



June 25th, 2026

The Honorable Doug Chaffee
Chair
Metrolink Board of Directors
Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Agency (Metro) Board Room
One Gateway Plaza, 3rd floor
Los Angeles, California 90012

Re: Public Comment Item 8C, June 26th Board Meeting

Dear Chair Chaffee and Metrolink board,

Californians for Electric Rail and our coalition partners represent transit riders throughout Southern California. Over the last few months, our coalition has delivered nearly 40,000 letters and mobilized dozens of people to Metrolink member agency board meetings in support of Metrolink service.

We believe that Southern California needs a true regional rail system, with frequent, fast, all-day service that serves urban transit riders and suburban commuters and leisure travelers alike, that is seamlessly integrated with local transit. We support the Metrolink SCORE program to deliver 30-minute systemwide service, and the Metrolink Reimagined program to move to a regional rail service pattern that is both more cost-effective and better suited for post-pandemic travel patterns than peak-only commuter service. We would love to see even further improvements that go beyond what Metrolink has proposed, like through-running, electrification, level and additional service enhancements, though we recognize that there are many challenges in the current moment.

Unfortunately, Metrolink is moving in the opposite direction and falling back even on its more modest service goals. Due to the budget deficit, Metrolink is facing 25-70% service cuts on all lines in most scenarios, with weekend service eliminated on the Orange County Line. These cuts will reduce ridership, worsen Metrolink's financial issues, and reduce transportation options at a time when the public is reeling from the skyrocketing cost of driving and Southern California prepares for the Olympics.

The fiscal cliff is not unique to Metrolink – it is a nationwide issue brought on by inflation and changing post-pandemic travel patterns. Even Caltrain, which has seen the nation's fastest

ridership growth and exceeds both Metrolink and Metro rail in ridership recovery thanks to electrification and enhanced service, is facing a fiscal cliff. In a system with real leadership, Metrolink stakeholders, including member agencies would have stepped up to provide a solution – as seen with Caltrain, who worked together with other Bay Area transit agencies and public stakeholders to launch a revenue measure to fund enhanced service.

Instead, the past few months have been dominated by finger-pointing and infighting. LA Metro and OCTA chose to reduce their contribution to Metrolink in spite of warnings about the fiscal cliff, and have remained steadfast in their commitment to doing so despite the overwhelming public support for maintaining or increasing service. Indeed, OCTA leadership has suggested Metrolink should be running fewer trains, in defiance of both Metrolink and state plans for improved service. SBCTA and RCTC are planning to renew transportation ballot measures with no additional funding for Metrolink, despite their desire to increase service. Member agency board members have been underinformed and misled about basic facts about Metrolink's financial situation and why service cuts are necessary.

We urge board members representing Los Angeles and Orange Counties, the main funders of Metrolink, to continue to work with their member agencies to explore every option to avert service cuts, including lobbying for Metrolink's state budget request. In Orange County, this could include beginning the process of revising Measure M2 allocations to preserve Metrolink service for the lifetime of the ballot measure.

However, it is clear that Metrolink governance is not working. The JPA structure requires close cooperation from all members. When member agencies cannot even agree on implementing settled service plans, how can the agency continue to function? Metrolink's Budget and Finance Committee is a step in the right direction, but a different approach is needed to empower Metrolink to prioritize service delivery. Metrolink should be reorganized into a state or regionally controlled transit district that can operate independently of member agencies. Key powers of a reformed agency should include:

- Metrolink needs a source of operations funding it controls. The Metrolink agency needs the legal power to levy a special tax to fund Metrolink operations independent of the member agencies and provide a pathway to service improvements.
- Metrolink needs control over its right of way. The current system where member agencies control some aspects of capital project development while Metrolink controls others impedes oversight and has led to the slow progress of SCORE capital projects, such as the Serra Siding. It also impedes systemwide and line-wide service improvements on lines with right of way shared between multiple agencies, such as the San Bernardino Line. If one county is proactive on capacity improvements but another is not, improvements are held up for the entire line or even system. We recognize that acquisition of right of way owned by Class I railroads may be infeasible, and limit this suggestion to public right of way only.
- The Metrolink board needs different membership criteria, such that experts in transit management, finance, and technology are able to provide their full

attention to Metrolink management. Despite the best of intentions, current Metrolink board members have many other responsibilities in local government, and have neither the time nor expertise to provide sufficient oversight. Given Metrolink's regional nature, the board should include representation for all six counties served, including San Diego, and include representatives for the state and the full system. We recommend that major transit local agencies, including LA Metro, OC Bus, Omnitrans, and RTA hold ex facto representation.

We recognize that many of these changes will require changes to state and local legislation involving partners beyond the Metrolink board, and challenge the authority of current leadership. But the system is in crisis, facing stasis at best and complete collapse at worst. Leadership from Metrolink board members and other stakeholders to resolve the immediate crisis and provide a better structure moving forward will make a world of difference. Will you choose managed decline or a world class regional rail system?

Sincerely,

Adriana Rizzo

Californians for Electric Rail