



Isothermal Planning and Development Commission

2020 Regional Legislative Agenda

Coronavirus Pandemic Response

- Advocate for continued federal and state-level support for local governments in budget shortfalls and negative impacts because of the Coronavirus Pandemic
- Classify the Coronavirus Pandemic as a disaster preparedness issue and utilize COGs/Commissions as the training arm for future disaster preparedness efforts; including making COGs/Commissions eligible for FEMA disaster funding grants

Economic, Community, and Workforce Development

- Promote expanded financial opportunities to improve broadband connectivity throughout the Isothermal region to ensure the region is competitive in economic, community, and workforce development opportunities
- Advocate for local governments to have the authority to connect broadband opportunities to communities, particularly the more rural communities in the Isothermal region
- Ensure financial support for broadband, water, wastewater, and stormwater (other public infrastructure to include electric, dams, roads, and parks) infrastructure projects within the Isothermal region
- Support continued funding for the USDA Rural Development programs Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), advocating for the inclusion of Cleveland County in the ARC region
- Utilize COGs/Commissions as a liaison between the state and local governments in legislative decisions and through state programs when appropriate
- Provide consistent NCDOT funding for streetscaping projects in the prioritization process or through grant funding
- Prioritize funding and policies that support the development of workforce housing in the region to further encourage and promote economic development

Broadband and Broadband Deployment

- Continue to advocate for expanded funding to provide broadband in the Isothermal region to increase education opportunities, economic and workforce development, and COVID-19 response
- Support expansion of accessible, affordable high-speed fiber and mobile broadband throughout the Isothermal region, utilizing COGs/Commissions as a resource
- Promote expanded broadband opportunities that allow municipal entities to implement affordable high-speed Internet in the Isothermal region without the reliance of private entities

Human Services

- Support increased funding to alleviate the stress on human services such as healthcare and mental health because of the Coronavirus Pandemic
- Continue to promote financial support to help alleviate the substance abuse epidemic
- Seek methods to provide funding for disaster preparedness and emergency plan coordination efforts that pertain to human services

Public Infrastructure

- Continue to seek funding for infrastructure improvements around the Isothermal region for critical projects including the Lake Lure Dam and sewer system
- Continue to seek future interstate status for US 74 from I-26 in Polk County through Cleveland County to I-85
- Seek methods to increase the current level of NCDOT Division 13 and 14 maintenance funds, including pavement rehabilitation and bridge repair
- Continue to seek increased funding opportunities to support improved water and wastewater utility infrastructure throughout the region; particularly for aging infrastructure projects that have been identified by the Local government Commission as a priority
- Seek legislation to ensure that the amount of Powell Bill funds appropriated by the state are sustained and distributions to municipalities in the Isothermal region increase and grow over time

Housing

- Prioritize the importance of critical federal investment in the Isothermal region via HUD or other agencies in housing assistance in the Isothermal region
- Promote legislation that provides additional tools and financial resources for addressing the affordable housing crisis
- Support increasing the level of funding for the Home and Community Care Block Grant, the HUD-VASH Program, and the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program
- Assist local governments in finding sustainable and affordable options for housing rehabilitation in existing neighborhoods and in providing multi-modal transportation options to connect affordable housing developments to employment and cultural centers
- Continue and support marketing and education efforts seeking to inform protected class members about their rights and fair housing in general – working to reduce language barriers and to provide translation services

Regional Commissions and Councils

- Advocate for the establishment of COGs/Commissions as a unit of local government to define COGs/Commissions as eligible recipients of grants whenever local governments are eligible.
- Continue to promote stronger regional approaches to issues; for example, hazard mitigation, disaster recovery, and resiliency planning