



**STAFF REPORT**  
Board Meeting of March 18, 2026

**AGENDA ITEM:** 4-D

**PREPARED BY:** Dylan Stone, Principal Regional Planner

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**SUBJECT:**

San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority – Draft 2026 Business Plan

**Enclosure:** No

**Action:** Information and Discussion Only

**SUMMARY:**

The San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJJPA) released its Draft 2026 Business Plan for public review and comment. Comments on the draft plan may be submitted until March 18, 2026, at 12pm. These will be presented to the SJJPA Board on March 19, 2026. Any comments received after the deadline will be included in the final Staff Report for the May 15, 2026, meeting.

Each year, SJJPA must develop and approve an updated Business Plan as required by SJJPA's Interagency Transfer Agreement (ITA) with the State. The annual Business Plan is required to be submitted to the Secretary of California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) by April 1 of each year, and in final form by June 15 of each year to allow Amtrak time to finalize operating cost estimates.

As specified in AB 1779, the Business Plan shall include a report on the historical performance of the San Joaquins Service (Gold Runner), an operating plan including proposed service enhancements to increase ridership, short-term and long-term capital improvement programs, funding requirements for the upcoming fiscal year, and an action plan with specific performance goals and objectives.

The SJJPA Draft 2026 Business Plan outlines the strategy for managing and expanding the San Joaquins (Gold Runner) intercity passenger rail service over the next two fiscal years. The plan describes operating needs, funding requests to the state, and capital investments needed to maintain and grow service. It highlights goals to increase ridership, improve reliability, and expand multimodal connectivity through rail and connecting bus services. The plan also identifies near-term service enhancements and longer-term improvements tied to the Valley Rail program and future integration with California high-speed rail, while

establishing performance targets and funding requirements for operations, marketing, and infrastructure upgrades.

The SJJPA continues advancing the Valley Rail Program, expanding the San Joaquins (Gold Runner) network with new and extended service to Sacramento, Merced, and Natomas. The strategy focuses on increasing frequencies, improving reliability, and building the infrastructure needed to support future connections with California High-Speed Rail and regional commuter rail systems.

A key long-term strategy is preparing the San Joaquins (Gold Runner) system to integrate with the future California High-Speed Rail Authority network. The plan supports station coordination, schedule integration, and infrastructure upgrades to allow seamless transfers between conventional intercity rail and high-speed rail, particularly at Merced, creating a statewide passenger rail spine connecting Northern and Southern California.

The Draft Plan prioritizes continued deployment of the new Siemens Venture trainsets to modernize the San Joaquins (Gold Runner) fleet. These trains increase passenger capacity, accessibility, and comfort while improving operational reliability. The strategy also includes maintenance improvements, operational efficiencies, and customer-experience upgrades intended to attract riders and support long-term ridership growth across the corridor.

Madera County is primarily referenced in relation to regional rail connectivity and future integration with the statewide high-speed rail system. The plan highlights the planned Madera Station near Avenue 12, which will relocate the existing San Joaquins (Gold Runner) stop and serve as a multimodal hub connecting the San Joaquins (Gold Runner) with the future high-speed rail network being developed by the California High-Speed Rail Authority. This project is intended to improve interregional mobility by linking Madera County with major Central Valley cities and statewide destinations, supporting economic access to jobs, education, and services. The station and associated infrastructure are also expected to reduce reliance on personal vehicles by expanding rail travel options along key corridors such as State Route 99 and Interstate 5. In the broader context of the business plan, Madera County is positioned as a strategic transfer point in the evolving Central Valley rail network, helping facilitate connections between conventional intercity rail service and future high-speed rail operations.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

No fiscal impact to the approved 2025-26 Overall Work Program and Budget.