



ITEM ID: 2025-199-0

TRANSMITTAL DATE: May 16, 2025

MEETING DATE: May 23, 2025

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Paul Hubler, Chief Strategy Officer

SUBJECT: May 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

On April 7, Metrolink presented an update of recent activities impacting Metrolink service to the communities within the jurisdiction of the San Fernando Valley Council of Governments (SFVCOG) Transportation Committee, including an update of the enhanced service schedule; current ridership gains and trends; and the status of funding and development of Antelope Valley Line (AVL) projects. The committee unanimously approved a recommendation to the full SFVCOG to submit a letter of support seeking Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) funds for the Metrolink AVL capacity and service improvement projects. Applications must be submitted to SCAG by August 1, with a program of awards expected to be adopted by the SCAG Regional Council expected in November or December 2025. Staff will keep the Board apprised as this process moves forward.

State

Extension of Cap-and-Trade Program

On April 15, Governor Newsom, Senate President pro Tempore Mike McGuire and Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas announced they would seek an extension of the cap-and-trade program during this legislative year. The program is currently set to expire in 2030 and requires reauthorizing by the Legislature. Extending the program this year can provide the market with greater certainty and attract stable investments. Revenues from the program are distributed via the the state's Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) and are critical to the future of public transportation and the state's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) and the Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP), which are funded from GGRF, have enabled Metrolink to invest in capital and operations efforts with significant positive impacts on service frequency and ridership growth. Additionally, Metrolink has sent a letter to legislative leadership and budget chairs advocating for a portion of reauthorized cap-and-trade funds to fund regional rail projects that have direct nexus to California High-Speed Rail, which currently is the recipient of significant cap-and-trade funding. Additionally, Metrolink has requested consideration of an ongoing funding source from cap-and-trade revenues dedicated to regional rail operations, noting that no significant dedicated state revenues are available for passenger rail operations. Metrolink is leading requesting that partner regional rail agencies from around the state join in this advocacy effort.

Senate Bill 741 (Blakespear)

SB 741 was amended by Senator Blakespear on April 21, 2025. The bill would expand existing exemptions from coastal development permit requirements for emergency highway repairs to also include emergency railroad repairs along the LOSSAN rail corridor. Public agencies would be allowed to perform emergency maintenance, repair, or restoration of existing railroad tracks within the existing right-of-way. The exemption would apply only if the damage results from a natural event such as fire, flood, storm, earthquake, land subsidence, gradual earth movement or landslide, within one year of the damage. The bill does explicitly exclude a project that would include construction of any new or expanded revetment, seawall, bluff or cliff stabilization, retention structure, rock slope protection, and other construction that

alters natural shoreline processes, or a project that would expand or widen railroad facilities. SB 741 passed unanimously (6-0) from the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee on April 22 and is now referred to the Senate Appropriations Committee for a hearing.

Federal

Rep. Torres' Listening Session on Olympics Preparation

On April 17, Metrolink Director of Government Relations Jeff Dunn and Director of Special Projects Michael Litschi attended a listening session hosted by Congresswoman Norma Torres on regional transit agency preparations for the 2028 Olympic & Paralympic Games. Items discussed included the impacts to transit infrastructure posed by the Games and efforts to date on cross-agency collaboration. Congresswoman Torres was particularly focused on how the federal government could assist the region in efforts to host the Games. Metrolink staff outlined our capital and operations funding needs and stressed the urgency regarding the need for investments, as much of our improvements require large lead times.

House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Rail Subcommittee Solicits Reauthorization Ideas

The House Transportation & Infrastructure Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Material is soliciting legislative proposals from stakeholders for inclusion in the next surface transportation reauthorization bill. Metrolink staff will submit several proposals that reflect the Board-approved 2025 Legislative Program priorities. These include directives to the T&I subcommittee to consider opening up the CRISI competitive grant program to commuter rail applicants, defining regional rail in statute, and codifying the FTA waiver on the repayment of federal interest when retiring polluting locomotives early.

Prepared by: Jeffrey Dunn, Director, Government and Community Relations
Anna Denecke, Senior Manager, Government Relations
Julie Nieto, Management Analyst II

Approved by: Paul Hubler, Chief Strategy Officer

Attachment(s)

[Appendix A - May 2025 Bill Matrix](#)