

2026 Federal 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 serving the bistate Kansas City region, including Cass, Clay, Jackson, Platte and Ray counties in Missouri, and Johnson, Leavenworth, Miami and Wyandotte counties in Kansas. In addition to our nine-member counties, many of MARC's programs and services support communities across the two-state area. MARC is governed by a board of locally elected officials, and convenes nonprofit organizations, economic development organizations and other groups to address the priority areas included in this document.

About this policy platform

This policy platform represents a consensus of policy positions and priorities for 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.

Regional councils have the unique ability to efficiently coordinate and plan across jurisdictional boundaries. The federal government depends upon regional councils and metropolitan planning organizations like MARC to distribute and expend federal funds, so they simultaneously achieve federal, state and regional goals.

Congressional support needed to reauthorize federal laws and extend programs

MARC receives federal funds directly from many federal agencies and through Missouri and Kansas state agencies. The largest proportion of the funding received by MARC is sub-granted, or passed through, to local governments, early childhood education providers, nonprofit organizations serving older adults, meal providers for older adults, etc.

Members of Congress are encouraged to reauthorize important federal laws supporting infrastructure, regional and local economies, older adult services and early education. Members of Congress are also asked to consider the critical needs in the Kansas City region as they deliberate policy issues and appropriate funds for these priority areas of concern for fiscal years 2026 and 2027.

MARC 2026 FEDERAL KEY POLICY POSITIONS

Transportation

MARC encourages Congress to support reauthorization of the federal transportation law and for passage of legislation and appropriations that allow for:

- A new five-year federal surface transportation law that supports full funding of the Highway Trust Fund and seeks to improve **all modes of transportation**, including public transit and active transportation, with consideration to regional economic and mobility needs and priorities. Reauthorization of the federal transportation law, which expires Sept. 30, 2026, should also preserve the metropolitan planning organization planning process, with local decision-making.
- Continued efforts to reduce **freight and passenger train** bottlenecks throughout the nation, including support for the national rail passenger network.
- Expanded funding and access to expertise **for planning, designing, building policy and infrastructure frameworks** induced by the expanding use of electric, connected and autonomous vehicles.

Environment

MARC encourages Congress to support legislation and appropriations that allow for:

- Reauthorization and modernization of the **Federal Flood Insurance Program**, including new mapping of the 100-year floodplain.
- Support for **system improvements to water and wastewater infrastructure** that are essential for local communities to ensure adequate water quality and supply.
- Approval of funding for **flood control and watershed planning** and projects as outlined by the Missouri and Associated Rivers Network through the Water Resources Development Act.
- Support for **energy conservation and balanced energy sources** that enhance our region's quality of life and lower energy costs for residents and businesses.
- Support policies and resources for **clean air** to protect public health and maintain regional economic competitiveness.

Economic development

MARC encourages Congress to support legislation and appropriations that allow for:

- Continued resources for the **Economic Development Administration (EDA) and federal investment in regional economies** that result in stronger economies, better paying jobs, more widely shared economic benefits and less dependency upon federal resources in the future.
- **EDA and National Science Foundation grants for investments in emerging industries** in the Kansas City region, in particular **biosciences and critical minerals**.
- Resources for the Kansas City region as a host city to address safety and security requirements and transportation system needs to **fully support the 2026 World Cup**.

Data

MARC encourages Congress to support legislation and appropriations that allow for:

- **Funding of the federal statistical agencies** to enable them to continue to provide the high-quality data needed by businesses, individuals, nonprofits and governments.

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- Funding for the **Census Bureau** to complete the **Local Update of Census Addresses** for the 2030 Census to ensure that all homes in new developments and redeveloped areas are included for a complete count.

Public health

MARC encourages Congress to support legislation and appropriations that allow for:

- Continued **support for public health disease surveillance, epidemiology and lab capacity**; the capacity to **prepare for and respond to all hazards**; and programs to reduce health disparities and promote optimal health.

Homeland Security, emergency services and public safety

MARC encourages Congress to support legislation and appropriations that allow for:

- The continued designation of the Kansas City region as an Urban Area Security Initiative area for **annual homeland security funding**.
- Support reimbursement through Medicare and Medicaid to support local EMS agencies in **providing cost-effective emergency response, preventive care and non-emergency services**.
- Support the **911 SAVES Act** to reclassify public safety telecommunicators from clerical to protective service occupation.
- Support the **National Telecommunications and Information Administration Organization Act** for further deployment and coordination of Next Generation 911.

Early education

MARC encourages Congress to support legislation and appropriations that allow for:

- **Increased funding for Head Start** to serve more eligible children with comprehensive services and enhance support for the Head Start workforce. MARC operates the Mid-America Head Start program, serving 2,400 children and their families in Jackson, Clay and Platte counties. The five-year grant was awarded in 2023.
- Full funding for the **Child Care and Development Grant Program** to help low-income working households return to or remain in the labor force.
- Continued funding for **Preschool Development Grants** to allow states to implement improvements to their systems.
- Continued funding for the **Refugee Family Childcare Microenterprise Development Program**.

Older adults

MARC encourages Congress to support legislation and appropriations that allow for:

- **Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act** to modernize and streamline its implementation to enable Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) to focus on the unique needs of their planning and service areas. MARC is the AAA serving the region's five Missouri counties. Increased funding is needed to meet the needs of the growing older adult population.
- Resources for **wrap-around services for AAAs and caregiver supports** that are fundamental for healthy aging and options to age in place.

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- Increase funding for **nutrition and medically tailored meals** to offset provider food costs, address food insecurity and promote chronic disease self-management.
- Community Care Hubs to provide in-home and community resources.

Food security

MARC encourages Congress to support legislation and appropriations that allow for:

- **Reauthorization of the Farm Bill** to include support for farmers and food security programs, including the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program.
- Maintaining important **federal nutrition programs** for the health of children and families and older adults with limited incomes.

Housing

MARC encourages Congress to support legislation and appropriations that enable local communities to increase the supply of housing:

- **Housing for low-income people and families** while encouraging cross-jurisdictional collaboration and innovation for housing programs.
- **Attainable housing, including both homeowners and renters.**
- **Housing for unhoused people and families**, victims of domestic violence and veterans.

Workforce development

MARC encourages Congress to support legislation and appropriations that allow for:

- Reauthorization of the **Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act** with particular focus on helping workforce boards assist businesses in finding and training potential job seekers with skills to meet the local economy's needs.
- Reauthorization of the **Higher Education Act** to invest in community college-business partnerships. Support federal loans for post-secondary programs that enable those 18 years and older to pursue health care, technology and other degrees to meet workforce needs in communities throughout the nation.
- **Modernize and expand apprenticeship programs** and ensure sufficient funding for workforce systems to assist businesses in the development and implementation of such programs.
- **Expand Pell Grant eligibility** to cover high-quality, short-term credential programs, and increase funding for career and technical education and adult basic education.