



ITEM ID: 2024-195-0

TRANSMITTAL DATE: May 17, 2024

MEETING DATE: May 24, 2024

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 relating to Metrolink service and relevant policy initiatives.

Discussion

Local

Metrolink is soliciting feedback on the implementation of increased rail service along the Antelope Valley Line for a Title VI hearing. The Community Relations team hosted a bilingual virtual community meeting on April 18 to provide information about the expansion of AVL service and give community members an opportunity to comment on the expansion. There were 14 people in attendance at the meeting. Additionally, a survey was posted on Metrolink's website and posted on Nextdoor. The meeting was recorded for viewing by those unable to attend. The Community Relations team invited 115 community-based organizations to attend the meeting and advertised it on our website, social media, and customer information system boards. Additionally, ads regarding the public hearing on May 24 were placed in 16 Limited English Proficiency newspapers.

In April, community relations staff hosted two outreach meetings for city representatives and elected officials along the AV Line. The first meeting held on April 16 allowed city staff to ask questions and learn about activities and improvements along the line and Metrolink's SCORE plans. The second meeting, led by Metrolink CEO Darren Kettle, was held for elected officials on April 24. Participants included Burbank Councilmember Tamala Takahashi, Santa Clarita Councilmember Marsha McLean, Lancaster Councilmember Lauren Hughes-Leslie and staff from Senator Scott Wilk, Assemblymember Laura Friedman, Representative Jimmy Gomez and Representative Mike Garcia. In addition to meetings with city staff and elected officials, Metrolink representatives participated in pop-up events in each city and shared information about service with the community.

In conjunction with the engineering staff, the community relations team participated in an annual district-wide career fair at Alhambra High School on April 24.

To build upon engagement with local communities, staff offered to provide Metrolink presentations to Chambers of Commerce and Senior and Recreation centers across our service region. To date, staff have presented to the Laguna Niguel, Fontana, and Moreno Valley Chambers of Commerce and are scheduled to present to the Corona Senior Center.

State

On April 15, Governor Newsom signed AB 106 (Gabriel), the first of several bills aimed at proactively decreasing the state budget deficit. The Early Action Budget Agreement, once passed in its entirety, will reduce next year's funding shortfall by approximately \$17.3 billion. Previously, the Newsom administration estimated the deficit to be around \$38 billion, while the Legislative Analyst's Office estimated it to be as much as \$73 billion. The Early Action Budget Agreement preserves SB 125 funding, including the entirety of the \$1.1 billion Zero-Emission Transit Capital Program funding. It delays \$1 billion of the \$4 billion Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) provided by SB 125 by one fiscal year.

The Senate Subcommittee on LOSSAN Rail Corridor Resiliency will held an informational hearing *Waves and Trains - Revitalizing Rail* on April 29. CEO Darren Kettle testified in Sacramento about lessons learned following the reopening of track closures in San Clemente. Panelist included executive leadership from OCTA, LOSSAN, the city of San Clemente and state agencies.

Metrolink staff will attend the California Transit Association Spring Legislative Conference in Sacramento on May 21. Staff will meet with legislators to focus on the positive impacts of the SB 125 budget surplus funding for Metrolink projects and operations.

Federal

CEO Darren Kettle provided testimony at a House Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials Subcommittee hearing on April 17. Panelists included Mike Noland, President, Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District; Debra Johnson, General Manager and Chief Executive Officer, RTD-Denver; David W. Dech, Executive Director, South Florida Regional Transportation Authority / Tri-Rail and Kevin Corbett, President and Chief Executive Officer, New Jersey Transit on behalf of the Northeast Corridor Commission. Panelists addressed the challenges, obstacles and legislative opportunities for the commuter rail industry. CEO Darren Kettle's testimony focused on the transition from a commuter rail to regional rail model, Metrolink's role in preparing for the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games and future connectivity with high-speed rail. Panelists also advocated for full eligibility of commuter rail for the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grant program, restricted to intercity and freight rail projects.

Following passage of the FY24 Omnibus bill funding USDOT programs through September 30, the Federal Transit Administration announced formula apportionments through the end of the fiscal year. A total of \$20.5 billion is available, reflecting the increases provided by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The Los Angeles – Long Beach – Anaheim Urbanized Area will receive \$603.4 million; the Riverside – San Bernardino Urbanized Area will receive \$77 million; the Oxnard – Ventura Urbanized Area will receive \$21.5 million.

Final text of the FY24 Omnibus included two Metrolink earmarks. Rep. Sherman provided \$1 million for the Metrolink Track Intrusion System and Positive Train Control Project. This funding, which will be combined with a recently awarded SMART grant from USDOT, will allow Metrolink to develop a prototype intrusion detection system for the right-of-way and grade crossings. Sen. Butler and Sen. Padilla secured \$1.6 million for Wireless Crossing Nearside Station Stop (WCNSS) positive train control (PTC) technology at four crossings across our system.

Paul Hubler, Jeff Dunn, and Michelle Stewart attended the APTA Annual Legislative Conference in Washington, DC in early April. Staff met with the legislative staff for 12 House members and both California US Senators to request support for pending discretionary grant applications, Olympics-related needs and earmark requests.

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Attachment(s)

[Appendix A - May 2024 Bill Matrix](#)