



ITEM ID: 2025-128-0

TRANSMITTAL DATE: February 7, 2025

MEETING DATE: February 14, 2025

TO: Executive Committee

FROM: Paul Hubler, Chief Strategy Officer

SUBJECT: February 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

Community and Government Relations staff, in coordination with the Customer Experience and Fare Collections departments, developed a program to offer free ride passes to those displaced by the fires. As of January 17, 145 round-trip promo card passes have been sent to community-based organizations (CBOs) and elected officials to distribute to their constituents and community members in need. Additionally, staff distributed approximately 300 passes to organizations and residents at a donation site in Santa Anita on January 17.

Community Relations staff will be conducting outreach in accordance with Title VI requirements for the Metrolink Reimagined schedule change. The process is scheduled to start on February 28, 2025 with a community meeting scheduled for March 26, 2025. A public hearing culminating the process would occur at the April 25, 2025 Board of Directors meeting.

Working in conjunction with the Safety team the Community Relations Team continues to conduct follow up to all schools along the San Bernardino line informing them of the opportunity to participate in a safety briefing that will provide a free trip to the San Bernardino Depot station. This free trip will include a docent-led tour of the historic station, an age-appropriate safety presentation, and a free return trip to their station of origin.

State

CARB Withdraws Request for EPA Waiver Needed to Enforce In-Use Locomotive Rule

The California Air Resources Board (CARB) withdrew its request for a waiver from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that, if issued, would have authorized state regulation of passenger and freight locomotive emissions. CARB's April 2023 In-Use Locomotive regulation requires Metrolink and other freight and passenger rail operators in California to upgrade locomotive technologies to reduce criteria pollutants by certain deadlines. Without the federal waiver, key elements of the regulation are likely not enforceable. Staff will continue to monitor these developments.

Committee Assignments Announced

Sacramento statehouse leaders announced new committee assignments in January. Assemblymember Lori D. Wilson (District 11) will retain her position as Chair of the State Assembly Transportation Committee and Laurie Davies (District 74) will continue serving as Vice Chair of the Transportation Committee. Assemblymembers Juan Carrillo (District 39), John Harabedian (District 41), Dr. Corey Jackson (District 60), Tom Lackey (District 34), each of whom represent a portion of Metrolink's system, will serve on the Assembly Transportation Committee. On the Senate side, Dave Cortese (District 15) will serve as the Chair of the Senate Transportation Committee. Senators Bob Archuleta (District 30), Catherine Blakespear (District 38), Sabrina Cervantes (District 31), Monique Limon (District 21), Caroline Menjivar (District 20), Kelly Seyarto (District 32), Thomas Umberg (District 34), and Suzette Martinez

Valladares (District 23) each represent a portion of Metrolink's system and will serve on the Senate Transportation Committee.

Governor's Proposed Budget Honors Previous Transit Commitments

On January 10, Governor Newsom released his FY 2025-26 Proposed Budget and projected a modest \$363 million surplus. The one-time funding provided by SB 125 for transit capital and operations remains intact in the Governor's proposal, with the modified appropriation timeline agreed to in last year's Budget Act. For the FY 2025-2026 year, \$1 billion from the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) will be available, according to the modified appropriation schedule. The FY 2025-26 Proposed Budget also requests that the Legislature join the Governor in considering extending the cap-and-trade program beyond 2030, noting "extension sooner could provide greater certainty and attract stable investment."

Bill to Plus Up Transit Funding To Be Introduced

Senator Scott Weiner (District 11) intends to introduce legislation that would provide an additional \$2 billion from the General Fund to transit providers across the state. The funding would be distributed through the existing TIRCP formula and eligible uses would include capital and operations.

Federal

2025 Marks Beginning of 119th Congress

The 119th Congress convened on January 3 with Republicans maintaining control of the U.S. House and assuming the majority in the U.S. Senate. Representatives Sam Graves (R-MO) and Rick Larsen retained their positions as House Transportation & Infrastructure Chairman and Ranking Member, respectively. The Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials is under new leadership, with Representative Daniel Webster (R-FL) assuming the chairmanship and Dina Titus (D-NV) taking over the ranking member slot. Newly elected Congresswoman Laura Friedman (D-CA), who represents the Burbank and Glendale portions of the Metrolink system, is a member of the Railroad Subcommittee. In the Senate, transportation policy matters fall into the jurisdiction of several committees. Senators Alex Padilla (D-CA) and Adam Schiff (D-CA) were both named to the Committee on Environment and Public Works, the primary committee responsible for drafting the next surface transportation authorization bill.

USDOT Leadership Positions Begin to be Filled

In November, President-elect Trump announced his intent to nominate Sean Duffy to serve as his Secretary of Transportation. Mr. Duffy, a former Congressman from Wisconsin, was approved by the Senate Commerce Committee by a vote of 28-0 on January 22. His nomination is expected to be considered by the full Senate in late January or early February. President Trump also announced his intent to nominate David Fink to serve as Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Administrator. Mr. Fink is the former President of Pan Am Railways. He is awaiting confirmation.

Reauthorization Begins

House Transportation & Infrastructure (T&I) Chairman Sam Graves (R-MO) convened a hearing to kickstart discussions on reauthorization of the next surface transportation bill. The current authorization, the Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act (IIJA), is set to expire in September 2026. The T&I hearing was held on January 15 and Congressman Graves indicated developing a successor to the IIJA would be one of his committee's top priorities in

the coming year. It is unclear the extent to which IIJA investment levels will be maintained, whether new funding sources will be identified, or if funding will be distributed primarily through formula or competitive grant processes.

Prepared by: Jeffrey Dunn, Director, Government and Community Relations
Anna Denecke, Senior Manager, Government 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 - February 2025 Bill Matrix](#)