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.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation Funding
State legislators must address the issue of insufficient revenues at the state level to meet Missouri’s multi-modal transportation needs. This includes taking steps to protect the integrity of current state funding and working to identify new resources for highway, major roadway and bridge infrastructure, public transit, bicycle, pedestrian and aviation needs across the state and in the Kansas City metro area. In 2017, the General Assembly adopted HCR 47, which established the 21st Century Missouri Transportation System Task Force. From the 21st Century Transportation System Task Force report: "Providing cost-effective multimodal options for Missouri businesses and residents would add efficiency and resiliency to our state’s economy. Even a small investment of about $80 million (about $1.55 per month per driver) would allow MoDOT to give attention to transit, railroads, waterways, bike/pedestrian facilities, airports, and more. Expanding the state’s portfolio of transportation is an inexpensive way of attracting and retaining new and existing residents and businesses, especially as transportation preferences shift in new directions." **Recommendation: Identify additional resources in addition to the gas tax to address the state’s growing transportation needs, including funds for public transit.**

Automated Vehicles ★★★ Priority Issue
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 Missouri. 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 in both Missouri and Kansas.**
Transportation Safety
There is increasing support to address the use of wireless devices by drivers, and the General Assembly is encouraged to **pass legislation that will restrict use of wireless phones to hands-free technology and broaden restriction on texting while driving to apply to drivers of all ages.** Other safety issues: **support a primary seat belt law; maintain current law requiring helmet use for motorcycles; and strengthen protections for transit operators from workplace violence.**

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.**

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.**

EARLY LEARNING

Child Care Subsidies ★★★ Priority Issue
Quality early learning is critical to helping children to be ready to enter kindergarten and thrive in school and in life. Access to quality child care creates a more productive workplace as well. Parents who trust that their child is well cared for while they are working and who have access to quality, reliable child care are more productive employees and are less likely to miss work due to child care concerns. But the cost of child care can be prohibitive for many parents. In 2016, the average annual cost of full-time care for an infant in a Missouri child care center was $8,632. This is 7.9 percent more than the annual cost of in-state tuition for four-year public college. In order to help parents work and to provide children with safe, quality child care, Missouri provides child care assistance to qualifying families based on income. Without this assistance, quality child care options would be out of reach for many of Missouri’s most at-risk families. Nationwide, the average income eligibility for child care is 180 percent of the federal poverty level. Eligibility for Missouri’s child care assistance program has long been lower than most other states, ranking 49th in 2014. Although lawmakers did increase eligibility levels, Missouri still lags behind most other states, including most neighboring states. In addition, subsidy reimbursement rates for providers in many regions of the state are still below 75 percent of the actual market rates for child care. These lower rates make it difficult for providers to serve subsidy-eligible children, making it nearly impossible for many low-income families to access quality child care programs for their children. **Recommendation: Support efforts to increase the income eligibility rate for families who qualify for child care subsidies up to 185 percent of the Federal Poverty Level and increase the child care reimbursement rate for child care subsidies up to 75 percent of the current market rate.**
Voluntary Pre-K Community Provider Partnerships ★★★ Priority Issue
The Missouri General Assembly passed HB 1689 in 2014, which provides state funding to districts and charters through the state finance formula for public pre-K education. The Pre-K funding is for children ages 3 and 4 eligible for free/reduced lunch. Funding is capped at 4 percent of the districts’ and charters’ total number of pupils who are eligible for free/reduced lunch. Last year, the Missouri General Assembly provided funding for fully funding the foundation formula allowing for all school districts to access Pre-K funding starting in 2018. Concerns have been raised by many community-based providers across the state that expansion of Pre-K without provisions allowing school districts and charters to contract with community-based providers will force many providers to close their doors. Since many of these providers rely on their preschool services to help offset the higher cost to provide infant and toddler care, there is a concern this will only worsen the current shortage of infant and toddler care in many communities across the state. **Recommendation:** Support legislation that will allow public school districts and charter schools to contract with community-based child care providers for Pre-K services funded through the foundation formula.

Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) ★★★ Priority Issue
Quality Rating and Improvement Systems provide a framework for a comprehensive early childhood system by measuring and setting benchmarks for quality; developing infrastructure to provide targeted and coordinated quality improvement supports to programs; and providing families with useful information to help them make informed child care choices. In 2017 Missouri passed legislation to develop and pilot an early learning quality assurance report. While the legislation was passed it only included support for a limited pilot program and did not include funding to provide quality improvement supports which are critical to the success of a QRIS program. **Recommendation:** Support efforts to fund the development and full implementation of a QRIS program.

Expand Access to Quality Home Visiting Programs
Research shows high quality home visiting programs, like Parents as Teachers, provide parents with children under the age of five with parenting support and child development knowledge to help prepare children for school at a time when the child’s brain is developing at its most rapid pace. Budget cuts over the past decade have restricted PAT and other quality home visiting programs from reaching all the Missouri families that could benefit from these vital services. **Recommendation:** Support efforts to expand funding for PAT and other high quality home visiting programs to increase access for more Missouri families.

Child Care Regulations
Missouri currently has some of the most lenient laws regarding in-home family child care programs in the nation. Under Missouri law, in-home child care providers with four or fewer children are not required to be licensed. These in-home child care providers are allowed to care for an unlimited number of additional children that are related within the third degree. Each year in Missouri, dozens of children are injured or in some cases die in unregulated in-home settings due to lack of adequate supervision. Eliminating the related-child exemption for younger children would make these environments safer for the states’ youngest children and more closely align Missouri with the majority of states nationwide. Most of Missouri’s surrounding states require related children who are younger than school age to be counted. Kansas and Oklahoma requires every child to be counted, while Illinois allows just one related child to be exempted from the count. **Recommendation:** Support efforts to strengthen health and safety standards for unlicensed in-home child care providers.
PUBLIC SAFETY

**Missouri 911 ★★★ Priority Issue**

In 2018, the Missouri General Assembly passed HR1456, which enables counties to seek voter approval for a fee on all devices capable of calling 911 and establishes a state grant fund with the fee on pre-paid wireless services to support improving 911 systems in small and rural counties. In the last days of the session, changes were made to the bill to enable broad legislator support. Several changes have created challenges for some counties, and minor items require attention in 2019, including removing a provision that allows counties that passed sales taxes for 911 instead of a surcharge on communications devices to be able to ask their voters to renew the sales tax if required by the previous voter action.

**Recommendation:** Support minor changes to the 911 law to enable effective implementation.

ENVIRONMENT

**Solid Waste and Recycling**

The MARC Solid Waste Management District is one of 20 such districts in Missouri charged to supporting local communities to increase waste reduction and recycling to reduce the material going to landfills.

**Recommendation:** Continue support for solid waste management districts in Missouri in order to protect local government rights to develop and implement local and regional integrated solid waste management systems and strategies, including waste disposal and materials diversion facilities and services, which are designed to protect human health and the environment and to maximize waste reduction and diversion.

HEALTH AND MEDICAL

**Time-Critical Diagnosis (TCD) ★★★ Priority Issue**

The TCD program provides for the rapid recognition of stroke, heart attacks (STEMI) and serious trauma by EMS services and hospitals. MARCER, the regional committee for EMS and hospital coordination, played a leadership role to establish the Missouri TCD program. The original legislation passed in 2008 was ground breaking in the nation as an effort to assure all patients with these critical problems rapid and effective management no matter where they are in Missouri. There are numerous medical studies that have demonstrated that a statewide system approach has a dramatic impact on the outcome of these patients. The Missouri TCD law sets up a system where the ambulance services will identify and rapidly transport patients to hospitals that have been previously designated based upon the resources and personnel they have to treat these specialized situations. The hospitals are designated at differing levels and the various regions of the state have developed plans to pre-determine where these patients will be taken to expedite care. The whole concept is based upon getting the right patient to the right hospital rapidly. The legislature approved a budget in the last session that included $155,000 for the TCD hospital assessment and trauma designation process. The Governor vetoed that line item.

**Recommendation:** Support funding to continue the Time Critical Diagnosis Program with certification of hospitals as trauma centers.

**Support the Expansion of Health Care Insurance Coverage**

**Recommendation:** Expand Medicaid coverage to increase health care access for low and moderate income residents that are not currently covered by the program.
Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (Registry for Opioids)
Missouri is one of a few states that do not have a drug monitoring program for physicians to check on opioid prescriptions for patients prior to issuing additional prescriptions. **Recommendation: Support the creation of a statewide prescription registry for opioids for use by physicians.**

Public Health Funding
**Recommendation: Increase financial support for local public health.**

Funding for Older Adult Services
MARC is the Area Agency on Aging, and provides a number of services to older adults including home delivered meals that are supported with state and federal funds. The state has reduced its support for these programs, which are experiencing substantial increases in demand as the number of older adults grows. **Recommendation: Increase state funding to Area Agencies on Aging for home delivered meals and other services.**

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
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 that offer programming that supports their career interests, including skilled trades. **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.**