



**ITEM ID:** 2023-329-0

**TRANSMITTAL DATE:** November 9, 2023

**MEETING DATE:** November 17, 2023

**TO:** Board of Directors

**FROM:** Paul Hubler, Chief Strategy Officer

**SUBJECT:** 2024 Legislative Program

**Issue**

Metrolink develops an annual Legislative Program to guide staff on legislative proposals considered at the federal, state, and local levels.

**Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Board adopt the 2024 Federal, State and Local Legislative Program.

**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**

The 2024 Legislative Program is presented for Board adoption to guide advocacy efforts. The program is developed with feedback provided by the Board of Directors, discussion among the Southern California Legislative Roundtable, and industry priorities shared through the California Transit Association (CTA), the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), and the Commuter Rail Coalition (CRC).

## **Discussion**

The recommended 2024 Legislative Program encompasses federal, state, and local priorities and strategically advances key goals directed by the Board of Directors.

The following are new proposals that build and expand upon the priorities carried over from the 2023 Legislative Program.

### **Rolling Stock and Facilities**

- Raise the need and advocate for additional funding to procure new Tier 4 locomotives.
- Secure additional resources to build out Metrolink maintenance facilities (CMF, EMF, OCMF).

### **Operations and Service**

- Support funding and policies that improve Metrolink's response to and recovery from incidents, including improving physical infrastructure (wireless connectivity, access to remote locations) and improving the accessibility of alternative transportation for passengers.

### **Grant Programs, Funding and Procurement**

- Seek opportunities to leverage non-state funding sources, increase state formula funds and reduce Authority project-cost contributions.
- Support funding and favorable grant programs to address extreme heat, climate, and weather-related events.

### **Safety and Security**

- Support local programs and funding to secure Metrolink stations, including additional private security at stations.
- Raise Metrolink's profile for funding and programs to support service, maintenance, safety and security during the LA28 Olympics.
- Ensure proposed Transportation Security Administration (TSA) security directives are carefully scoped and are not unduly burdensome or costly for agencies.

### **Labor and Supply Chain**

- Engage statewide partners on opportunities to strengthen the labor market and address materials/supply chains to support construction and timely delivery of capital projects.

## **DEIA, DBE, and Small Business Opportunities**

- Seek opportunities to support DEIA, DBE, and small business participation in contract opportunities to promote growth and diversity among contractors and vendors.

The key elements of the 2023 Legislative Program are carried over into the 2024 program recognizing the mid-year cycle of the Congressional and State Legislative sessions. Key goals and objectives from the federal, state and local sections are described below.

### **GOAL 1: SEEK FAVORABLE RAIL AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION FUNDING PROPOSALS.**

#### Federal

1. Seek maximum eligibility, flexibility, protection and increased funding for federal competitive and discretionary programs; including opportunities through annual appropriations bills.
2. Seek funding for technology improvements, including upgrading right-of-way, safety infrastructure, Positive Train Control (PTC), Tier 4 and zero-emission technologies for rolling stock, equipment and facilities.
3. Support financial incentives to deploy zero-emissions passenger rail technologies, including grants, potential tax incentives and innovative financing mechanisms.
4. Support opportunities to secure additional funding, cost savings and/or price stability for future insurance and liability program renewals while maintaining all applicable coverage requirements.
5. Seek new funding and supportive policies that increase access to Metrolink service for qualified low-income, disadvantaged communities and student populations.
6. Seek new funding and favorable funding guidelines to address extreme heat, climate, and weather-related events.
7. Seek all opportunities to fund Olympic readiness projects that support service operations, rolling stock and safety and security during the LA28 Olympic games.
8. Seek opportunities to support Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE), Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA), and small business participation in contract opportunities to promote growth and diversity among contractors and vendors.

#### State

1. Seek opportunities to leverage non-state funding sources, increase state formula funds and reduce Authority project-cost contributions.
2. Monitor discussions, bill introductions and oversight hearings for new potential funding sources which support public transportation and advocate for funding for commuter rail services.
3. Support new innovative incentives and funding to provide discounts for qualified low-income, disadvantaged communities, and student populations that increase access to public transportation services, including new and expanded transportation tax credits.
4. Seek and support new funding to protect railroad rights-of-way from trespassing and improve system safety.

## **GOAL 2: SEEK FAVORABLE RAIL AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION REGULATORY PROPOSALS.**

### Federal

1. Protect Metrolink from proposals that negatively impact the safe access to tracks, track rights, track capacity, stations and rail projects necessary for the delivery of passenger rail service.
2. Support the highest cybersecurity standards that provide resources for rail operators and technical assistance when needed to ensure the safe movement of trains.
3. Support passenger rail technology requirements that are technologically feasible and not financially burdensome for operators.
4. Monitor proposed Transportation Security Administration (TSA) security directives to ensure that proposals are carefully scoped and not unduly burdensome for the agency.
5. Seek and support additional flexibility for rolling stock useful life requirements when acquired with federal funds, including removing existing penalties that dis-incentivize fleet improvements.

### State

1. Support efforts to streamline the delivery of maintenance, state of good repair and capacity projects for track, signals and structures to reduce costs and project timelines.
2. Protect Metrolink from proposals that could negatively impact track rights, capacity, stations, and rail projects and jeopardize the delivery of safe, customer-focused service.
3. Seek additional legislative authority as needed to ensure the safe and secure operation of passenger rail service, including protecting the Authority against committed crimes and theft.
4. Seek direct eligibility for the necessary regulatory and funding relief considered by the State Legislature and all state transportation agencies during times of crisis or need.

## **GOAL 3: SEEK OPPORTUNITIES TO ACCELERATE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA OPTIMIZED RAIL EXPANSION (SCORE) CAPITAL PROJECTS.**

### Federal

1. Seek additional federal funding to complete the SCORE capital improvement program, which prepares the region's infrastructure for the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games and provides generational benefits.
2. Engage with statewide partners to seek opportunities to strengthen the labor market and address challenges with securing materials and improving supply chains to support construction and timely delivery of capital projects.

### State

1. Seek state funding to complete the SCORE capital improvement program, which prepares the region's infrastructure for the 2028 Olympic Games and provide generational benefits.
2. Support the allocation of state funding for rail purposes in Southern California – including for crossings, Olympic and high-speed rail readiness.
3. Seek available means of accelerating the delivery of SCORE projects, including the review of designs, environmental documents, and securing necessary funding.

## **GOAL 4: SEEK OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUTER RAIL TO ACCELERATE SHARED CLEAN AIR GOALS, ENCOURAGE FUNDING SUPPORT AND FAVORABLE REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT.**

### Federal

1. Monitor the EPA and FRA for the development of new locomotive emissions standards and encourage a regulatory process that includes participation and feedback by impacted stakeholders, a framework that supports operators, and provides incentive funding for fleet transitions.
2. Seek participation in any regulatory process and comment period, including participation with stakeholders such as the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) and Commuter Rail Coalition (CRC).

### State

1. Seek funding and regulatory support to deploy a zero-emission rail propulsion demonstration and related infrastructure in Southern California that is efficient, scalable across all service corridors and supports Metrolink operated service.
2. Support opportunities to coordinate with the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA), the California Air Resources Board (CARB) and local air districts as a resource to assist in reaching air quality attainment standards.
3. Support legislation and action by state agencies to provide robust funding for zero-emissions passenger rail technologies.

### Local

#### **GOAL 1: BUILDING STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS BY BEING A GOOD NEIGHBOR WITH COMMUNITIES IN THE METROLINK SERVICE AREA AND NEAR METROLINK FACILITIES.**

Seek support and federal, state, and local funding to complete construction and improvements at Metrolink maintenance facilities.

1. Support efforts to modernize Metrolink facilities and operations to advance a zero-emissions future and to reduce noise and emissions in surrounding communities.
2. Engage in partnerships with local stakeholders regarding improvements to grade crossings, including the establishment of Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) designated Quiet Zones.
3. Support funding and partnership opportunities with local K-12 and higher education institutions to increase access to transportation services – including student benefits, fare subsidies and transit passes.

#### **GOAL 2: DELIVER RIGHT-OF-WAY IMPROVEMENTS THAT ENSURE THE CONTINUED SAFE OPERATION OF RAIL SERVICE.**

1. Support the continued meeting of the Incident Reduction Taskforce (IRTF) to coordinate with stakeholders to improve conditions within rail rights-of-way, including the removal of debris, graffiti and encampments within rail rights-of-way.
2. Partner with municipalities and transit operators to support funding and policies that improve Metrolink's response to and recovery from incidents along the rail right-of way, including minimizing gaps in wireless connectivity and providing accessible alternative transportation for passengers.

#### **GOAL 3: ENSURE THE DELIVERY OF CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS.**

1. Seek opportunities to leverage non-local funding sources and reduce Authority project-cost contributions.

2. Support municipalities leveraging local funding to enhance rail and passenger safety onboard and at stations, improve the customer experience, and maximize station area economic development and lifestyle benefits of access to commuter rail service.
3. Seek support for SCORE-related improvements from local stakeholders in partnership with Authority member agencies.
4. Conduct meetings along each of Metrolink's service lines that will focus on city staff and elected officials, in coordination with other efforts such as NextDoor surveys, community pop-ups and town hall meetings to build support for Capital Improvement Projects and strengthen relationships with city leaders.

### **Budget Impact**

There is no budgetary impact as a result of this report.

### **Next Steps**

Upon Board approval, staff will work with federal, state and local government relations stakeholders to inform them of Board-approved priorities for 2024 and will work to implement those priorities.

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### **Attachment(s)**

[Attachment A - 2024 Legislative Program Presentation - 2024 Legislative Program](#)