

**Statement of
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Southern California Regional Rail Authority (Metrolink)
Before The
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing & Urban Development
And Related Agencies
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Good afternoon, Chairman Collins, Ranking Member Reed, and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the invitation to join this important hearing on rail safety and for the opportunity to share Metrolink's experience as the first rail operator in the nation to have Positive Train Control (PTC) in-service across our entire host territory. Metrolink is Southern California's regional rail provider, a network connecting six counties across seven lines that traverse 538 miles of track. Serving a population of 18 million, Metrolink is responsible for moving people safely and reliably through a region of national significance that hosts the nation's largest international trading hub.

Southern California would grind to a halt without Metrolink. Each of our riders - almost 43,000 them daily - travel an average of 36 miles. The vast majority of Metrolink riders own vehicles but choose to leave them at home. As a result, our service removes up to four lanes of traffic in a region with some of the worst freeway traffic in the world. Our service gets people to and from their jobs and has the added benefit of relieving the commute for all the drivers still on the road. We are a large and vital system with a big job to do. We approach that responsibility with the principle that safety always comes first.

Metrolink's trailblazing journey to implement PTC demanded an unwavering commitment to safety, and in the process, solidified the fabric of the agency to a culture of safety first. The decision to implement PTC was born out of tragedy; on September 12th, 2008, 25 people lost their lives and many more were injured when a Metrolink train collided with a freight train in Chatsworth, California. An operational PTC system would have prevented this accident.

Following Chatworth, it was not a difficult decision to dedicate the agency to full implementation of an interoperable PTC system. The path forward, though, came with significant technological, operational and funding challenges.

Overcoming those challenges - the trial and error, the countless cycles of testing software and hardware version upgrades - has helped the technology to mature and reduced the testing burden for subsequent railroads. We played a key role in developing many of the processes, standards, agreements and submittals that the rest of the industry relies on and improved the efficiency for subsequent railroads. We take pride that Metrolink is a training ground for many staff and contractor resources that utilize their new skills to serve the entire industry to protect the safety of passengers across the country. Metrolink's trailblazing PTC effort has benefited not only Southern California, but the entire nation.

To date, the Metrolink Board has invested \$220 million to develop, install, test, and certify our PTC system. Nearly 83 percent of this funding came from state and local sources, with the

federal contribution coming from ARRA, FTA and FRA Rail Technology grants and High Speed Intercity Rail funding.

Metrolink is currently operating at 95% PTC compliance on our owned right-of-way. We have completed interoperability testing and are operating PTC in revenue service with Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad and Union Pacific. We have begun initial phases of interoperability testing with Amtrak. While we are concerned that the deadline is quickly approaching, we appreciate Amtrak's statements that they will have their PTC system fully-operational in time to meet the deadline.

Importantly, the investment for PTC does not stop at installation, implementation, or even interoperability. Operating and maintaining PTC requires sustained and reliable funding of PTC assets. Despite the progress we have made, this technology is still in its early phase. Additional capital, operating and rehab investment is required to fully deploy, operate and maintain these systems, including upgrades to leverage their full capability and tools to improve operational efficiency, reliability and security. Metrolink's average yearly maintenance and operations cost to support our PTC system is approximately \$10 million, which is entirely borne by our already oversubscribed operations budget. Without additional funding to support these costs, it requires redirecting funding that could otherwise be spent on critical rehabilitation projects.

While PTC is foundational, it is not exclusive. PTC is a vital component of a complete system of rail network safety that includes keeping the railroad in a state of good repair and ensuring a safe operating environment for cars and pedestrians, as well as for passengers. Investments are needed for technological interventions and capital improvements to protect the right-of-way and improve safety at crossings to prevent strikes.

Metrolink operates throughout Southern California where almost half of our nation's imports and exports enter through the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach and move throughout the country by rail. Metrolink dispatches up to 300 passenger and freight trains a day on this shared corridor. Maintaining the railroad in a state of good repair, and improving the capacity of the existing system, is vital to ensuring both passengers and freight operators travel safely and efficiently through concentrated population centers.

Unfortunately, funding to support optimized rail service is not commensurate with the need. Los Angeles, the heart of the Metrolink system, has the distinction of hosting some of the worst traffic in not only the nation but the world. In addition, we operate on shared corridor that hosts the busiest freight and goods movement corridor in the nation. Targeted, smart investments in capital improvements could unlock the gridlock and unleash the economic engine for the benefit of the entire nation.

Metrolink worked in partnership with our freight partners and intercity rail to develop a roadmap to achieve optimized rail service called the Southern California Optimized Rail Expansion (SCORE) program. SCORE identifies the capital improvements necessary to achieve system wide 30-minute, bi-directional service all while accommodating increased freight capacity. If fully funded, this plan would transform mobility in the busiest corridor in the nation. We are pleased that the state just awarded Metrolink a significant down payment towards this effort with \$1.2 billion in state funds directed to achieve the first phase of our SCORE plan. We look forward to working with this Committee, and our two Senators, the Department of

Transportation, and other federal partners to build off this initial investment to achieve the full SCORE vision.

Passenger railroads across the country share these same unique challenges and opportunities. We have the task of operating on territory shared with our freight partners. Upgrades to this shared rail network- adding track and other capacity improvements- benefit goods movement and passenger movement alike. We also share the need to support the ongoing maintenance and operations of our PTC systems and must ensure they are interoperable with our freight partners.

Given these issues, which are systemic to almost all commuter railroads, we look forward to working with you to develop and recognize the unique function commuter rail can play to address the nation's transportation needs. Our mission- to provide safe, reliable service through congested corridors - is simply too important.