TECHNOLOGY & UTILITIES

Technology and utility infrastructure now shape nearly every aspect of county operations and residents' daily lives. Counties are not simply users of technology; they also serve as providers, regulators, and partners in developing the systems on which Florida increasingly depends. FAC recognizes that continued innovation must advance the public interest, safeguard sensitive information and critical infrastructure, preserve local authority, and reach residents in every community. As these systems become more sophisticated and essential, FAC is committed to ensuring that state and federal policy equips counties to adopt new tools responsibly, manage shared infrastructure effectively, and deliver reliable public services.

TECHNOLOGY

A. Cybersecurity: Counties protect sensitive resident data and critical infrastructure by maintaining cybersecurity standards, training personnel, and meeting state incident-reporting requirements. Cyber threats evolve rapidly and many counties, particularly small and rural counties, lack the staff and resources to respond independently, FAC supports sustained state investment and intergovernmental partnerships that strengthen county capacity to prevent, mitigate, respond to, and recover from cyber incidents.

B. Artificial Intelligence: Artificial intelligence is increasingly integrated into public service delivery, creating opportunities to improve efficiency, access, and responsiveness while also raising concerns about privacy, transparency, bias, security, and accountability. Counties need guidance, funding, and technical assistance to adopt AI tools responsibly. Small and rural counties also face the additional challenges of limited staff capacity and accessibility to reskilling for workforce impacted by AI. FAC supports clear guardrails and standards for responsible government use of artificial intelligence, along with funding and technical assistance that help counties protect resident data, preserve flexibility, and improve services without unnecessary restrictions on legitimate local uses.

C. Emerging Technology: Rapid technological change continues to reshape county service delivery. Counties need systems that are secure, interoperable, cost-effective, and adaptable without being locked into a single platform, vendor, application, or current technology. FAC supports sustained policy coordination, technology-neutral policies, funding, and intergovernmental collaboration to help counties modernize systems, improve data sharing and service delivery, and respond to emerging tools and risks while preserving local operational control.

UTILITIES

A. High-Speed Internet: Reliable, affordable high-speed internet is essential to economic development, health care, and education, public safety, and civic participation, yet significant access gaps persist between rural and urban Florida. Expanding high-speed internet requires accurate mapping, competition, affordability, and early county involvement in planning and deployment. FAC supports continued efforts to expand high-speed internet access, competition, affordability, and reliability and supports strong state-county coordination to ensure federal and state broadband resources reach unserved and underserved communities efficiently.

B. Right-of-Way Authority: Counties coordinate the many public and private uses of public rights-of-way, including utility lines, high-speed internet infrastructure, drainage, sidewalks, transportation facilities, and roadways. Local authority over these shared corridors allows counties to balance competing uses, protect public safety, coordinate infrastructure effectively, and keep rights-of-way functioning for all who depend on them. FAC supports preserving local government authority over the management, permitting, coordination, and protection of public rights-of-way.

C. Energy-Intensive Facilities: Data centers—defined under SB 484 as facilities housing equipment to process, store, and transmit digital information, with large-scale data centers at 50 megawatts or more of peak load—and other large, energy-intensive facilities can place substantial new demands on local infrastructure and resources. Their impacts must be addressed through appropriate siting, planning, permitting, and cost-allocation policies. FAC supports preserving county land-use and permitting authority over energy-intensive facilities and supports policies ensuring that infrastructure and utility costs attributable to those facilities are borne by the facilities creating the demand, rather than shifted to local ratepayers or taxpayers.

D. Energy Resources: Florida's energy needs continue to grow as communities, technology, transportation, and public infrastructure become more dependent on reliable power. Counties need flexibility to manage energy resources they own or operate, protect agricultural and conservation lands, and address the local impacts of energy development. FAC supports responsible growth and diversification of Florida's energy resources while preserving county authority to manage county-owned or county-operated energy resources, protect agricultural and conservation lands, and address local impacts from energy development.

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