

2025 State Policy Agenda Mid-America Regional Council

About MARC

The Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) is the association of city and county governments and metropolitan planning organization (MPO) serving the bi-state Kansas City region, including Cass, Clay, Jackson, Platte and Ray counties in Missouri and Johnson, Leavenworth, Miami and Wyandotte counties in Kansas. MARC brings together local officials, nonprofit organizations, economic development organizations and other groups to address an efficient and equitable transportation system; a healthy environment; support for vulnerable older adults; a strong early learning system for families and the economy; a competitive economy; safe, secure and healthy communities; affordable housing to meet a range of needs; and efficient local government services.

About this policy platform

This policy platform represents a consensus of policy positions and priorities of the Kansas City region as discussed and discerned in various committees, working groups and public engagement forums supported by MARC. It is approved by the elected leaders comprising the MARC Board of Directors as a statement of regional consensus and does not necessarily reflect the views of individual board members.

The Missouri General Assembly and the Kansas State Legislature are encouraged to consider the following critical needs in the Kansas City region as they deliberate policy issues and appropriate funds in fiscal year 2025.

Local government authority

The Mid-America Regional Council supports the ability of local governments, school districts and other special districts governed by local elected officials to make decisions for their communities, particularly tax and revenue decisions, to ensure efficient, effective and quality operations, infrastructure and other investments.

Local governments provide critical infrastructure and services to residents and businesses. States have granted cities and counties the ability to establish policies and regulations under home rule provisions to raise and expend resources, provide services and otherwise meet the needs of their communities. However, states have taken legislative action in recent years to limit local government home rule authority by preempting local regulatory powers. In addition, states have enacted rules to limit local government tax and expenditure abilities while requiring local government actions without accompanying resources.

Efficient transportation

The Kansas City region has an extensive network of highway, bridge and roadway infrastructure and an expanding network of facilities for other modes of transportation. The region supports investing in the safety and integrity of current systems; expanding multi-modal transportation, particularly public transit, to support travel to jobs in suburban locations; lowering household transportation costs and promoting efficient economic growth and development patterns; active transportation to meet both travel and health needs of an expanding population; and freight infrastructure to support a growing logistics industry.

Key policy positions:

- **Transportation safety:** Strengthen policies and funding to improve enforcement, education, engineering and emergency response strategies to eliminate or reduce roadway fatalities and serious injury crashes.
- **Transportation funding:** Maintain existing transportation 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 Missouri and Kansas. Support expanded funding for multi-modal transportation including public transit, active transportation, ports and freight.

Healthy environment

The states' support for a healthy environment includes addressing climate resiliency and energy conservation; solid waste and recycling; water resources; and air quality. The Kansas City region is committed to creating and sustaining a healthy environment.

Key policy positions:

- **Energy conservation and renewable energy:** Encourage 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. Proactively coordinate with local officials to seek federal funds to address energy conservation and renewable energy that align with local priorities. Encourage the state of Missouri to work with local officials in the Kansas City region to implement its federal Solar for All funding to help low-income households increase the comfort and affordability of housing.
- **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. Support the Paint Stewardship Bill, which will provide convenient access for Missouri residents to drop off leftover paint for proper disposal.
- **Water resource protection/climate adaptation/hazard mitigation:** Encourage the development of state and local plans and support investments in infrastructure to protect water resources, 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.

- **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.

Quality early learning

The lack of early childhood services for infants, toddlers and pre-K students, as well as the lack of before- and after-school care for K-8 students, is negatively affecting the states of Missouri and Kansas, including but not limited to employee families and young children. Access to high-quality early learning helps prepare young children to enter kindergarten ready to learn. These educational opportunities support economic growth, safe communities and the development of a skilled workforce.

Key policy positions:

- **Affordable child care:** Reduce barriers to child care subsidy access in Kansas and increase child care subsidy reimbursement rates to the actual cost of quality instead of the market rate model. Increase subsidy income limits so that families pay no more than 7% of their household incomes toward child care, as recommended by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Establish categorical eligibility for child care workers to receive the child care subsidy. Support child care exchanges through grants and tax credits in Missouri.
- **Qualified workforce:** Invest in strategies to develop a pipeline of human capital, including certification and recruitment starting at the secondary level, workforce retention, and funding to support higher wages and increased benefits.
- **Strong families:** Increase access to evidence-based home visitation programs.

Economic development

The states of Missouri and Kansas have identified priority economic development industries for federal and state investment. Funding through large federal grant programs offer the Kansas City region the opportunity to strengthen its economy, benefitting the states in the key areas of biosciences, including animal and human health and biologics; bio-defense; technology and cybersecurity; reshoring of manufacturing and strategic investments in critical minerals; electric vehicles and batteries manufacturing; the innovative health district in Kansas City, Missouri; and transportation and logistics.

Key policy positions:

- **Economic development projects:** Support regional economic development projects in key industries that offer the opportunity to transform regional and state economic prosperity.

- **Secure resources:** Provide state matching resources for regional initiatives to enable securing federal grants consistent with state and federal economic development priorities.

Broadband infrastructure and access

The Kansas City region's economy depends upon reliable, affordable broadband for businesses and residents. While much of the Kansas City region is reasonably well served by existing internet service providers, there are urban, suburban and rural areas with inadequate infrastructure or cost barriers to access. Many anchor institutions (schools, hospitals, libraries, local governments, etc.) lack access to quality broadband for their facilities or lack the resources to connect in ways that enable more efficient operations.

Key policy positions:

- **Address metro area gaps:** Both Missouri and Kansas should invest a portion of federal infrastructure funding to address the needs in the Kansas City region, including urban, suburban and rural areas. Funds should be allocated to support anchor institutions in the region to improve access to reliable, quality broadband and to connect important facilities.
- **Targeted populations:** Both Missouri and Kansas should support digital access for low-income households, older adults and other target populations for education, employment, telehealth, civic engagement and social interaction through resources for devices, internet connections and digital training.

Affordable housing

The Kansas City region, like much of the nation, lacks an adequate supply of affordable housing. State actions could help to address this critical need.

Key policy positions:

- **Local housing development tools:** 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.
- **Low-Income Housing Tax Credit:** Support the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program for the acquisition, rehabilitation and construction of rental housing for lower-income households.
- **Related household expense relief:** Support policy and innovative strategies that lower the cost of housing through energy efficiency and transportation improvements.

Safe, secure and healthy communities

For over 40 years, the Kansas City Regional 911 System has served 2 million people, businesses and visitors, connecting callers to the appropriate public safety agency to provide response. The system has been designed and implemented with state-of-the-art technology and redundant systems to avoid service disruptions. Over 40 public safety agencies, relying on the system across 11 counties in Kansas and Missouri, work together to ensure that system reliability and response serves the public who travel frequently across the state line.

Key policy positions:

- **Local control:** Cities and counties should maintain local control of the 911 system.
- **Next Generation 911:** Continue to support funding that will allow Missouri's emergency communications centers the ability to provide Next Generation 911 to residents and fund the establishment of a statewide emergency services network, which will improve 911 interoperability across the state.

Public health

While each local public health department offers different programs and support based on the needs of their service area, all public health focuses on disease prevention and health education.

Key policy positions:

- **Investment:** Support investment in a strong state and local public health infrastructure to ensure that communities are protected from, and able to respond to, public health threats.
- **Regulatory authority:** Maintain adequate regulatory authority to respond to possible public health emergencies.

Emergency medical services

The Kansas City region has a strong network of emergency medical service (EMS) agencies that work closely with one another.

Key policy positions:

- **Reimbursement payments:** Support reimbursement payments and program regulations that enable EMS agencies to provide the highest quality pre-emergency care.
- **Behavioral health:** Support the integration of the regional EMS system with the developing network of behavioral health centers as part of the overall response to behavioral health patients.
- **Improving care:** In Missouri, support regulations that enable EMS agencies to ensure a quality time-critical diagnosis program. In Kansas, 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.

988/opioid settlement/mental health

After the launch of the national 988 program, agencies across the nation – including in Kansas and Missouri – are answering more calls in response to suicide and behavioral health crises.

Key policy position:

- **Implement crisis system:** Support full implementation of the essential elements of an integrated crisis system, including the 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.

Community health workers

Community health workers have become an important part of the health care system, supporting patients with chronic diseases and those facing barriers due to social determinants of health (such as food and housing insecurity, mental health challenges, and domestic violence).

Key policy position:

- **Reimbursement:** Support allowing agencies that use community health workers to be reimbursed through Medicaid and other public health care programs.

Medicaid

Medical insurance is critical to ensuring that all residents can live healthy, productive lives.

Key policy position:

- **Implementation and expansion:** In Missouri, support full implementation and funding of MO HealthNet and timely review and approval of applications for eligible families and children. In Kansas, authorize the expansion of Medicaid and enable Medicaid reimbursement for community health worker services to connect patients to resources.

Thriving older adults and communities

As residents in the region age, they may require services to remain in the community and in the setting of their choice. This population segment is growing due to the retiring of those from the baby boomer generation and many older adults living longer.

Key policy positions:

- **Responding to older adults:** Support additional funding and flexibility for regional and local agencies to respond to specific needs of older adults within their service areas. In Missouri, maintain and fully fund the Missouri Senior Services Growth and Development Program previously supported by ARPA dollars to serve older adults at risk of abuse.

- **Restore programs:** Restore programs important to older adult health and well-being that have been demonstrated to be effective. In Missouri, restore funding for the Missouri Rx Program, which aids older adults where their health insurance coverage was inadequate to meet prescription costs. Fully fund critical Long-Term Care Ombudsman programs. In Kansas, continue to support the Kansas Rural Transit Assistance Program, which helps older adults in securing services.
- **Food security:** In Missouri, identify additional state funding to fully maintain and expand access to healthy foods and support for local farmers and grocers through the Double Up Food Bucks program. In Kansas, support the Double Up Food Bucks program through funding mechanisms. Continue strong support of statewide congregate and home-delivered meals infrastructure enhancements and food access solutions.