



ITEM ID: 2026-186-0

TRANSMITTAL DATE: April 17, 1016

MEETING DATE: April 24, 2026

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Paul Hubler, Chief Strategy Officer

SUBJECT: April 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

State

Update on Bills and Legislative Session

On April 6, the Legislature reconvened from Spring Recess. In the weeks ahead, the Legislature will continue to hold policy committee and budget subcommittee hearings. April 24, 2026, is the last day for policy committees to hear and report to fiscal committees any fiscal bills introduced in their house; and May 1, 2026, is the last day for policy committees to hear and report to the Floor non-fiscal bills introduced in their house.

Updates on key bills staff is tracking are noted below, with a full list included in Appendix A:

AB 1855 (J. Gonzalez) Passenger rail CEQA exemptions - Support

This bill would remove the requirement that rail projects be exclusively used by zero-emission locomotives, or Tier 4 or cleaner locomotives, to qualify for a CEQA exemption, and clarifies that the mainline rail for a project must be located entirely within an existing rail or highway rail right-of-way, enabling coverage of other infrastructure necessary for service. Metrolink submitted a letter in support of this bill since it builds on existing CEQA exemptions by streamlining passenger rail project delivery and reducing cost while maintaining appropriate mitigation for construction impacts. The bill will apply to expanded rail service such the Perris to Hemet and San Jacinto rail extension being planned by Metrolink's member agency, Riverside County Transportation Commission, for future passenger rail service. Additionally, other capital projects in the future likely will benefit should this CEQA exemption expansion be enacted. As of February 23, the bill has been referred to Assembly Natural Resources Committee.

SB 1136 (Blakespear) Intercity rail and commuter rail: special events service plans: fare system integration

As of April 6, this bill has been amended to require a regional rail operator operating within an intercity rail corridor to ensure that its fare systems are fully integrated with the intercity rail operator and other regional rail operators in the corridor. This bill would require an interagency transfer agreement to require a joint powers board to ensure that service planning is provided for special events, commencing with the 2027-28 fiscal year. The bill does not mandate additional service for special events beyond what is feasible. With the latest amendments, a requirement for a public agency responsible for commuter rail services to adopt a special events service plan in order to access State Rail Assistance funds was removed from the bill. Metrolink remains engaged with the author's office, its rail operator partners throughout the state, and the California Transit Association, working with the author to address issues with the bill as it moves forward. The bill is scheduled to be heard on April 14, Senate Transportation Committee.

SB 1411 (Stern) Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund: funding conditions: high-speed rail – Support

This bill would authorize the CA High-Speed Rail Authority to enter into new funding

commitments outside of the Merced-to-Bakersfield segment in any amount for additional activities that maximize the efficiency of delivering the project. Currently there is a prohibition in state law that restricts the project from spending more than \$500 million on activities outside its Merced-to-Bakersfield segment until June 2030. Metrolink submitted a support letter for this bill since increased flexibility in investment in Southern California is essential to ensuring that projects are implemented in a manner that improves coordination and accelerates delivery timelines. The bill is set for hearing on April 14 in the Senate Transportation Committee.

Federal

President Trump Releases FY27 Budget Proposal

On April 3, 2026, President Donald Trump released his FY 2027 Budget request. The President's budget requests \$114.1 billion in budgetary resources for the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), which includes \$26.6 billion in discretionary budget authority for a \$1.6 billion (6.2%) increase over FY2026 enacted levels. However, the bulk of new funding is directed to highways and air traffic control. Transit and rail programs would be reduced to \$16.3 billion (23% decrease) for public transit and \$2.8 billion (82% decrease) for passenger rail in FY27.

The President's budget does not seek to continue advance appropriations under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), which results in substantial cuts to key public transit and passenger rail investments. The budget eliminates all funding for Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail grants and significantly reduces funding for other grant programs. Additionally, the budget request does not include any U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) surface transportation authorization funding or policy proposals. The budget does not include 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games funding. The President's budget outlines the Administration's policy and funding priorities, but Congress ultimately must pass the 12 annual appropriation bills for the next fiscal year.

American Public Transportation Association Legislative Conference in Washington DC

Chief Strategy Officer Paul Hubler, Government & Community Relations Director Jeffrey Dunn, and Management Analyst II Julie Nieto attended the American Public Transportation Association's Spring Legislative Conference in Washington D.C. The conference is an opportunity for public transportation industry professionals across the nation to advocate for full public transit and commuter rail funding and hear from speakers on important federal legislation and policy initiatives. In addition to attending APTA programming, staff meet with members of the Metrolink federal delegation. Meetings focused on 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games security, capital and operations needs. Staff also thanked offices for their consideration of Community Project Funding /Congressional Directed Spending applications submitted in March. Metrolink staff submitted 11 appropriations requests for FY27 totaling approximately \$30 million.

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Julie Nieto, Management Analyst II
Senator Zavala, Government Relations Grad on Career Track

Approved by: Paul Hubler, Chief Strategy Officer

Attachment(s)

Appendix A - April 2026 Bill Matrix
Presentation - April Legislative Update