



**RailPAC**  
Rail Passenger Association  
of California and Nevada

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29<sup>th</sup> May, 2015

Hon. Shawn Nelson  
Chair,  
Southern California Regional Rail Authority  
One Gateway Plaza  
Los Angeles CA 90012

### **Metrolink Safety and the Oxnard Accident**

Dear Chair Nelson:

I have received a letter from a member in Oxnard detailing his horrifying experience, injuries, and ongoing financial stress as a result of the Oxnard accident in February. Metrolink spokespersons and Board members were very quick to sing the praises of the Crash Energy Management system ("CEM") built into the new Rotem cars, claiming that it saved lives. Based on the position of the cars after the collision, the death of the engineer, and the severe injuries to a number of passengers we take a different view.

The desired outcome of a railroad collision is for the train to remain upright and in line, giving the best protection to the passengers. In this case a decelerating train hit a stationary object squarely on the tracks. Yet the CEM does not seem to have done its job. Instead of the energy being absorbed the cars were deflected to the side and overturned, resulting in many passengers being severely injured. The photographs tell the story quite clearly.

We hope that, working with NTSB, SCRRA is asking the hard questions about the performance of the Rotem cars. Did the CEM actually absorb a meaningful amount of energy? In addition to the CEM we wonder whether the couplings are adequate in maintaining the alignment of the cars. We also question the dynamics of a mixed consist of Rotem and Bombardier cars.

Safety at grade crossing is another issue arising from this unfortunate event. While not under your direct control we hope that your Board will put pressure on their agencies to improve markings on the roadways to clearly delineate the edge of the pavement. A broad white stripe, and/or reflective studs might well have been sufficient to warn the truck driver not to make the premature right turn.

The introduction of Metrolink service was supposed to be a major step forward in mobility for southern California but we cannot support operations that leave passengers vulnerable to these types of life changing injuries. The SCRRA Board needs to understand the issues involved, ensure that an adequate risk assessment is undertaken and, if necessary, suspend service where the highway

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authority has failed to install safety features at known high-risk crossings.

RailPAC is a non-profit volunteer group that has campaigned for increased passenger rail service since 1978. Our objective is to see a safe, reliable, seven day a week, all day Metrolink service, coordinated with local transit to provide door to door service for the majority of southern California. We hope that with new management we will finally see some real progress in this direction.

Yours faithfully,

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