



ITEM ID: 2026-154-0

TRANSMITTAL DATE: March 20, 2026

MEETING DATE: March 27, 2026

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Paul Hubler, Chief Strategy Officer

SUBJECT: March 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 community, local, state, and federal stakeholders concerning Metrolink service and relevant policy initiatives.

Discussion

State

Update on Legislative Session and Bills

The second year of the 2025–26 legislative session is underway. In the coming months, the Legislature will begin holding policy committee hearings on newly introduced bills and conducting hearings on the Governor’s proposed budget. The deadline to introduce bills for this year’s session was February 20, 2026. Under legislative rules, bills must be in print for 30 days before they may be heard in policy committee, which is expected in late March. The Legislature will recess for Spring Recess from March 26 through April 6. Following the recess, the Legislature must complete first-house policy committee hearings by April 24, 2026.

A full list of bills staff is tracking is included in Appendix A, including the following:

SB 667 (Archuleta) Railroads: safety: wayside detectors – Oppose

This bill requires railroad corporations to install wayside detector systems at specified intervals on California rail tracks used by freight trains, establishes penalties for violations, and directs the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to enforce those penalties. As of January 27, the bill is in the Assembly and pending referral to a policy committee.

Following the February 27, 2026 Board of Directors meeting, staff prepared a letter outlining concerns regarding the bill’s potential effects on passenger rail service and stating the agency’s opposition. The requirement to install wayside detector systems every 10 miles could force freight trains operating on segments without the required spacing to travel at speeds as low as 10 mph, reducing corridor capacity and negatively affecting passenger rail on-time performance and reliability. The agency is also concerned that the bill mandates costly infrastructure without first evaluating the incremental safety benefits relative to the installation and ongoing maintenance costs. Metrolink joins other rail operators public and private in opposition with the California Transit Association.

SB 1136 (Blakespear) Intercity rail and commuter rail: special events service plans

This bill would require a public agency responsible for commuter rail services that has a transfer connection between two or more commuter rail services to adopt a special events service plan for each event that meets specified requirements in order to access State Rail Assistance funds. The bill would require the special events service plan to include schedules to access the event without requiring a transfer, ticket interoperability, and all other technical, equipment, and infrastructure requirements. For intercity service, the bill would require the annual business plan to include a special events service plan that includes detailed operating schedules, fare information, and rolling stock requirements designed to satisfy the requirement to provide that supplemental service. The bill has been referred to the Senate Transportation Committee with no hearing scheduled as of date of preparation of this report.

SB 1411 (Stern) Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund: funding conditions: high-speed rail

This bill would authorize the CA High-Speed Rail Authority to enter into new funding commitments outside of the Merced to Bakersfield segment in any amount for additional activities that maximize the efficiency of delivering the project, as specified. Currently there is a prohibition in state law that restricts the project from spending more than \$500 million on activities outside its Merced-to-Bakersfield segment until June 2030. The bill is double referred to the Senate Transportation Committee and Senate Environmental Quality Committee.

Fiscal Year (FY) 2026-2027 Budget

The Senate and Assembly budget subcommittees will soon begin meeting regularly to review Governor Newsom's proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year. On February 20, 2026, the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) updated its forecast of anticipated revenues, which are expected to come in above the Governor's budget assumptions due to higher projected income tax collections. Legislative priorities are beginning to take shape and will set the stage for negotiations between the two houses and the Governor ahead of the June 15, 2026 deadline to pass the state budget.

This is the first budget proposal following the passage of the Cap-and-Invest Program. In the proposed Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) expenditure plan, the Administration allocates more than \$1.6 billion to discretionary activities, including \$1.25 billion for California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) costs that would otherwise be paid by the General Fund, \$250 million for activities identified in SB 840 intent language, and \$115 million to establish a new light-duty zero-emission vehicle incentive program.

The second California Air Resources Board allowance auction since the passage of the Cap-and-Invest Program was held on February 18, 2026. Auction #46 cleared at the price floor of \$27.94. While the price was lower than in previous auctions, the supply of credits available for sale increased, with approximately three million more credits sold than in the prior two auctions. This auction generated roughly \$919 million for the GGRF, which is an increase from the previous two quarterly auctions which netted \$844 million and \$851 million respectively.

Auction #47 is scheduled for May. Staff will continue to monitor budget developments and GGRF revenues given the importance to Metrolink of the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) and the Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP), which are funded from the GGRF.

Federal

FY27 Appropriations

Congress has begun the FY27 appropriations process, including the opportunity to submit Community Project Funding (CPF)/Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS), also known as 'earmark' applications to members of Congress. Metrolink submitted the following applications:

- Rep. Pete Aguilar – \$679,200
Metrolink San Bernardino Line Operational Reliability and Safety Improvements – Install or expand video surveillance at signal locations, upgrade customer information displays at Rialto Station, and implement track/signal technology to improve rail temperature readings and reduce train delays.
- Rep. Julia Brownley – \$4.3 million
Ventura Fiber Project – Installation of fiber to improve communication infrastructure.
- Rep. Ken Calvert – \$1.28 million
Corona Rail Security and Passenger Information Modernization Project – Install video

surveillance at railroad signal locations and upgrade customer information display monitors at Corona West and Corona North stations.

- Rep. Judy Chu – \$1.28 million
Installation of Smart Crossing Technology at Claremont Station – Install Wireless Crossing Nearside Station Stop (WCNSS) systems for two crossings in Claremont.
- Rep. Lou Correa – \$2.56 million
Installation of Smart Crossing Technology at Railroad Crossings – Install WCNSS systems for four crossings in Santa Ana, Orange, and Anaheim.
- Rep. Jimmy Gomez – \$4 million
Customer Information System Modernization Project at Los Angeles Union Station – Replace Customer Information System software to support next-generation digital passenger information displays at Los Angeles Union Station.
- Rep. Young Kim – \$1.47 million
CA-40 Rail Reliability and Grade Crossing Safety Enhancement Project – Install WCNSS for two crossings in Tustin and Anaheim Canyon and improve switches to reduce train delays.
- Rep. Luz Rivas – \$840,000
CA-29 Metrolink Station Safety and Passenger Information Modernization Project – Install WCNSS system at one crossing and install upgraded customer information display monitors at Sun Valley and Sylmar/San Fernando stations.
- Rep. Norma Torres – \$2.82 million
CA-35 Station Information and Safety Modernization Project – Upgrade passenger communication systems and information display monitors at stations in the district and install WCNSS system at two crossings.
- Senator Alex Padilla – \$5 million
Arroyo Seco Bridge Deck Replacement Project – The project is needed to ensure that railroad operations crossing the Arroyo Seco Bridge (MP 480.82) on the River Subdivision can continue at the current or higher levels of service and safety. The bridge needs a deck replacement to ensure that the bridge remains in a State of Good Repair.
- Senator Adam Schiff – \$6 million
Arroyo Simi Bridges Scour Mitigation Project – The Arroyo Simi Channel Rail Bridges Rehabilitation and Scour Mitigation Project will perform protective rehabilitation and scour mitigation for the four existing bridges crossing the Arroyo Simi Channel east of the Moorpark Amtrak and Metrolink rail station in Ventura County. The project will perform protective rehabilitation and scour mitigation for the four existing bridges crossing the Arroyo Simi Channel east of the Moorpark station in Ventura County.

Staff acknowledges and thanks Metrolink Board Directors who provided letters of support for these project applications and will provide updates this Spring on which of these were recommended by members of Congress to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees for adoption into the FY27 THUD appropriations bill. It is expected in this election year that the Congress will pass all appropriations bills prior to the November midterms.

In other matters, House leadership has recently identified four legislative bills that will be prioritized for passage this year, which include the reauthorization of the Foreign Intelligence Service Act (FISA); the Water Development Resources Act (WRDA) reauthorization; the agriculture reauthorization law (commonly referred to as ‘the Farm bill’) and the Surface Transportation Reauthorization bill (successor to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) yet to be introduced). Metrolink is monitoring development of the surface transportation bill closely, with the Chair of the Transportation & Infrastructure announcing his intention to

mark up the bill this Spring, though no markup has been set. There is also sentiment in the House to continue the current bill at status quo funding levels until after the election where one or both chambers of the congress may flip majority parties. Staff will keep the Board apprised on these and all matters related to reauthorization of the surface transportation law which determines authorized formula funding levels, grant program funding levels, and national policy priorities in the transportation sector including passenger rail.

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Attachment(s)

[Appendix A - March 2026 Bill Matrix](#)
[Presentation - March Legislative Update](#)