



KANSAS TRANSIT REPORTER

SUMMER 2026

IN THIS EDITION:

- [Director's Message](#)
- [Congratulations to Nikhila Gunda on Earning Professional Transportation Planner® Certification](#)
- [Building and Sustaining Kansas' Transit Workforce](#)
- [2026 Kansas Transit Manager Handbook](#)
- [Technology Spotlight Follow-Up: RideSheet in Action](#)
- [Addressing Transit Worker Fatigue: A Growing Safety Imperative](#)
- [Preventing Human Trafficking During the World Cup](#)
- [The Safe System Approach: What It Means for Rural Transit in Kansas](#)
- [Kansas RTAP Training Update](#)

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

By Kara Cox, Kansas RTAP



As we head into the second half of the year, I'm excited to share several new resources and opportunities that Kansas RTAP has been working on to support transit agencies across the state.

One project I'm especially excited about is the release of our [2026 Kansas Transit Manager Handbook](#). Whether you're stepping into a management role for the first time or you've been leading your agency for years, this handbook is designed to be a practical resource you can keep within reach. We've updated it with current information, helpful guidance, and resources that reflect today's transit environment in Kansas.

We've also launched a brand-new [Compendium of Policy Guidance](#). Over the years, we've answered many questions through our policy guidance articles in the Kansas RTAP newsletter. Now, instead of searching through old newsletters, you can find those articles organized in one convenient location. We hope this becomes a go-to resource whenever questions arise. And if there's a topic you'd like us to cover, don't hesitate to [submit a training request](#) through our website—we're always looking for ways to provide guidance that meets your agency's needs!

Kansas RTAP will be offering our Transit Manager Training at the KPTA conference in Hutchinson, KS. This training is designed to provide both new and experienced managers with practical tools, valuable resources, and the confidence to navigate the many responsibilities of managing a transit system. These sessions are great because they give us a chance to learn from one another and discuss the real-world challenges agencies are facing.

Don't forget to mark your calendar for our October webinar! Join us at 2 p.m. on October 29 as team members from the Transit Workforce Center, FTA's national technical assistance center for workforce development, discuss innovative recruitment strategies transit organizations of all sizes and types have used across the country to reach out to a broad range of potential employee populations. [Registration is available on the Kansas RTAP website!](#)

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

On a personal note, I am excited to share that I will be welcoming my first child at the end of August. While I am on leave, Nikhila Gunda will be your point of contact for all things related to Kansas RTAP – minus training inquiries—those requests can continue going to Anne Lowder or Megan Tester.

Thank you for everything you do to keep Kansans connected. I hope you'll take advantage of these new resources and training opportunities, and as always, if there is anything Kansas RTAP can do for you, please don't hesitate to reach out!

CONGRATULATIONS TO NIKHILA GUNDA ON EARNING PROFESSIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNER® CERTIFICATION

By Kara Cox, Kansas RTAP

The University of Kansas Transportation Center is proud to congratulate Nikhila Gunda on earning her Professional Transportation Planner® (PTP) certification from the Transportation Professional Certification Board (TPCB).

The PTP credential recognizes transportation professionals who have demonstrated the knowledge, skills, and expertise needed to address complex transportation challenges, develop innovative solutions, and improve communities through effective planning.

In announcing her certification, TPCB noted that PTP-certified professionals are recognized as members of a specialized group equipped to successfully solve problems, create solutions, and make meaningful contributions to the transportation profession.

Congratulations, Nikhila, on this outstanding professional achievement! Your dedication to advancing the transportation field and your commitment to excellence continue to make a positive impact at KUTC and beyond.

Let's Connect KANSAS RTAP SOCIAL



@ksrtap



@ksrtap



@Kansas RTAP



@University of Kansas
Transportation Center

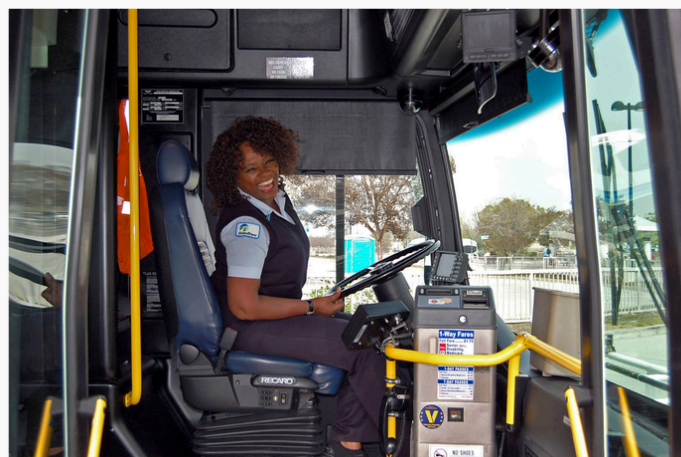
BUILDING AND SUSTAINING KANSAS' TRANSIT WORKFORCE

By Nikhila Gunda, Kansas RTAP

For many Kansas transit agencies and providers, finding and retaining qualified drivers has become one of the greatest challenges to maintaining reliable service. From connecting older adults to healthcare appointments and helping individuals with disabilities remain independent by providing access to jobs, education, and essential services, transit drivers are the backbone of community mobility—especially in rural Kansas.

This challenge extends far beyond Kansas. A national survey of small urban and rural transit agencies found that driver shortages, an aging workforce, and increasing retirements are disrupting transit operations and making workforce development a top priority for transit providers nationwide (Small Urban and Rural Center on Mobility, 2023). The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) also recognizes workforce development as a national priority. Through its support of the Transit Workforce Center (TWC), the FTA is helping transit agencies recruit, hire, train, and retain the skilled workforce needed to provide safe and reliable transit services now and into the future.

Recruitment, however, is only part of the solution. According to National RTAP, successful transit agencies improve retention by creating supportive workplaces that offer competitive wages and benefits, quality training, mentorship, employee recognition, and opportunities for career growth. Drivers are the "face" of every transit agency, making investments in their success essential to delivering safe, dependable, and customer-focused service. Recent research further highlights the urgency of the issue. An American Public Transportation Association (APTA) survey found that 96% of transit agencies reported workforce shortages, while 64% experienced difficulty retaining employees, emphasizing that keeping experienced operators is just as important as recruiting new ones.



To support Kansas transit providers and learn about best practices and strategies for recruiting and retaining transit drivers, Kansas RTAP will host a webinar on October 29th at 2 p.m. CT featuring a workforce expert from the Transit Workforce Center. The session will discuss current workforce trends, practical recruitment strategies, and proven retention practices that agencies of all sizes can implement. Whether your agency is addressing immediate staffing needs or planning for the future, you'll gain practical tools, valuable resources, and real-world examples to help build and sustain a strong transit workforce. Stay tuned and for more information, visit - <https://kutc.ku.edu/ks-rtap-webinars>

RESOURCES

- American Public Transportation Association. (2022). Transit Workforce Shortage: Root Causes, Potential Solutions, and the Road Ahead. <https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/APTA-Transit-Workforce-Shortage-Report.pdf>
- Federal Transit Administration. Workforce Development Initiative & Transit Workforce Center. <https://www.transit.dot.gov/research-innovation/workforce-development-initiative>
- National Rural Transit Assistance Program. Transit Manager's Toolkit: Driver Recruitment, Training, and Retention. <https://www.nationalrtap.org/Toolkits/Transit-Managers-Toolkit/Administration/Driver-Recruitment-Training-and-Retention>
- Small Urban and Rural Center on Mobility. (2023). Workforce Development and Driver Shortages in Small Urban and Rural Transit. <https://rosap.nhtl.bts.gov/view/dot/67224>

2026 KANSAS TRANSIT MANAGER HANDBOOK

By Nikhila Gunda, Kansas RTAP



Public transportation is constantly evolving. Federal and state regulations are updated, funding requirements change, new technologies emerge, and best practices continue to advance. To provide safe, compliant, and effective service, transit agencies must stay informed and adapt to these changes.

To help Kansas transit providers navigate this evolving landscape, Kansas RTAP is excited to announce that the 2026 Kansas Transit Manager Handbook will be published soon. Building upon the 2023 edition, this updated handbook has been thoroughly reviewed and revised to reflect the latest guidance, resources, and industry practices. The handbook includes updated content, refreshed web links and references throughout, and important revisions that every Kansas transit manager, board member, and agency staff member should know.

One of the most significant updates is the incorporation of changes from the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) Kansas Public Transportation Policy Manual, published in February 2026. These updates provide agencies with current policy guidance, program requirements, and administrative procedures to help ensure compliance with state and federal expectations while supporting efficient transit operations.

Whether you are a new transit manager or a seasoned professional, the 2026 Kansas Transit Manager Handbook is designed to be your go-to reference for managing Kansas public transportation programs. Watch for its release later this year and take advantage of this valuable resource to stay informed, prepared, and ready to meet the evolving needs of your agency and the communities you serve.

RESOURCES

Kansas Public Transportation Policy Manual (Kansas Department of Transportation, February 2026):
<https://www.ksdot.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/14155/639068558783070000>

TECHNOLOGY SPOTLIGHT FOLLOW-UP: RIDESHEET IN ACTION

By Kara Cox, Kansas RTAP

When Kansas RTAP first highlighted RideSheet as an emerging dispatching and reporting solution in the August 2024 edition of the Kansas Transit Reporter, only one agency was beginning to explore how the platform could simplify daily operations. Since then, multiple Kansas transit providers have successfully implemented the system and have experienced firsthand how it can improve scheduling, reporting, and overall operational efficiency.

Kansas RTAP recently checked in with three agencies, Marshall County Agency on Aging, Clay County General Public Transportation, and Osage County General Transportation, to learn about their implementation experiences and gather advice for other agencies considering the transition.

WHY AGENCIES MADE THE SWITCH

While each agency had different reasons for adopting RideSheet, they shared a common goal: improving efficiency.

For Marshall County Agency on Aging, RideSheet offered an affordable web-based way to track trips and simplify reporting. During implementation, the agency worked with RideSheet developer Kevin Chambers to customize the manifest and reporting calculations to better fit their operational needs.

Clay County's need was driven by rapid growth. As ridership increased from roughly 150 passengers each month in 2021 to more than 700 by early 2024, the agency had outgrown its paper-based processes.

"We were using scratch paper, sticky notes, spreadsheets, [and] white boards to take our calls and communicate the information from dispatchers to drivers," explained Jay Berends. "It was disorganized and led to clients not getting picked up on time, unhappy drivers and clients."

For Osage County General Transportation, the decision came after their previous dispatching software, ParaPlan, was discontinued. RideSheet stood out as an affordable alternative that also produced reports in the format required by KDOT, reducing the time spent preparing monthly reports.

OVERCOMING THE LEARNING CURVE

Implementing any new technology requires adjustments, but each agency emphasized that the transition became easier with patience and support.

Marshall County worked directly with the RideSheet development team to customize manifests and reporting calculations to better fit the agency's needs.

Osage County encountered a few technical hurdles during implementation, including setting up Google Workspace and refining several formulas. Misty Norton, Director of Mobility Management for East Central Kansas (CTD 5), credits the responsiveness of the development team with making the transition much smoother.

"Kevin responded quickly and resolved those problems as they came up," she said. "Overall, the agency was able to work through implementation challenges by staying in communication and getting prompt support when needed." Clay County also noted that participating as one of the pilot agencies required patience as the software evolved, but the investment paid off with a system tailored to its operational needs.

"It's a learning curve for sure, but it's well worth it once you get the hang of the program!"

*— Ashley Slupianek,
Marshall County Agency on Aging*

IMMEDIATE BENEFITS

Across all three agencies, one improvement stood out above the rest: reporting.

For Marshall County, monthly reporting has become significantly easier.

"I do not have to add up everything at the end of the month," Slupianek said. "All we have to do is print off the report." Clay County has seen improvements across dispatching, driver scheduling, and reporting. RideSheet automatically creates driver manifests, tracks vehicle and ridership data, and generates BlackCat reports that previously required much more manual effort. The agency has even begun using RideSheet reports to support presentations and funding requests with detailed operational data.

For Osage County, the reporting improvements were immediately noticeable.

"The biggest improvement has been in reporting," Norton explained. "RideSheet provides reports exactly as KDOT needs them, all in one location and in an easy-to-read format."

STAFF ADAPTATION

While most riders may never notice the software running behind the scenes, agencies say they notice the difference every day.

Clay County reports that improved organization has translated into more reliable service.

"It has made our clients know that they can depend on us as we will be there on time and they will not miss their ride," Berends said.

For Marshall County and Osage County, many of the improvements have occurred behind the scenes. Dispatchers and managers spend less time compiling reports and more time focusing on operations, while drivers benefit from clearer manifests and organized schedules.

Another recurring theme was the flexibility of RideSheet itself. As agencies identified opportunities for improvement, feedback led to enhancements that better matched their

workflows. Osage County, for example, requested a different daily ride view to better support dispatching, and the feature was incorporated into the software.

ADVICE FOR OTHER KANSAS TRANSIT AGENCIES

Each agency encouraged others to embrace the transition, even if the first few months require extra effort.

"For a small demand-response agency, RideSheet is well worth implementing because it helps organize daily operations and makes the work easier," Berends said. He added that agencies that keep up with daily data entry can complete BlackCat reporting "in about 10 minutes at the end of the month."

Norton also encourages agencies not to be discouraged by early challenges.

"Be prepared for setbacks, and do not get discouraged if something does not work exactly as expected at first," she said. "Most importantly, don't be afraid to take the leap. The first few months may bring some ups and downs, but over time the process can lead to more streamlined operations and long-term success."

LOOKING AHEAD

The experiences of these Kansas transit agencies demonstrate that successful technology implementation is about more than adopting new software—it's about creating more efficient processes that allow agencies to better serve their communities. Whether the goal is replacing an outdated platform, managing rapid growth, or simplifying monthly reporting, RideSheet continues to evolve alongside the agencies that use it.

As more Kansas transit providers implement RideSheet, Kansas RTAP looks forward to sharing additional success stories and best practices that help agencies leverage technology to improve transit operations across the state.

ADDRESSING TRANSIT WORKER FATIGUE: A GROWING SAFETY IMPERATIVE

By Anne Lowder, Kansas RTAP

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has issued Safety Bulletin 26-01, highlighting transit worker fatigue as a critical and growing safety concern. Drawing from National Transit Database (NTD) reporting, follow-up investigations, and media coverage, the FTA identified 133 fatigue-related safety events since 2014—with a sharp increase in recent years. Notably, 73 of these events occurred between 2022 and 2025, signaling an urgent need for action across the transit industry.

These incidents have resulted in one fatality, 149 injuries, and approximately \$12.3 million in property damage, underscoring the significant human and financial consequences of fatigue-related errors. In response, the FTA is encouraging agencies to integrate fatigue risk management into their Safety Management Systems (SMS) and Public Transportation Agency Safety Plans (PTASP).

UNDERSTANDING FATIGUE IN THE WORKPLACE

Fatigue is not simply “feeling tired.” In occupational safety, it encompasses a range of mental, physical, and subjective states that impair performance. Workers experiencing fatigue may demonstrate:

- Mental effects: reduced attention, poor decision-making, and diminished cognitive function
- Physical effects: exhaustion, weakness, and reduced physical capacity
- Subjective symptoms: drowsiness, lethargy, irritability, and decreased alertness

Fatigue can result from insufficient sleep, long work hours, shift work, stress, or medical conditions. Research shows that being awake for extended periods significantly increases risk: after 17 hours awake, impairment is comparable to a blood alcohol content of 0.05, and after 24 hours, it can reach 0.10—well above legal driving limits in many areas.

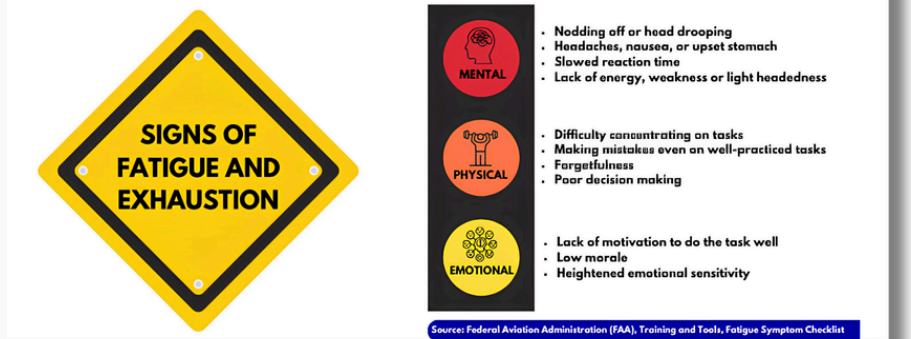


Figure 1: FTA's Fatigue Resources for Transit Operations:
<https://www.transit.dot.gov/fatigue>

WHY FATIGUE MATTERS IN TRANSIT SAFETY

Fatigue is widely recognized as a form of impairment and a major workplace hazard, especially in safety-critical industries like transit. It can:

- Slow reaction time
- Impair judgment and concentration
- Increase risk-taking behavior
- Reduce situational awareness

Studies estimate that up to 13% of workplace injuries are linked to fatigue, and workers with sleep issues face a significantly higher risk of incidents. Fatigue-related risks are particularly elevated:

- During overnight hours (midnight–6 a.m.)
- In the mid-afternoon (1–3 p.m.) when natural energy dips occur
- During long or irregular shifts and overtime
- In monotonous or repetitive tasks

For transit workers, these risks are compounded by demanding schedules, extended routes, and the responsibility of public safety.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM FTA SAFETY BULLETIN 26-01

The FTA recommends that transit agencies take a systematic approach to fatigue using their existing safety frameworks. Key strategies include:

1. Assess Fatigue Risk Using SMS and SRM

Agencies should integrate fatigue into their Safety Risk Management (SRM) processes by:

- Identifying high-risk roles (e.g., operators, dispatchers, maintenance staff)
- Evaluating conditions such as long shifts, split shifts, and night operations
- Assessing the likelihood and severity of fatigue-related incidents

2. Implement Effective Work Scheduling Practices

Scheduling plays a central role in fatigue management.

Agencies are encouraged to:

- Provide adequate rest between shifts
- Limit consecutive work hours and days
- Maintain predictable schedules where possible
- Monitor actual versus scheduled hours to identify risks

3. Provide Work Scheduling Training

Training ensures that scheduling policies are consistently applied. Effective programs should cover:

- Fatigue risk factors in scheduling patterns
- Circadian rhythms and sleep science
- Managing operational constraints (e.g., overtime)
- Documentation and reporting procedures

4. Deliver Fatigue Awareness Training

Workers and supervisors should be trained to recognize and respond to fatigue. Topics may include:

- Identifying signs and symptoms of fatigue
- Understanding sleep health and circadian rhythms
- Reporting concerns and responding appropriately

5. Establish Nonpunitive Fatigue Reporting Programs

A strong safety culture requires openness and trust.

Agencies should:

- Enable confidential, non-reprisal reporting of fatigue concerns
- Use reports to inform hazard identification and risk mitigation
- Analyze trends and provide feedback to employees

FATIGUE RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS (FRMP)

FTA also encourages agencies to develop comprehensive Fatigue Risk Management Programs that incorporate science-based approaches. Effective programs typically include:

- Defined roles and responsibilities
- Training for employees, supervisors, and schedulers
- Hours-of-service limitations
- Continuous monitoring and data analysis

These programs support ongoing improvement through Safety Assurance processes and performance tracking.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS AND WARNING SIGNS

Fatigue is influenced by both workplace and personal factors, including:

- Long or irregular work hours
- Inadequate rest or sleep disorders
- Environmental conditions (lighting, temperature, noise)
- Stress and mental workload

Common warning signs include:

- Microsleep or unintended sleep episodes
- Reduced concentration and memory
- Irritability or lack of motivation
- Slower reaction times

Recognizing these signs early is critical to preventing incidents.



Figure 2: FTA's Fatigue Resources for Transit Operations:
<https://www.transit.dot.gov/fatigue>

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

BUILDING A CULTURE OF SAFETY AROUND FATIGUE

Addressing fatigue requires more than policies—it demands a cultural shift. Organizations should:

- Promote open discussions about fatigue as a safety issue
- Encourage rest breaks and provide recovery opportunities
- Support employee wellness, including sleep health and mental health resources
- Integrate fatigue considerations into incident investigations

Research shows that many workers do not perceive fatigue as a safety priority, even when employers do. Bridging this gap is essential to effective risk management.

CONCLUSION

Transit worker fatigue is a complex and growing challenge with serious safety implications. The FTA's Safety Bulletin 26-01 provides a clear framework for agencies to identify, assess, and mitigate fatigue-related risks.

By adopting science-based scheduling, training, reporting systems, and fatigue management programs, transit agencies can reduce incidents, protect workers, and enhance public safety. As industry continues to evolve, prioritizing fatigue management will be essential to building a safer, more resilient transportation system.

RESOURCES

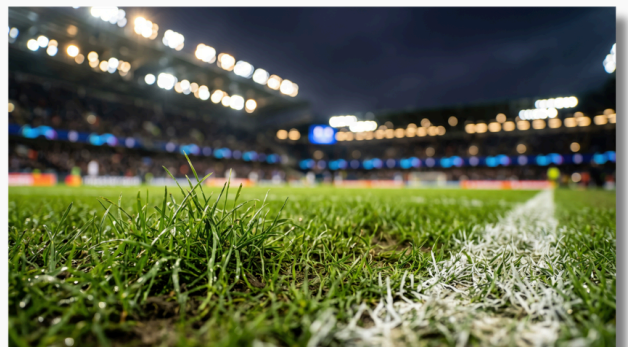
"Safety Bulletin 26-01: Transit Worker Fatigue." Federal Transit Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, 5 June 2026, <https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-programs/safety/safety-bulletin-26-01-transit-worker-fatigue>. Accessed 17 June 2026.

PREVENTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING DURING THE WORLD CUP

By Megan Tester, Kansas RTAP

The FIFA World Cup has brought excitement and good times to Kansas City and surrounding areas. From the Algerian National Team being hosted in Lawrence, Kansas to the actual games taking place in Kansas City, the World Cup was an exciting time. However, in the lead up to the World Cup games, Kansas City residents were worried about an anticipated rise in human trafficking, as large events like the World Cup can lead to additional opportunities for human traffickers. Every city in which a World Cup game was taking place put measures in place to prevent human trafficking, from increased law enforcement to sting operations; cities were preparing ahead of time. During the World Cup, many host cities throughout the US as well as Canada and Mexico partnered with "It's a Penalty," a campaign "harness[ing] the power of sport to prevent abuse, exploitation and human trafficking on a global scale, positioning each major sporting event as a platform for worldwide action and change."

In Kansas City, organizations like Relentless Pursuit Outreach and Recovery had increased volunteers and



security in place during the games, and trafficking recovery nonprofit ReHope increased their crisis stabilization rooms from four to 20. Advocates fighting human trafficking were very clear with the public: Do NOT approach suspected trafficking victims. Call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888. Though these large events have the chance to increase human trafficking, they also give law enforcement the chance to arrest suspected traffickers and help victims. In Florida, seven suspected traffickers were arrested and ten victims were rescued during what law enforcement called "Operation Red Card."

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

When events like the World Cup come to cities, it can be exciting, but it's important to not get caught up in the excitement. As a city, it's important to have practices and policies in place to prevent human trafficking and help survivors. As transportation workers, it's important to know what to look for in regards to human trafficking. Who is vulnerable? How do you recognize human trafficking? Who do you contact if you suspect someone is a victim of human trafficking? The Department of Homeland Security has information and infographics available on their website here: <https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/what-human-trafficking>. Remember, if you suspect someone is a victim of human trafficking, do not approach them. Contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline (1-888-373-7888) immediately. You can find more information on the National Human Trafficking Hotline website here: <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en>.

RESOURCES

- KCTV5. (2026, June 20). Kansas City's anti-trafficking coalition hits ground running as World Cup kicks off. "Safety Bulletin 26-01: Transit Worker Fatigue." Federal Transit Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, 5 June 2026, <https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-programs/safety/safety-bulletin-26-01-transit-worker-fatigue>. Accessed 17 June 2026.
- It's a Penalty. (n.d.). Campaigns. "Safety Bulletin 26-01: Transit Worker Fatigue." Federal Transit Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, 5 June 2026, <https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-programs/safety/safety-bulletin-26-01-transit-worker-fatigue>. Accessed 17 June 2026.
- NBC 6 South Florida. (2026, June 19). Operation Red Card: 7 arrested in World Cup sex trafficking crackdown, BSO says. "Safety Bulletin 26-01: Transit Worker Fatigue." Federal Transit Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, 5 June 2026, <https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-programs/safety/safety-bulletin-26-01-transit-worker-fatigue>. Accessed 17 June 2026.
- National Human Trafficking Hotline. (n.d.). National Human Trafficking Hotline. "Safety Bulletin 26-01: Transit Worker Fatigue." Federal Transit Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, 5 June 2026, <https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-programs/safety/safety-bulletin-26-01-transit-worker-fatigue>. Accessed 17 June 2026.

THE SAFE SYSTEM APPROACH: WHAT IT MEANS FOR RURAL TRANSIT IN KANSAS

By Nikhila Gunda, Kansas RTAP



Figure 1: Safe System Approach Principles & Objectives; Source: KDOT

Safety has always been the foundation of public transportation. Every day, transit agencies across Kansas transport older adults to medical appointments, connect individuals with disabilities to essential services, provide access to employment and education, and help residents remain independent in their communities. Whether operating demand-response services in rural counties or providing fixed-route service in urban areas, transit agencies share a common responsibility: ensuring every passenger, driver, pedestrian, cyclist, and road user arrives safely at their destination.

Today, transportation safety is evolving. Rather than simply responding to crashes after they occur, transportation professionals across the nation are adopting a more proactive philosophy known as the Safe System Approach (SSA). The Safe System Approach is the foundation of the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Roadway Safety Strategy (NRSS) and has also been adopted by the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) through its

Drive To Zero (DTZ) initiative, which aims to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries on Kansas roadways (U.S. Department of Transportation [USDOT], 2022; KDOT, 2025).

WHAT IS THE SAFE SYSTEM APPROACH?

The Safe System Approach is built on a simple but powerful idea: people make mistakes, but those mistakes should not result in death or life-changing injuries. Traditional transportation safety strategies are often focused primarily on changing individual behavior by encouraging safer driving, seat belt use, or reducing distractions. While these efforts remain important, the Safe System Approach recognizes that human error is inevitable. Instead of expecting perfect behavior from every road user, it seeks to create transportation systems that anticipate mistakes and reduce the likelihood that those mistakes will result in severe injuries or fatalities (USDOT, 2022). The approach is guided by six principles:

- Deaths and serious injuries are unacceptable.
- Humans make mistakes.
- Humans are vulnerable to crash forces.
- Responsibility for safety is shared.
- Safety is proactive.
- Redundancy is crucial, meaning multiple layers of protection work together to prevent severe outcomes.

THE FIVE ELEMENTS OF A SAFE SYSTEM

The Safe System Approach consists of five interconnected elements that work together to reduce crashes and lessen their severity.



Safer People: People remain at the center of transportation safety. Transit agencies can foster safer travel by investing in driver training, defensive driving, fatigue management, wellness initiatives, and continuous professional development. Passenger education also contributes by encouraging safe boarding and exiting procedures, proper use of mobility devices, and seat belt use where available.



Safer Roads: Although transit agencies typically do not own roadways, they experience roadway conditions every day and are often the first to recognize recurring safety concerns. Examples include:

- Bus stops without sidewalks or ADA-compliant access
- Poor lighting
- High-speed roadways adjacent to transit stops
- Limited sight distance
- Difficult turning movements
- Frequent near misses

Sharing these observations with local governments, metropolitan planning organizations, counties, and KDOT helps improve roadway safety for everyone.



Safer Vehicles: Safe, reliable vehicles are essential to public transportation. Preventive maintenance, regular inspections, tire and brake maintenance, and prompt repairs reduce the likelihood of mechanical failures. Modern vehicle technologies—including

Automatic Emergency Braking (AEB), Lane Departure Warning (LDW), Electronic Stability Control (ESC), backup cameras, pedestrian detection systems, and collision warning systems—provide additional layers of protection that complement safe driving practices.



Safer Speeds: Speed greatly influences crash severity. This is particularly important in rural Kansas, where many transit trips occur on higher-speed highways and county roads. Transit agencies can support safer speeds by:

- Developing realistic schedules
- Reinforcing defensive driving
- Using telematics or driver feedback programs
- Adjusting driving practices for weather, roadway, and passenger conditions

Safe speeds are not simply about obeying speed limits—they involve selecting speeds appropriate for the surrounding environment.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



Post-Crash Care: The Safe System Approach recognizes that crashes may still occur despite preventive efforts. Effective emergency response reduces injury severity and improves outcomes. Transit agencies should regularly review:

- Emergency communication procedures
 - Passenger evacuation protocols
 - Incident reporting procedures
 - Coordination with emergency responders
 - First aid and emergency preparedness training
- Prepared employees are better equipped to protect passengers during unexpected events.

WHY THE SAFE SYSTEM APPROACH MATTERS FOR RURAL KANSAS?



Figure 2 - Just south of Manhattan, KS in the valley of the Flint Hills at sunrise; Photo credits: Luke Townsend; Source: The Counter

Kansas has one of the nation's largest rural roadway networks, connecting hundreds of communities across the state. Rural transit agencies often travel long distances while serving passengers who rely on transit for essential services. These trips frequently involve:

- Higher-speed highways
- Limited roadway lighting
- Wildlife crossings
- Agricultural equipment
- Severe weather conditions
- Longer emergency response times

These conditions can increase the severity of crashes when they occur. At the same time, rural transit serves many vulnerable populations, including older adults, individuals with disabilities, veterans, and people without access to personal vehicles. For these riders, transit provides access to healthcare, employment, education, grocery stores, pharmacies, and community life. Every safe trip directly contributes to healthier, more connected Kansas communities.

WHAT CAN TRANSIT AGENCIES DO?

Implementing the Safe System Approach does not always require major investments. Many improvements begin with organizational culture. Transit agencies can strengthen safety by:

- Making safety a core organizational value.
- Providing ongoing driver training and refresher courses.
- Reviewing crashes and near misses to identify trends.
- Encouraging employees to report hazards.
- Performing preventive vehicle maintenance.
- Working with local agencies to improve bus stop safety and accessibility.
- Participating in Road Safety Assessments (RSAs) and local safety planning efforts.
- Evaluating new vehicle safety technologies.
- Developing and practicing emergency response plans.

These proactive measures help reduce risk while improving employee confidence and passenger trust.



Figure 3 - Passenger interacting with the bus driver; Source: National RTAP

KANSAS' COMMITMENT TO SAFETY

Kansas has embraced the Safe System Approach through [Drive To Zero \(DTZ\)](#), the state's comprehensive roadway safety initiative. The [2025–2029 Kansas Drive To Zero Plan](#) replaces the former Strategic Highway Safety Plan and organizes statewide efforts around the five Safe System elements: Safer People, Safer Roads, Safer Vehicles, Safer Speeds, and Post-Crash Care. The initiative brings together transportation professionals, law enforcement, emergency responders, public health agencies, local governments, advocacy organizations, and community partners to reduce fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads in Kansas (KDOT, 2025).

Transit agencies are key partners in this effort. Drivers, dispatchers, mechanics, managers, board members, and local officials all contribute to improving safety by identifying risks, maintaining safe operations, and building partnerships within their communities.

Kansas LTAP and RTAP programs support these efforts by providing technical assistance, webinars, peer learning opportunities, and training resources that help transit agencies incorporate Safe System principles into everyday operations. Be sure to check out DTZ webinar series - <https://kutc.ku.edu/drive-zero-webinar-series>

MOVING TOWARD ZERO TOGETHER

The Safe System Approach reminds us that transportation safety is a shared responsibility. No single strategy, agency, or individual can eliminate crashes alone. Instead, safer outcomes result from multiple layers of protection working together—well-trained drivers, safer vehicles, forgiving roadways, appropriate speeds, effective emergency response, and a strong organizational safety culture.



For rural transit agencies across Kansas, embracing the Safe System Approach means more than preventing crashes. It means protecting the people who depend on transit every day, strengthening community mobility, and supporting KDOT's vision of a transportation system where no one loses their life or suffers a serious injury while traveling on Kansas roadways. Every safe trip matters. Every partnership strengthens the system. And every improvement brings Kansas one step closer to a future with zero traffic fatalities and serious injuries.

RESOURCES

- Kansas Department of Transportation. (2025). Kansas Drive To Zero (2025–2029) Plan. <https://www.ksdot.gov/programs/safety-programs/drive-to-zero>
- Kansas Department of Transportation. (2025). Drive To Zero Initiative. <https://www.ksdot.gov/about/our-organization/divisions/transportation-safety/drive-to-zero>
- U.S. Department of Transportation. (2022). National Roadway Safety Strategy. <https://www.transportation.gov/NRSS>
- U.S. Department of Transportation. (2024). What Is a Safe System Approach? <https://www.transportation.gov/safe-system-approach>
- Federal Transit Administration. (2023). National Roadway Safety Strategy. <https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-programs/safety/national-roadway-safety-strategy>

KANSAS RTAP TRAINING, TRAINING RESOURCES AND CONFERENCES

By Anne Lowder, Kansas RTAP

Below are training courses available from Kansas RTAP and other sources through October of this year. If you are interested in hosting a training class, I am still scheduling for 2026. Please contact Anne Lowder at alowder@ku.edu if you would like to host a training course at your agency. 2026 Kansas RTAP Trainings can be found at [KUTC - RTAP](#)

DEFENSIVE DRIVING AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

- 08/05 – Ellsworth
- 08/20 – Dodge City
- 08/27 – Hutchinson
- 09/09 – Newton
- 10/22 – Hutchinson
- 11/19 – Salina
- 12/17 - Hutchinson

DEFENSIVE DRIVING AND PASSENGER ASSISTANCE/ WHEELCHAIR SECUREMENT

- 09/10 – Emporia
- 09/16 – Arkansas City
- 09/17 – Salina
- 09/17 – Wellington
- 09/24 – Hutchinson
- 10/01 – Manhattan
- 10/07 – Emporia
- 10/14 – Garden City
- 10/15 – Dodge City
- 10/21 – Goodland
- 11/19 – Hutchinson

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

Determining ADA Complementary Paratransit Eligibility Virtual Workshop

September 1, 2026 @ 11:00 am – 2:00 pm

[Determining ADA Complementary Paratransit Eligibility Virtual Workshop – Easterseals Project Action](#)

National RTAP: Website Builder Office Hours Virtual Workshop

September 1, 2026 1 p.m.

[Events Calendar | National RTAP](#)

Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) Leading with Emotional Intelligence: Changing Leadership in a changing world Virtual Workshop

September 22, 2026

[Leading with Emotional Intelligence: Changing Leadership in a Changing World – CTAA Training & Certifications Shop](#)

Kansas Public Transit Association Annual Meeting and Expo
Sustaining Rural Transit in Kansas
August 10 -12, 2026
Hutchinson, Kansas

Southwest Transit Association Summer Leadership Lab 2026
September 13-15, 2026
Summer Leadership Lab 2026 - Your Regional Transit Association

APTA 2026 TRANSform and Expo
October 4-7, 2026
Chicago, IL
APTA 2026 TRANSform & Expo - APTA

South West 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, 23026
Miami, FL
Safety and Risk Management Seminar - APTA

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 2026. 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

THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS PROHIBITS DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF RACE, COLOR, ETHNICITY, RELIGION, SEX, NATIONAL ORIGIN, AGE, ANCESTRY, DISABILITY, STATUS AS A VETERAN, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, MARITAL STATUS, PARENTAL STATUS, GENDER IDENTITY, GENDER EXPRESSION AND GENETIC INFORMATION IN THE UNIVERSITY'S PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES. THE FOLLOWING PERSON HAS BEEN DESIGNATED TO HANDLE INQUIRIES REGARDING THE NONDISCRIMINATION POLICIES: DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL OPPORTUNITY AND ACCESS, IOA@KU.EDU, 1246 W. CAMPUS ROAD, ROOM 153A, LAWRENCE, KS, 66045, (785) 864-6414, 711 TTY.

