



# OCTA'S COMMITMENT TO METROLINK

SUPPORTING REGIONAL RAIL WHILE ENSURING LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

OCTA has been a strong and consistent partner in supporting Metrolink service for more than 30 years. Since the system's founding, OCTA has invested heavily in maintaining and improving regional rail service that connects Orange County to jobs, education, and destinations across Southern California.

## A Longstanding Investment in Regional Rail

- \$790+ million invested in Metrolink service and improvements since 1991 through OCTA's Measure M
- \$300+ million in one-time state and federal funding committed since 2021 to sustain service through the COVID-19 pandemic
- Ongoing commitment to fund Metrolink service through 2041, as promised to voters through OCTA's Measure M

## OCTA'S ROLE

OCTA is one of five member agencies that plans, funds, and administers Metrolink service, an essential link in Southern California's transportation network.

Our role is to:

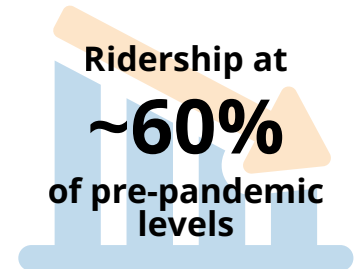
- Provide funding through local sales tax and other sources
- Work collaboratively with regional partners
- Ensure taxpayer dollars are used responsibly and effectively

## RIDERSHIP AND COST CHALLENGES

Metrolink service in Orange County was restored to pre-pandemic levels in 2024, but ridership did not return, reflecting long-term shifts in commuting and travel behavior.

Ridership remains at approximately 60% of pre-pandemic levels, and Metrolink's forecasts show ridership is not expected to fully recover.

This gap between service and demand has placed increasing pressure on Metrolink operations.

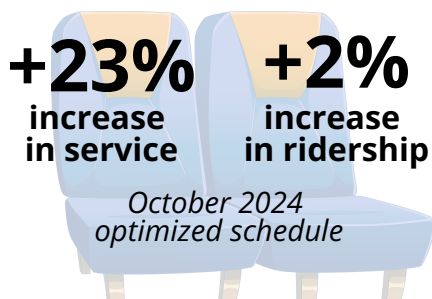


## Demand Has Not Kept Pace With Service

With the launch of Metrolink's optimized schedule in October 2024, service levels increased by more than 23%, but ridership grew by only 2% in the first year.

Metrolink implemented service reductions in March 2026 due to equipment availability challenges and broader financial pressures, and these changes are now expected to remain in place.

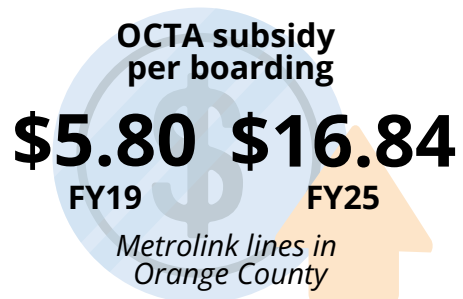
This reflects broader operational and financial challenges and the need to align service levels with current demand.



## Costs Are Rising While Revenue Lags

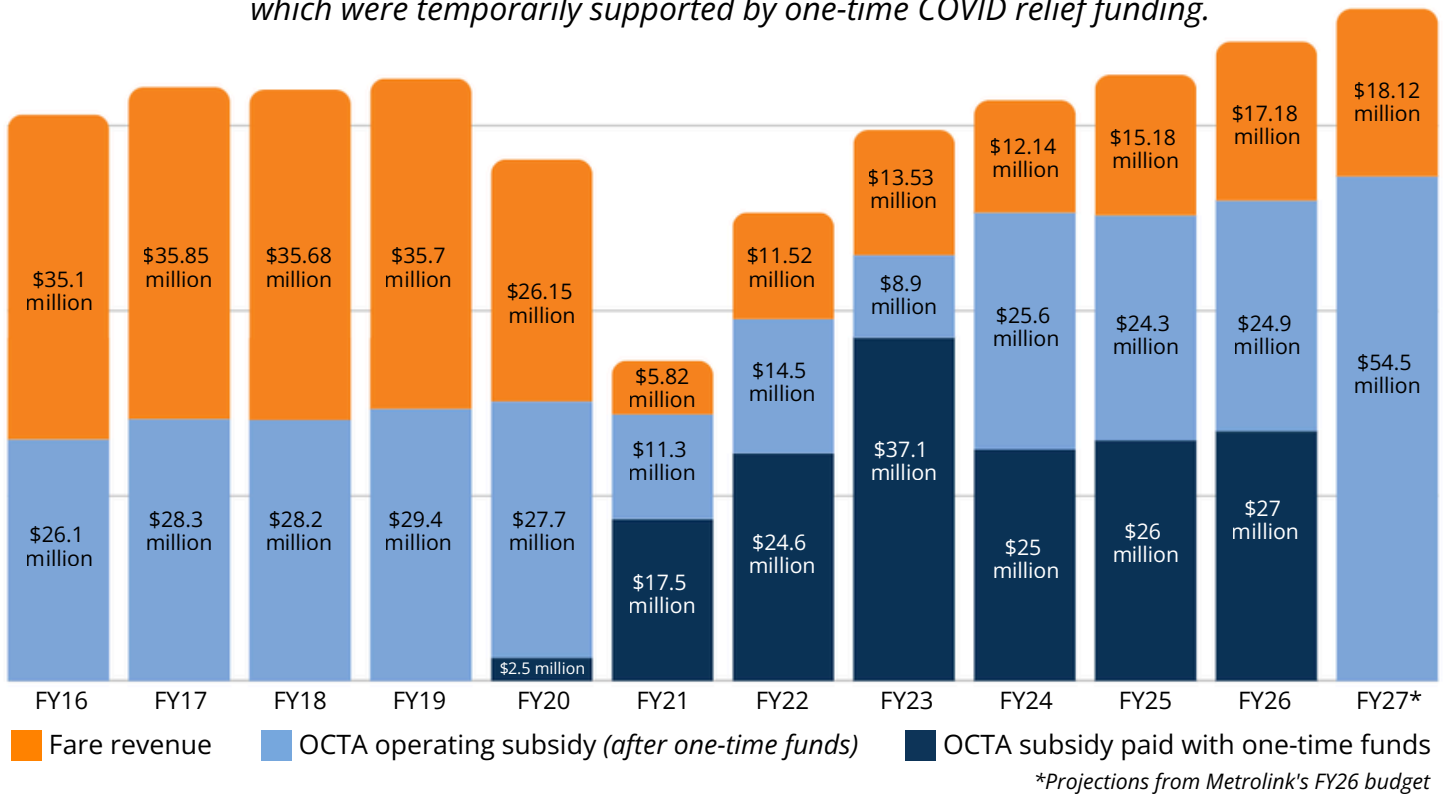
The cost to operate Metrolink has increased, while revenue has not kept pace, placing a greater responsibility on member agencies like OCTA to subsidize service.

Subsidy per boarding has increased by 163%, while fare revenue remains about one-third of pre-pandemic levels. At the same time, one-time COVID relief funding used to sustain service has been fully exhausted.



# OPERATING EXPENSES FOR OC METROLINK SERVICE BY FUNDING SOURCE

*Rising costs and lower ridership have increased the need for subsidies, which were temporarily supported by one-time COVID relief funding.*



## OCTA'S BUDGET: INVESTING IN A BALANCED TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

OCTA's proposed FY 2026-27 budget is approximately \$2 billion, with more than half dedicated to transit, including bus and rail. This reflects OCTA's continued commitment to providing a range of transportation options for Orange County.

Within this broader investment, OCTA is proposing to fund Metrolink operations at approximately \$46 million, compared to \$52 million in FY 2025-26. This approach reflects the need to align funding with current ridership demand, ensure long-term financial sustainability, and balance investments across all transportation priorities.

**\$2 billion**  
FY26-27  
proposed budget

**52%**  
invested  
in transit

### Sustaining Service for the Long Term

OCTA is working with Metrolink and regional partners to ensure service remains viable for decades to come by aligning service with demand, maintaining reliable operations, and ensuring funding remains sustainable through the life of OCTA's Measure M.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Metrolink is a vital regional service for Orange County, and OCTA has demonstrated its commitment to support and maintain it through substantial, sustained investment.
- Ridership remains well below pre-pandemic levels, while operating costs have risen sharply, more than doubling the subsidy per boarding since 2019.
- While thousands of riders rely on Metrolink each day, adding more service has not resulted in similar increases in ridership or fare revenue.
- Without adjustments, Metrolink is not financially sustainable through 2041, as committed to voters through OCTA's Measure M.