



ITEM ID: 2023-285-0

TRANSMITTAL DATE: September 15, 2023

MEETING DATE: September 22, 2023

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Paul Hubler, Chief Strategy Officer

SUBJECT: September 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 local, state, and federal government and community relations stakeholders relating to Metrolink service and relevant policy items.

Discussion

Local

Staff have arranged tours of the Central Maintenance Facility (CMF) with staff from Los Angeles City Councilmember Hugo Soto-Martinez, District 13, and with Councilmember Eunisses Hernandez, District 1, on August 29 and October 23, respectively. The council offices either represent the facility or communities adjacent to the facility. During the meeting staff will tour the facility, provide an update on completed and planned improvements at the facility, and brief council staff on Metrolink operations and service. Metrolink is committed to being a partner and good neighbor in the communities we service. Staff appreciate the support and partnership with the Los Angeles City Council offices.

Following the first by-line meetings along the San Bernardino Line, staff are planning the next meeting series along the Ventura County Line tentatively scheduled for October 2023. These meetings highlight capital improvement and state of good repair projects, provide information on Quiet Zones, and facilitate open communication between local communities and Metrolink. Staff continue to look for new and strategic opportunities to foster partnerships across our network.

An important part of community interaction is communication with nonprofit Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) in the Metrolink service area. Staff are developing a strategy to identify and effectively engage with CBOs. Initial outreach will include environmental and environmental justice CBOs, businesses, neighborhood councils, transportation stakeholders, and multicultural 501(c)(3) organizations. This new framework and strategy will help facilitate engagement.

Staff are continuing outreach to identified stakeholders with information regarding the relaunch of the Mobility-4-All program. Prior outreach to local and government agencies has helped inform potential users of the program. Continued outreach will provide further resources and information to local stakeholders.

State

The state Legislature was on summer recess from July 14 through August 14. Prior to the recess, the Legislature and Governor Newsom reached a budget agreement that included \$5.1 billion for transportation through the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) and a new zero-emission transit vehicle capital program. Both programs use established formulas to distribute funding to Regional Transportation Planning Authorities (RTPAs) across the state. The Legislature also included accountability and reporting requirements that govern the use of funding.

The California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) released guidelines to provide additional clarification and guidance on the use of funds in late August. Staff coordinated with Member Agencies and the California Transit Association (CTA) on requested revisions or amendments to the use and allocation of funding.

The legislative session through September 1 included floor votes on potential legislation, fiscal or appropriations committee meetings, and policy committee informational hearings. During that period, Chief Executive Officer Darren Kettle testified before the Senate Transportation Subcommittee on LOSSAN Rail Corridor Resiliency and the Assembly Select Committee on Regional Transportation Solutions on August 15 and August 25, respectively. Metrolink was joined by other executive staff from Member Agencies in providing updates on regional rail service, capital improvement projects, and other agency initiatives.

The Legislature will continue consideration of bills through September 14 before adjourning for the session. The Governor then has until October 14 to act on any bills passed and approved by the Legislature. The second year of the two-year session is expected to begin January 3, 2024. A summary of latest action of bills of interest is included in the attached bill matrix.

In the Assembly, Robert Rivas (D-Salinas) assumed the role of Assembly Speaker in July. Speaker Rivas announced the following legislative leadership roles. A letter from CEO Darren Kettle was shared with Speaker Rivas and the new Assembly leadership following their appointments.

- Cecilia Aguilar-Curry (D-Winter), Speaker Pro Tem
- Isaac Bryan (D-Los Angeles), Majority Leader

Additionally, Speaker Rivas appointed Metrolink delegation member Juan Carrillo (D-Palmdale) as chair of the Local Government Committee. The committee was formally chaired by Assemblymember Aguilar-Curry, who is now the Speaker Pro Tem.

The California Air Resources Board (CARB) released amended language for the adopted In-Use Locomotive regulation. A summary of the changes will be provided during the meeting. A comment letter was submitted to reiterate the need for state incentive funding to facilitate fleet replacement and further accelerate the development of technologies that can be successfully scaled and applied in the Metrolink service area.

Federal

Congress adjourned for the summer on July 29. The Senate will return on September 5 and the House of Representatives is expected to return September 12. Both legislative chambers have set different Fiscal Year 2024 appropriations allocations with FY 2023 ending on September 30. The Senate is appropriating topline funding agreed to under previous debt limit and budget agreements while the House is using FY 2022 levels. It is expected that Congress will need a short-term funding gap or Continuing Resolution (CR) through as late as early December to resolve funding differences.

Staff are sharing the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) message to fully fund the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). Legislative proposals that significantly cut public transit and passenger rail below the authorized funding levels could result in as much as a \$2 billion cut to passenger rail investments. Staff are encouraging federal delegation offices to support fully funding and providing direct eligibility for programs like the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program and Federal-State Partnership for State-of-Good-Repair Program that fund critical Metrolink projects.

Staff are preparing information to share with federal delegation offices on Metrolink's application to the Neighborhood Access and Equity (NAE) discretionary grant program

seeking match funds to replace eight Tier 2 locomotives with the cleanest available Tier 4 equipment. If awarded, the grant funds would match state funding from the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) Carl Moyer Program.

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Attachment(s)

[Appendix A - September 2023 Bill Matrix](#)