



ITEM ID: 2024-338-0

TRANSMITTAL DATE: December 6, 2024

MEETING DATE: December 13, 2024

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Paul Hubler, Chief Strategy Officer

SUBJECT: December 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

Local

Community relations staff in coordination with our Safety team recently developed a mobile classroom effort to share safety education with students and the local community. We will test the mobile classroom with schools along the San Bernardino Line and information was distributed in mid-November to 70 local middle and high schools near the railroad. For schools that are interested, Metrolink will offer a train ride to the historic San Bernardino Depot station, provide a safety class that will include an age-appropriate safety presentation and video, which builds upon and incorporates the school safety video describing safety best practices for students at schools adjacent to or near the right-of-way. The effort will also include a tour of the historic station and a return ride to their origin station along the line. This will be provided free of charge to all interested schools. The safety mobile classroom will also serve to introduce students to Metrolink service and, as well, make them aware of the Student Adventure Pass and the viability and convenience of riding Metrolink. Thus, the effort is envisioned to accomplish two core goals of Metrolink - enhancing both safety and ridership - in a coordinated, supportive way.

State

On November 8, 2024, the community relations team worked with staff from Assembly District 50, Assemblymember Eloise Gomez Reyes, to organize an Arrow train ride with 40 students in their Young Legislators program in coordination with a trip to the University of Redlands. The Young Legislators educational program aims to provide local high schools students across the district with firsthand experience in government and leadership. The students started their day at the Metrolink Downtown San Bernardino station and arrived at the University of Redlands where they were met by University President Krista Newkirk. The students then received a tour of the campus and a panel presentation to learn more about the university. Metrolink staff provided a presentation on the importance of safety near railroad tracks, benefits of taking public transportation, and shared information on our Student Adventure Pass.

On November 14, Metrolink and SBCTA provided State Assembly Transportation Committee staff with a tour of the Arrow ZEMU service and maintenance facility. Farra Bracht, Chief Consultant, and Aaron Kurz, Senior Consultant, took the Arrow service from San Bernardino to Downtown Redlands with SBCTA transit and rail staff, public affairs staff, and representatives from the Metrolink government relations and operations teams. They learned about operations and maintenance intricacies, how state money is supporting student fares, and the plans to grow ridership in the years ahead. Appreciation was expressed for the Legislature's generous appropriation of funding to transit in recent state budgets, and staff was reminded of the need for identifying a sustained source of operational funding in the passenger rail space to match the capital funding that has been provided.

The impacts of the November 5 election on the state legislative delegation in the Metrolink service area were minimal, with nearly all incumbents running for reelection retaining their

seats. As of this reporting, incumbent Senator Josh Newman (D-37), representing Senate District 37 covering central Anaheim, was trailing Steven Choi by less than 10,000 votes. Of the 10 vacant assembly seats in the Metrolink delegation, all remained held by the same party except for District 58, currently Sabrina Cervantes' district, which flipped with Leticia Castillo, a Republican, defeating Clarissa Cervantes, a Democrat, by less than 500 votes in the open race.

Federal

The 2024 election resulted in a trifecta of Republican power in Washington, with former President Donald Trump winning 312 electoral votes to Vice President Kamala Harris' 226. Congressman Adam Schiff won his Senate race and will join Alex Padilla in representing California in Washington's upper chamber. In the Metrolink service area, Congressman Mike Garcia, a Republican, in a very close contest conceded to George Whitesides, a Democrat, to represent the 27th congressional district serving the Lancaster/Palmdale and adjacent area. The race in California's 45 congressional district between incumbent Michelle Steele, a Republican, and Derek Tran, a Democrat, remains one of the closest in California history, with the challenger holding an approximate 100 vote lead in a race of over 300,000 votes cast, as of this reporting. The district covers primarily Orange County but does cross over into Los Angeles County in some areas.

Funding of the federal government is provided by a continuing resolution (CR) extending current fiscal year funding levels until December 20 and is set to expire unless the Congress passes new appropriations legislation or again extends current CR during the lame duck session. It is unclear at this juncture which action the Congress will take, but Metrolink will monitor the legislation closely and position its advocacy to secure favorable consideration of proposed funding of Olympics' infrastructure in the Senate appropriations bill, in the amount of \$200 million in total, of which Metrolink may be considered for approximately \$25 million of funding. The status of these pending legislative efforts following the national election is highly fluid, and staff will keep the Board apprised.

Prepared by: Jeffrey Dunn, Director, Government and Community Relations
Anna Denecke, Senior Manager, Government Relations
Sylvia Novoa, Manager, Public Affairs
Julie Nieto, Management Analyst II
Grayson Hahn, Grad on Career Track

Approved by: Paul Hubler, Chief Strategy Officer