

## 2023 STATE POLICY AGENDA MID-AMERICA REGIONAL COUNCIL

The Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) 2023 policy agenda offers broad policy statements aligned with the organization’s seven program areas: Efficient Transportation and Quality Places; Healthy Environment; Safe and Secure Communities; Thriving Older Adults and Communities; Effective Local Government; Quality Early Learning; and Competitive Economy.

This policy agenda, approved by the MARC Board of Directors in October 2022, enables MARC to speak out on legislation or state policy proposals that could impact the greater Kansas City area. Many issues are similar for both the states of Missouri and Kansas. Where differences exist, the policy statements are noted for each state.

### Efficient Transportation and Quality Places

**MARC’s role** is to advance regional plans for a safe, balanced and equitable transportation system. MARC prepares a Long-Range Transportation Plan every five years to guide the investment of federal, state and local funds. In 2022, MARC worked with state and local governments and transit operators to program the use of over \$100 million in federal funds for transportation projects and plans. Other transportation plans address transportation safety, active transportation and transportation equity. MARC also supports the operations of a regional traffic signal system, Operation Green Light; helped small Missouri communities with a pavement overlay project in 2022; and supports residents with transportation options through RideshareKC.

**Funding:** Maintain existing funding programs to address the states’ growing transportation needs and ensure that the Kansas City region receives appropriate resources as a major economic hub for both states. Recognize that projects previously approved for funding may need additional resources due to rising material and labor costs.

**Missouri:** Maintain existing resources, including motor fuel taxes and vehicle registration fees, to support highway needs in Missouri. Support expanded funding for multimodal needs, including public transit, ports and freight, and bicycle and pedestrian safety.

**Kansas:** Preserve and strengthen the Eisenhower Legacy Transportation Program in Kansas to address multi-modal needs.

**Energy Efficiency:** Encourage adoption of fuel-efficient and zero-emission vehicles to improve air quality and increase climate resilience. Include recommendations from [Connected KC 2050](#) and the [Kansas City Regional Climate Action Plan](#).

**Transportation Safety:** Support transportation safety legislation and regulations to reduce crashes, injuries and fatalities.

**Missouri:** Ensure safe driving practices by restricting use of wireless phones and texting for drivers of all ages. Support other safety measures around the primary seat belt law and safety for transit operators.

**Kansas:** Ensure safe driving practices by restricting the use of wireless phones to hands-free technology; maintain current speed limits on highways rather than increase speeds, and support helmet use for ATV riders under 18 years of age.

**New and Emerging Transportation Technologies:** Enable 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.

## HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

**MARC's role** is to develop and implement initiatives that help keep the region's air and water clean, reduce the amount of waste sent to landfills, protect and conserve green infrastructure, advance energy efficiency and renewable energy, and catalyze climate resilience.

**Energy Conservation and Renewable Energy:** Encourage greater investment in energy conservation, renewable energy and energy-efficient technologies. Encourage investments in energy-efficient housing and building energy retrofits through strategies such as green banks, lender education programs and utility partnerships.

**Solid Waste and Recycling:** Support policies and regulations that enable local governments to address solid waste and recycling in ways that respond to their community's needs.

**Missouri:** Continue support for solid waste management districts in order to protect local government rights to develop and implement local and regional integrated solid waste management systems and strategies, including maximizing waste disposal and materials diversion facilities and services, which are designed to protect human health and the environment. Avoid legislation to preempt or erode the ability of local governments to address solid waste challenges, such as plastic bag bans, bag fees and other waste management policies, without involvement by local governments in drafting legislation—and when such legislation would create a more effective and beneficial statewide program. Ensure that those who manufacture, design, consume or sell products are also responsible for minimizing the product's environmental impact throughout all stages of the product's life cycle, including end-of-life management (product stewardship).

**Water Resource Protection/Climate Adaptation/Hazard Mitigation:** Encourage the development of state and local plans and support investments in infrastructure to build climate and economic resilience and ensure that residents and businesses are protected from the risk of loss of life or damage to property due to more extreme weather conditions. Expand green infrastructure, native landscaping, tree plantings and local food production to reduce stormwater runoff and urban heat islands, protect water resources and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

**Air Quality:** Support the Kansas City region’s efforts to reduce ozone and fine particulate matter (PM2.5) pollution and maintain its status as a clean air region.

## **SAFE AND SECURE COMMUNITIES**

**MARC’s role** is to manage the ongoing operation, maintenance and state-of-the-art enhancement of the regional 911 system, and coordination of the region’s interoperable communications system. MARC works with local agencies to strengthen the region’s emergency services, health and medical and homeland security capabilities to prevent, protect, prepare, respond and recover with coordinated plans and high-quality training, exercises, technology and specialized equipment.

**911:** Support the ability of local communities to work together to maintain local control of the 911 system and 911 taxes for both wireline and wireless communications. The Kansas City metropolitan region has built a high-quality 911 emergency call system, with state-of-the-art equipment, trained call-takers and efficient use of resources to upgrade, maintain and operate the system.

**Public Health:** Continue to support funding to local public health agencies and avoid limitations to local capabilities to respond to disease or other public health emergencies. Local public health services are critical to healthy residents and communities. While each local public health department offers different programs and support based on the needs of their service area, all public health agencies focus on disease prevention and spread and health education.

**Emergency Medical Services (EMS):** Support reimbursement payments and program regulations that enable EMS agencies to provide the highest quality pre-emergency care. Consider Medicaid reimbursement for EMS services to more closely match Medicare payments. Support EMS agencies to establish community paramedic programs to improve care to patients in their homes, reduce the need for costly transports and save scarce hospital emergency room resources. EMS agencies in the Kansas City area work closely with one another, both within their home state and across the state line. EMS agencies rely on public and private insurance payments to cover operating costs.

**Missouri:** Support regulations that enable EMS agencies to ensure quality Trauma and Time Critical Diagnosis programs and support personnel in their stressful work environment. Ensure programs to provide quality pre-hospital emergency care are designed for the Kansas City region's work environment.

**988/Opioid Settlement/Mental Health:** The national 988 program launched on July 16, 2022, and agencies across the nation, including in Kansas and Missouri, are answering more calls in response to suicide and behavioral health crises. Support the full implementation of the essential elements of an integrated crisis system, including 988 call centers, mobile crisis response teams and crisis stabilization facilities. Focus opioid settlement and federal resources to reduce deaths from opioids and heroin by expanding behavioral health services for children, youth and adults and implementing harm reduction programs.

**Medicaid:** Health insurance is important to communities to support a healthy population.

**Kansas:** Authorize the expansion of Medicaid in Kansas.

**Homeland Security:** Grant local governments maximum flexibility and discretion over implementation of monies and strategies regarding homeland security. First responders at the local level serve as the front-line defense in the prevention and response to terrorism and other security risks.

## **THRIVING OLDER ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES**

**MARC's role** is to strengthen support systems for the region's most vulnerable residents, including older adults and underserved populations and create communities that support healthy living and active lifestyles. MARC serves as the Area Agency on Aging for the five Missouri counties, receiving Older American Act funds to support services, including home delivered and congregate meals, transportation, in-home services, an information and referral phone line, and minor home modifications. In addition, MARC supports a Community Support Network to assess patients' needs and deliver specific services, such as meals and transportation, to improve their health outcomes. MARC implements nutrition incentive programs to help individuals and families maximize the use of SNAP resources by purchasing fresh produce.

**Funding for Older Adult Programs:** Provide additional funding and flexibility for regional and local agencies to respond to specific needs within their service areas.

**Missouri:** The increasing number of older adults, including the number of vulnerable and frail older adults, requires services to remain in the community. The Missouri Senior Services Growth and Development Program requires funding to allow the Area Agencies on Aging to

support the infrastructure and technology needed to scale programs and services to the growing population. A funding cliff is anticipated after federal COVID-19 relief dollars are exhausted.

**Maintain Programs for Older Adults:** Restore programs important to older adult health and well-being that have been demonstrated to be effective.

**Missouri:** Restore funding for the state’s RX Program, offering assistance to older adults where their health insurance coverage was inadequate to meet their prescription costs.

**Kansas:** The state should continue to support the Rural Transportation Program through KDOT, which helps older adults with essential support in securing services.

**Food Security:** Continue to support enrollment in the federal SNAP and WIC programs to enable low-income families and seniors to afford healthy food.

**Missouri:** The state should continue strong support of statewide home-delivered meals infrastructure enhancements.

**Community Health Workers (CHWs):** Support expansion of the use of CHWs, front-line workers who are part of a health care team, by health care organizations to help patients with chronic diseases address social determinants of health and improve health outcomes. Support the reimbursement of CHW services by Medicaid.

## EFFECTIVE LOCAL GOVERNMENT

<p><b>MARC’s role</b> is to provide high-quality training and technical assistance services to local governments and develop collaborative efforts and shared services to help cities and counties work more efficiently and effectively. Emerging issues for cooperation among local government and community leadership are affordable housing and broadband/digital equity.</p>
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**Local Government Authority and Finances:** Address the needs of the Kansas City region by allocating American Rescue Plan (ARP) and other federal COVID-19 relief funds with attention to supporting regional projects and programs that most efficiently administer resources across jurisdictional boundaries. Maintain home rule authority for local governments. As state governments consider the allocation of federal funds, the needs of the Kansas City metro area should be considered. The Kansas City area is an economic hub for both states.

**Affordable Housing:** Support policy and innovative strategies to achieve safe, stable and attainable housing. Enable local jurisdictions to dedicate public funds to support the development, rehabilitation and preservation of attainable housing. Support the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program for the acquisition, rehabilitation and construction of rental

housing for lower-income households. Support policy and innovative strategies that lower the cost of housing through energy efficiency and transportation improvements.

**Broadband/Digital Access:** Support investments by state broadband offices in the use of federal funds to ensure that the Kansas City region—including urban, suburban and rural areas—has high-quality broadband infrastructure. Support investments by state broadband offices in the use of federal funds to support digital access to low-income households for education, employment, telehealth, civic engagement and social interaction through support for devices, internet connections and digital training.

## QUALITY EARLY LEARNING

The greater Kansas City regional early learning system is comprised of interconnected components that converge to help young children thrive. **MARC's role** is to provide leadership and coordination for a robust early learning system centered on strong families, quality programs, qualified workforce and a supportive community context.

**Strong Families:** Increase access to evidence-based home visitation programs.

**Quality Programs:** Reduce barriers to childcare subsidy access and increase child care subsidy reimbursement rates.

**Qualified Workforce:** Support strategies to develop a pipeline of human capital, including recruitment, retention and increased funding to support higher compensation.

**Supportive Community Context:** Maintain existing funding and work to secure future funding to protect critical investments in early learning programs.

## COMPETITIVE ECONOMY

**MARC's role** is to help lead regional partnerships to enhance the performance of the metropolitan economy and expand inclusive economic opportunity, focusing on workforce development systems, postsecondary educational attainment, and producing data and analysis for economic recovery and resiliency efforts. MARC works closely with KC Rising, a partnership of the Civic Council of Greater Kansas City, Kansas City Area Development Council, the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce and MARC. MARC convenes two regional groups quarterly: the Regional Workforce Intelligence Network (RWIN), composed of workforce and economic development professionals, and GradForce KC, composed of K-12 and post-secondary education and workforce professionals.

**Education and Post-Secondary Opportunities:** It is important that the states continue to invest in the region’s higher education institutions so that the region produces the talent needed to support economic growth and help residents achieve economic success. State policy should allow qualifying high school 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. Support measures to assist and incentivize competency-based education, including the Real-World Learning model piloted in the greater Kansas City area; development of career pathways, internships and apprenticeships aligned to local workforce needs; and dedicated funding for career and technical center cooperatives and innovation centers.

**Missouri:** Support funding and requirements of Access Missouri and Missouri A+ Scholars programs to ensure that low-income students can better afford post-secondary education.

**Workforce Development:** Continue to provide support for state apprenticeship offices to assist employers in employing and training workers to earn while learning, enabling them to progress toward careers with good-paying jobs. Support state funding for programs that help increase apprenticeships, workplace readiness, adult education and workforce certification programs.

**Missouri:** Support a statewide adult learner network and scholarship support for adults to pursue credentials from two- and four-year institutions and fill in-demand jobs.