



**ITEM ID:** 2024-267-0

**TRANSMITTAL DATE:** September 6, 2024

**MEETING DATE:** September 13, 2024

**TO:** Board of Directors

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

**SUBJECT:** September 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**

#### **City Outreach**

Metrolink has reached out to its station cities to request that information on Metrolink service and fare promotions be included in city newsletters and other communications platforms and has offered to present this information at appropriate community meetings. In addition, staff presented at the following meetings in July and August:

- July 10: Mead Valley Municipal Advisory Council (MAC) near Perris
- July 11: Good Hope/Meadowbrook MAC near Perris
- July 24: Highgrove MAC near Riverside
- August 15: Moreno Valley/Perris Transportation-NOW coalition meeting

Additionally, Metrolink staff was invited by the cities of Industry and El Monte to participate in an on-site meeting at Valley Blvd. and the I-605 freeway ramps to address homeless encampment and graffiti issues near Metrolink right of way.

#### **CBO Meeting**

The community relations team held an information meeting and listening session on August 1 for invited community-based organizations (CBOs) from across the region. The meeting provided CBOs an opportunity to learn about Metrolink and our fare programs and explore collaboration opportunities. Feedback voiced at the meeting included appreciation for additional AVL service and for the October Metrolink Reimagined service expansion.

#### **Locomotive Outreach for Grant Opportunities**

The community outreach team is implementing a community outreach plan in support of future discretionary grant opportunities to secure match funds needed for procurement of replacement Tier 4 locomotives. Outreach efforts include community tabling events and social media outreach in the lead up to Clean Air Day. The outreach is intended to increase awareness of the community benefits of Tier 4 locomotives including improving public health by reducing emissions. Outreach efforts are required to enhance the competitiveness of grant applications.

### **State**

#### **Metrolink represented at Senate Hearing on Southern California Rail Service**

On August 13, 2024, Metrolink CEO Darren Kettle testified before the Senate Transportation Subcommittee on LOSSAN Rail Corridor Resiliency. The oversight hearing, "Southern California Passenger Rail Service – Performance and Operations," featured perspectives from Metrolink, Shawn Donaghy of NCTD, and Jason Jewell of LOSSAN, as well as a separate

panel of state agencies. CEO Kettle emphasized the investment required to meet the CARB In-Use Locomotive Rulemaking by 2030 or earlier, as well as funding needs ahead of the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Questions from lawmakers included topics such as ridership goals, zero-emissions equipment, security and transparency of goods movement throughout the corridor.

## **Federal**

### FY25 Federal Appropriations

On July 10, the House Appropriations Committee marked up and passed the FY25 Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development (THUD) appropriations bill by a party-line vote of 31 to 26. The legislation provides just over \$25 billion to the Department of Transportation, which is \$1.7 billion below the FY24 enacted level. Cuts are proposed to Amtrak's budget as well as to several New Starts awards, including \$200 million for the Inglewood Transit Connector, and a \$100 million proposed cut to the CRISI program. Meanwhile, the Senate Appropriations Committee introduced and passed their FY25 THUD bill on July 25. The legislation includes \$3.3 billion more for DOT than the House version and essentially keeps funding levels the same as FY24. Notably, there is \$200 million reserved for Olympics-related transportation assistance in the Senate FY25 THUD bill, including \$24.7 million for Metrolink Olympics needs, should the funding be included in the final compromise bill.

Meanwhile, the FY25 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill passed the House by a vote of 210-205. The legislation was amended during the committee process to include language offered by Rep. Obernolte prohibiting the EPA from approving a Clean Air Act waiver for the CARB In-Use Locomotive Regulation. Republicans have held two hearings in the House focused on the impacts of the CARB regulation on goods movement and freight rail.

### FRA Administrator Bose Visits Metrolink

On August 14, 2024, Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Administrator Amit Bose met with CEO Darren Kettle and staff to discuss, among other things, the need for federal support to replace the agency's remaining Tier 2 locomotives with Tier 4 replacements. Administrator Bose and Darren also discussed safety and capacity enhancements needed for the 2028 Olympics and reviewed various rulemakings and their impact on Metrolink operations and personnel.

### DC Senate Staff Visits Metrolink

On August 20, 2024, Metrolink CEO Mr. Kettle and staff met with Senator Alex Padilla's Legislative Director Joshua Esquivel and Transportation Policy Advisor Jacob Huls to discuss Metrolink service enhancement and ridership recovery efforts, new fare offerings, the California In-Use Locomotive regulation and efforts to transition Metrolink's fleet to Tier 4 locomotives, the Arrow hydrogen ZEMU, and Metrolink's 2028 Olympics' readiness needs. Metrolink will continue to work with and rely upon the leadership of Senator Padilla and its entire congressional delegation to secure the federal resources needed to advance these and other priorities in this and the next Administration and Congress. Staff will keep the Board apprised.

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**Attachment(s)**

[Appendix A - September 2024 Bill Matrix](#)