

METROLINK®



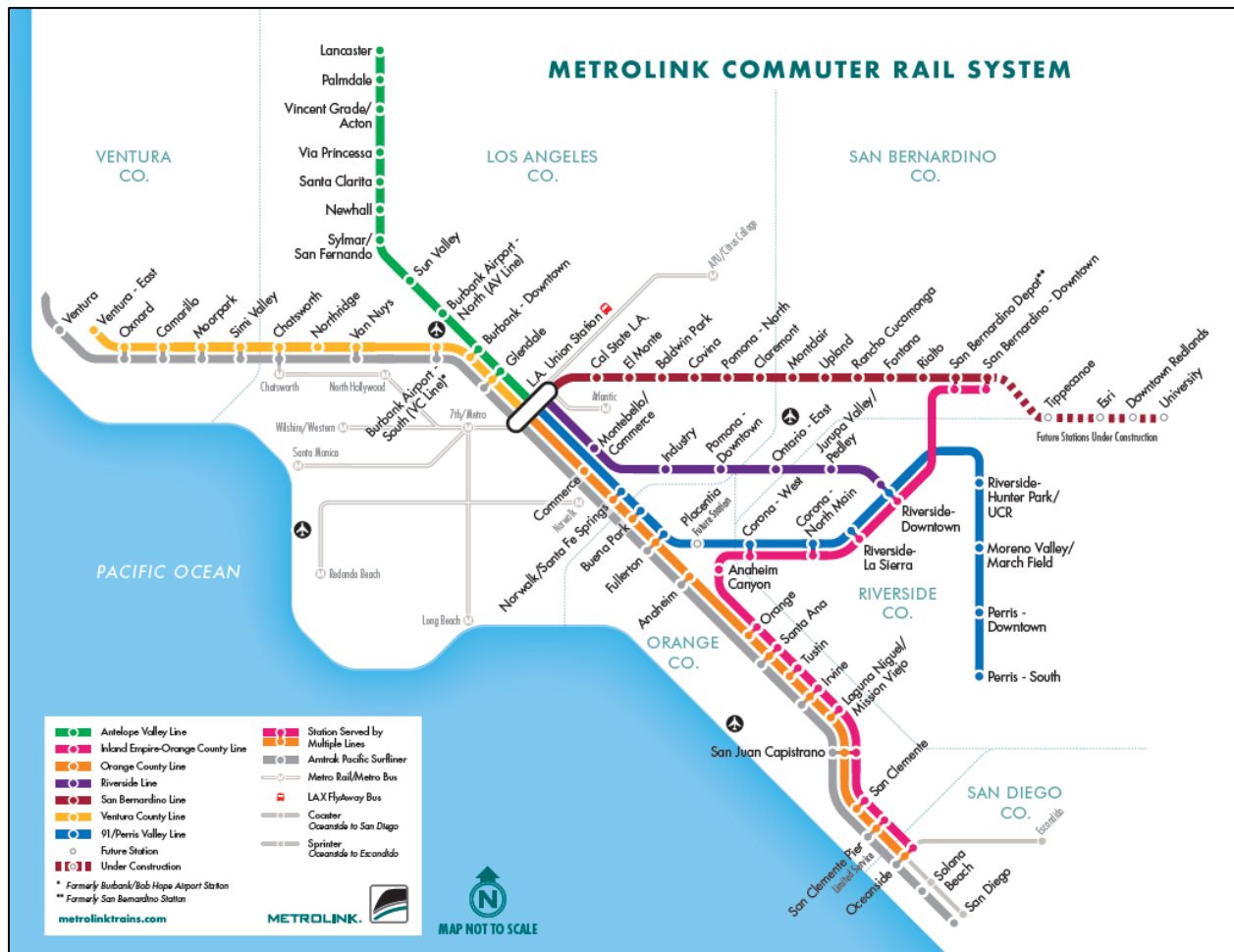
**Testimony before the Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
United States House of Representatives
“Challenges and Opportunities for Commuter Railroads”
September 24, 2019**

**Stephanie N. Wiggins
Chief Executive Officer
Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA) – Metrolink**

INTRODUCTION

Thank you Chairman Lipinski, Ranking Member Crawford and Subcommittee Members for the invitation to testify today on the many challenges and opportunities facing our nation’s commuter railroads. I appreciate the opportunity to provide Metrolink’s perspective as the largest commuter rail operator in California and the third largest in the Country.

My name is Stephanie Wiggins, Chief Executive Officer of Metrolink (Southern California Regional Rail Authority). Metrolink began service in October 1992 with the ideal to serve the Southern California region with safe, efficient, dependable and on-time rail transportation service that offers outstanding customer experience and enhances quality of life. Today, Metrolink – a Joint Powers Authority – governed by an 11-member Board of Directors representing Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura counties, is literally and figuratively connecting Southern California communities. Metrolink’s 538 route miles also extend into the northern portion of San Diego County.



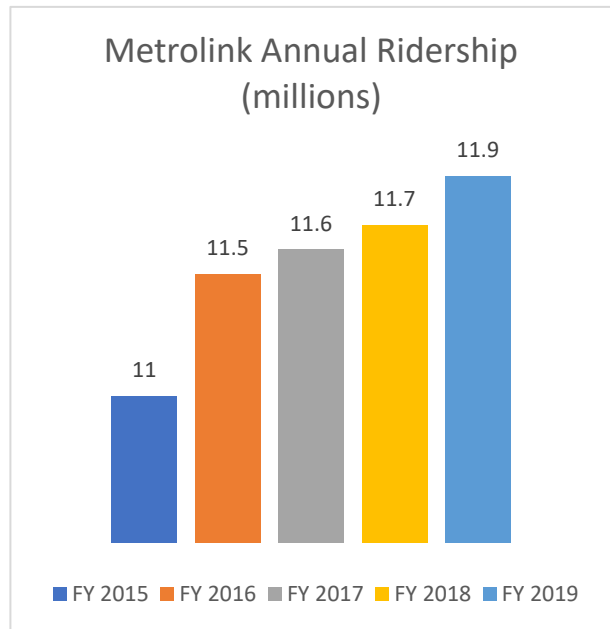
The Metrolink system connects Southern California with a convenient, reliable alternative to increasingly congested roadways.

THE METROLINK SYSTEM

Southern California is a region with some of the most notoriously congested highways in the nation. For those commuting to work, Metrolink provides the freedom to live in almost any portion of the region with the option to hop on one of our trains to get to work. Every day, riders leave their personal vehicles at home and bypass the traffic and unpredictable highway commute in favor of a more relaxing and environmentally conscious ride. We connect multiple commercial markets, along with urban and rural areas, to major job centers all over Southern California – the largest of which is downtown Los Angeles where most of our lines converge at historic Los Angeles Union Station.

The population of the six Southern California counties served by Metrolink is now 21.5 million people, more than half of California’s total population. Over the next 15 years, these counties are forecasted to add one million people, while still striving to meet the State’s ambitious goals to reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions and make housing more affordable to all.

Over the last five years, Metrolink has experienced sustained annual ridership growth, culminating in the highest ridership in our 26-year history for Fiscal Year 2019, which ended on June 30, 2019. The 11.9 million annual riders who chose Metrolink in Fiscal Year 2019 represent a reduction of peak travel volume on parallel highways of up to 28%, as well as annual reductions of 335 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and 130,000 metric tons of GHG emissions – the equivalent of 9.3 million fewer car trips.



The Metrolink system is the economic engine of our region. We share more than half of our system with our railroad partners. The Southern California rail system not only carries an average of 173 Metrolink commuter trains per day, but also up to 30 daily Amtrak intercity trains on the San Luis Obispo – Los Angeles – San Diego (LOSSAN) Corridor, as well as hundreds of Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) and Burlington-Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Class I freight trains. UPRR and BNSF are hauling freight along these nationally significant corridors from the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, the nation’s largest cargo gateway.

SAFETY

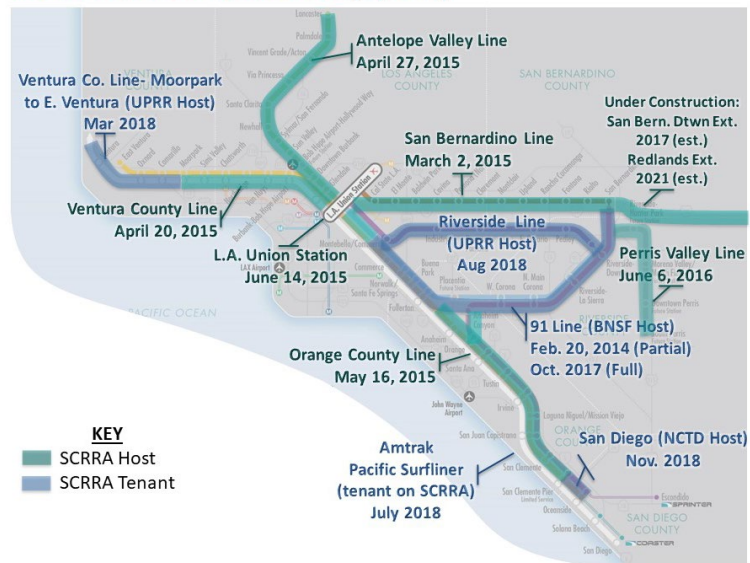
September 22 through 28 marks National Rail Safety Week. Therefore, it is timely to emphasize that safety is a foundational value at Metrolink, and we are proud to lead the nation in the innovation, collaboration, piloting and implementation of critical safety technologies – as well as providing thought leadership and studying lessons learned related to safety. Just two weeks ago, in support of Rail Safety Month in California, Metrolink hosted a national Rail Safety Summit to spur discussion and collaboration around improving rail safety across the region. The event featured a keynote by National Transportation Safety

Board (NTSB) Member Jennifer Homendy, as well as discussions where panelists shared perspectives on ways to solve critical safety issues including evolving safety technologies, trespasser strikes, and the role of mental health and homelessness in the rise of fatal incidents across our region. Ultimately, the summit galvanized attendees to find creative solutions that will help our industry pursue a zero-incident future.

Metrolink was the first commuter rail operator in the nation to bring Positive Train Control (PTC) technology online. PTC is a GPS-based safety technology that can stop a train and prevent train-to-train collisions, over-speed derailments and unauthorized train movement. This technology ensures the safety of our passengers and employees by acting as a safeguard against human errors and other potential hazards. Since 2009, Metrolink has committed approximately \$250 million to develop and install PTC and advanced train control systems. Our agency has always been committed to the timely deployment of PTC. We have worked collaboratively with stakeholders, operators and regulatory agencies as an incubator for best practices and industry standards.

Our systems are now interoperable with PTC on all host and tenant tracks with UPRR, BNSF and Amtrak. Metrolink continues to advance safety through projects like nearside crossing technology that can minimize the impacts to vehicular traffic at crossings that are adjacent to train stations. The technology keeps the gates from activating while the train is in the station until it is ready to depart and proceed through the crossing. This reduces the gate down times that impact cross-traffic and can lead to driver frustration and attempts to beat or go around the crossing gates.

Metrolink PTC In-Service Date (By Line)



As these technologies continue to evolve, there will continue to be new operations and maintenance costs associated with PTC technology. Our agency continues to budget between \$8-\$10 million annually for recurring costs associated with PTC. This commitment equates to an approximate 7.5% increase in Metrolink’s total operations budget. In addition, we anticipate an additional \$50 million is necessary over the next 10 years for the continued evolution of the PTC system. Safety is a core value you cannot put a price tag on. Nevertheless, for Metrolink to continuously build upon its successes, we will need the support of the federal government by making the waiver for technology applications under the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement (CRISI) Program permanent, as an example.

PTC is just one part of the safety platform at Metrolink. We have gone beyond PTC to include additional technologies as part of Metrolink’s commitment to the safety of our passengers, employees and the traveling public. These technologies include:

Automatic Train Stop (ATS) – Prior to the instillation of PTC, Metrolink implemented ATS technology. In 2009, we expanded the use of ATS and have since kept the system as a redundant safety backstop during the installation of PTC. ATS includes magnetic inductors that are placed next to the track at locations where the train is approaching a curve or speed change. The ATS system includes an audible alarm and

flashing alert on the engineer's control panel. The train brakes are then automatically applied if the engineer does not push a button acknowledging the alert within approximately eight seconds. Now that PTC has been installed, the older ATS technology will ultimately be phased out.

Inward and Outward Facing Cameras – In 2009, Metrolink installed inward and outward facing cameras in all locomotives and cab cars. The observation of the operator and the right-of-way provides an additional layer of safety for our crews and passengers. This technology is recommended by the NTSB and was deployed a decade before the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) published proposed rules. Today, all 62 locomotives and 73 cab cars have inward and outward facing cameras on board.

Crash Energy Management (CEM) Technology – In 2010, Metrolink became the first passenger train service in the nation to debut the next generation of cab and passenger rail cars equipped with CEM technology. This safety feature is included in 117 of our passenger cars. CEM technology provides a unique collision-absorption function with redesigned seats and work tables and advanced crumple zones at each end of the cars. This technology is analogous to the crumple zones found in private automobiles meant to dissipate the energy from a crash before the driver feels it.

Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) – In February 2019, Metrolink installed AEDs on all train cars, a critical safety resource to help those experiencing sudden cardiac arrest. The medical device can analyze the heart's rhythm and, if necessary, deliver an electronic shock, or defibrillation, to help the heart re-establish an effective rhythm. This technology provides a critical resource to passengers and train crews, just like they do to airports, sports venues and many workplaces around the country. Metrolink began the installation of AEDs prior to the introduction of state legislation requiring them and completed the installations more than a year ahead of a July 2020 deadline.

Surveillance Detection System – Metrolink piloted a real time video software to monitor rail rights-of-way and detect pedestrians entering sensitive areas. We have tested the technology along the perimeter and entrance of our Central Maintenance Facility (CMF). The pilot allowed for an improved monitoring and response for unauthorized access into a determined area. We continue to test and refine the technology, which we intend to expand along the rights-of-way to provide notification to Metrolink's Security Operations Center (SOC) and Dispatch Operations Center (DOC) to stop train movement or reduce speeds in an area to reduce the risk and allow the opportunity to remove an individual.

OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

Our region provides many opportunities to further the successes experienced by commuter rail operators across the country. Southern California relies on commuter rail to provide a convenient, viable alternative to driving severely congested roadways. In fact, Metrolink just recorded its highest ridership ever in its 26-year history – 11.9 million boardings. This record is also supported by five years of consecutive ridership increases on the Metrolink system. But it's more than that. We know that taking public transit contributes to our riders' physical health and overall better quality of life. According to the American Heart Association, taking public transportation results in people walking more, which contributes to cardiovascular health. In recognition of our complementary missions, Metrolink and the American Heart Association have started a new partnership that can better inform new audiences about the benefits and virtues Metrolink has to offer.

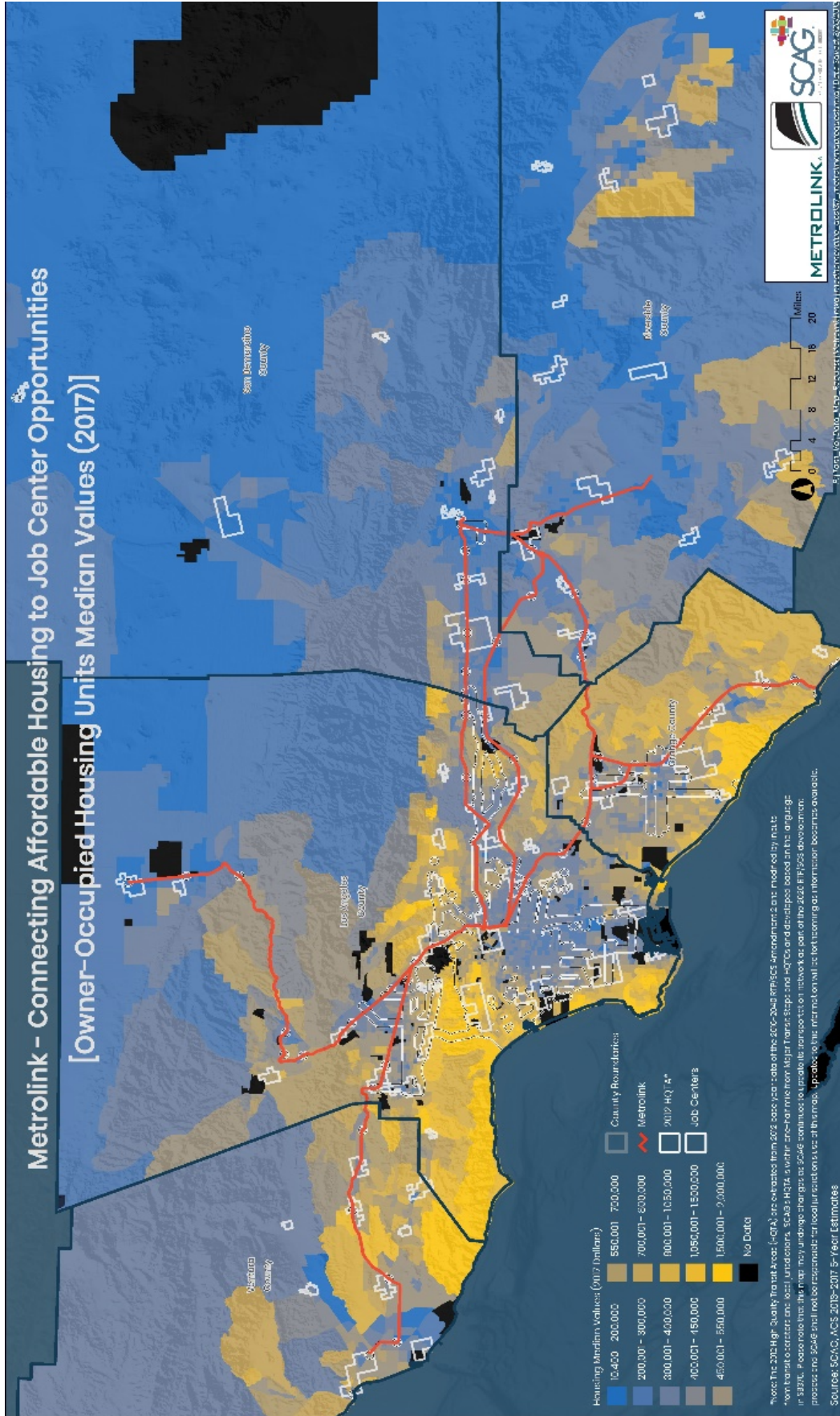
What we do is important to the overall health of Southern California residents. According to the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), it is projected that 8.7 million Americans will be age 85 or older by

2030, and a substantial portion of them will no longer drive. Plus, as more millennials between the age of 20 and 37 express a willingness to take public transportation, despite having access to a car, Metrolink provides a vital transportation alternative for our region. 60% of Metrolink riders travel across county lines. More than 85% of our riders own a car, and their average ride is 36 miles long.

My customer-focused vision for the future is to double ridership in the next five years and to provide service no less than every 30 minutes throughout the day. We will do this by tapping into the peoples' desires to leave their personal vehicles at home most of the time, be environmentally conscious, and by removing key barriers like infrequent or nonexistent mid-day service that can leave people feeling stranded.

Metrolink is also a leader in the zero-emission future of rail transportation as Southern California sets aggressive targets to reduce mobile source emissions. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has set standards for railway locomotive emissions that are designated by a tiered status, with Tier 4 being the highest achieved indicating the greatest reduction in pollutant emissions. Metrolink has received more than half of its purchased Tier 4 locomotives, the remainder of which are scheduled to be delivered by summer 2020. These locomotives reduce emissions between 65% and 85% compared to legacy Tier 2 and Tier 0 locomotives. Metrolink was the first commuter rail operator in the State of California to deploy this technology. As part of a recent state grant award, Metrolink is now embarking on a fleet modernization study to further research opportunities accelerate deployment of a zero-emission operations strategy.

We are at an important juncture for the future of commuter rail, which provides such a critical alternative to suffering through crushing traffic in our personal automobiles to connect us to each other, affordable housing to jobs, and to leisure travel opportunities as illustrated in the map below. As the House of Representative Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee considers future funding opportunities – either through a surface transportation authorization bill, formula funds or discretionary grant opportunities, we respectfully request that the following policy recommendations be considered.



(Source: Southern California Association of Governments)

Surface Transportation Authorization Bill – The Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act authorizes transit programs through September 30, 2020. The reauthorization process provides an opportunity to provide new, long-term dedicated revenues to significantly increase commuter rail investments.

The Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement (CRISI) Program – The CRISI Program was authorized in the FAST Act in 2015. The program consolidated five existing FRA funding programs into one safety and infrastructure funding source. Despite being regulated by the FRA, there are provisions within the CRISI Program that limit project eligibility to corridors that provide intercity rail service. With this provision, only half of the Metrolink system qualifies to receive program funding.

The Metrolink system is critically important to maintaining national economic competitiveness. Our proximity to the ports of Los Angeles, Long Beach, Hueneme and San Diego contribute to over 62 million metric tons of freight shipments carried over shared tracks annually. To ensure the safety and resilience of rail corridors for passenger and freight service, we request that Congress consider including full eligibility for commuter rail to be a qualified applicant for capital projects. We also request that the current waiver for technology applications be made permanent for further PTC developments.

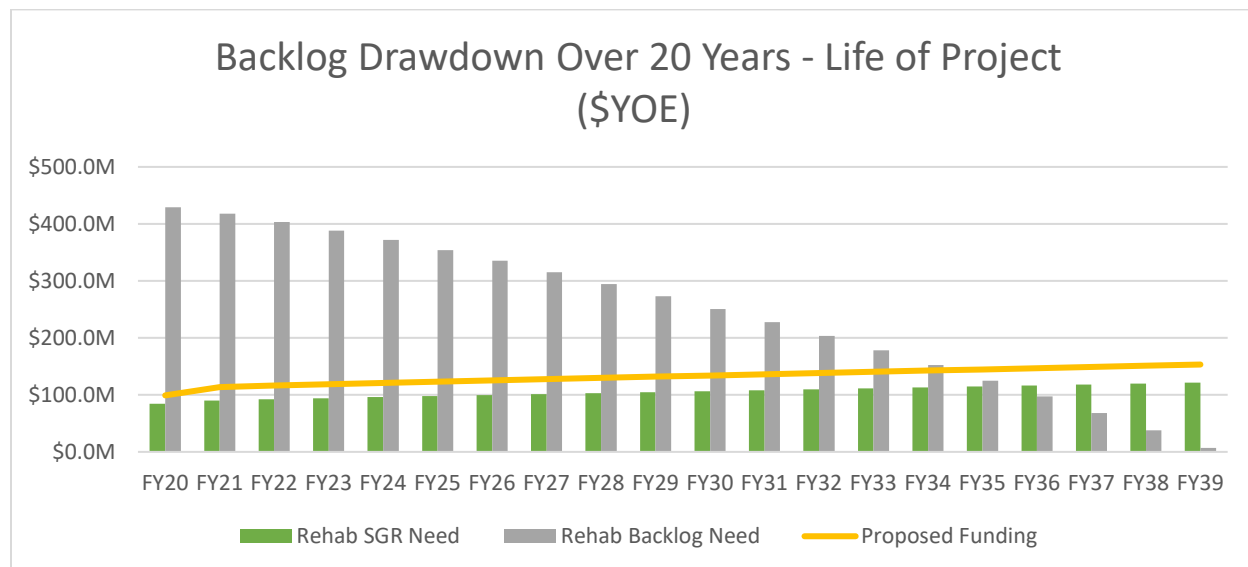
Railroad Crossing Improvement Funding – The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Railway-Highway Crossings (Section 130) Program provides funds to mitigate hazards at railway-highway crossings. According to the FRA, in 2017, there were 274 fatalities across the U.S and 38 deaths and 57 injuries in the State of California related to railway-highway crossings. Across urban and rural centers, the Metrolink service area includes 456 at-grade crossings. The large geographic region serviced by Metrolink includes intercity passenger and freight services that are all growing. Unfortunately, existing Section 130 funding does not meet national demand. These are the most common interface points with railroads, and often the most precarious. More funding is needed here for us to realize our continuous safety improvements that drive us to minimize risk and move towards a zero-incident future.

There are further opportunities for commuter rail operators to incorporate innovative technologies into crossings. We encourage the FRA to consider support for new pilot programs and technologies that could revolutionize railroad crossing infrastructure. Metrolink is already leading the industry in crossing design standards with active pedestrian gates and vehicular and pedestrian channelization. We appreciate the opportunity to discuss new and emerging technologies. The passenger and freight service supported by railroad crossings are simply too important not to invest in.

Without additional resources to reinforce Metrolink’s 538 route miles of track, our system also remains vulnerable for trespassing. Metrolink has partnered with Operation Lifesaver to implement best practices to encourage safe behavior around the right-of-way through engineering, enforcement and education to deter trespassing. The FRA recently submitted a report to Congress on a national strategy to prevent trespassing on railroad property. We support the FRA’s approach, which includes identifying new funding for trespasser mitigation.

State of Good Repair – In an environment of limited resources, the focus on installation of PTC meant an increase in the state of good repair backlog. When compounded with constrained funding, Metrolink’s maintenance and rehabilitation program includes a \$444 million backlog of unfunded state-of-good-repair projects. These projects put Metrolink service at risk of delays and reduced speeds to ensure the safety of our operations. Our system requires \$85 million annually in funding to maintain current rehabilitation conditions. Metrolink receives approximately \$50-\$60 million annually for maintenance and rehabilitation

projects, which is below the funding amount to maintain current conditions. We require approximately \$100 million annually in Fiscal Year 2020 to draw down the backlog over 20 years.



Deferred maintenance can also have cascading impacts on delays for Metrolink, Amtrak and freight trains operating in the Southern California region. Conditions of rolling stock, equipment, track, signals and structures all impact our on-time performance. In FY 2019, track and signal related maintenance resulted in approximately 702 Metrolink trains impacted by delays averaging 13 minutes, resulting in over 9,000 minutes in delays systemwide. Nevertheless, we have still realized improvements in on-time performance through better operating approaches. To keep this up, we must be able to address the backlog more quickly.

For example, a tunnel on our Antelope Valley Line (AVL) support Metrolink and freight service through north Los Angeles County. Each weekday, 30 Metrolink AVL trains and five UPRR freight trains enter the tunnel between Newhall Station and Sylmar/San Fernando Stations. The tunnel has 4,300 wood ties and 69 pumps that remove water that is continually seeping into the tunnel, even in dry weather. The tunnel was originally built in 1876, reinforced with a concrete liner in 1924 and received some improvements in the mid-1990s after the Northridge Earthquake. The tunnel recently received maintenance in 2015 and 2018; however, the maintenance performed was temporary and designed to keep this asset in service until a more permanent solution could be funded. A \$12 million rehabilitation project in the tunnel would avoid nearly \$58 million in life-cycle costs associated with additional inspection, emergency repairs and temporary fixes, as well as slow orders and bus bridges. Delays associated with the deferred maintenance are expected to cause a loss of 265,954 riders per year on the AVL, approximately 16% of the line’s total annual ridership – more than 1.8 million in Fiscal Year 2019.

Constrained Funding – There are not enough resources to maintain a state of good repair and provide the necessary capacity projects to improve service. Metrolink is primarily funded through fare revenue, grants and JPA member agency subsidies. Our infrastructure needs further improvements and investments to meet regional demand for Metrolink service.

Metrolink is working to leverage state and local grant programs to secure federal funding through programs like the US DOT Core Capacity, Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) and Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) discretionary grant programs. We already have secured approximately \$2 billion in state and local funding to deliver our Southern California Optimized Rail Expansion (SCORE) Program, which is a 10-year plan to improve railroad safety, efficiency, reliability and enable more railroad service throughout the Southern California region in time for the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games. According to Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation analysis, the SCORE Program is expected to generate over 1.4 million jobs throughout the region and add \$684 billion to Southern California's regional gross product through 2050, defined as all finished goods and services produced in the region as a result of the SCORE Program. With additional federal funding, we believe Southern California can even unlock private investment in at least one of its key corridors over the course of the next decade.

CONCLUSION

In my role as Chief Executive Officer, I am committed to delivering the transportation service of choice. Safety is our foundational value from which we will always build. With improved customer service and increased frequency and reliability, commuter rail will become an even more viable alternative to our nation's most congested roadways. The future for our region – and the health of its population – depend on an integrated transportation system that connects all modes across Southern California, especially all rail and transit modes in a seamless system to the customer. This transportation renaissance begins with commuter rail. We are modernizing our business practices and delivering services for future generations.

To achieve the vision for improved commuter rail service across the country, we respectfully request that the following policies be considered:

1. Provide full eligibility to the CRISI Program for commuter rail as a qualified applicant;
2. Provide substantially more funding for critical railroad crossing and right-of-way improvements to deter trespassing and reduce railroad crossing incidents to keep people safe;
3. Include dedicated new funding for commuter rail in the surface transportation authorization bill that does not supplant existing funding sources.

Chairman Lipinski, Ranking Member Crawford and Subcommittee Members, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I look forward to working with you as we deliver on the vision of transformative commuter rail service across the nation.