



August 4th, 2026

Southern California Association of Governments
Attn: Warren Whiteaker, Planning Manager
900 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1700
Los Angeles, CA 90017

Re: Connect SoCal Draft Amendment 2

Dear Mr. Whiteaker and SCAG board,

The undersigned represent transit riders and environmentalists throughout Southern California. We are writing to express concern about the considerably slower timeline for numerous critical rail projects expressed in Draft Amendment 2 in the 2024 Connect SoCal Regional Transportation Plan. These projects are necessary for enhanced Metrolink service and a critical component of California's climate goals. Many of the projects are part of Metrolink's SCORE program to deliver 30 minute systemwide service by 2028 for the Olympics. It now appears that not a single Metrolink line will have the capacity for full 30 minute service by the deadline for the games, with some projects delayed by more than 10 years. These projects include:

- The Brighton to Roxford Double Track was set in 2024 to be complete by 2025, but has now been extended to 2037 - a timeline jumping 12 years in just two years. This project eliminates a bottleneck between Sylmar and Burbank on the Antelope Valley Line and is critical for reliability.
- The Balboa Double Track project, a SCORE project, will not be complete until 2039, 11 years after SCORE's 2028 goal. This project fixes a bottleneck between the San Fernando Valley and Santa Clarita, essential for more service to a rapidly growing region.
- Rancho Cucamonga Double Track, a SCORE project needed for reliable 30 minute service all the way to San Bernardino on the San Bernardino Line, has been delayed by four years until 2029 - missing the 2028 goal. Cost continues to escalate despite a decrease in scope that has shortened the project to just 0.7 miles.
- The 3rd/4th track on the BNSF San Bernardino Subdivision in Corona and Riverside (project 111), needed for more reliable and frequent service on the 91/Perris Valley and Inland Empire/Orange County Lines, is delayed 9 years until 2039. This route parallels one of Southern California's most congested freeways, and RCTC has completed multiple major freeway widening projects in the same area within the last 10 years.
- The 91 line extension to San Jacinto, a State Rail Plan project, is now delayed until 2050. This extension serves some of the fastest-growing communities in the state, yet a planned widening of SR 79 is advancing considerably faster than this extension.

We also call attention to the lack of passenger rail capacity projects in Orange County in both Draft 2 and the original plan. The SCORE program includes four capacity-increasing projects in Orange County: the Fullerton Interlocker and Atwood-Esperanza 3rd track, which increases capacity and service on the 91/Perris Valley Line, the Orange County Maintenance Facility in Irvine, which is needed for reliability in case of track obstruction and for more service throughout Riverside and Orange Counties, the Irvine Station Improvements, which include additional passing tracks at Irvine station to enhance service on the Orange County and Inland Empire-Orange County Lines, the Surfliner, and perhaps future high-speed rail, and the Serra Siding in Dana Point. The Serra Siding in particular is a crucial bottleneck for all rail travel between greater Los Angeles and San Diego, as well as for beach access via the IE/OC and OC lines and Surfliner.

All of these projects are missing from all versions of the plan, suggesting a lack of commitment to delivering these transformative projects or the associated service enhancements.

This is SCAG's third regional transportation plan since the SCORE program was introduced in 2017. In that time, the region has failed to fund the required capital projects necessary for 30 minute service for a single line on Metrolink. Instead small amounts of funding have been disbursed to some constitutive projects on different lines.

As a result, a few projects may advance but the complete suite of projects necessary to enable a phased service improvement is stuck. That means the projects SCAG does fund are stranded assets - investments made by SCAG and its member local governments that are not providing benefits to riders and the public.

The regional transportation plan practice of extreme deference to locally-generated priorities is a key driver of this dynamic. A project like the Serra Siding has beneficiaries for the entire region in terms of Metrolink and Surfliner riders, but is not an Orange County priority. As a result investments are made elsewhere in the corridor, SCAG region and SANDAG region that cannot be fully operationalized in terms of capacity and reliability without the Serra Siding.

The common thread here is that the Regional Transportation Plan fails to account for transportation plans (e.g. SCORE, LOSSAN Optimization Study, State Rail Plan) and investment that requires coordination across county and MPO boundaries. This isn't just hurting Southern California: it extends to rail planning in Northern California where programs like Valley Rail and the Capitol Corridor Vision Plan languish as MPOs prioritize local priorities rather than phased regional and intercity rail service delivery.

There is no prohibition in state or federal law that requires SCAG to operate without regard for regional and intercity rail planning. In fact, the spirit of state and federal law with regards to MPOs and regional transportation plans intends to solve exactly these coordination problems.

CalSTA's [Draft SB 1098 Report](#) identifies that MPOs consistently fail to prioritize intercity rail that crosses MPO boundaries in their modeling, planning and investment and makes key recommendations for reform.

CHALLENGE

Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs) travel demand models do not consistently or accurately account for the benefits of intercity passenger rail, which often accrue beyond the boundaries of any single metropolitan planning region. This means that the Pacific Surfliner service, as the second busiest intercity service in the country, is often undercounted in single-region planning processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Request Caltrans to provide greater technical assistance for intercity rail modeling in RTP development. For example, the Pacific Surfliner traverses the jurisdictions of six Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO), each of which independently develop its own travel demand models. These models are not necessarily calibrated to a common standard for intercity rail and may not share consistent assumptions. As a result, the benefits tied to intercity rail are likely being understated.
2. Request Caltrans to develop standardized technical guidance for how intercity passenger rail services that span multiple regions should be modeled in travel demand models used in RTPs.

CHALLENGE

There is a need to better integrate intercity passenger rail in regional planning processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Statewide guidance should be issued to establish a common framework for how passenger rail is described and coordinated in RTPs.
2. This may include: expectations for baseline documentation of existing and planned rail services, key corridor characteristics, and coordination with operators and state agencies, as well as clarifying roles when corridors span multiple MPOs.

The undersigned would go further: MPOs like SCAG underweigh regional rail plans even within MPO boundaries.

The practice of deference and prioritization for locally-generated project lists within regional transportation plans is conducive to improvements to a highway network and local roads. An improved interchange at one location in one county does not depend on improvements in another county to realize most of its benefits.

This system, however, has failed to mesh with global best practice of service-led planning for regional and intercity rail - ie SCORE, LOSSAN Optimization Study and the State Rail Plan. A county like San Bernardino or San Diego that prioritizes SCORE/LOSSAN double tracking projects is dependent on other counties prioritizing double tracking or other improvements in its borders to realize the benefits. Meanwhile Orange or Los Angeles counties have often de-prioritized SCORE/LOSSAN plans for capacity projects in favor of local transit or highway projects in their regional transportation plan advocacy. The result under the regional transportation plan process is a Prisoners' Dilemma where cooperation almost always fails and regional and intercity rail improvements languish.

MPOs like SCAG must work to improve their regional transportation planning to account for the need for phased regional and intercity rail service improvements across county or MPO lines.

That requires MPOs to:

- Incorporate service-led planning into their regional transportation plan processes
- Work with Caltrans Division of Rail to assess the readiness of State Rail Plan projects necessary for phased service delivery (ie [Network States. per 2025 State Rail Plan Update](#)) of regional and intercity rail improvements
- Prioritize capital projects within the regional transportation plans that can collectively deliver phased service improvements for lines, irrespective of whether they cross county or MPO borders

The current approach has failed to deliver regional rail services for the 2028 Olympics. That is unavoidable. It has wasted nearly ten years and stranded hundreds of millions of dollars in investment and assets since SCORE and LOSSAN Optimization studies debuted with no Metrolink or Surfliner service improvements to show for it.

What is still within SCAG's control is learning from this lesson. That requires openness to new concepts, working with Caltrans, local advocates, rail operators, local governments and performing coordination work within the region and beyond.

Sincerely,

Adriana Rizzo
Founding Member, Californians for Electric Rail

Eli Lipmen
Director, Move California

David Diaz
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Senior Transportation Advocate, NRDC