



**ITEM ID:** 2024-294-0

**TRANSMITTAL DATE:** October 4, 2024

**MEETING DATE:** October 11, 2024

**TO:** Executive Committee

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

**SUBJECT:** Bench Contract No. L175-21 - Federal Legislative Representation Services - Exercise Option Years and Increase Contract Funding Authorization - Blank Rome, Kadesh & Associates, Potomac Partners DC

### **Issue**

The Authority requires federal legislative advocacy services to maintain strategic relations and achieve policy priorities with the Administration, Congress, federal transportation agencies and regulatory bodies. These services are necessary to meet long-term service and funding goals of the Authority.

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Committee recommend that the Board authorize the Chief Executive Officer to amend Contract No. L175A-21 with Blank Rome, Contract No. L175B-21 with Kadesh & Associates, and Contract No. L175C-21 with Potomac Partners to exercise the second two-year option to extend the period of performance to December 31, 2026 and increase contract authority by \$720,000 for the bench.

### **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**

On September 25, 2020, the Board authorized the Chief Executive Officer to award Contract No. L175-21 to a bench of qualified firms:

- Blank Rome (formerly Chambers, Conlon, and Hartwell)
- Kadesh & Associates
- Potomac Partners DC

The contract was awarded for a base term of two years with two two-year options. On October 28, 2022 the Board authorized the Chief Executive Officer to amend the contract to exercise the first two-year option. The current contract term will expire on December 31, 2024.

## **Discussion**

There are legislative, regulatory and funding decisions in our nation's capital that impact the Authority. These actions occur in a dynamic political environment. Having legislative representation and regulatory support in place is crucial for the Authority to successfully obtain its fair share of funding and secure support for or counter beneficial and adverse legislative or regulatory policies, respectively.

Each of the advocacy firms representing Metrolink are national in scope and are heavily focused within the transportation sector. Each firm has specific strengths to draw upon in executing Metrolink's Board-adopted advocacy efforts, with demonstrated synergistic effects working and supporting one another as well as in conjunction with partner organizations and agencies. Advocates work together to maintain close relations within Metrolink's delegation and with key offices on the policy committees of jurisdiction in the Senate and House, and the relevant appropriating committees. Advocates provide indispensable assistance to the CEO and Strategy and Government Relations staff to secure impactful Member, staff, and Administration meetings during Metrolink's annual advocacy trips, including the APTA, Mobility 21, and CTA federal advocacy trips.

Advocates were crucial in securing appearance of Metrolink CEO Kettle before the Rail Subcommittee of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee at a commuter rail focused hearing in April 2024. Metrolink-specific issues addressed included 2028 Olympics' needs; connection to the Brightline service that will provide transformational high-speed service to Las Vegas; and ongoing structural state-of-good-repair and operations' funding insufficiencies. This opportunity to testify before a Congressional committee of jurisdiction will benefit the Authority as deliberations continue in Congress on future transportation legislation. Advocates continue to well position Metrolink within the current Administration and are prepared to move assertively with the next Administration following the election this year.

Extension of this contract will allow these efforts to proceed seamlessly and without interruption.

During the contract period, advocates have also provided instrumental assistance to facilitate direct, face-to-face meetings with key Administration officials and lawmakers on the Hill to secure and advance Authority legislative objectives, including with US Senator Alex Padilla; US Congressmembers Pete Aguilar, Nanette Barragan, Julia Brownley, Ken Calvert, Judy Chu, Jimmy Gomez, Young Kim, Grace Napolitano, Adam Schiff, Brad Sherman, Mark Takano; T&I Committee Chair Sam Graves (MO); T&I Rail Subcommittee Chair Troy Nehls (TX); FRA Administrator Amit Bose; FRA Associate Administrator Paul Nissenbaum; USDOT Deputy Secretary Polly Trottenberg, USDOT Deputy Assistant Secretary Charles Small and others.

Advocates assisted the Authority in funding and administrative advocacy related to efforts to replace Tier 2 locomotives with cleaner Tier 4 locomotives, consistent with Board policy, and to forestall federal interest repayment penalties on locomotives retired before the end of their useful life.

Finally, with respect to congressional directed spending requests, also known as earmarks, advocates have successfully assisted the Authority in securing federal earmarks to support safety, security and capital project improvements. Earmarks secured in FY24 included \$1.6 million from Rep. Sherman and \$1.6 million from Sens. Butler and Padilla for PTC investments. Pending requests for FY25 include \$500,000 from Rep. Brownley for fiber network improvements, \$750,000 from Rep. Cardenas for the installation of wireless grade crossing technology in Sylmar, and \$250,000 from Rep. Schiff for the installation of the same technology at Burbank Airport.

Staff recommend the Board approve extension of the federal legislative representation services contract extension to allow continued, stable representation in Washington, D.C. through 118th and 119th Congresses.

### **Budget Impact**

This contract is for two calendar years, January 2025 - December 2026. Funding for first portion six months, Jan - June FY25 (\$180,000), is included in the adopted operating budget. Funding for subsequent years will be requested through the annual budget process.

### **Next Steps**

Upon Board approval, staff will execute amendments with Blank Rome, Kadesh & Associates, and Potomac Partners DC to extend the contracts through December 31, 2026 and increase contract authority by \$720,000 for the bench.

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