



ITEM ID: 2025-335-0

TRANSMITTAL DATE: October 17, 2025

MEETING DATE: October 24, 2025

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Paul Hubler, Chief Strategy Officer

SUBJECT: October 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

Mobility 21 Summit

On September 12, CEO Darren Kettle and Metrolink staff attended the 2025 Mobility 21 Southern California Transportation Summit in Anaheim. The annual event brings together more than 1,400 transportation stakeholders, elected officials, and industry leaders from across the region.

As part of the program, CEO Kettle participated in a panel discussion titled “Forward Olympics: Regional Readiness through Partnerships,” alongside Kome Ajise (SCAG), Rose Casey (OCTA), and Conan Cheung (LA Metro). The panel was moderated by Maria S. Salinas, President & CEO of the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce. With the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games fast approaching, the conversation focused on how Southern California’s transportation agencies are working collaboratively to ensure the region is prepared to host more than 15 million expected visitors. Panelists emphasized the importance of innovation, regional coordination, and sustained infrastructure investment, not only to support the Games, but also to deliver long-term mobility benefits for Southern California.

State

Deal Reached on Cap-and-Invest

After months of negotiations, the California Legislature passed and Governor Newsom signed AB 1207, reauthorizing Cap-and-Invest (formally Cap-and-Trade) through January 1, 2046. The Governor also signed SB 840, which details the new Cap-and-Invest Expenditure Plan. SB 840 creates three “tiers” of Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) expenditures, with \$1 billion of funding reserved for California High Speed Rail and \$1 billion for “legislature discretion” each year as part of the higher priority “tiers.” Tier 3 includes, among other programs, Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) and Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP). Specifically, SB 840 provides \$400 million annually for TIRCP and \$200 million annually for LCTOP. These funding amounts are close to the high-water mark for these two programs in prior years of Cap-and-Trade funding. However, if GGRF auction proceeds are low, both TIRCP and LCTOP can expect to receive substantially less than the dollar amount stipulated in SB 840.

Legislature Re-Affirms SB 125 Funding

As part of a flurry of end-of-session activity, the California Legislature reaffirmed its commitment to the SB 125 investments that support transit capital and operations needs across the state. SB 105, the Budget Bill Jr., transfers \$188 million in GGRF revenue to the formula-based TIRCP program, so that a total of \$1 billion can be appropriated in FY25-26, as called for in the modified SB 125. SB 105 also transfers an additional \$180 million from the GGRF to support TIRCP Cycle 6.

Bill Gives Public Opportunity to Comment Virtually

SB 707 (Durazo) Open Meetings: Meeting and Teleconference Requirements passed both the Senate and Assembly in September and is awaiting a possible signature by Governor Newsom. Specific to Metrolink, SB 707 requires the public to be provided with a two-way audiovisual platform or a two-way telephonic service and live webcasting so that they may be provided the opportunity to hear, see, and comment. If SB 707 is signed by Governor Newsom, it will take effect on January 1, 2026.

Two Metrolink-Supported Bills Head to Governor's Desk

AB 476 (González) passed the Senate and Assembly unanimously and is now awaiting a signature from the Governor. AB 476 creates more thorough documentation requirements for junk dealers and recyclers that purchase and resell scrap metal, including seller identification and a list of materials purchased. The bill also increases financial penalties for junk dealers that knowingly buy railroad wires and cables without doing due diligence on the seller's legal ability to resell those materials. Finally, AB 476 increases fines for those illegally possessing certain metals and related materials. Metrolink urged Governor Newsom to sign AB 476 in a September 17 letter as the bill includes meaningful copper wire theft deterrence mechanisms.

AB 394 (Wilson) passed the Senate and Assembly unanimously and is now awaiting a signature from the Governor. AB 394 applies existing punishments for assaults against transit operators and drivers to all transit employees and contractors. The bill also clarifies that public transit operators are employers for purposes of seeking a temporary restraining order against violent offenders and that "unlawful violence" as defined in temporary restraining order law includes battery committed against passengers and transit workers pursuant to Penal Code Section 243.3. Metrolink urged Governor Newsom to sign AB 394 in a September 17 letter as the bill strengthens protections for transit operators and employees.

Federal

FRA Repurposes Rail Funding

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) published a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for a new National Railroad Partnership Program (NRPP). \$5 billion is available for programs that enhance grade crossing safety, improve passenger rail safety, reliability, and capacity, address state-of-good-repair backlog, and support stations looking to add family-friendly upgrades. The \$5 billion available includes funding formally available through the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail program as well as approximately \$2.4 billion redirected from the California HSR project. Metrolink is an eligible applicant under this program; eligible projects must be located on intercity routes. Applications are due January 7.

Federal Government Shutdown

The Federal budget year expired on September 30, and the path forward still isn't immediately clear. On September 19, House Republicans approved a plan to fund the government with a Continuing Resolution (CR) until November 21. A short-term CR would buy Congressional leaders more time to negotiate a full-year FY25-26 funding agreement. However, 60 votes were needed in the Senate to approve the short-term CR, and so far, the upper chamber hasn't secured the necessary support. Since an agreement was not reached by September 30, federal government shut down procedures were initiated on October 1.

Metrolink Joins with Commuter Rail Coalition to Advocate for Excess Liability Deadline Extension

Metrolink urged members of its federal delegation that serve on the House Transportation and Infrastructure to support Congressman Troy Nehls' (R-TX) proposal that extends the statutory deadline commuter rail agencies must abide by to procure excess liability insurance. Every five years, the liability cap is adjusted based on the Consumer Price Index. Current law gives rail agencies only 30 days after the adjustment to obtain excess liability insurance to meet the new cap. Securing this coverage is a complex process involving long underwriting cycles, and if an agency cannot obtain coverage in time, it may be forced to suspend operations. The next adjustment is expected in early 2026. Rep. Nehls' bill would extend the 30-day deadline to secure excess liability insurance to 90 days, providing agencies like Metrolink and others across the country with the time needed to secure the required insurance.

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Attachment(s)

[Appendix A - October 2025 Bill Matrix](#)
[Presentation - October Legislative Update](#)