




June 16, 2025

To: Members of the Board of Directors

From: Jason Jewell, Managing Director 

Subject: Temporary Additional Santa Barbara Service

Overview

The Ventura County Transportation Commission and the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments have requested the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor Agency to support a temporary service agreement that would allow the Southern California Regional Rail Authority/Metrolink to provide additional rail service between Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties. The additional service would utilize a rail timeslot previously secured by the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor Agency through an agreement with Union Pacific Railroad Company and intended to be utilized for a future expansion of Amtrak Pacific Surfliner service.

Recommendation

- A. Authorize the Managing Director to negotiate the terms of an agreement or agreements to subcontract the implementation of additional temporary service in partnership with Metrolink and funded by Ventura County Transportation Commission and the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments, allowing for the temporary use of Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor Agency's timeslot while assuring anticipated future expansion of Pacific Surfliner to north of Los Angeles to Santa Barbara, Goleta and San Luis Obispo.
- B. Direct the Managing Director to bring back the agreement(s) necessary for Board approval.

Background

In 2022, Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) and the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) requested the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) Rail Corridor Agency (Agency) to restore peak northbound early-morning service to Santa Barbara and Goleta. The Pacific

Surfliner previously operated an early-morning train from Los Angeles Union Station to Santa Barbara. However, the route, which started in 2018, suffered from reliability issues and overall low demand. It was eliminated as part of COVID-related service reductions.

In collaboration with SBCAG and VCTC, the LOSSAN Agency has explored various options to restore peak-morning Pacific Surfliner service to Ventura, Santa Barbara and Goleta. However, equipment availability and funding have prevented the implementation of the expanded service. The LOSSAN Agency's fiscal year (FY) 2024-25 Annual Business Plan does not include funding for this service and the current fleet capacity is not sufficient to support the expanded service levels.

The LOSSAN Agency's FY2025-26 Annual Business Plan, which was approved by the LOSSAN Agency Board of Directors (Board) and submitted to the State of California for review and approval on April 1, 2025, includes planning for additional roundtrips serving the Ventura and Santa Barbara County stations and traveling further north to San Luis Obispo in FY 2026-27. The planned expansion of Pacific Surfliner service in FY 2026-27 would bring the total to 14 roundtrips between San Diego and Los Angeles, six roundtrips between San Diego and Goleta, and three corridor-wide roundtrips between San Diego and San Luis Obispo, subject to available funding and fleet capacity.

As part of this plan, the 13th roundtrip between San Diego and Los Angeles is planned for implementation in FY 2025-26, also subject to equipment availability. To respond to the interest in restoring peak-morning service to Ventura, Santa Barbara, and Goleta, staff has drafted preliminary schedules to implement the 13th roundtrip between San Diego and Los Angeles, the 6th roundtrip to Goleta and the 3rd roundtrip to San Luis Obispo—by FY 2026-27 or sooner, when equipment and funding become available.

The rail access necessary to support this planned service expansion was secured through a Board-approved Passenger Rail Cooperative Agreement (PRCA) executed between the LOSSAN Agency and Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR), which owns and operates the Santa Barbara Subdivision of the LOSSAN Rail Corridor. The PRCA, which was executed in December 2022, established terms for increased Pacific Surfliner train service, including provisions for operations and maintenance reimbursements and performance-based incentive payments.

In return for increased track access, the LOSSAN Agency agreed to pay UPRR track access fees and on-time performance incentives as well as fund infrastructure improvements to support the expanded service. To date, the LOSSAN Agency has made approximately \$74 million capital investments in the Santa Barbara Subdivision. These infrastructure projects, which were funded

through State grants, include centralized traffic control, powered sidings, bridge replacements and new rails and ties. Future use of the rail timeslots negotiated as part of the agreement requires payment of the track access fees and on-time performance incentives to UPRR by LOSSAN.

Discussion

Because VCTC and SBCAG desire to initiate peak-morning service sooner than anticipated in LOSSAN's Annual Business Plan, the agencies engaged the Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA or Metrolink) to explore the possibility of Metrolink utilizing the additional rail access secured by LOSSAN through the PRCA to provide one additional roundtrip between Moorpark and Goleta stations. In late 2024, the Commission and Boards of VCTC, SBCAG and SCRRA, respectively, approved an agreement for SCRRA to begin the process of preparing an *Initial Service Start-up Plan* for the proposed service, including development of an operating agreement with LOSSAN. Since that time, the four agencies - Metrolink, VCTC, SBCAG and LOSSAN - have engaged in regular discussions to coordinate and plan the proposed Metrolink service.

The framework for an agreement to enable LOSSAN to subcontract with Metrolink to temporarily utilize LOSSAN's train access to implement the proposed roundtrip between Moorpark and Goleta is contemplated as a subcontract agreement between LOSSAN and Metrolink and a separate funding agreement(s) with VCTC and SBCAG to provide the required funding to LOSSAN. Under this arrangement, Metrolink would temporarily operate the service, and the operating costs would be provided to LOSSAN by VCTC and SBCAG. The agreements would include reimbursement to LOSSAN for track fees, on-time performance incentives and administrative costs. In addition, use of the timeslot would implicitly need to be temporary and time-limited to ensure it does not impact LOSSAN's ability to implement planned service expansions. Under no circumstances would the timeslot change hands from LOSSAN to SCRRA. Under this framework, additional details such as ticketing, fare structure, marketing and promotions would need to be coordinated and agreed upon among the agencies.

Summary

Staff recommends the Board of Directors authorize the Managing Director to negotiate the terms of an agreement or agreements to subcontract the implementation of additional temporary service in partnership with Metrolink and funded by Ventura County Transportation Commission and the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments, allowing for the temporary use of the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor Agency's timeslot while assuring anticipated future expansion of Pacific Surfliner to north of Los Angeles to Santa Barbara, Goleta and San Luis Obispo. Staff will bring back the agreement(s) for Board of Directors' approval.

Attachment

None.

Prepared by:



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