



ITEM ID: 2024-217-0

TRANSMITTAL DATE: June 21, 2024

MEETING DATE: June 28, 2024

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Paul Hubler, Chief Strategy Officer

SUBJECT: June 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

Metro Older Adults Transportation Expo

On May 7, 2024, the Metrolink Community Relations team participated in Metro's Older Adults Transportation Expo at the Pasadena Convention Center. Over 500 senior transit riders attended the event and learned about bus, train and other transportation options and discounts available to them. Metrolink made a presentation to over 100 seniors highlighting the services and destinations throughout its service area.

City of Claremont Preemption Concerns

The City of Claremont contacted the Community Relations team about a preemption issue impacting pedestrian street crossing times. A possible solution was reached with the Signal team and the city will work with its lighting contractor to address the timing on the pedestrian crossing signals. In addition to assisting the city resolve its crossing concerns Metrolink will help draft a notice to be distributed to the community.

Participation in Local Events

On May 10, 2024, the Metrolink Government and Community Relations team attended the Orange County Business Council Government Affairs meeting which featured presentations by the Honorable Young Kim (R-CA-40) and Lou Correa (D-CA-46). This event provided the Government/Community Relations team an opportunity to work more closely with the Orange County Business Council and further strengthen relationships with local Congressional members.

In keeping with our goal of developing relationships with Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in our service area, the Community Relations team attended the Second Annual Convening of Nonprofits and Foundations at Los Angeles Valley College on May 21, 2024. The event featured presenters from the Ralph M. Parsons Foundation, the Weingart Foundation, the California Community Foundation and many other nonprofits and foundations in our service area. Assemblymember Luz Rivas was also in attendance. In addition to developing a database of over 500 nonprofits and CBOs in our service area, the Community Relations Team will continue to look for opportunities to work with nonprofits in a meaningful and productive manner to expand Metrolink's footprint with their constituencies.

Future Title VI Efforts

Title VI outreach efforts are being planned and will be undertaken for the Student Adventure Pass and the October Schedule change. Title VI outreach efforts are required by federal law whenever there is a substantive change in fares or schedules. The effort to combine outreach for these two significant events is intended to leverage messaging on the importance of both and seek greater participation from impacted residents and passengers. Metrolink will proceed with outreach during the summer and provide input and recommendations from the outreach to the Board before changes are made to the October schedule.

State

SB 125 Funding Distributions Frozen

In response to a worsening budget deficit, Governor Gavin Newsom announced a 60-day statewide freeze on discretionary spending on April 29. Included in the frozen funds is \$2.4 billion in Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) and Zero-Emission Transit Capital Program funding that was supposed to be released April 30. This \$2.4 billion is part of a larger \$5.1 billion investment in transit operations and capital projects provided by the State Legislature through SB 125 in 2023. Metrolink projects potentially affected by the freeze are listed below.

Agency	Project	Funding
VCTC	Train Service to Santa Barbara	\$3.8 million
SBCTA	Operations for Metrolink/Arrow	\$16.2 million
SBCTA	Double Track Lilac to Sycamore	\$16.5 million
OCTA	San Juan Creek Bridge Replacement Project	\$17 million

Since release of the May Revise, the Administration has repeatedly assured that, except for certain specific cuts identified that affect principally unallocated future grant funding, Active Transportation Program and Grade Separation Program projects, the freeze of these funds is only a delay - not a cut - to the above and other TIRCP funded projects. Schedule for allocation of these funds is uppermost among advocacy objectives of statewide transportation and transit stakeholders.

California Transit Association Spring Legislative Conference

CEO Darren Kettle, Chief Strategy Officer Paul Hbler, Director of Government and Community Relations Jeff Dunn, and Senior Manager of Government Relations Anna Denecke attended the California Transit Association's state advocacy day on May 21. Staff met with key legislators and staff to make the case that retention of SB 125 funding is critical to the future of transit across the state. Other topics discussed included Olympic Games preparation and the agency's transformation from a commuter to a regional railroad.

May Revise Proposes Maintaining SB 125 Transit Funding

On Friday, May 10, Governor Newsom released the FY24-25 state budget revision, known colloquially as the "May Revise." The Governor's proposal projects a two-year, \$56 billion deficit which includes a \$27.6 billion deficit for FY24-25 and a projected \$28.4 billion deficit for FY25-26. The Governor's plan, which is subject to approval by the Legislature, addresses the deficit through a combination of actions that include drawing on funds from the State's reserve or 'rainy day' fund; savings from budget efficiencies; savings from budget cuts; savings from budget expansion pauses and shifts; and increased revenues and borrowing. The May Revise proposes shifting \$1.3 billion from the General Fund to Greenhouse Emission Reduction Fund (GGRF) to maintain support for transit recovery. This action, if approved by the Legislature, will maintain transit formula funds, TIRCP, and Zero Emissions transit capital support provided by the past two budgets.

Federal

Earmark Requests Submitted to Federal Delegation

Congressional offices officially opened their Community Project Funding portals after passage of the much-delayed FY24 Omnibus that funds federal agencies through September 30, 2024. Metrolink submitted 16 requests in total. Projects we are seeking support for include microgrid and backup dispatching support for the agency's Dispatching Operating Center, installation of wireless grade crossing technology across various locations in our system, and planning support for service to downtown Ventura Beach station.

Mobility 21 Federal Delegation Trip

Darren Kettle met with federal lawmakers and members of the Biden Administration as part of the Mobility 21 delegation trip on June 3-5. Meetings focused on the Southern California region's Climate Pollution Reduction Grant application to EPA, which includes potential support for two Antelope Valley Line projects, as well as the need for flexible Buy America requirements and the importance of approval for SCAGQMD Contingency Measure Plan.

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 - June 2024 Bill Matrix](#)