

2026 FEDERAL POLICY AGENDA

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. This includes Cass, Clay, Jackson, Platte and Ray counties in Missouri, and Johnson, Leavenworth, Miami and Wyandotte counties in Kansas. In addition, 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 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 on regional councils and metropolitan planning organizations like MARC to distribute and expend federal funds, so they simultaneously achieve both federal and regional goals.

MARC receives funds from many federal and state agencies. The largest proportion of the funding MARC receives is sub-granted, or passed through, to local governments, early childhood education providers, nonprofit organizations that serve older adults, groups that provide meals for older adults, and other partners.

Identified needs for the Kansas City region

In 2026, MARC encourages members of Congress to reauthorize important federal laws that support infrastructure, regional and local economies, older adult services, and early education. Following are policy positions adopted by the MARC Board of Directors on these and other issues of particular interest to the Kansas City region:

TRANSPORTATION

MARC encourages Congress to support the renewal of **the federal surface transportation authorizing legislation** and appropriations that allow for:

- A **robust federal transportation program** with funding levels at or higher than current levels.
- Support for **all modes of transportation**, including public transit and active transportation, with consideration for regional economic and mobility needs and priorities.

MARC 2026 FEDERAL KEY POLICY POSITIONS

- Simplification of the federal investment program structure to enable **increased formula funds** allocated to states and metropolitan areas.
- Continued use of **regional planning processes** that engage state and local government officials in cooperative planning and allocation processes through Metropolitan Planning Organizations like MARC to ensure alignment of federal, state, local, and private investment priorities, supported by continued or increased federal planning funds.
- Expanded funding and technical support for planning, policy and infrastructure frameworks to address **new and evolving transportation technologies** such as expanding the use of electric, connected and autonomous vehicles.
- Continued efforts to reduce **freight and passenger train** bottlenecks throughout the nation, including support for the national rail passenger network.

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.
- Funding for **flood control and watershed planning** and projects as outlined by the Missouri and Associated Rivers Network.
- Support for **increasing energy production using a balanced portfolio of sources** that meet growing demand, enhance our region's quality of life and lower operating costs for residents and businesses.
- Support for policies and resources for **clean air** to protect public health for area residents and maintain regional economic competitiveness.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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

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

DATA

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

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

PUBLIC HEALTH

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

- **Disease surveillance, epidemiology and increased lab capacity.**
- Increased capacity to **prepare and respond to all hazards.**
- Continued investment to improve community health, including the use of **community health workers (CHWs).**

HOMELAND SECURITY

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

- Continued financial support of the **Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI)** and Kansas City designation to ensure capacity to protect, respond to, and recover from man-made and natural disaster events.

EMERGENCY SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

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

- Support for local EMS agencies to use Medicare and Medicaid to provide cost-effective **emergency response, preventive care and non-emergency services.**
- Support for the **911 SAVES Act** to reclassify public safety telecommunicators from clerical to protective service occupation.
- Support for the **National Telecommunications and Information Administration Organization Act** to provide 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 enhanced support for the Head Start workforce.
- 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.
- Make the **Child and Dependent Care Tax credit** fully refundable and adaptable so families receive credit for the types of childcare they choose.
- Continue to appropriate funds for the **Refugee Family Childcare Microenterprise Development Program.**

THRIVING OLDER ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES

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

- Support **Older Americans Act** reauthorization and increased funding to modernize and streamline its implementation and to enable AAAs to focus on the unique needs of their planning and service areas.

MARC 2026 FEDERAL KEY POLICY POSITIONS

- Resources that facilitate wrap-around services for **Area Agencies on Aging** and caregiver supports that are fundamental for healthy aging and options to age in place.
- Increased funding for **nutrition and medically tailored meals** to offset provider food costs, address food insecurity, and promote chronic disease self-management.
- Support the expansion of **community care hubs (CCHs)** providing home and community-based services, impacting upstream drivers of health for all ages

FOOD SECURITY

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

- Support for the reauthorization of the **Farm Bill** that includes funding for the **Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program**.

HOUSING

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

- Appropriation of funds to create **housing options** for low-income people and families and to encourage cross-jurisdictional collaboration and innovation for housing programs.
- Support for initiatives that **increase the supply of attainable housing** for all Americans.

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.
- Reauthorization of the **Higher Education Act** to invest in community college-business partnerships and support **low-interest loans** for health and other professional occupations.
- Support for the **modernization and expansion of apprenticeship programs** and allocation of sufficient funding for workforce systems to assist businesses in development and implementation of such programs.
- **Expansion of Pell Grant eligibility** to cover high-quality, short-term credential programs, and increased funding for career and technical education and adult basic education.