



ITEM ID: 2023-119-0

TRANSMITTAL DATE: February 17, 2023

MEETING DATE: February 24, 2023

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Scott Johnson, Interim Chief Customer Experience Officer

SUBJECT: Customer Experience Quarterly Update for Q2 FY2022-23

Issue

Staff is updating the Committee on Customer Experience activities for the second quarter of FY 2022-23 (October 1 – December 31, 2022). These updates will be provided each quarter.

Recommendation

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE received and filed this report.

Strategic Commitment

This report aligns with the Strategic Business Plan commitment of:

- **Customers Are Our Business:** We respect and value our customers, putting them at the heart of all we do, and work hard to attract and retain new customers by understanding their needs and finding new and innovative ways to delight them. In collaboration with departments across Metrolink, the Customer Experience team works to deliver a consistently exceptional experience throughout our customers’ entire journey – starting from the moment they first interact with our brand and through every trip planned, taken, and remembered.

Background

The Customer Experience team's FY2022-23 goals are to provide exceptional experience, help regain and grow ridership, and reposition and elevate the value of the Metrolink brand.

This report is an overview of the ways the Customer Experience group worked to achieve those objectives during the second quarter of FY2022-23 ending December 31, 2022.

Discussion

Regain and Grow Ridership

Throughout the second quarter, staff continued to utilize paid, earned, and owned media, partnerships and incentives to grow use of Metrolink among our current riders, as well as find and entice new riders to the service. Compared to a year ago, weekday ridership during the second quarter rose 42% while weekend ridership rose 12%. Ridership also benefited from the 30% monthly pass discount in October, November, and December. The highest daily ridership in the second quarter was reached in October with 18,404 boardings, a new pandemic record. Ridership recovery during the quarter reached 42% of pre-pandemic levels. Unfortunately, ridership was impacted negatively by the track closures in southern Orange County. The IE-OC Line was impacted particularly hard with a 15% decline since the track closure.

During Q2, efforts to regain and attract new riders were focused on the following campaigns:

Arrow Service

In partnership with the San Bernardino County Transportation Authority (SBCTA), the new Metrolink Arrow service launched on Oct. 24, extending Metrolink service from San Bernardino to Redlands by nine miles that include four new stations. New Arrow trains operate between the new Redlands-University Station and Metrolink's previously existing San Bernardino-Downtown Station, with daily connections to and from Metrolink's San Bernardino and Inland Empire-Orange County lines.

Metrolink began media outreach for the Arrow service on Oct. 17 with an advisory issued jointly with SBCTA to invite media to the ribbon cutting ceremony held on Oct. 21 at the Redlands-Downtown Station.

On the first day of Arrow service, Metrolink issued a press release announcing its launch. Earned media results of at least 32 mentions by Southern California media outlets included approximately 14,000,000 impressions with an ad value equivalency of \$2,997,937. On the first day of Arrow service, KTTV Fox 11 performed several live broadcast segments from the Redlands-Downtown Station and on board one of the Arrow trains.

The integrated marketing and communication campaigns paid and organic social media efforts received more than 200,000 impressions and above average engagement rates across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. Two customer emails (pre- and post-launch) were each distributed to a database of more than 190,000 emails and resulted in open rates of over 40% and 55% respectively. The website saw pageviews of over 57,000 from over 41,300 unique visitors. The top driver of traffic to the website was organic search resulting from

search engine optimization best practices.

Public response resulted in 572 rides taken on the first day of service. Daily ridership during the second quarter averaged 188 boardings on weekdays, and weekend ridership averaged 200 daily boardings. One-way and round-trip tickets account for the majority (69%) of trips taken on Arrow. Nearly half of Arrow ridership travels to destinations outside the corridor with the destination L.A. Union Station accounting for about 20% of trips.

30th Anniversary

In October 2022, Metrolink celebrated its 30th anniversary with a 30% fare discount, a customer-focused event, partnership with the L.A. Times, an updated website timeline and the launch of the new Metrolink logo. The 30th anniversary customer-focused celebration at L.A. Union Station was held on Oct. 26 from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. At the event, which coincided with the introduction of Metrolink’s new logo, staff provided attendees with commemorative giveaways and the opportunity to take selfies with branded cutout frames while playing 90s music and showcasing vintage photos. In advance of the event, Metrolink staff invited media to attend and two television stations covered the event. In addition, staff distributed a press release immediately after the event to announce the 30th anniversary as well as the new logo. The minimum audience reached with earned efforts was 208,877 with an ad value equivalency of \$44,871.

Metrolink staff partnered with the Los Angeles Times Digital Studios to produce 30 destination-focused videos celebrating our 30th anniversary. Each video showcased a location in Southern California accessible via Metrolink service. The videos were published as advertisements through the L.A. Times Facebook, Instagram and TikTok accounts. In total, the videos garnered over 1.6 million views.

To celebrate Metrolink’s 30th year, staff also implemented a 30% discount on monthly passes in October, November and December 2022. The discounted monthly passes went on sale on September 25, 2022, supported with an integrated marketing and communications campaign.

For earned media, staff distributed a press release announcing the 30% off discount on Sept. 26. Media pickup was strong with at least 22 mentions, total impressions of 3,158,541 and ad value equivalency of \$96,004. The email was distributed to a database of over 240,000 and resulted in an open rate of 51.5%. The website landing page delivered 30,255 pageviews to over 24,000 unique visitors. Paid and organic social media efforts deployed in both English and Spanish resulted in over 460,000 impressions and 130,000 engagements.

Customer response was strong with 5,030 monthly passes sold for October, 30% more than had been sold in September. November passes were up 35% over September, and monthly passes for December, a traditionally low ridership month were up 15% over September. About 4% of pass sales came from new riders. Next quarter, staff will return to the Committee with a financial analysis of the promotion that will consider pass sales to both new customers as well as to existing customers who may have switched from other ticket types.

Month	Monthly Pass Sales	% Increase over September
October	5,030	30%
November	5,195	35%

December	4,448	15%
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Holiday Travel & Destination Campaign

Metrolink took the opportunity to promote holiday destinations and events for leisure travelers to visit within Metrolink’s scheduled train times. Website pages for each of these destinations and events were created in Metrolink’s EXPLORE section, and a digital toolkit was produced for member agencies to share the attractions in their respective counties. Promotion of the \$10 Holiday Pass and Kids Ride Free on Weekends were the primary fare types emphasized for this content.

For holiday shopping purposes, Metrolink provided a 10% discount on its online store from late November through the end of the year. Compared to the holiday shopping season of the previous year, sales for the Metrolink Store were up 35%, total orders up 29%, website sessions up 93% and traffic from social media sessions up 320%.

And, in keeping with the spirit of giving for the holidays, Metrolink joined the Los Angeles Unified School District to support their Winter Wonderland event in Pacoima on Dec. 8. The agency collected children’s books donated from all office locations and set up a booth at the event to give away promotional items and promote the Metrolink service to over 200 LA-area families in attendance.

Earned media results this holiday season were strong. The campaign garnered a minimum of 48 mentions across print/online, radio and television with a total audience of 6,057,326 and an ad value equivalency of \$14,808,088. The earned media strategy involved promoting the \$10 Holiday Pass on the observed Christmas holiday (Dec. 26), as well as on New Year’s Day (Jan. 2), which included the Rose Parade service.

Staff also conducted targeted media outlet pitches with tips for traveling by train with children. The story was picked up by six publications within the Inland Empire’s City News Group at the time of this writing.

Rose Parade Campaign

On Jan. 2, Metrolink offered early morning service on five lines (Ventura County, Antelope Valley, San Bernardino, 91-Perris Valley and Orange County) to deliver attendees of the 134th Rose Parade to Los Angeles Union Station where riders could transfer to Pasadena in time for the start of the parade. The promotional campaign highlighted the special schedule as well as the \$10 Holiday Pass available for all day travel and free transfers on Metro. The campaign was supported by paid social media advertising, website, email, media outreach and outreach to local governments with stations along the five lines. A partnership with Visit Pasadena and Sharpe Seating to give away a 4 pack of tickets to the parade resulted in 753 submissions.

Earned media results included at least 39 mentions – 21 online/print, 15 television, and three radio, with a total audience of 6,550,650 and an ad value equivalency of \$14,939,934. The website landing page resulted in 13,584 pageviews from 11,116 unique visitors. The email was distributed to 200,017 database and resulted in a very strong open rate of 48.9%. The campaign resulted in 405 tickets sold and revenue of \$4,050.

Customer Retention Strategies

Event Partnerships

The shift in our positioning to be inclusive of leisure travel has been an important strategy in our ongoing efforts to regain ridership. To encourage Metrolink travel to major events and introduce Metrolink to new audiences, staff worked with several large-scale event promoters to encourage taking Metrolink to avoid traffic congestion and parking hassles.

Special late-night trains on the San Bernardino Line were provided via our partnership with Insomniac events for Escape Halloween and Countdown New Year's Eve at the National Orange Show Events Center.

	Hard Summer	Escape Halloween	Countdown NYE
Dates	7.30.22 - 8.1.22	10.29.22 - 10.30.22	12.31.22 - 1.1.23
Passenger Count	599	1,132	560
Ticket Revenue	\$ 11,140	\$ 28,060	\$ 17,860
Special Train Revenue	\$ 3,481	\$ 2,834	\$ 2,834
Total Revenue	\$ 14,621	\$ 30,894	\$ 20,694

Metrolink also continued its longstanding partnership with Holiday Ice Rink at Pershing Square. Metrolink riders received \$1 off admission to the ice rink when showing proof of Metrolink fare. In addition, Holiday Ice Rink provided Metrolink with 10 tickets to raffle off in social media giveaways. Over 300 entries were received via Facebook, Instagram and email submission.

In Q2, Metrolink continued its partnership with Broadway in Hollywood to promote taking the train to shows at the Pantages Theater. Tickets for Mean Girls were awarded to riders in contest giveaways on Metrolink's social media channels. 103 entries were received.

Staff also ran social media contest giveaways for the following events:

- Burbank Winter Wine Walk (November 2022)
- Christmas at the Farm at Underwood Family Farms (December 2022)
- Metrolink Store Throw Blanket Giveaway (December 2022)
- Rose Parade (December 2022)

Reposition and Elevate the Value of the Metrolink Brand

The success, efficiency and safety of the Metrolink service is dependent on the perceptions of the brand among riders and the community at large. And while brand-building is a part of our ridership-driving campaigns, we also regularly implement initiatives whose primary goal is brand- and reputation-building.

The 2022 Great ShakeOut

On Oct. 20, at 10:20 a.m., Metrolink participated in an international earthquake preparedness

simulation called the Great ShakeOut by sending out a simulated alert to Metrolink in-service trains announcing that an earthquake had been detected and that trains would be slowed down for 60 seconds. Conductors made an announcement about the simulation, explaining why the trains were slowing down and that it was being done for the Great ShakeOut as a drill.

To generate media attention about Metrolink's participation in the Great ShakeOut, its Earthquake Early Warning System and commitment to safety, staff issued a media advisory to invite media on board two San Bernardino line in-service trains during the Great ShakeOut, as well as a press release after the simulation.

The earned media efforts resulted in five media mentions, including four television and one online/print story, with a total audience of 397,834 and ad value equivalency of \$129,682. On the morning of the Great ShakeOut, two television stations covered the story at L.A. Union Station and on board one of the San Bernardino trains.

Improve the Customer Experience

The Customer Experience team collaborates with other Metrolink departments to improve our customers' experience. Key initiatives are highlighted here.

Arrow Service

With the Arrow service launch on Oct. 24, Customer Relations updated the Code of Conduct to include Arrow's food and beverage onboard policy and developed a fare policy training guide for Arrow conductors and engineers. The training guide covers general information about Metrolink fare and ticket types, including discounts, usage, and transfer policies, and was also distributed to Customer Relations staff and Amtrak conductors to offer consistent information to customers.

Burbank Junction Groundbreaking Event

Metrolink held a groundbreaking event for the Burbank Junction Speed Improvement Project on Nov. 9 at the Burbank-Downtown Metrolink station. The project is one of SCORE's larger Phase 1 efforts, adding new siding tracks near the Burbank-Downtown Metrolink station.

The media strategy included sending out a media advisory on Nov. 3 to invite members of the press to attend the groundbreaking, and then a press release immediately after the event. The event received coverage from four television and one radio station, as well as five online stories. Total audience was at least 397,834, with a total ad value equivalency of \$129,682.

Website Improvements

In response to customer feedback, the size and weight parameters for wheelchairs and bicycles were added to the What's Allowed Onboard webpage and the online ticket portal terms and conditions were updated to match those on the main website. Also, language was added to the Voucher Reimbursement webpage, informing customers they can use vouchers as a payment option, and the Everyday Discounts webpage was updated to include sample images of the various identifications acceptable for discount eligibility. Staff continue to make website improvements in response to customer feedback.

After-Call Survey

Metrolink's call center, operated by Alta Resources, launched a new after-call survey on Dec. 16, 2022. At the end of each call, customers are offered the opportunity to answer two questions ("How likely are you to recommend Metrolink to a friend or family member?", and "How did you first learn About Metrolink?"), rating their level of satisfaction with Metrolink's and the call agent's service. Through Dec. 31, 394 callers responded to the first question about the likelihood of their recommending Metrolink with 335 responded with a likelihood between "5" and the highest score of "10". The 85% of positive responses is promising when considering most of our callers call with an issue or concern, beyond routine service inquiries. The data will be used to determine opportunities for service improvements.

Next Steps

Staff will present its next quarterly update to the Executive Committee in May 2023.

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Attachment(s)

[Presentation - Customer Experience Quarterly Update Q2 FY2022-23](#)