

MID-AMERICA REGIONAL COUNCIL 2012 KANSAS LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

BACKGROUND

The Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) is the association of city and county governments and metropolitan planning organization serving the bistate Kansas City metropolitan area. Each year, the MARC Board of Directors (33 local elected officials from the nine counties and area cities) considers and approves state and federal legislative platforms to guide agency advocacy efforts during the year. The issues are identified through MARC committees, and some issues continue to be concerns from last year.

Kansas

Transportation

- ❑ The Kansas Legislature passed T-WORKS in May 2010 to support continued investment in the state's transportation system. The Kansas Department of Transportation has outlined a spending plan to provide \$4.6 billion on preservation projects to ensure the preservation of the state's highways and bridges. All regions throughout the state will receive some level of support, and projects have been selected with local input. Funding will also be provided to support transit, aviation and rail projects. ***The Kansas Legislature is to be applauded for passing this legislation during tough economic times, and is encouraged to ensure that the funds committed to T-WORKS are not redirected for other state budget needs.***
- ❑ ***State legislators are urged to support the following traffic safety issues, which have been identified as priorities by the Destination Safe Coalition, including***

Motorcycle Helmet Law

Expand the current Kansas law to require helmets for riders of all ages.

Expanding the law to cover all ages would increase helmet use. Based on studies of the effects of states' enactment, repeal, or weakening of universal helmet laws, use approached 100 percent when all motorcyclists were required to wear helmets, compared with about 50 percent when there was no helmet law or a law applying only to some riders.

Unattended Children in Vehicles

The state legislature is encouraged to consider changes to state law to protect children from being left in unattended motor vehicles. Leaving a child in a vehicle unattended is dangerous and should never happen, yet many children have died or been injured as a result of being left alone in motor vehicles. Law enforcement officials have limited ability to deal with parents or those caring for the child, either through a warning or a charge of child endangerment. The first option in many cases is not strong enough and the second option may be too severe resulting in the loss of custody.

Public Safety

- **Allow local law enforcement officers to cross the state line to provide mutual aid, apprehend individuals in emergency situations, and assist with certain investigations.** Local governments and emergency response agencies in the Kansas City area support one another on a daily basis, and during major disaster events. Law enforcement agencies need support under state mutual aid laws to cross state lines to work together on major incidents. In some cases, such as the area's bomb squads, personnel are federalized and can cross the state line to provide mutual aid. In other cases, law enforcement personnel are limited in their ability to respond in major incidents across the state line unless a formal disaster declaration is made.

Human Services

- **Support funding for the Area Agencies on Aging in Kansas to provide "benefits" counseling to assist seniors in understanding the changes in Medicare and Medicaid, and to access services for which they may be eligible.**
- **Protect the current funding level for the Children's Initiative Fund.** Greater Kansas City is committed to building a high quality early learning system to prepare all children for success in school. The Children's Initiatives Fund (CIF) was created by the Kansas Legislature in 1999 and is administered by the Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund. Funding for the CIF comes from payments made to the state from the master tobacco settlement. Programs that receive CIF funding undergo a rigorous evaluation by the Children's Cabinet to ensure that state dollars are being spent effectively. The 2011 legislative session resulted in budget cuts for early education services. About half of all children in the state, are served by programs that rely on CIF dollars. These programs serve children of all ages with the primary focus on children birth to age five. It is critical that the current funding level for the CIF be maintained.

Environmental Protection

- MARC, local governments and area utilities are working to increase energy efficiency and conservation efforts in the Kansas City region. State tax credits and state programs are important elements to an overall system of support for residential, commercial and industrial property owners to achieve energy conservation objectives. MARC has initiated a review of state legislation to support PACE (Property Assessment Clean Energy) programs, and depending on the outcome of that review, additional state legislation may be needed to enable local communities (cities and counties) in Kansas to establish PACE programs. ***The state legislature is asked to support legislation to encourage greater energy conservation and use of alternative fuels by businesses, utilities, government organizations and individuals.***

Local Government Revenues/Rights

- State and federal government agencies often identify potential strategies to address problems in communities and enact legislation to respond to these problems. In most cases, the response actions that are required impact city and county governments and their budgets. In addition, as the state tightens its budget to respond to fiscal challenges, the result often impacts local governments. ***The state legislature is asked to consider the impacts of new requirements and state budget decisions on local governments and avoid placing additional requirements, particularly those with financial mandates, on local governments without new resources.***