

March 26th, 2026

The Honorable Doug Chaffee
Chair, Metrolink Board of Directors
Metro Board Room
One Gateway Plaza
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Via email at BoardSecretary@scrra.net

Re: Public Comment, Agenda items 7A and 7B

Dear Chair Chaffee and Metrolink Board,

We write in as a coalition of rail and transit organizations with members throughout the five Metrolink Counties, united in support of frequent and reliable transportation.

We are deeply concerned by the service cuts that went into effect Monday, March 23rd, due to chronic mechanical issues and parts shortages for the F-125 locomotives (Item 7A). Providing steep service cuts with little notice and no replacement is unacceptable and an insult to riders who rely on Metrolink, particularly at a time when gas prices are skyrocketing due to the oil crisis in the Gulf. In the short term, we urge Metrolink to work with Amtrak and other rail operators around the state to provide temporary replacement locomotives while the F-125s await repairs. These service cuts will only exacerbate Metrolink's revenue shortages (Item 7B).

From our perspective the genesis of the F-125 issue was the development of a complex, regulation-driven locomotive with high maintenance requirements. This could have been avoided if the worldwide standard for zero emission rail service, overhead catenary electrification, had been implemented in Southern California. Moving forward Metrolink should transition to overhead catenary electrification (OCS) as a power source for their trains. Electric trains have fewer moving parts, fewer failure points, and overall lower maintenance costs than diesel trains, resulting in more reliable service. This would avoid the ongoing maintenance and parts supply issues for the F-125 locomotives for the next few decades.

Electrification has other benefits that will improve Metrolink's ridership and fiscal sustainability. Caltrain electrification made Caltrain the fastest-growing transit agency in America, with weekday ridership increasing by 57% and weekend ridership doubling from 2024-2025¹. This incredible growth was a result of the shorter trip times and more frequent service unlocked by electric trains' faster acceleration and lower operating costs. Californians for Electric Rail's Electrolink report modeled the service benefits of electrification, level boarding, and through-running, and found that electrifying the San Bernardino Line would cut end to end trip

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<https://www.caltrain.com/news/caltrain-named-americas-fastest-growing-transit-agency-aptas-2025-transit-wrapped>

times by 33%, while electrifying the Antelope Valley Line to Vista Canyon would make a trip from Vista Canyon to Los Angeles less than an hour².

Right now is a unique opportunity for Metrolink electrification. The High Speed Rail Authority 2026 Draft Business Plan³ envisions HSR reaching Los Angeles via an electrified Antelope Valley Line prior to the completion of all planned tunnels, sharing tracks with Metrolink much like Caltrain will. Streets for All recently released a report⁴ highlighting that an Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD) around all the Los Angeles County HSR stations could raise \$16 B - enough to fund the interim proposal in the Draft Business Plan. This would fund electrification of much of the Antelope Valley Line in the 2030s, with the potential for extension to Anaheim if there was political support from Orange County. Gaps could be filled with battery electric trains that charge on wire, or Metrolink could seek additional funding sources to electrify portions of the AVL not shared with high-speed rail.

The failure of the F125s and rising fuel prices highlight the urgency of electrification. We urge Metrolink to commit to a timeline for electrification, and urges board members Najarian, Barger, Sandoval, and Solis to support a study of a high-speed rail EIFD by Los Angeles County staff.

We are also concerned by Metrolink's budget shortfall. While we realize there are no easy solutions, we urge Metrolink to maintain existing levels of service and future planned service expansions. We strongly support the Metrolink Reimagined project to move to all day regional rail service patterns, and in particular its planned expansion to weekend service. Weekend ridership is currently 82% of weekday⁵ despite much worse service, a trend seen around the country since the pandemic with the rise of remote work, and should be prioritized moving forward. Sub-par ridership recovery on regional rail is a nationwide phenomenon driven by these trends, and funding and service must be redesigned to reflect these new patterns. However, Metrolink's shortfall also reflects broader structural failings unique to Metrolink that must be remedied.

We are particularly dismayed that Los Angeles and Orange Counties have reduced their operational support for Metrolink. We urge board members Barger, Solis, Najarian, Sandoval, Chaffee, and Nguyen to use their influence to reverse these cuts and maintain past levels of support moving forward. But this situation highlights the failures of Metrolink's devolved structure where all decisions are left to the counties. This structure makes Metrolink everyone's last priority, where both capital and operations are neglected in favor of more local priorities. We encourage Metrolink to support governance reform efforts that would centralize capital management and provide a dedicated stream of operations funding. Current opportunities include SB 1324, a bill to improve the governance of the LOSSAN corridor, and Metro's Ad Hoc

² <https://calelectricrail.org/electrolink-modern-passenger-rail-service-for-southern-california/>

³ <https://hsr.ca.gov/communications-outreach/reports/business-plans/2026-business-plan/>

⁴ https://data.streetsforall.org/blog/cahsr_eifd/

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https://legistarweb-production.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/attachment/pdf/3927862/SGDP_Presentation_Feb_2026.pdf

Board Composition committee, which impacts Los Angeles County's transit governance as part of Measure G reforms to county governance.

Another structural problem fueling Metrolink's budget shortfall is that the state of California funds transit operations at far lower levels than other national peers⁶. We urge Metrolink and member agencies to prioritize higher levels of operational support in their statewide lobbying efforts.

Oil prices are rapidly increasing, putting the pain on Southern California commuters as well as transit agencies that run on fossil fuels. We are also one year out from the devastating LA fires and just past a record-smashing March heatwave, events that remind us of climate change's impact on everyday lives. In these times, it is critical that Metrolink continue to provide convenient, reliable, low-carbon alternatives to driving.

Sincerely,
Adriana Rizzo
Founding Member, Californians for Electric Rail

Marc T. Vukceвич,
Director of State Policy, Streets For All

Bart Reed
Executive Director, The Transit Coalition

Steve Roberts
President, Rail Passenger Association of California and Nevada



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