METROLINK

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ITEM ID:	**2026-349-0**
TRANSMITTAL DATE:	**November 6, 2026**
MEETING DATE:	**November 13, 2026**
TO:	**Board of Directors**
FROM:	**Paul Hubler, Chief Strategy Officer**
SUBJECT:	**November Legislative Update**

Issue

Staff provides a regular monthly update on current legislative affairs.

Recommendation

Receive and file.

Strategic Commitment

This report aligns with the Strategic Business Plan commitments of:

- **Connecting and Leveraging Partnerships:** We will forge new and enhanced relationships with our public and private partners to integrate and coordinate connecting services, providing residents throughout Southern California with better, seamless, sustainable alternatives to driving. This commitment is met by sharing news, information and the Authority's legislative priorities with elected officials.

- **Advancing Key Regional Goals:** We will grow the role of regional rail in addressing climate change, air quality, and other pressing issues by advancing toward zero emissions, making rail a compelling alternative to single-occupant automobiles and advancing equity-focused opportunities for all communities throughout Southern California. This commitment is met by encouraging federal, state and local support for Authority priorities.

Background

Staff continues to engage with state and federal stakeholders concerning Metrolink service and relevant policy initiatives.

Discussion

State

CalSTA Flexible State Rail Assistance Funding
As previously reported, the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) released a Notice of Funding Opportunity for Cycle 2 of the Flexible State Rail Assistance Program on September 8. The program provides funding for commuter and intercity rail capital and operating needs with up to $66.6 million available statewide to eight eligible applicants.

Metrolink submitted its application for $20M in funding on October 19. On November 5 Metrolink was advised by the State that its request was approved for the full amount. This award will allow the agency to avert service cuts that were planned to take effect yet this fiscal year, as well as additional reductions that would otherwise have been required in FY27-28. Metrolink staff are pleased to report a robust response to our requests for letters of support from member agencies, state legislators, universities/colleges, chambers of commerce, labor organizations, advocacy groups, and other entities. Nearly 60 letters of support were submitted to CalSTA for our application.

November Election Changes to State Leadership
On November 3, California voters elected Xavier Becerra as the state's next Governor. All 80 members of the State Assembly, and half of the Senate (20 seats) were on the ballot. Seven Assembly seats and three Senate seats within Metrolink's service area were open this cycle, guaranteeing new legislators in those districts.

The election will also establish the composition of the Legislature as lawmakers prepare to consider the FY 2027-28 state budget and transportation policy priorities. Changes in legislative membership and committee assignments may influence future discussions concerning transit operations assistance, capital investment, and other transportation funding programs.

Voters across the state also approved several regional transportation funding measures. In the Bay Area, the Regional Transit Measure, which is projected to raise $1 billion annually, will enact a half-cent sales tax in Alameda, Contra Costa, San Mateo, and Santa Clara counties and a one-cent tax in San Francisco for 14 years. Preliminary returns show the measure passing with 61.5 percent of the regional vote and majorities in each county. Within Metrolink's service area, voters in Riverside and San Bernardino counties approved Measure A and Measure I, respectively, each with approximately 70 percent support, continuing each county's existing half-cent transportation sales tax. Both measures required two-thirds approval and include continued funding for public transit, including Metrolink. All results reflect preliminary returns as of November 5, and ballot counting continues before results are finalized and certified.

Metrolink will continue working with returning legislators and establish relationships with any newly elected members of its state delegation to advance the authority's legislative priorities. Staff will provide additional information regarding election results and anticipated changes to the state delegation as they become available.

Federal

Metrolink Urges Congress to Restore IIJA Advanced Appropriations
As reported in October, Congress approved a continuing resolution (CR) extending federal government funding and surface transportation programs through December 11. However, the CR does not extend the advance appropriations provided under Division J of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), which established an elevated level of guaranteed multi-year funding for public transportation and passenger rail programs.

According to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), the lack of advance appropriations results in a 20 percent reduction in federal public transit investment and an 81 percent reduction in passenger rail investment compared with enacted FY2026 levels. Nationwide, these reductions represent about $4.2 billion in public transportation funding and $12.9 billion in passenger rail funding. The reductions threaten delay to infrastructure improvements, constrain efforts to address maintenance backlogs, and create uncertainty for agencies planning long-term capital investments.

The IIJA provided substantial increases in federal funding available to Metrolink, including a 45.7 percent increase in state of good repair formula funding. These investments support maintenance and infrastructure improvements throughout Metrolink's network. Without restoration of advanced appropriations, federal discretionary grants programs supporting passenger rail capital projects would also face significant reductions, limiting opportunities for Metrolink to secure funding for future improvements.

Metrolink has communicated with members of its congressional delegation serving on the appropriations and transportation committees, urging the restoration of public transportation and passenger rail investment to FY2026- enacted levels when the current continuing resolution expires December 11. The effort also emphasizes the importance of sustaining federal investment through the next surface transportation reauthorization.

November Election and Expected Leadership Changes
Democrats won majorities in both chambers of Congress in the November 3 midterm elections and will take control of the House and Senate when the 120th Congress convenes in January. In the Senate, Democrats flipped seven Republican-held seats and currently hold a 54–44 advantage, with races in Alaska and Mississippi not yet called. In the House, Democrats have surpassed the 218 seats needed for a majority. As of November 5, Democrats have won 252 seats and Republicans 155, with 28 races yet to be called.

Two races within Metrolink’s congressional delegation remain uncalled. In District 23, Representative Jay Obernolte (R) holds a narrow lead over Democrat Tessa Hodge. In District 40, redistricting placed Representatives Ken Calvert (R) and Young Kim (R) in the same district, and Calvert currently leads. The delegation will also include several new members in January: Jacqui Irwin in District 26, the Ventura County seat currently held by Representative Julia Brownley; Hilda Solis in District 38; and Angela Gonzalez-Torres in District 34, who defeated incumbent Representative Jimmy Gomez.

The 2026 midterm elections will bring significant changes to the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee, which will play a central role in developing the next surface transportation reauthorization. Current Ranking Member Rick Larsen (D-WA), who won reelection, is poised to become Chairman. Representative David Rouzer (R-NC), currently chairman of the Highway and Transit Subcommittee, is expected to become Ranking Member, though his own race had not been called as of November 4. Both members have extensive experience on the committee and involvement in federal transportation policy and infrastructure legislation. Metrolink is well positioned to maintain its messaging regardless of election outcome, having long-standing relationships with both Member offices, including hosting Rep. Rouzer during a visit last year. The committee is also expected to experience substantial membership turnover. At least 14 of the committee's 67 members will not return for the next Congress, and approximately half of its subcommittee chairs and ranking members are expected to leave their current positions. Additional changes could result from competitive congressional races and subsequent committee assignments.

Leadership of Senate committees with jurisdiction over transportation will also change. Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) is in line to chair the Commerce Committee. On the Environment and Public Works Committee, Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) is anticipated to become Chair, with current Chair Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) moving to Ranking Member.

The leadership transitions come as Congress considers the next multi-year surface transportation authorization to succeed the IIJA. The new committee compositions will influence the development of federal transportation programs, funding levels, and policy priorities affecting commuter and passenger rail. Metrolink staff will monitor election outcomes and committee assignments while continuing to engage with congressional offices on the Authority's federal legislative priorities.

Prepared by:	Jeffrey Dunn, Director, Government and Community Relations Anna Denecke, Senior Manager, Government Relations Julie Nieto, Management Analyst II Senator Zavala, Grad on Career Track, Government Relations
Approved by:	Paul Hubler, Chief Strategy Officer

Attachment(s)

Appendix A - November 2026 Bill Matrix
Presentation - November Legislative Update