



September 9, 2021

To: Transit Committee

From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

Subject: Metrolink Fiscal Year 2020-21 Performance Report

Overview

The Southern California Regional Rail Authority is a five-member joint powers authority that operates the 400-mile commuter rail service known as Metrolink. A report on Metrolink ridership, revenue, and on-time performance for service in Orange County covering fiscal year 2020-21 is provided for consideration by the Board of Directors.

Recommendation

Receive and file as an information item.

Background

The Southern California Regional Rail Authority's (Metrolink) member agencies include the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA Metro), the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA), the Riverside County Transportation Commission, the San Bernardino County Transportation Authority, and the Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC). Metrolink serves 62 stations in six Southern California counties, offering trips on seven lines.

Service and ridership were severely impacted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and, as a result, a temporary service reduction of 30 percent was implemented systemwide by Metrolink in March 2020. Service was further reduced in November 2020. Following both temporary service reductions, weekday trains were reduced by 36.1 percent, from 169 to 108 weekday trains systemwide. These changes resulted in a 23.2 percent reduction of service on the three lines that serve Orange County (OC Metrolink). Metrolink is working with member agencies to assess future demand and determine when and how service will be reinstated.

In addition to fare revenue, Metrolink is funded by its member agencies. Each agency's contribution is derived through formula which is based upon several factors covering each aspect of capital, maintenance, operations, rehabilitation. However, Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act funds were utilized for Metrolink operations to supplement the loss of fare revenue during fiscal year (FY) 2020-21.

OC Metrolink is outlined as follows, with pre-COVID-19 pandemic and current service levels following the temporary service reductions:

- Orange County (OC) Line:
 - Oceanside to Los Angeles via Anaheim
 - Established in 1994
 - 27 daily trains (17 trains post service reduction)
- Inland Empire – Orange County (IEOC) Line:
 - San Bernardino to Oceanside via Orange
 - Established in 1995
 - 16 daily trains (14 trains post service reduction)
- 91/Perris Valley (91/PV) Line:
 - Perris to Los Angeles via Fullerton
 - Established in 2002
 - 11 daily trains (ten trains post service reduction)

Metrolink trains serve 11 OC stations daily and carry an average of 2,882 daily passengers on OC Metrolink. Weekend service is offered on all three lines, with 16 trips on Saturday and Sunday; these trips were not included as part of the service reductions.

Metrolink service along portions of each line in OC shares a corridor with the state-supported intercity passenger rail service known as the Amtrak Pacific Surfliner, managed by the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor Agency.

The Rail 2 Rail (R2R) Program, which began in 2003, allows Metrolink monthly passholders the option of riding Amtrak Pacific Surfliner trains at no additional charge to the rider, if they travel within the stations identified on their monthly pass. Amtrak Pacific Surfliner monthly pass holders may also ride any Metrolink train within the station pairs of their monthly pass. The R2R Program is fully funded by the three member agencies that benefit from the program: LA Metro, VCTC, and OCTA, with OCTA contributing 66 percent.

Discussion

This report provides an update on Metrolink weekday and weekend ridership, revenue, and on-time performance (OTP) for FY 2020-21 by line. Performance data is further detailed in Attachment A and is obtained directly from Metrolink, unless otherwise noted.

Ridership

Total Ridership

Weekday and weekend ridership combined for FY 2020-21 for OC Metrolink was 797,722, which represents a 79.4 percent decrease compared to the previous FY, as shown in the following table.

Total Boardings			
Line	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21	Percent Change
OC Line	2,158,259	352,757	-83.7%
IEOC Line	1,015,806	273,710	-73.1%
91/PV Line	700,553	171,255	-75.6%
OC Metrolink	3,874,618	797,722	-79.4%
Systemwide	9,357,013	2,102,141	-77.5%

A quarterly ridership breakdown for OC Metrolink is provided below to reflect the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on ridership, which shows ridership has been incrementally recovering since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic the prior FY, which occurred during the fourth quarter. Ridership increased by 142 percent in the fourth quarter of FY 2020-21, more than doubling when compared to the prior year, indicative of ridership recovery.

Line	Quarter	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21	Percent Change
OC Metrolink	Q1	1,329,985	163,761	-87.7%
	Q2	1,277,507	179,733	-85.9%
	Q3	1,153,217	178,571	-84.5%
	Q4	113,909	275,650	142.0%
	Total	3,874,618	797,722	-79.4%

Average Weekday Ridership

As Southern California's commuter rail system, weekday commuters are Metrolink's key market, and schedules are optimized to serve that market. In FY 2020-21, there were 2,882 combined average weekday boardings on

OC Metrolink, representing a decline of 80.4 percent compared to the prior FY. The following table shows the change in average weekday station boardings in FY 2019-20 compared to FY 2020-21. The OC Metrolink lines, stations, and boardings changes are geographically portrayed in Attachment B

Average Weekday Station Boardings			
Orange County Station	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21	Percent Change
Anaheim	423	70	-83.4%
Anaheim Canyon	240	71	-70.4%
Buena Park	462	76	-83.6%
Fullerton	1,269	178	-86.0%
Irvine	1,074	153	-85.7%
Laguna Niguel/Mission Viejo	263	48	-81.7%
Orange	504	127	-74.8%
San Clemente (North Beach)	74	23	-68.8%
San Juan Capistrano	111	34	-69.4%
Santa Ana	629	125	-80.1%
Tustin	922	140	-84.8%

In addition to local OC Bus routes that connect to rail stations, OCTA operates StationLink and iShuttle routes that are designed to meet certain trains. These rail feeder buses provide a commuter link to major employment centers at no additional cost with valid Metrolink fare. The StationLink service averaged 206 weekday boardings this FY, the previous FY there was an average of 459 weekday boardings, which represents a decline of 55.1 percent. The City of Irvine suspended iShuttle service when Metrolink implemented the COVID-19 pandemic-related service reductions. The iShuttle suspension was in effect from March 2020 to June 2021, and service was restored in July 2021. The iShuttle service averaged 27 weekday boardings for the month of July 2021.

OCTA also provides the OC Flex microtransit service that serves the Laguna Niguel/Mission Viejo Station. Connections to OC Flex service are free with valid Metrolink fare. A total of 360 riders transferred from Metrolink to OC Flex this FY, and the previous FY there were a total of 869 riders that transferred, a decline of 59 percent.

Weekend Ridership

Metrolink weekend service began in 2006 with two roundtrips on the OC Line. There are currently four weekend roundtrips on the OC Line, two on the IEOC Line, and two on the 91/PV Line. Weekend service on the 91/PV Line extension began in October 2019.

Combined weekend ridership on OC Metrolink lines in FY 2020-21 reached approximately 86,497 boardings. This represents a decrease of 74.3 percent compared to FY 2019-20. Currently, weekend ridership is recovering at a faster rate than weekday ridership through the COVID-19 pandemic. To encourage weekend ridership recovery, OCTA continues to promote Metrolink weekend service through Metrolink weekend campaigns, which feature exclusive deals and travel itineraries. The following table details weekend ridership by line.

Total Weekend Ridership			
Line	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21	Percent Change
OC Line	166,930	39,914	-76.1%
IEOC Line	112,005	33,222	-70.3%
91/PV Line	56,986	13,361	-76.6%
OC Metrolink	335,921	86,497	-74.3%
Systemwide	770,579	141,395	-81.7%

Revenue

Systemwide fare revenue for FY 2020-21 was \$16.1 million, a 74.1 percent decrease from FY 2019-20. Annual revenue for OC Metrolink totaled \$5.8 million, which represents a 78.6 percent decrease from the previous FY, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Revenue for OC Metrolink is 36.3 percent of the systemwide total of \$16.1 million.

Passenger fare revenue covers roughly half of Metrolink operating expenses, with the remainder covered by other revenues and member agency subsidies. The OC Line consistently has the highest farebox recovery rate, for FY 2020-21 projected farebox recovery was 17.1 percent as noted in Metrolink's FY 2020-21 Adopted Budget, exceeding the systemwide projection of 10.4 percent. Given the demographics of the OC Line, a slower progression of ridership and revenue recovery has been observed when compared to other Metrolink lines. A summary of Metrolink revenue is depicted in the following table.

Metrolink Total Revenue			
Line	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21	Percent Change
OC Line	\$ 16,901,989	\$ 2,994,578	-82.3%
IEOC Line	\$ 5,839,660	\$ 1,534,393	-73.7%
91/PV Line	\$ 4,548,926	\$ 1,320,017	-71.0%
OC Metrolink	\$ 27,290,575	\$ 5,848,988	-78.6%
Systemwide	\$ 62,018,826	\$ 16,092,578	-74.1%

OTP

Trains can be delayed for a variety of reasons, including equipment issues,

unscheduled delays (or meets) with other trains, delays from other operators utilizing the same tracks, construction or track maintenance, and incidents. Metrolink's OTP goal is 95 percent. A train is defined as on-time if it arrives at its destination within five minutes of its scheduled arrival time. In FY 2020-21, Metrolink operated at a 94.4 percent systemwide on-time performance, a 0.7 percentage point decrease from the prior year. The OC, IEOC, and 91/PV lines averaged 95.6, 93.4, and 95.3 percent OTP, respectively, for FY 2020-21. OTP improved significantly at the onset of the FY and held steady through the remainder of the year.

Key Initiatives FY 2020-21

Metrolink undertook several efforts to enhance service during the year. The following list highlights some of these efforts:

- Smarter. Better. Essential. Campaign: Metrolink launched a clean commute campaign in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, by increasing the cleaning and safety procedures on board and at stations.
- The Metrolink Recovery Plan Framework was designed to protect employees and customers against the spread of COVID-19, while taking a phased approach to emerging from the pandemic as a smarter and better passenger train service. This plan encompasses several campaigns and efforts, notably:
 - Metrolink conducted a survey that revealed that 85 percent of riders working from home will return to riding Metrolink trains post-COVID-19 pandemic.
 - The plan set a roadmap for various campaigns that showcased Metrolink's enhanced cleaning protocols and commitment to keep transit safe and slow the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Metrolink also took the American Public Transportation Association Health and Safety Commitments Program pledge to increase riders' confidence and ensure they feel safe while riding.
 - In August 2020, the Metrolink Board of Directors approved two new fare products (5-Day Flex Pass & Kids Ride Free on Weekends) to encourage riders to return to taking the train. Since the 5-Day Flex Pass went on sale on August 24, 2020, a total of 7,940 passes were sold this FY. Following the launch of the Kids Ride Free weekend promotion, kids ridership more than tripled, from 157 average weekend rides in August 2020 to 546 in July 2021.
 - Metrolink created the SoCal Explorer loyalty program in October 2020. The program rewards riders with points for traveling on Metrolink. As of August 2021, the program has over 16,000 members.

- Climate Action Plan: Metrolink adopted a Climate Action Plan in March 2021 that charts a course toward a greener future for the agency. The plan addresses climate change, air quality, and other pressing sustainability issues.

Summary

This report provides an update on OC Metrolink commuter rail ridership, revenue, and OTP for FY 2020-21. Total ridership was 767,722 boardings, a 79.4 percent decrease over the prior year, with the COVID-19 pandemic impacting both weekday and weekend ridership. Annual revenue for OC Metrolink totaled \$5.8 million, which represents a 78.6 percent decrease from the previous FY. The OC, IEOC, and 91/PV lines averaged 95.6, 93.4, and 95.3 percent OTP, respectively, for the period covered in this report.

Attachments

- A. Metrolink Fiscal Year 2020-21 Performance Report
- B. Percentage Change in Average Metrolink Boardings, FY 2019-20 v. FY 2020-21

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