

Metrolink Strategic Business Plan

Progress Report



April 2, 2025

A Message from the CEO



Since being appointed CEO in the fall of 2021, I have had the privilege of leading Metrolink through an extraordinary period of transformation and resilience. Our industry has faced unprecedented challenges, yet thanks to the commitment of our dedicated workforce, the support of our partners, and the trust of our riders, we have continued to evolve and thrive as Southern California's regional passenger rail provider.

Established more than three decades ago, Metrolink has played a vital role in shaping mobility in our region, growing from a commuter-focused agency into a dynamic passenger rail system that serves a broader range of travel needs. We have prioritized innovation, accessibility, and sustainability, providing people with a safe, efficient, and environmentally friendly alternative to driving on congested highways.

The Metrolink Strategic Business Plan was originally developed in early 2020, prior to the vast changes in ridership patterns and commuter behavior brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, we have adapted to a changing landscape, reimagined and increased our service beyond pre-pandemic levels, attracted student ridership beyond all previous records and reinforced our commitment to being an essential part of Southern California's transportation network. The Strategic Business Plan has served as our guiding framework, helping us navigate these shifts while remaining focused on service growth and long-term success.

It is important to assess our progress against the goals included in the Strategic Business Plan, and I am pleased to present the accompanying Progress Report detailing a remarkable range of short-term accomplishments over the past five years and identifying unfinished work. As we develop a new Strategic Business Plan in Fiscal Year 2026, we will reassess emerging and ongoing challenges and opportunities while identifying new strategies and setting ambitious goals for Metrolink.

The new Strategic Business Plan will build on past work while representing a broad vision for Metrolink's future which continues to redefine regional rail to better serve our communities, connect people to opportunities, and support a thriving Southern California.

I am grateful for the support of our Board of Directors, member agencies, and the many advocates who champion the role of passenger rail in our region. Their vision and dedication have been instrumental in shaping our progress, and I look forward to working together to create the next chapter in Metrolink's evolution.

Thank you for your continued trust and partnership. The best is yet to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darren M. Kettle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Darren Kettle

Chief Executive Officer, Metrolink

Leadership and Organization

Board of Directors

SCRRA's Board of Directors is composed of 11 primary and 11 alternate representatives of its Member Agencies. Additionally, there are three non-voting ex-officio members: Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), and the State of California (Caltrans District 7). **As of April 2025, voting Board members are as follows:**



Doug Chaffee, Chair
Supervisor, 4th District, County of Orange
OCTA Board



Tim Sandoval
Mayor, City of Pomona
Metro Board



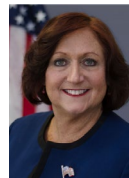
Brian Berkson, Vice-Chair
Mayor, City of Jurupa Valley
RCTC Board



Hilda Solis
Supervisor, 1st District County of Los Angeles
Metro Board



Tony Trembley, 2nd Vice-Chair
Council Member, City of Camarillo
VCTC Board



Karen Spiegel
Supervisor, 2nd District County of Riverside
RCTC Board



Kathryn Barger
Supervisor, 5th District County of Los Angeles
Metro Board



Alan D. Wapner
Council Member, City of Ontario
SBCTA Board



Larry McCallon
Mayor Pro Tem, City of Highland
SBCTA Board

Board of Directors Alternates

Walter Allen, III, Council Member, City of Covina,
Metro Appointee

Mike Carroll, Council Member, City of Irvine, OCTA Board

Javier Dutrey, Mayor, City of Montclair, SBCTA Board

Bob Engler, Council Member, City of Thousand Oaks,
VCTC Board

Ray Marquez, Council Member, City of Chino Hills,
SBCTA Board

Linda Molina, Mayor, City of Calimesa, RCTC Board

Pam O'Connor, Metro Appointee

Eric Ohlsen, Council Member, City of Palmdale,
Metro Appointee

Victor Preciado, Council Member, City of Pomona,
Metro Appointee

Michael Vargas, Mayor, City of Perris, RCTC Board

VACANT, OCTA Board



Ara Najarian
Council Member, City of Glendale
Metro Board

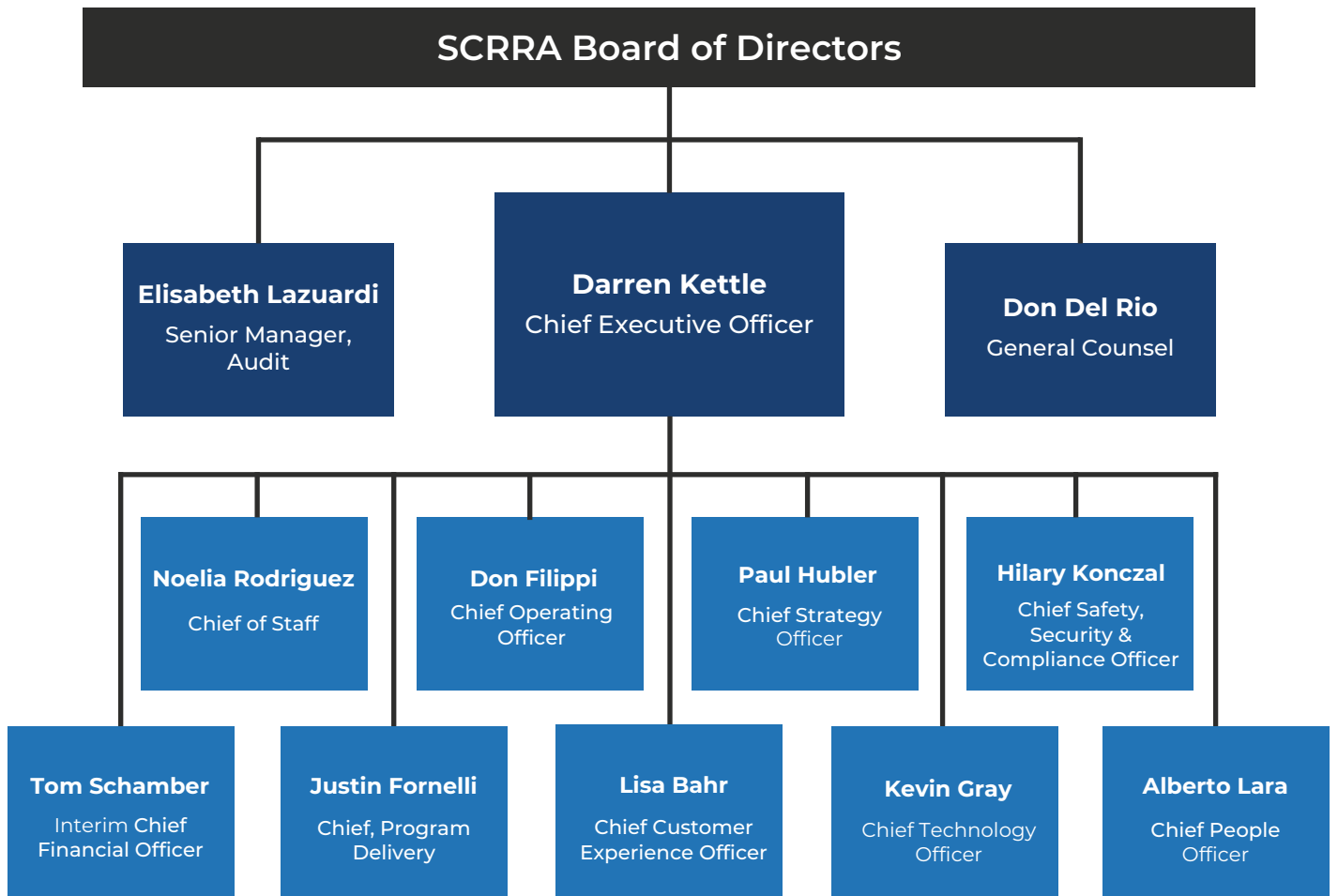


Tam Nguyen
Public Member
OCTA Board

Executive Leadership and Organization

SCRRA/Metrolink is a stand-alone entity with its own executive management team and staff, as shown in **Figure 6**. As of April 2025, Executive Leadership is as follows:

Figure 6: Metrolink Organization Chart



Metrolink Strategic Business Plan

Progress Report Foreword

In January 2021, the Authority's Board of Directors adopted the Metrolink Strategic Business Plan to articulate our value to the Southern California region and chart a course toward a stronger future where our service, our role, and our positive daily impact can grow and thrive. The Plan lays the foundation for Metrolink's transformation into a more connected, efficient, and essential regional passenger rail service provider, now and into the future. The Plan outlines Metrolink's Mission and Vision and includes a framework for strategic actions for the agency for three distinct time periods: 2021-2025 (short-term), 2026-2030 (mid-term), and 2031-2050 (long-term).

Preparation of the Plan began in early 2020, prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic when ridership projections were optimistic. However, like most other transit agencies in America, Metrolink's outlook took a sharp turn in March 2020 when stay-at-home orders forced a pivot to accommodate changing trends and realities. Although ridership dropped by as much as 91% at the peak of the pandemic, there remained a core cohort of riders – essential workers, including first responders and healthcare providers, who were on the frontline of the pandemic. Analysis of pandemic trends highlighted the multiple layers of Metrolink's market and helped clarify that Metrolink's mission needed to be extended beyond serving just commuter markets.

Metrolink's Strategic Business Plan outlined a framework for survival and recovery through the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. Furthermore, it provided guidance for Metrolink's continued evolution in response to emerging challenges and opportunities, which is reflected in the short-, mid-, and long-term goals. The Plan set forth actionable and quantifiable goals classified according to five commitments:

- Safety Is Foundational
- Customers Are Our Business
- Connecting and Leveraging Partnerships
- Modernizing Business Practices
- Advancing Key Regional Goals

Five years have passed since the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the adoption of the Plan, offering an opportune time to assess progress against those goals and evaluate whether Metrolink is achieving its broad strategy of developing into a more comprehensive regional rail system. The Strategic Business Plan Progress Report highlights Metrolink's progress in meeting the short-term goals set within the original Strategic Business Plan. Each initiative is assessed as to whether it is:

- Completed
- Completed & Ongoing
- In Progress
- Attempted

A brief narrative description is provided to explain how each initiative was implemented and each goal achieved.

Overall, progress in accomplishing the set of goals developed in 2020 was successful, and Metrolink continues to build on that momentum. Notable accomplishments include:






- Launched Arrow service in San Bernardino County
- Introduced flexible fare policies including Student Adventure Pass
- Updated Metrolink Rehabilitation Plan and developed State of Good Repair Program
- Launched 'Metrolink Reimagined' schedule update

Initiatives and goals that involve a considerable transformation over time generally required ongoing work. Therefore, there are several goals Metrolink has made demonstrable achievements toward, but work will continue to be ongoing.

Evaluation of accomplishments toward Metrolink's priorities and goals in this Progress Report will help identify which goals need to be retained in an updated strategic plan. Furthermore, the Strategic Business Plan Progress Report will help identify how Metrolink should evolve its strategic direction to reflect current realities, challenges, and opportunities moving forward.

Safety is Foundational

We will stay on the leading edge by deploying new technologies and processes to enhance the safety and security of our riders, employees, and the communities we serve.

2021-2025 SHORT-RANGE TRANSIT PLAN	ACCOMPLISHMENT BULLET POINTS	STATUS
Focus on safety and cleanliness	Enhanced cleanings at stations and on trains in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.	
	Hosted a variety of safety and security training sessions for staff led by Metrolink's Safety, Security, and Compliance team.	
	Enhanced cybersecurity posture to protect vulnerable IT infrastructure, including monitoring, blocking, and isolating malicious software; ensuring that clean backups are available for recovery; and conducting regular phishing tests. As a result of this focus on protecting against cyber threats and other external forces, Metrolink was negligibly affected by the CrowdStrike incident that disrupted enterprises around the globe in 2024.	
	Maintained 99% system reliability of Positive Train Control (PTC) for all trains operating on Metrolink tracks.	
Secure consensus on State of Good Repair (SOGR) program	Developed a State of Good Repair (SOGR) Financial Plan in 2021, which defines strategies to advance SOGR programs and projects for vehicle fleet, track and signal infrastructure, and facilities over a 10-year period.	
	In 2023, updated Metrolink Rehabilitation Plan (MRP), which provides a comprehensive evaluation of the condition of Metrolink's rail system assets and a projection of annual investment needed to keep up with ongoing wear-and-tear on assets. The MRP documented that Metrolink's infrastructure rehabilitation backlog would require an investment of approximately \$850M with additional funding of roughly \$135M annually needed to maintain assets in a SOGR.	
	Metrolink continues to use the MRP to work with its Member Agencies to fund SOGR needs during the annual capital budget development process.	
Continue fleet modernization	Completed Rail Fleet Management Plan Update (RFMPU) in 2021, which inventoried Metrolink's rolling stock fleet and identified investment needs to modernize and maintain the assets in a state of good repair.	
Deliver Southern California Optimized Rail Expansion (SCORE) projects (Phase 1)	Completed seven SCORE projects to date. One project is currently under construction, while five projects are fully designed and being prepared for construction, and a further eight projects are in the design phase.	
Redlands Passenger Rail Project (Arrow)	In October 2022, launched the Arrow service, connecting San Bernardino and Redlands with five stations and generating more than 67,000 trips in its first year.	

STATUS KEY:



Completed



Completed & Ongoing









In Progress



Attempted

Customers are Our Business

We respect and value our customers, putting them at the heart of all we do, and work hard to attract and retain new customers by understanding their needs and finding new and innovative ways to delight them.

2021-2025 SHORT-RANGE TRANSIT PLAN	ACCOMPLISHMENT BULLET POINTS	STATUS
Introduce market-based service planning for equity and accessibility	Implemented the 'Metrolink Reimagined' service plan in October 2024, which is helping Metrolink transition from a commuter rail model to a regional rail service by offering more frequent service and improved connectivity.	
Continue customer experience improvements (Wi-Fi, app, etc.)	While the mobile app procurement was originally paused due to leadership changes, Metrolink is now building a comprehensive technology roadmap for fare collections, which will help determine future mobile application needs.	
	Conducted extensive testing in 2019 and 2020 to evaluate the feasibility of onboard Wi-Fi, identifying opportunities, challenges, and industry interest. While onboard Wi-Fi is not currently financially viable, ongoing assessments will continue as ridership grows and financial conditions improve.	
	Launched a multilingual digital assistant chatbot on the Metrolink website, offering 24/7 customer support to efficiently address common inquiries and eliminate wait times for users who prefer chat-based communication.	
Develop flexible policies on fares, bundling, etc.	To enhance accessibility and promote ridership, introduced innovative fare policies, including the Student Adventure Pass Pilot Program, which allowed students to ride for free, and the \$15 Summer Day Pass.	
	Conducted a comprehensive evaluation of Metrolink's fare structure, resulting in actionable recommendations to simplify pricing, enhance clarity for customers, and align with the Authority's long-term growth strategy; a fare restructuring pilot program is scheduled to launch in July 2025.	
Introduce more off-peak services	In April 2022, restored service on the Antelope Valley, Orange County, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura County lines, which had been reduced due to the pandemic, and increased service on the 91/Perris Valley Line to exceed pre-pandemic levels.	
	In October 2023, added significant service to the Antelope Valley Line and provided a more balanced service offering throughout the day.	
	In October 2024, introduced the 'Metrolink Reimagined' service model, providing hourly trains and service into the evenings on most lines on weekdays.	
Develop customer-focused metrics	Developed and implemented customer-focused metrics through Voice of the Customer (VOC) initiatives, including biannual public opinion studies, customer surveys, and the creation of the Metrolink Rider Community, an online research panel designed to gather actionable insights and enhance rider satisfaction.	
Seek unified ticketing and scheduling	Currently working with the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) and the California Integrated Travel Project (Cal-ITP) to conduct a contactless open payment demonstration on the San Bernardino Line and Arrow service.	
	Implemented pulse scheduling across the Metrolink system, with timed transfers in Los Angeles, San Bernardino, and Riverside.	

STATUS KEY:



Completed



Completed & Ongoing



In Progress






Attempted

Connecting and Leveraging Partnerships

COMMITMENT

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.

2021-2025 SHORT-RANGE TRANSIT PLAN	ACCOMPLISHMENT BULLET POINTS	STATUS
Enhance partnerships to improve services and integration	Collaborated with educational institutions, local government agencies, and community partners to increase student ridership through the Student Adventure Pass (SAP) Pilot Program, leading to a 124% increase in student ridership since it launched in October 2023.	
	Renewed focus on local business partnerships through the Corporate Partnership Program to promote public transportation solutions for more Southern Californians.	
Implement partnership programs with other transit agencies, TNCs, private sector employers, and businesses	Partnered with more than 20 transit agencies to improve transfers between Metrolink trains and local bus services.	
Reach agreement for high-speed rail connections (i.e. CHSRA and BLW)	Executed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with Brightline West to guide planning coordination, particularly related to transfers between Metrolink trains and the future high-speed rail service at the proposed major transfer station in Rancho Cucamonga.	
	Drafted a Construction and Maintenance (C&M) Agreement to support the construction of a Brightline West station at Rancho Cucamonga, which is currently under review.	
	Performing ongoing right of way and environmental impact coordination with the California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA).	

STATUS KEY:



Completed



Completed & Ongoing



In Progress








Attempted



Modernizing Business Practices

COMMITMENT

We will improve our operational efficiency through transparency, objective metrics, and streamlined governance, reducing reliance on subsidy while bringing our system into a state of good repair and investing in the development of our employees.

2021-2025 SHORT-RANGE TRANSIT PLAN	ACCOMPLISHMENT BULLET POINTS	STATUS
Seek new funding sources	Secured approximately \$365 million in federal and state discretionary grant funding since January 2021 to support a variety of projects, including infrastructure capacity, grade crossing, and safety improvements; new zero- to low-emission locomotives; cybersecurity and video surveillance enhancements; and track, signal, and bridge rehabilitation.	
	Conducting research and presenting at the Board workshop in March 2025 a staff analysis of alternative dedicated revenue sources that Metrolink can leverage as additional funding streams for capital or operating expenses.	
	Leveraged existing grants, including California's Low Carbon Transportation Operations Program (LCTOP), to support additional initiatives.	
Pursue RRIF financing for long-term needs	Identified in the 2021 State of Good Repair Financial Plan an opportunity to pursue federal credit assistance through the U.S. Department of Transportation's Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) program as a potential strategy to finance rehabilitation needs. Annual budgeting was ultimately determined to be preferable to debt financing.	
Advance federal legislative strategies	Pursued and secured federal funds for projects, including wireless grade crossing technology and an intrusion detection technology pilot. Metrolink secured a \$1.3M U.S. Department of Transportation grant and a \$1M Congressional earmark to support an intrusion detection technology demonstration in 2024 and received an additional \$1M in earmarks for wireless grade crossing technology in the pending 2025 federal transportation appropriations bill.	
	Continuing to advocate for increased federal rail funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which saw funding for some programs expand fivefold, and for projects that support 2028 Olympics and Paralympics preparation in current and future administration budget requests.	
Employ new metrics for efficiency	Created a new daily ridership report that shows average daily ridership, ridership trends over time, and on-time performance.	
Build workforce development program	Offering a variety of professional development training opportunities to strengthen Metrolink's workforce.	
	Relaunched Leadership Essentials Academy and formed new partnerships with local academic institutions to provide a wider array of professional development opportunities to Metrolink employees.	

STATUS KEY:



Completed



Completed & Ongoing







In Progress



Attempted

Modernizing Business Practices

continued

2021-2025 SHORT-RANGE TRANSIT PLAN	ACCOMPLISHMENT BULLET POINTS	STATUS
Build workforce development program <i>(Continued)</i>	Created and filled five new full-time staff positions, 20 Grad on Career Track (GOCT) temporary positions, and 19 interns between 2021 and 2024.	
	Executed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2023 with the Construction Management Association of America (CMAA) to offer summer internships and training to college engineering and construction management students. CMAA covers a portion of the interns' salaries, and over the last two summers, Metrolink has employed more than a dozen students through this program, with all the graduating seniors securing full-time employment with Metrolink engineering consultants.	
	Successfully negotiated a new Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) contract in 2023.	
	Designated as a "Most Loved Workplace" by the Best Practices Institute, Inc., in 2022.	
Implement dashboard reporting	Developed potential Key Performance Indicators for safety and security, customer experience, customer demand, partnerships, internal operations (including service delivery and strategic engagement), and sustainability. These metrics will be organized into a Performance Summary Dashboard that shows progress towards strategic goals.	
Deliver constant communications	Launched a weekly "Coffee with Kettle" virtual forum hosted by the Metrolink CEO. Metrolink also issues a monthly newsletter called The Link to staff, contractors, and key external stakeholders, including board members and elected officials.	
	Regularly communicating with Metrolink's database of more than 200,000 email addresses on marketing promotions and service updates.	
	Maintaining broad social media presence, spanning Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, X (formerly Twitter), and LinkedIn, posting regularly about service updates and offerings.	
	Continuing to work with local and industry media on a regular basis to expand messaging reach.	
Pursue higher farebox return	Increased farebox revenue from COVID-19 pandemic low of \$14M in FY21 to \$32M in FY24 as ridership levels have recovered.	
	Revenue is expected to continue to increase as Metrolink transforms from a commuter rail system to a regional rail system and the rider base expands, with about \$45M projected for FY25 and approximately \$48M in FY26.	

STATUS KEY:



Completed



Completed & Ongoing



In Progress






Attempted

Advancing Key Regional Goals

COMMITMENT

We will grow the role of regional rail in addressing climate change, air quality, and other pressing sustainability and economic 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.

2021-2025 SHORT-RANGE TRANSIT PLAN	ACCOMPLISHMENT BULLET POINTS	STATUS
Tie VMT reductions to SCAG GHG goals, SB743	Became a member of LA Metro’s Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Banking Research Project Taskforce. This Taskforce is charged with building a VMT Banking pilot program which will sell mitigation credits that fund VMT mitigation projects. These projects are designed to offset LA Metro’s highway projects that induce more travel. Metrolink’s service growth operations are a part of LA Metro’s pilot program.	
Accelerate efforts to zero emissions fleet	Secured up to \$146.7M in funding from the South Coast Air Quality Management District’s Governing Board in early 2024 to purchase two zero-emission rail vehicles and replace 12 locomotives from the existing fleet with lower-emission Tier 4 locomotives. These purchases have enabled Metrolink to advance its 2021 Climate Action Plan emission-reduction goals.	
	Launched zero-emission vehicle testing on the Arrow service in August 2024.	
Complete Climate Vulnerability Plan	In February 2022, prepared Metrolink Climate Vulnerability Plan, which discusses climate hazards and identifies solutions to reduce climate-related risks to Metrolink operations.	
	The 2023 Metrolink Rehabilitation Plan used the Climate Vulnerability Plan to define risk associated with carrying a State of Good Repair backlog for each asset class. This data continues to support State of Good Repair and capital funding requests.	

STATUS KEY:

-  Completed
-  Completed & Ongoing
-  In Progress
-  Attempted

