



**ITEM ID:** 2023-168-0

**TRANSMITTAL DATE:** April 7, 2023

**MEETING DATE:** April 14, 2023

**TO:** Executive Committee

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

**SUBJECT:** Sustainability Initiatives Update for 3rd Quarter FY 23

**Issue**

This report is the quarterly update to the Board on the sustainability initiatives and accomplishments of Metrolink.

**Recommendation**

Receive and file.

**Strategic Commitment**

This report aligns with the Strategic Business Plan commitments of:

- **Modernizing Business Practices:** We will improve our operational efficiency through transparency, objective metrics and streamlined governance, reducing over-reliance on subsidy while bringing our system into a state of good repair and investing in the development of our employees. Sustainability initiatives are focused on reducing environmental impacts, improving operational efficiencies and increasing engagement with our employees.
- **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. The purpose of this action is to ensure the healthiest, safest and most fiscally responsible working environment possible by focusing on Metrolink’s sustainability and resiliency.

## **Background**

On October 11, 2019, the Board authorized the Chief Executive Officer to enroll the Authority as an Entry-Level Signatory to the APTA Sustainability Commitment which was subsequently completed in November. The APTA Sustainability Commitment Program provides a path for signatories to obtain recognition for achieving higher levels of commitment. This requires demonstration of short- and long-term sustainability achievements and targeted improvements across key indicators.

## **Discussion**

### **Quarter 3 FY23 Activity**

#### **CARB In Use Locomotive Draft Regulation**

CARB released a final draft update to the regulations on March 1, 2023, and provided a 15-day public comment period which closed March 16, 2023. In coordination with the California Transportation Association, Metrolink submitted a comment letter in support of the updated regulations and included acknowledgement and appreciation for passenger rail advocacy by CARB Board members, specifically mentioning Directors Gideon Kracov, Hector De La Torre and Barbara Riordan. Updates to the regulations included additional details and specific instructions for completing and submitting an Alternative Compliance Plan. Additionally, important guidance specifically addressed that agencies opting to achieve equivalent emission reductions under an Alternative Compliance Plan pathway would not also be subject to requirements of a spending account fund set aside. Metrolink will pursue an Alternative Compliance Plan which will include a strategy to reduce annual emissions in compliance with the regulation requirements. Alternative Compliance Plans are valid for five-year verification periods with the first plan to cover annual activity of January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2028. CARB staff will present the final draft regulations for approval at the CARB Board hearing on April 27.

#### **Earth Day**

In celebration of the 53rd anniversary of Earth Day on Saturday April 22, Metrolink will provide free rides and encourage people to help save the planet by pledging to take the train and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Staff has volunteered to participate in various college campus Earth Day events throughout the month to increase outreach and engagement with students, faculty, and alumni.

#### **USC Student Research Project**

Through introductions provided by Chief of Staff Noelia Rodriguez, Metrolink staff are coordinating with USC faculty and students from the Jesse M. Unruh Institute of Politics on a student research project. Titled "Making Public Transit Attractive in a Hybrid World," six students are collaborating on the project to research how a hybrid workforce impacts future transit ridership growth, particularly for Gen-Z riders. A segment of the research will include a targeted survey of university students which will conclude April 14. The research will also focus on how to build a community for ridership and how to meet the needs of modern riders, looking at best practices across the country and abroad. The students will apply a sustainability lens to their work, taking into account the impact of California's air quality goals.

The students will present the final results of their research and survey highlights to the Metrolink Board during the next Board meeting on April 28.

**Next Steps**

Staff will continue to provide quarterly status updates to the Board.

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Approved by: Paul Hubler Chief Strategy Officer