



ITEM ID: 2025-373-0

TRANSMITTAL DATE: December 5, 2025

MEETING DATE: December 12, 2025

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Paul Hubler, Chief Strategy Officer

SUBJECT: 2026 Federal, State, and Local 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 2026 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 2026 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, which includes Member Agency government relations staff, 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 2026 Legislative Program encompasses federal, state, and local/regional priorities and strategically advances key goals directed by the Board of Directors.

The program identifies a series of policy goals and legislative/regulatory activities that will help Metrolink achieve those goals.

The Southern California Regional Rail Authority plays a crucial role in improving mobility, reducing emissions and vehicle miles traveled, and connecting people with more affordable housing, jobs, educational opportunities and other destinations throughout its six-county service area. To assist our organization in fulfilling its mission to provide safe, efficient, dependable, and on-time passenger rail service, we propose a legislative program to advocate for robust investment and strategic policy initiatives.

FEDERAL

Federal policy and investment programs must recognize the unique role regional rail plays in transporting riders' long distances, across multiple jurisdictions, and in coordination with the private sector, including Class I freight rail companies.

Goal 1: Secure Significant Federal Support for the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games

- 1.1 Advocate for robust funding for Olympics-related capital, operations, maintenance and fleet readiness needs, including prioritizing grant requests where appropriate.
- 1.2 Advocate for funding and coordination to support robust, safe and secure passenger transport for the 2028 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games. Investments are needed in operations, physical infrastructure, fleet and cybersecurity mitigation efforts.
- 1.3 Secure appropriate technical assistance and waivers as needed in support of 2028 Games project delivery and an anticipated surge in regional rail operations during the Olympics.

Goal 2: Protect and Increase Funding Available for Passenger Rail

- 2.1 Advocate for the full appropriation of transit and rail fund levels authorized in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.
- 2.2 Champion the development of a federal surface transportation reauthorization bill that provides investment commensurate with current funding levels and anticipated needs plus inflation.

- 2.3 Support the establishment of a statutory definition of regional rail.
- 2.4 Champion the establishment of a new funding stream for regional rail capital and operation needs without supplanting existing funding.
- 2.5 Advocate for new funding for regional passenger rail operators that supports the acceleration of procurement of rolling stock and ensures railroad operators are not unduly penalized for retiring rolling stock to meet air quality or other goals.
- 2.6 Support the expansion of federal grant program applicant eligibility to include regional railroads, including opportunities through annual appropriations bills.

Goal 3: Advance Metrolink's Position as a Reliable and Innovative Transit Provider

- 3.1 Advance regulatory and funding mechanisms to facilitate on-time performance improvements, particularly where passenger rail is a tenant of a host freight railroad.
- 3.2 Support the creation of incentives, new tax credits, and pilot programs for transit agencies utilizing alternative fuels, including renewable diesel.
- 3.3 Advocate for both pre-disaster mitigation and post-disaster recovery funding to support reliable regional rail service, which often serves as a transportation lifeline for impacted communities.
- 3.4 Support a timely examination of innovative propulsion technology and provide regulatory authority to operate the technology, if appropriate.
- 3.5 Secure a statutory change that provides regional and commuter rail agencies with up to 365 days to obtain excess liability insurance after the cap is adjusted.

STATE

Regional rail plays an important role in connecting the millions of people who live, work in, or visit Southern California. Metrolink service connects all corners of our region, bringing together people from areas with more affordable housing to economic centers. Metrolink provides a sustainable and convenient connection that promotes the health and well-being of residents, including disadvantaged communities. Metrolink service is essential to meeting the state's Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) and transportation sector emissions reduction goals and providing an attractive alternative to driving for choice riders.

Goal 1: Protect and Increase Funding Available for Passenger Rail

- 1.1 Advocate for the protection, enhancement, and establishment of existing and new transportation funding and funding sources for capital and operational needs, including Cap and Invest expenditures, State Rail Assistance (SRA), and other existing or prospective funding sources. Ensure any new funding is additive and does not supplant existing funding streams.
- 1.2 Support the continuation of funding to support regional rail capital needs, including the SCORE program and Olympic-related projects. Funding should be made available to backfill existing project shortfalls as well as for new projects.

Goal 2: Advance Policy to Create a More Equitable and Safe Transportation System

- 2.1 Advocate for new incentives and funding to support customer-focused innovations and provide discounts for qualified low-income disadvantaged communities and student populations.
- 2.2 Advocate for stronger penalties for vandalism of the system and trespassing.

Goal 3: Incentivize Sustainability, Resilience and Innovation

- 3.1 Support financial incentives to deploy passenger rail lower- and zero-emissions and security technologies, including grants, tax exemptions, and innovative financing mechanisms.
- 3.2 Advocate for legislation, initiatives or amendments to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) that streamline project delivery for rolling stock and related infrastructure while providing safeguards for the environment.
- 3.3 Advance regulatory or policy mechanisms to facilitate improvements in on-time performance, particularly where passenger rail is a tenant of a host freight railroad.
- 3.4 Support the provision of proactive funding to address known resiliency issues before problems impact passenger rail operations.

LOCAL / REGIONAL

By connecting regional economic hubs to more affordable housing centers, Metrolink is an important resource for municipalities and counties.

Goal 1: Municipalities Implement Infrastructure, Safety, and Accessibility Improvements

- 1.1 Support municipalities' pursuit of improvements to grade crossings, including the establishment of Federal Railroad Administration designated Quiet Zones.
- 1.2 Support local stakeholders in efforts to ensure safe and convenient access to and from Metrolink stations, including pedestrian, active transportation, safe street and first and last mile improvements.
- 1.3 Support station owners' activities to improve stations and develop nearby areas.

Goal 2: Secure System Infrastructure and Accessibility Improvements

- 2.1 Explore and support prospective funding sources needed for passenger rail and public transit operations and capital improvements.
- 2.2 Advocate for regional railroad eligibility for federal or state funds distributed regionally.
- 2.3 Request localities conduct timely review and approval of Right of Way access permits.

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 2026 and will work to implement those priorities.

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Approved by: Paul Hubler, Chief Strategy Officer

Attachment(s)

[Attachment A - 2026 Legislative Program](#)
[Presentation - 2026 Legislative Program](#)