



ITEM ID: 2024-167-0

TRANSMITTAL DATE: April 5, 2024

MEETING DATE: April 12, 2024

TO: Executive Committee

FROM: Paul Hubler, Chief Strategy Officer

SUBJECT: April 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 relating to Metrolink service and relevant policy initiatives.

Discussion

Local

Metrolink Community Relations staff have been active this month on several matters related to local outreach and interaction with station cities and adjacent communities. In March, staff met with City of Pomona staff to examine ways to improve the Pomona Downtown station environment, in response to noted passenger complaints related to safety and overall condition of the station. Metrolink is engaged and working with the City of Pomona to address these issues and improve the station environment.

Metrolink participated with LA Metro in the Girls Empowerment Summit at Union Station on March 24, 2024. This event brought together more than 200 9th – 12th-grade girls from LA County schools to introduce them to non-traditional and transportation industry careers. The girls heard women in the transportation industry and participated in hands-on workshops to bring about awareness of possible career paths available to them. Participation in this summit is key to expanding opportunities for women in the transportation industry locally while also preparing a skilled labor force for the future.

Throughout 2023 and early 2024, Metrolink has been actively working to expand its network of Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to leverage its outreach activities. To enhance CBO participation, the Community Relations team is developing a virtual on-line workshop to communicate directly with CBOs, the focus of which will be to engage with CBOs to learn what issues are important to them and to share how they might leverage Metrolink outreach activities to enhance awareness and benefit to their constituencies.

The Antelope Valley Line (AVL) By-line meetings are moving forward with the city staff meeting scheduled for April 16 and the elected officials meeting scheduled for April 24. This outreach follows the successful By-line meetings held last year on the San Bernardino and Ventura County Lines to examine issues important to station cities and adjacent communities. As with these meetings, the AVL Byline meeting will focus on expanded service, capital project/SCORE, maintenance of way, quiet zone, safety and security, sustainability and enhanced fare products. We look forward to the participation of city staff and elected officials to strengthen our partnerships and ties to the communities we serve.

At the March 29 meeting, the Metrolink Board approved initiating the Title VI equity analysis and community outreach process for expanded service on the AVL. A virtual public meeting will take place on April 18, with public comments accepted until May 10. The final public hearing, which will provide the results of the equity analysis and the public outreach effort, will occur at the Metrolink Board meeting on May 24, when the Board will consider the findings and recommendations of the Title VI process for final adoption.

State

The Transit Transformation Task Force will meet for a third time on April 15, 2024. The task

force last met in February to discuss their goals and objectives and review California's sustainability goals and how they connect to transit ridership across the state. As part of the Task Force, technical working groups are being formed and meetings will continue through 2025. Among these, the Transit Transformation Advisory Committee (TTAC) has formed to provide key legislative, policy, regulatory, and budgetary recommendations for future advocacy by the California Transit Association (CTA) and the Task Force. Metrolink CEO Darren Kettle has been appointed to the TTAC as the only rail representative to participate in the work of the committee and lend voice to the passenger rail perspective as these recommendations are promulgated. A report of findings and policy recommendations based on the task force's efforts to the appropriate policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature is due before October 2025.

The Governor will release his revised budget by May 14 based upon the latest economic forecasts. The State Legislative Analyst's Office has estimated the budget deficit has increased to \$73 billion, up from the \$58 projected deficit estimated upon release of the budget in January. The state Department of Finance in the interim pegged the estimated budget deficit at \$37.9 billion.

As a reminder, the current proposed budget would largely honor last year's \$5.1 billion transit funding deal, with no proposed cut to the funds for transit operations to eligible operators and capital, only a proposed one-year delay of some TIRCP funding. Of the \$5.1 billion, \$2.4 billion is appropriated as part of the current fiscal year, \$2 billion TIRCP and \$410 million for the newly created Zero Emission Transit Capital Program (ZETCP). The current budget also commits to appropriating \$2 billion of TIRCP in FY 2024-25 and \$230 million of ZETCP funding each year from FY 2024-25 through FY 2026-27. The Governor is proposing the state delay a portion of the remaining TIRCP funding by one fiscal year, so \$1 billion would still be appropriated in FY 2024-25 and the remaining \$1 billion would be appropriated in FY 2025-26.

The Legislature has started budget committee and subcommittee hearings to review the governor's proposal and make initial decisions. Metrolink will continue to advocate for the state to maintain the full \$5.1 billion in transit funding approved with SB 125 and, with CTA and other transportation partners, urge that there be no cuts nor delays to this critically necessary funding. Metrolink CEO and government relations staff will attend the CTA legislative conference in Sacramento in late May following release of the May Revise. Advocacy meetings with key lawmakers and staff in leadership and on the relevant policy and fiscal committees, and the Administration are being requested.

Federal

On March 8, the Senate cleared a six-bill funding package, sending the \$459 billion measure to President Biden's desk just before a partial government shutdown. The measure passed 75-22 following votes on several Republican amendments that ultimately failed on the floor. The bill decides the budgets for more than a dozen federal departments and independent agencies that handle transportation, energy, housing, agriculture and veterans' programs, and others. President Biden signed the package March 9. At time of preparation of this report, Congress still faces a deadline of March 22 to pass a much larger, second spending package that would fund approximately 70% of the government, including military, health, education, and labor programs.

On March 11, President Biden released his Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) Budget request, outlining

his Administration's priorities for the next year. The President is requesting \$16.8 billion for public transportation in FY 2025, with \$14.3 billion for transit formula grants and \$2.4 billion for capital investment grants. President Biden has requested \$3.2 billion for passenger and freight rail programs, a \$180 million increase from the FY 2024 enacted level. The budget provides \$2.5 billion for Amtrak, \$100 million for Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail grants, and \$250 million for Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement (CRISI) grants. The budget requests \$800 million for Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) and Mega competitive grants for surface transportation projects, including public transportation and multi-modal projects. The Administration has indicated that any significant federal assistance that will be provided to prepare for the 2028 Olympic Games will not occur before the FY 2026 appropriations cycle. Metrolink communicated its needs to the Administration by letter on March 1.

Strategy Office staff attend the APTA Annual Legislative Conference in Washington, DC from April 7-9. During the trip, staff will meet with offices to highlight Metrolink's needs to prepare for the 2028 Olympic games, pending discretionary grant applications currently before the Administration, and Metrolink's congressionally directed funding requests (earmarks) submissions. Staff will provide updates to the Board following the trip.

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

Approved by: Paul Hubler, Chief Strategy Officer

Attachment(s)

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