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**PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE
November 16, 2011**

SUBJECT: REGIONAL RAIL UPDATE

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

Receive and file the Regional Rail Update for October 2011.

ISSUE

The Regional Rail unit is responsible for providing overall coordination, management and programming of funds for LACMTA's commitment to the commuter, inter-city and high speed rail networks serving Los Angeles County. In addition, this team coordinates and leads capital improvement projects along the LACMTA owned right-of-way operated by the passenger rail carriers. This report provides a monthly update on commuter, intercity and high speed rail issues of importance to the Board.

BACKGROUND

LACMTA is a member of and the lead funding agency for the Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA), the operator of the Metrolink commuter rail network. Metrolink carries 43,000 riders per day throughout the Los Angeles basin.

LACMTA is also a member agency of the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN), which coordinates the passenger rail services of the three carriers within this corridor. The LOSSAN Corridor is the second busiest inter-city corridor in the nation, carrying 2.8 million passengers per year. The LOSSAN JPA is working towards gaining local management of the Amtrak Pacific Surfliner service in this corridor.

LACMTA is also instrumental in the planning, coordinating and funding efforts for the future high speed rail alignment connecting northern California to southern California.

ISSUES

Metrolink

- Antelope Valley Line Study

In April 2011 the Board approved a consultant study to recommend and prioritize safety and other capital enhancements to operate faster and more reliable Metrolink service between Lancaster and Los Angeles Union Station. The goal is to enhance service levels and operate 30 minute service to Santa Clarita and 1 hour service to Lancaster. In addition, the study will identify funding sources and strategies to implement these improvements.

A consultant was selected and has begun their work. LACMTA is leading the effort and is partnering with SCRRA in this study. SCRRA is providing the modeling of the proposed improvements.

This study is moving forward rapidly to ensure that the final results are ready to be presented to the Board by March 2012, in addition to the regular reports. Additional information regarding the progress of this study will be presented to this committee this month.

Staff is working with San Bernardino to develop the next corridor study. Staff is also working to develop a Request For Qualifications (RFQ) for a railroad planning bench so that two additional Metrolink corridor studies can be completed for the Ventura County and San Bernardino Lines.

- Rail-to-Rail (R2R) Program

R2R enables Metrolink and Amtrak Pacific Surfliner monthly pass holders to use either service at no additional cost. This popular program provides riders on the Orange County and Ventura County lines with additional rail travel options. Approximately 500,000 (20%) of the Pacific Surfliner's 2.8 million annual boardings are R2R passengers. SCRRA compensates Caltrans Division of Rail approximately \$1.3 million annually for this program.

For several months Caltrans has been negotiating with SCRRA and its member agencies to renew the R2R agreement. Our position in these discussions is that R2R provides a significant service to both Amtrak and Metrolink customers. Amtrak and Caltrans Division of Rail have taken a position addressing revenue and overcrowding. Both Caltrans and SCRRA (with its member agencies) have stated that this is a very successful program. Currently 20% of Amtrak ridership in this corridor consists of R2R users.

Staff is continuing to work with SCRRA and the other member agencies to resolve this issue and maintain the service. The current agreement will expire on October 31, 2011. Prior to that there will be conference calls and other actions to resolve the concerns.

SCRRA is the process of receiving 117 new Guardian state-of-the-art rail cars. So far, over 100 of the 117 cars in the base order have been received by SCRRA. In December 2010 the LACMTA Board agreed to advance funds to SCRRA to finance the purchase of an additional 20 cars. This 20 car option will increase the Guardian fleet to 137 cars and enable SCRRA to achieve significant savings by acquiring the vehicles at a cost of approximately \$1.67 million per vehicle instead of \$2.6 million per vehicle.

LACMTA will loan up to \$18 million in Measure R 3% funds to SCRRA to exercise the 20 car option. SCRRA expects to sign the promissory note with LACMTA by the end of 2011. The note will be repaid to LACMTA primarily with Prop. 1B California Transportation Security Grant Program (CTSGP) funds. LACMTA will be repaid, including interest, by FY 2015-16.

- **Metrolink Fleet Management Plan**

SCRRA staff recently shared their Fleet Management Plan with the member agencies. The plan is still in draft stage; however, two themes have emerged that might pose significant funding challenges to SCRRA.

Many of SCRRA's locomotives are in need of rehabilitation to maintain reliability. In addition, SCRRA will need to perform rehabilitation to up to 52 of its locomotives in the next five years in order to meet more stringent Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) clean burning standards. Each locomotive could cost \$4 million to meet Tier 3+ EPA standards.

The older Bombardier trailers are in need of significant rehab for safety and overall upgrades. Once all of the new Guardian fleet cars are in service, SCRRA will have almost doubled the size of its rolling stock fleet. This will allow mid life rehabilitation of the older Sentinel fleet without a disruption in service.

Preliminary estimates are that the rehabilitation described in the Fleet Management Plan could cost upwards of \$118 million to upgrade locomotives to Tier 3+ standards and perform the mid life rehabilitation of the Sentinel fleet. SCRRA staff has identified various grant funding opportunities that could fund the vast majority of the costs, with minimal impacts to the member agencies. Staff will continue to monitor the fleet management plan and the potential financial impacts to the member agencies.

- **Positive Train Control (PTC)**

PTC is a federally mandated safety system which controls train movements and can prevent train-to-train collisions. PTC is SCRRA's number one safety priority, with an initial goal to be implemented by December 2012, ahead of the statutory deadline of December 31, 2015. The budget for PTC is approximately \$230 million. Currently PTC is fully funded.

There have been some recent third party impacts, beyond the control of SCRRRA, which have delayed the PTC implementation schedule. Some of these impacts have to do with national interoperability standards and bandwidth licensing, which is presently in court. In addition, the technology for the radios that are a significant part of the system are still being developed and will not be ready until 2012. Because of Metrolink's commitment to installing this important safety feature, a plan has been implemented to place PTC into service in the early part of 2013 through a phased approach. This date remains far in advance of the 2015 Federal mandate.

- **Quarterly Ridership and Revenue Update**

Metrolink ridership and revenues appear to be gradually improving in spite of the continued economic downturn and 12% unemployment rate in Los Angeles County. First quarter ridership for FY 2011-12 (July, August, September) is up 9% year-over-year and revenues are also up 7%. Ridership is 4% over budget for FY 2011-12 and revenues are down 1% compared to the budget for FY 2011-12.

METROLINK FY 2010-11 YEAR-TO-DATE THRU 9/30/11						
	RIDERSHIP			REVENUES		
	FY 11	FY 12	CHANGE	FY 11	FY 12	CHANGE
TOTAL	2,768,498	3,016,595	+ 9%	\$18,582,164	\$19,818,225	+ 7%

- **Doran Street Improvements**

The LACMTA Board passed a motion to allocate \$6.6M for enhancements to the Doran Street at-grade crossing. This crossing is located on the Los Angeles and Glendale border and involves both cities, Metrolink, and the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). There have been attempts to close the crossing. Currently this crossing is the subject of administrative action by the CPUC.

Staff has been working with the parties to move forward with a course of action regarding this crossing.

LOSSAN

- **FRA Grants for Two San Fernando Valley Projects**

In the Fall of 2010 LACMTA was successful in obtaining grants from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for \$2.4 million to perform Preliminary Engineering (PE)/National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) work for two important LOSSAN projects in the San Fernando Valley.

The Raymer-to-Bernson Double Track Project will eliminate a single track bottleneck by constructing six miles of second main line track between Van Nuys and Chatsworth. The Van Nuys North Platform Project will construct a single center platform and allow for simultaneous double track operation at the Van Nuys Station.

Once completed, the entire LOSSAN corridor from Los Angeles north to Chatsworth will be double tracked. These capacity enhancements will enable LOSSAN to operate more frequent and reliable service north of Los Angeles. LACMTA will partner with SCRRA to complete the PE/NEPA work which will commence in late 2011 and be completed by February 2013.

- LOSSAN Governance Issues

In August 2011 the LOSSAN Board took a decisive step to move forward with a new form of governance which will provide for local control of the Amtrak Pacific Surfliner Service. Local governance of the service will provide local decision which will provide the following advantages:

- Places management with those that understand the corridor
- Allows easier coordination of passenger rail services
- Provides for more efficient management
- Will develop a more customer oriented service plan

A CEO-led team is working to further develop governance guidelines, legislation, and develop a business plan which should be ready for review in late 2011.

- Pacific Surfliner Ridership

Pacific Surfliner ridership continues to be strong. For Federal Fiscal year 2010-11, ridership was 2.8 million boardings, second busiest inter-city corridor in the nation and up 7% over FY 2009-10. Revenues are up 12% over FY 2009-10. This is primarily due to an aggressive marketing campaign, growing business travel and increased overall rail travel appeal. Customer Satisfaction Index for the Pacific Surfliner is 87%, compared to 85% for Amtrak as a whole. On-time performance has slipped to 70%, mostly due to continued interference with other commuter and freight trains.

HIGH SPEED RAIL (HSR)

- Business Plan

The California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) released the 2012 Business Plan on November 1, 2011. Staff has been working closely with the CHSRA to address concerns regarding the nature of the business plan and investment in southern California. Specifically, staff has been providing input into the plan. In October 2011, LACMTA was part of a meeting involving transportation agencies across the state. At this meeting, a section of the Business Plan was discussed. This new section dealt with the concept of a "blended approach" where HSR would be integrated with local commuter rail and transit to deliver HSR. The Business Plan has revised ridership numbers and revised cost estimates. CHSRA has stated that the numbers that they are proposing are much more conservative in nature. Staff is reviewing this plan and providing comments to CHSRA.

- I-5/Grapevine Study

The CHSRA has reintroduced the I-5/Grapevine alignment as an alternative to the Palmdale station option. This alternative would provide for a direct route between Bakersfield and Los Angeles and avoids the issues that CHSRA has been facing between Palmdale and Sylmar. However, there are significant issues along the I-5/Grapevine corridor. LACMTA has officially supported the option of a station in Palmdale.

The I-5/Grapevine Study results will be released in December 2011. Staff will be receiving the conclusions of the study two weeks before the release. Previous reports recommend further study. Furthermore, it was noted that the results of the more detailed analysis of this alternative show that the decision regarding a preferred option between Los Angeles and Bakersfield will not be a very clear decision. Should this alternative be examined further, the environmental process could be delayed by at least seven months.

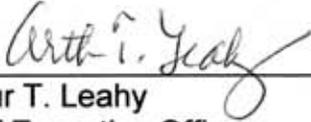
NEXT STEPS

Staff will return to the Board in January 2012 with the Regional Rail update.

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