Trainings can be found at [KUTC - RTAP](#)

DEFENSIVE DRIVING AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

11/03 - Pittsburgh
11/12 - Hays
11/18 - Hays
12/17 - Hutchinson

DEFENSIVE DRIVING AND PASSENGER ASSISTANCE/ WHEELCHAIR SECUREMENT

11/11 - Hays
11/19 - Hutchinson
11/19 - Hays

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.

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.

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

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.

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).

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

Southwest Transit Association LPTA and LADOTD Public Transit Conference

November 4- 6, 2026

Shreveport, LA

[LPTA & LADOTD Public Transit Conference - Your Regional Transit Association](#)

APTA Safety and Risk Management Seminar

December 6-9, 2026

[Safety and Risk Management Seminar - APTA](#)

CTAA Expo 2027

June 6-9, 2027

Atlantic City, NJ

[Community Transportation](#)

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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.

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