The Mid-America Regional Council serves as the metropolitan planning organization and nonprofit association of city and county governments for the bistate Kansas City region. Each year, the MARC Board of Directors adopts state legislative platforms to highlight issues of importance to the region for state legislators in Missouri and Kansas.

In addition, most local governments in the Kansas City metro actively support the legislative agendas of state municipal and county leagues. MARC’s regional platform is consistent with those agendas.

GENERAL POLICY POSITIONS

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY

Local Government Home Rule

Effective local government is built on the longstanding principle of home rule that is embedded in many statutory provisions, which enables cities and counties to legislate and determine local affairs. Many state and federal statutory, budgetary and regulatory actions limit the ability of local leaders to make decisions. They often impose financial burdens and impede the ability of local communities to govern themselves. **Recommendation:** Consider the impacts of state statutes and budget decisions on local governments, avoid unfunded requirements, and support the principle of flexible home rule to maximize opportunities for local self-determination.

TRANSPORTATION

New State Transportation Plan and Funding

**Recommendation:** Support the adoption of a new transportation program that provides long-term, stable and committed sources of funding to meet multi-modal needs, including regional priorities.

The Kansas Legislature passed T-WORKS in May 2010 to support continued investment in the state’s transportation system. The Kansas Department of Transportation outlined a $4.3 billion plan to ensure the preservation of the state’s highways and bridges. KDOT is now working with stakeholders on FORWARD KANSAS to raise the necessary resources and implement effective multi-modal transportation program that meets the state and region’s needs.

MARC supports the implementation of an effective multi-modal transportation program aligned with the region’s priorities, measures to encourage regional approaches to public transit and transportation planning, and the practice of long-term multi-year comprehensive transportation programs developed in collaboration with local governments and other stakeholders. State investment in the regional transportation system will facilitate business access to workforce, access to goods and services and access to external markets for local products. A well-funded, well-planned and well-maintained multi-modal transportation system will enhance regional competitiveness by helping attract, retain and grow area businesses.

Automated Vehicles

State legislators must consider the potential opportunities and challenges that early adoption of automated vehicle technologies could offer businesses, residents and communities in Kansas and the
greater Kansas City area. Potential opportunities include enhanced safety and efficiency in highway, freight and public transportation operations. Potential challenges include increased infrastructure maintenance costs, impacts to state and local revenues, new traffic and pedestrian safety concerns and uncertainty about liability and insurance requirements for driverless vehicles. Transportation innovations including autonomous and connected vehicles hold promise to improve safety, decrease operating costs and enhance regional economic competitiveness for key sectors including design professional services, automotive manufacturing and freight and logistics businesses. **Recommendation:** Develop state policies to enable and encourage safe and effective deployment of autonomous and connected vehicles. Policies and regulations should promote local innovation, maintain the integrity of local transportation systems, and be compatible with adjoining states.

**EARLY LEARNING**

**Children’s Initiatives Fund and the Kansas Endowment for Youth Fund**
The Kansas Endowment for Youth Fund (KEY) and Children’s Initiatives Fund (CIF) were created by the Legislature in 1999 and serve as the cornerstone of funding for the Kansas early care and education system. The KEY Fund is designed to serve as an endowment for investments in early education and is funded by annual payments from the Master Tobacco Settlement Agreement. Money flows from the KEY fund into the CIF, and from there is distributed to early childhood programs. This infrastructure has created a successful system that the Kansas Legislature’s own efficiency audit described as a gold standard for government accountability. Maintaining the state’s investment in the CIF and ensuring that all future KEY funds are invested in the CIF will ensure that today’s children will be equipped to lead Kansas toward a more prosperous future. **Recommendation:** Support efforts to protect existing funding for the CIF and KEY funds and work to secure future funding to protect these critical investments in early childhood programs across Kansas.

**ENVIRONMENT**

**Energy Conservation**
Communities in the Kansas City region and throughout the state have adopted energy efficiency initiatives to save money, drive investment, create jobs and reduce environmental impacts. The adoption of a state energy plan should include clean energy generation, and support affordable, reliable energy with opportunities to attract high-paying energy jobs to the state. Continued investment in energy efficiency programs translate into economic returns for the state. Creative implementation of renewable energy and energy efficient technologies offer the potential to create a state and local communities that are environmentally sustainable and economically prosperous. Energy efficiency saves money, drives investment across all sectors of the economy, creates jobs and reduces the environmental impact of energy use. Energy efficiency programs for residential customers include property-assisted clean energy (PACE). **Recommendation:** Support legislation to encourage greater investment in energy conservation and renewable energy and energy efficient technologies.

**EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

Education at the K-12 and college and university levels is changing to better align educational outcomes with the needs of students to become career-ready and to better meet the needs of the region’s employers. **Recommendations:**
- **Support state education policy that encourages school districts to adopt curriculum and teaching methods to help students be ready to enter the workforce, and develop career pathways, internships and apprenticeships aligned to local workforce needs.**
• Support measures to stimulate career, technical, and trade education in the state including STEM education and workforce development initiatives.
• Support policy to enable high school students to gain college credit and/or postsecondary certifications and training at any public and not-for-profit institutions in the Kansas City area that offer appropriate programming to support their career interests.

SPECIFIC LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY

Streamline Sales Tax
Local governments are being impacted by the increasing use of online sales for goods and services, and a corresponding decrease in sales at retail store locations. A number of states have allowed for sales taxes to be applied to online sales based on the delivery address for purchased goods.
Recommendation: Support legislation to allow for collection of sales tax for online retail purchases.

Alternative Property Valuation
The Mid-America Regional Council supports the position of local governments to ensure a fair and consistent approach to the appraisal of property values, and further supports proven techniques to value commercial properties at their highest and best use. Property valuation should be based on fair-market value as currently defined in Kansas statute. MARC opposes caps in property valuations as unconstitutional and inequitable.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation Safety
Safety is a growing concern among transportation professionals, law enforcement and others. The legislature is urged to address a number of safety issues in 2020, including: retain the current 75 mph speed limit (not increasing it); amend current law to include liability protection for Child Passenger Safety Technicians and their agencies; support helmets for children under 18 years of age using ATVs; and encourage attentive driving.

EARLY LEARNING

Child Care Subsidies
One of the primary obstacles to keeping parents in the workforce is the availability of affordable child care. If Kansas children do not have child care, their parents cannot work. Without access to child care assistance, many low-income working parents must choose between their work and the wellbeing of their children. The average annual cost of infant care in Kansas is $11,222. Infant care costs 28.4% more per year than in-state tuition for a four-year public college. In FY 2018, Kansas received a historic $19.2 million increase in Child Care Development Block Grant funding. With this funding, Kansas raised the subsidy reimbursement rate from the 40th percentile of 2014 markets to the 65th percentile of 2017 markets. However, subsidy reimbursement rates for providers in many regions of the state are still below 75% of the actual market rates for child care. These lower rates make it difficult for providers to serve subsidy eligible children and nearly impossible for many low-income families to access quality child care programs for their children. Recommendations: (1) Increase the child care reimbursement rate for child care subsidies to 75 percent of the current market rate; and (2) Reduce barriers to subsidy access through modification of eligibility requirements.
**Expand Access to Quality Home Visiting Programs:**
Research shows high quality home visiting programs provide parents with children under the age of five with parenting support and child development knowledge help prepare children for school at a time when the child’s brain is developing at its most rapid pace. Although recent changes now allow the Parents as Teachers (PAT) program to serve more families, budget cuts over the past decade have restricted PAT and other quality home visiting programs from reaching all the families that could benefit from these vital services.  
*Recommendation: Support efforts to expand funding for high quality home visiting programs to increase access for more Kansas families.*

**HEALTH AND MEDICAL**

**Support the Expansion of Health Care Insurance Coverage**
Fourteen states — including Kansas — have not expanded Medicaid under the terms of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). In 2017, the Kansas Legislature passed a Medicaid expansion bill that was vetoed by then-Governor Sam Brownback. The Kansas House passed a bill in 2019 to expand Medicaid, but the Senate did not take action. It is estimated by the Kansas Health Institute that nearly 130,000 Kansans (including 90,000 adults and 40,000 children) would enroll in KanCare if Medicaid is expanded, an increase of 31 percent in the number of program enrollees. Of the projected new enrollees, about 75,000 were previously uninsured, while about 55,000 were already insured and expected to switch to KanCare.  
*Expand Medicaid coverage to increase health care access for low and moderate income residents that are not currently covered by the program.*

**Remove ambulance services from KanCare as a step to seek to qualify for a GEMT Medicaid Supplement program**
Currently, ground ambulance services are paid by the KanCare insurance companies using the Medicaid rates set by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. However, there are different rules with each company making the process cumbersome and time consuming without any savings to Kansas due to the nature of the ground ambulance operations. The payment structure for an EMS agency is limited and the KanCare insurance companies deal with many transactions of relatively small payments. Ground ambulance services would benefit through a simplified and singular billing process instead of the variations between the three KanCare providers as well as KDHE. The key benefit to the ground ambulance services is that presently CMS will not allow Kansas to utilize any of the Medicaid supplement programs that currently are available to EMS agencies, which could lead to increased payment rates without any cost to Kansas. Around the nation, many states have gotten CMS approval to use either a Certified Public Expenditure (CPE), an Intergovernmental Transfer (IGT) or a Federal Reimbursement Allowance (FRA or also known as a provider tax such as what the Kansas hospitals and nursing homes presently use under Kansas law).Removing the ground ambulance services from the KanCare program would allow KDHE to establish a program that will benefit the ambulance services in Kansas over $9 million/year.  
*Recommendation: Remove ambulance services from KanCare and enable KDHE to provide direct reimbursement under Medicaid so that ground ambulance services may pursue a Medicaid supplement program and allow for more reasonable Medicaid rates for Kansas ground ambulance services.*

**Support proper funding of Trauma program**
In 2014 dedicated funding for the Trauma program was shifted to other state programs leaving the program with a pending shortfall. It is estimated that the program will run out of funds in 2020 or 2021.  
*Recommendation: We urge KDHE to restore the minimum funding provided prior to the 2014 cuts and
consider steps to initiate efforts to better support the inclusion of all hospitals in the trauma program.

Public Health Funding
The state of Kansas provides little state funding to support local public health departments. The funding is important to ensure that the public’s health is protected from disease outbreaks and that the public’s health is improved through preventive programs and services. *Recommendation: Increase financial support for local public health.*

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
Dual Credit and Dual Enrollment Access
There is a need to increase opportunities for high school students to earn college credit hours from public or nonprofit postsecondary institutions in the Kansas City area. *Recommendation: Support legislation to allow qualifying students to seek state financial aid for college courses taken prior to high school graduation, and support policy changes that would simplify the current process for certifying teachers to teach these dual credit courses and improve access by removing geographic restrictions.*