

STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN

Executive Summary



METROLINK®

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A Message from the CEO



Stephanie Wiggins
CEO, Metrolink

When I took the helm at Metrolink as its CEO, I knew it was an important transportation service that reduces congestion in one of the country's most sizable megaregions, which contributes to air quality improvements in support of local, regional and state goals. Today, two years later and as we emerge from one of the biggest challenges our country has seen in a generation, I see that Metrolink is essential to Southern California and its residents – on a very human level. More than a commuter rail service, Metrolink provides the people of Southern California a vital link to their friends and families. To career, educational and housing opportunities. And to all the experiences that make the Southern California region a special place to live. Importantly, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic we learned how vital Metrolink truly is, as we transported essential workers – first responders, healthcare workers and others essential to keeping our community functioning safely – to their jobs.

We kicked off the process to develop this Strategic Business Plan long before we first learned about COVID-19. Our intent then was to articulate the value of Metrolink to the region and chart a course towards a stronger future where our service, our role and our positive impact on our daily lives can grow and thrive. Little did I know when we started this endeavor that we would soon be at the beginning of a global pandemic that would forever change the course of our lives and force us to think very differently about our value proposition. The disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic drove us to reimagine our present, as well as our future. We must become a smarter, better, essential Metrolink.

Even while facing these challenges and maintaining our service at a level that helps get essential workers to their jobs, Metrolink forged ahead with initiatives that are vital to our future success. We doubled down on our commitment to safety by delivering new health and

operating practices that put our customers' safety first and securing the communications spectrum we needed to ensure the long-term viability of our Positive Train Control safety system. We continued to advance our zero emissions future by retiring our last Tier 0 locomotive, adding more Tier 4 locomotives to our fleet, and adopting a Recovery Plan Framework that focuses on the triple bottom line: environment, economy and equity. And we reduced operating costs through better efficiencies

This Plan is being published as vaccines against the coronavirus make their way from the lab to the people – one reason for which we look to the future with renewed hope. The Plan laid out on the following pages represents our vision for a Metrolink that is customer focused first and foremost. A Metrolink whose commitment to its foundational value --- safety – is stronger than ever. And a Metrolink that is poised to nimbly respond to new challenges, to innovate as technology permeates more of our business, and to continuously modernize business practices that create value and exceed expectations.

The Plan recognizes the creativity and resourcefulness of our team as we piloted new ideas like the 5-Day Flex Pass for telecommuters and our Kids Ride Free on Weekends promotion for families looking for a safe escape from their homes, and as we introduced new programs like our SoCal Explorer loyalty program. The Plan also lays the foundation for even more new approaches that will advance our transformation into a more independent, efficient and essential Metrolink for the future.

I could not be prouder of our Metrolink team and how they have delivered during the COVID-19 crisis, with exceptional levels of innovation and commitment, while at the same time adapting to the new ways of working that were forced upon us all. And I could not be more inspired by and grateful to those who have continued to go to our work locations every day – our essential workers. They stepped up with great selflessness and dedication to ensure we delivered safe uninterrupted service to the essential workers that still depend on us. The entire Metrolink team stepped up to every challenge and demonstrated their unwavering commitment to this organization and our important mission. Their enduring dedication humbles me.

Our Board and Member Agencies have been key to our ability to forge ahead to meet our aspirations on behalf of our customers. This Plan reflects their input, which is critical for success in meeting our shared goals. I particularly appreciate our Board of Directors for their support and engagement throughout this effort.

Our shared and enduring commitment will carry through to help make the mission, vision and commitments of this Plan a reality. The future is now, and together we will deliver on the promise.

Executive Summary

Introduction

What started as three rail lines in 1992 has become the third largest commuter rail system in the U.S., cultivating a transit culture in Southern California once thought impossible.

This is Metrolink

In Fiscal Year 2019 (FY19), Metrolink achieved a record 11.9 million boardings, following five years of consistent ridership growth at a time when many transit systems had plateaued or seen declines.

As the only rail service linking all six Southern California counties, Metrolink has proven to be an effective solution to several regional challenges, providing access to jobs and opportunities, reducing gridlock, connecting communities, and supporting a sustainable future. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted ridership growth. However, Metrolink pivoted, modified service levels and addressed customer concerns about public safety. As a result, Metrolink is poised to recover stronger.

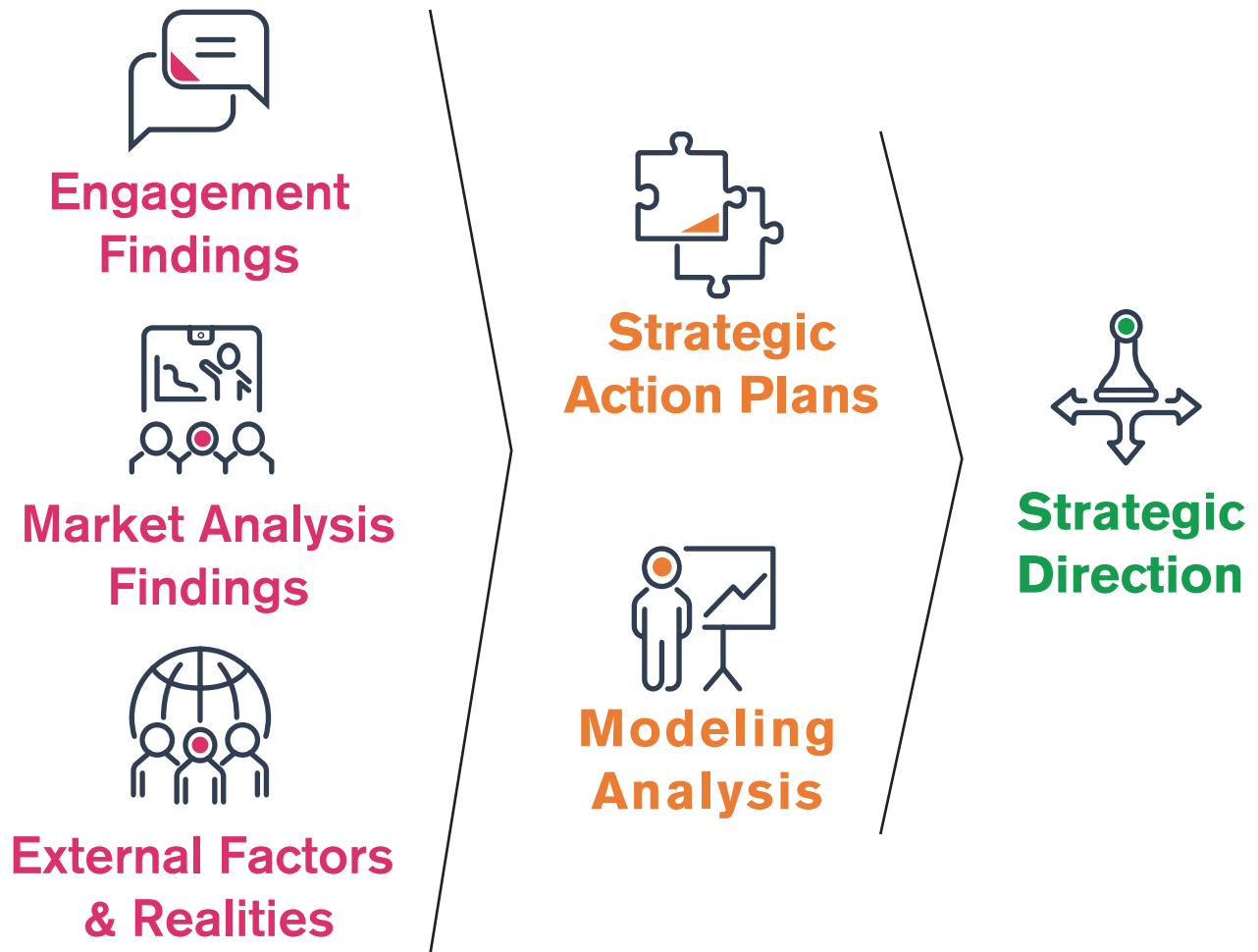
Looking ahead, planned and potential changes will revolutionize transportation in Southern California, with Metrolink setting the standard for passenger experience and transit innovation. These changes will stem from deliberate planning designed to accommodate major milestones and localized improvements, including the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the redevelopment of Los Angeles Union Station, and first- and last-mile innovations being advanced by all five of Metrolink's Member Agencies, by transit agency partners, and by cities served by Metrolink.

Metrolink is a transportation success story, and that success is a direct result of a committed team of professionals who collaboratively work to execute Metrolink's strategy for achievement: "Create Value, Exceed Expectations." That success sets the stage for the Metrolink organization to meet the challenges that lie ahead. The need to address pressing issues such as climate change, air quality, the jobs-housing imbalance, and to advance equity for all communities and populations in Southern California means that Metrolink must play an even larger role in the region.

So where to go next? Metrolink has developed this Strategic Business Plan (SBP) to guide its continued evolution into a smarter, more essential service that consistently broadens ridership and promotes safety and connectivity through innovation and strategic investments. The goal is to become a truly integrated, cohesive system that fully transforms passenger rail in Southern California. The SBP identifies a suite of actions that can double ridership and reduce reliance on Member Agencies' subsidies by 2030.

The Strategic Business Plan was developed considering multiple inputs, with strong emphasis on engagement, as shown on **Figure ES-1**.

Figure ES-1: Pathway to Strategic Direction



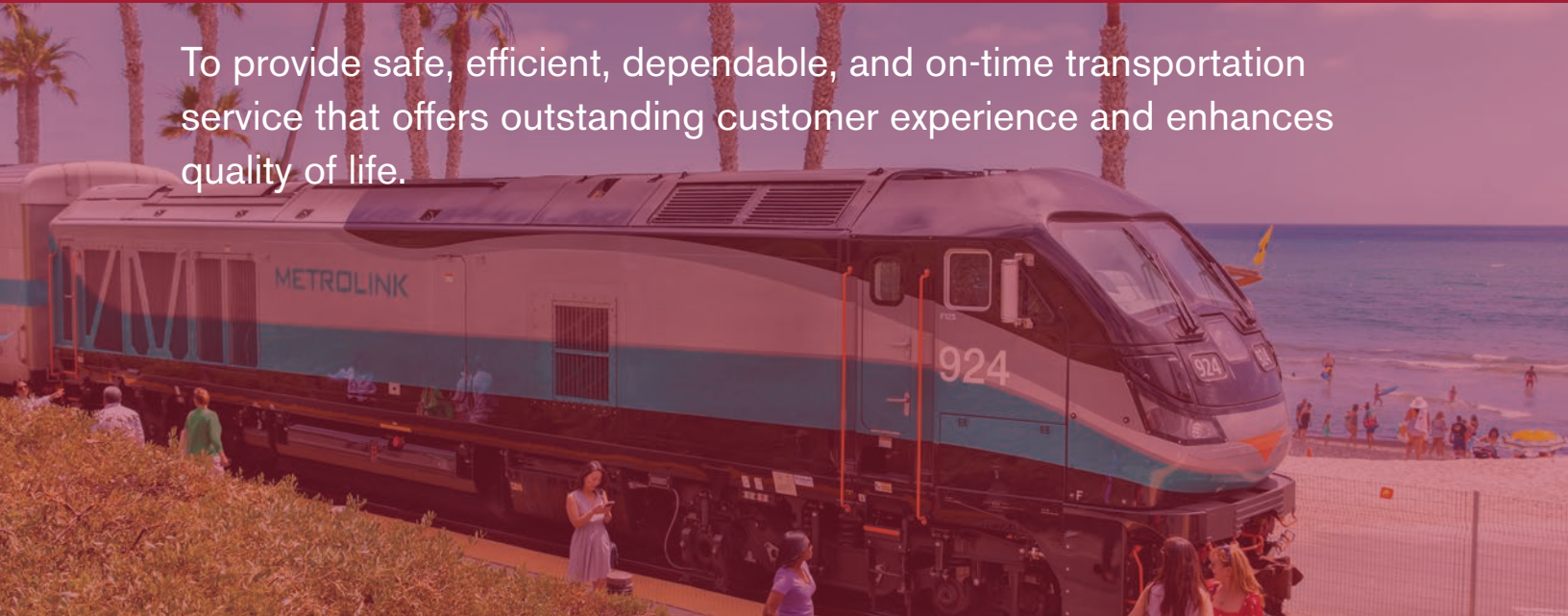
METROLINK® connects people to jobs, housing, education and events throughout the Southern California region; a stronger **METROLINK**® improves our entire mobility ecosystem.

Brian Humphrey
Metrolink Board of Directors Chair

Our Mission



To provide safe, efficient, dependable, and on-time transportation service that offers outstanding customer experience and enhances quality of life.



Our Vision



To be Southern California's preferred transportation system built upon safety, reliability, customer service, leading-edge technology, and seamless connectivity.





Our Commitment

Based on the mission and vision statements that underpin Metrolink, the Metrolink Team makes these commitments:

- 1 | 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.
- 2 | 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.
- 3 | Connecting and Leveraging Partnerships**
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.
- 4 | Modernizing Business Practices**
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.
- 5 | Advancing Key Regional Goals**
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.



Forging the Path Forward

In setting a new strategic direction, Metrolink is emphasizing that the agency's focus is to move people, not trains. Metrolink's strategic direction is informed by a thorough quantitative analysis of markets, a multilayered stakeholder engagement, followed by the development of scenarios to explore the impact of programmed Member Agency subsidies on service forecasts.

Market Analysis

A market analysis using data collected before the COVID-19 pandemic was conducted to support this Plan for the long-term future of Metrolink.

The most important finding was that Metrolink has a lot of room to grow. There is significant untapped market demand, and not just from traditional commuter segments. There is even more potential

outside of peak hours and with discretionary markets that are currently underserved, such as students, families and workers with non-traditional commutes. Over 770,000 potential daily trips within the general corridors served by Metrolink are currently taken by automobile. Even if a small percentage of these trips shifted, it would represent a significant opportunity for Metrolink. Major growth opportunities are outside of traditional commute trips, as over 40 percent of untapped demand is in the reverse peak direction or in the off-peak, primarily mid-day and evening.

Additionally, regional growth forecasts suggest an expanded role for Metrolink, as future housing and job growth in the region is focused along Metrolink corridors. Metrolink is viable to riders when it meets their travel needs – which is a function of both the schedules offered and station access.

Some changes will therefore be required to attract new riders, such as schedule and service integration, parking strategy reviews and other studies that will determine how best to partner with local transit providers and cities to enhance the transportation offer. Further, Metrolink is attractive to riders when the experience is easy, enjoyable, and a good use of their time. Ease of travel is determined by service design (e.g. intuitive schedules and timed transfers) and the strength of the tools available to navigate and pay for the service (e.g. a capable mobile app). Enjoyability is influenced both by the environment Metrolink cultivates (e.g. a friendly rider culture) and the amenities it offers (e.g. wi-fi or comfortable seats). A good use of time is possible when riders can use their time with Metrolink to “get time back” – whether it’s texting friends or working onboard – compared to if they drove. All of these factors assume that short-term customer experience concerns relative to health and safety are resolved with Metrolink’s significant efforts in its COVID-19 Recovery Plan Framework such as enforcement of cleanliness protocols such as masks and social distancing.

It is also important to acknowledge that key market segments may not use Metrolink due to current fares (cited by 19 percent of riders surveyed), accessibility, language barriers, or first/last mile connection issues. There are opportunities to increase access and affordability for customers from households with lower household income, as part of a broader equity strategy. The importance of this market was underscored by the relatively higher rates of Metrolink usage by essential workers during the pandemic restrictions.

Stakeholder Engagement

Metrolink has developed this Strategic Business Plan utilizing a multi-tiered stakeholder engagement process to support cohesive development and implementation of a shared vision. This engagement enabled Metrolink to identify stakeholder priorities and needs, which were layered with the quantitative inputs from the market analysis and operational data to identify a path forward that is practical, actionable, and measurable. Customers, staff, Member Agencies, and partner agencies were all part of the engagement process.

Key findings from the stakeholder engagement process were an emphasis on putting the customer first (moving people, not trains), with a strong support for increasing ridership, frequency, reliability, and partnerships. There was a strong and consistent view that Metrolink can and should play a larger role in helping address pressing regional issues, such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled, job-housing imbalance, and equity. Other themes that emerged were that Metrolink’s services should be viewed through an equity lens, and that Metrolink should strive for financial stability, with greater ability to act independently from the Member Agencies. This will require new funding sources and cultivating trust between Metrolink and the Member Agencies by strengthening foundational aspects of the system (operations/business/infrastructure) and reinforcing the culture of safety.





Setting a Direction: Strategic Actions

Building off the market analysis and stakeholder engagement, the Strategic Business Plan explores different scenarios to develop different strategic actions over time. Scenarios frame a way to answer the questions:

- What beneficial outcomes can be realized for a given level of resources?
- What would ridership look like in ten years at different funding levels?

This approach to exploring strategic actions was pursued in order to follow three principles:

- **Preparing for an unknown future** - COVID-19, economic turbulence, and other unforeseen events have demonstrated the need for Metrolink to be adaptive and flexible in pursuit of its mandate to provide rail service to the region.
- **Leveraging past historic investment** - the delivery of crucial rail infrastructure offers an opportunity to optimize and expand rail service over the coming decade.
- **Changing market needs** – as the region grows, where people live, work, and travel will evolve.

The Strategic Business Plan provides a strategic outlook at key milestones for Metrolink, five, ten and 30 years out. The first ten years of the Strategic Business Plan serve as Metrolink's Short-Range Transit Plan. The strategic outlook is based on the development of scenarios, with both constrained and unconstrained funding scenarios and the common goal to improve performance, reduce over-reliance on Member Agency subsidy and facilitate ridership growth. Action plans stemming from the scenarios vary from each other based on the following variables:

- Policy changes
- Service changes
- Rehabilitation and State of Good Repair (SOGR)
- Capital expansion

In order to fully explore the range of potential decision paths that Metrolink can pursue, a total of five scenarios were developed, each representing a different situation of resource availability. Different tactics were articulated for each time horizon:

1. Reduced Operating Resources
2. Similar Operating Resources as Today (pre-COVID trends)
3. Expanded Operating Resources
4. Similar Operating Resources as Today + Additional Capital Resources
5. Expanded Operating Resources + Additional Capital Resources

Key findings from the scenario analysis were:

- In the short term, optimization through policy action plans and service changes can achieve modest ridership gains (Scenario 2).
- Increased operating resources, alongside a suite of pilot projects and policies can support a doubling in ridership by 2030 and a significantly more financially efficient system (Scenarios 3 & 5).

- Additional operating resources have the greatest impact if made available 2024-2030, to allow for Metrolink to make use of new infrastructure due to be complete by 2024-2025 (Scenarios 3 & 5).
- Further capital expansion beyond the current funded and committed capital projects offers only minor benefits in the next 10 years - benefits are more apparent after 2030 and most pronounced by 2050 (Scenarios 4 & 5).

External events have played a large role in shaping Metrolink to date and will continue to impact the system. This Strategic Business Plan identifies new directions and tools, such as a better understanding of and tighter connection to the markets that can be served, and an array of actions that can be taken in various scenarios to improve service and grow ridership. Implementing these new tools will help Metrolink to not only respond effectively to changing conditions, but to proactively shape its future as a key foundation of a more sustainable, competitive, and equitable Southern California.

Figure ES-2 provides a summary of how strategies align with Strategic Business Plan Commitments and time periods of the Strategic Business Plan.



Figure ES-2: The Strategic Business Plan at-a Glance

Mission & Vision

Mission

To provide safe, efficient, dependable, and on-time transportation service that offers outstanding customer experience, and enhances quality of life.

Vision

To be Southern California's preferred transportation system built upon safety, reliability, customer service, leading-edge technology, and seamless connectivity.

Commitments

2021-2025 Short-Range Transit Plan Restoring & Optimizing

Safety Is Foundational



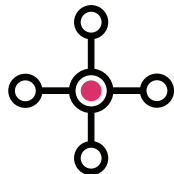
- Focus on **safety and cleanliness**
- Secure consensus on **State of Good Repair (SOGR)** program
- Continue fleet modernization
- **Deliver** SCORE projects (Phase 1) and Redlands Passenger Rail Project

Customers Are Our Business



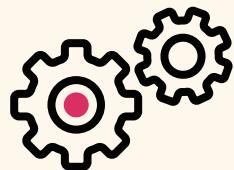
- Introduce **market-based** service planning for equity and accessibility
- Continue **customer experience improvements** (wi-fi, app, etc.)
- Develop **flexible policies** on fares, bundling, etc.
- Introduce more **off-peak services**
- Develop **customer-focused metrics**
- Seek unified ticketing and scheduling

Connecting and Leveraging



- Enhance **partnerships** to improve services and integration
- Implement partnership programs with other transit agencies, TNCs, private sector employers and businesses
- Reach agreement for high speed rail connections (i.e. CHSRA and DXE)

Modernizing Business Practices



- Seek **new funding sources**
- Pursue RRIF **financing** for long-term needs
- Advance federal **legislative strategies**
- Employ new **metrics** for efficiency
- Build **workforce development** program
- Implement **dashboard** reporting
- Deliver **constant communications**
- Pursue higher farebox return

Advancing Key Regional Goals



- Tie **VMT reductions** to SCAG GHG goals, SB743
- Accelerate efforts to zero emissions fleet
- Complete Climate Vulnerability Plan

2026-2030 Short-Range Transit Plan Expanding

- Continue to Implement SOGR plan
- Bring on new rolling stock, considering zero-emissions technologies and multiple units
- **Deliver** SCORE projects (Phase 1)

- Update market analyses
- **Implement SCORE** (Phase 1) improvements

- Expand partnerships

- Develop ancillary revenues
- Refine and adapt metrics
- Expand information sharing

- Target further GHG reductions
- Align services with 2028 Olympics
- Continue to accelerate efforts to zero emissions fleet

2030-2050 Delivering the Vision

- Continue to Implement and update SOGR plan

- Double ridership
- Expand SCORE-enabled service

- Develop and implement a holistic (equitable, accessible, social and financial) plan for connections to major employment centers and housing

- Seek dedicated funding stream
- Pursue continued efficiencies
- Utilize new technologies to track and share performance

- Zero emissions fleet

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