



STAFF REPORT
Board Meeting of May 21, 2025

AGENDA ITEM: 4-H

PREPARED BY: Dylan Stone, Principal Regional Planner

SUBJECT:

Availability of the 2025 DRAFT San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJJPAA) Business Plan for Public Review

Enclosure: No

Action: Information and Discussion Only

SUMMARY:

Background

The San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJJPAA) is the regional agency responsible for managing the San Joaquins Amtrak commuter rail service, which operates passenger trains in the Central Valley and connects major cities like Bakersfield, Fresno, Madera, Merced, Stockton, and Sacramento, with service extending to the Bay Area.

The SJJPAA was formed to provide regional control over the San Joaquins route, which was previously managed solely by the state through Caltrans. It oversees service planning, scheduling, marketing, and coordination with Amtrak (which operates the trains) and BNSF Railway (which owns most of the track used).

Each year, SJJPAA must develop and approve an updated Business Plan as required by SJJPAA's Interagency Transfer Agreement (ITA) with the State of California. The annual Business Plan is required to be submitted to the Secretary of the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) in draft form 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.

The Business Plan shall include a report on the historical performance of the San Joaquins Service, 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 Business Plan shall document service improvements (rail and thruway/connecting bus) to provide the planned level of service, inclusion of operating plans to serve peak period work trips, and consideration of other service expansions and enhancements.

Key Highlights from the 2025 Draft Business Plan:

A significant highlight in the 2025 Draft Business Plan is the Madera Station Relocation Project, a three-phase initiative aimed at enhancing connectivity and preparing for future high-speed rail integration.

The relocation and expansion of the Madera Station are key for several reasons:

- **Improved Accessibility:** The new location near Avenue 12 offers better access to State Route 99 and is closer to Madera Community College, enhancing convenience for passengers.
- **Increased Ridership Potential:** Ridership projections indicate that relocating the station could significantly increase ridership in Madera as compared to existing observations.
- **Transit-Oriented Development:** The project aligns with regional goals to foster sustainable, transit-oriented communities, as outlined in the Madera Transit Station Specific Plan.
- **Environmental Compliance:** The project has undergone environmental reviews under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and is preparing for further assessments under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations.

Additional highlights from the Draft Business Plan include:

Service Expansion and Operational Enhancements

- **Increased Daily Round-Trips:** Plans are underway to implement the 8th and 9th daily round-trips, with a phased approach targeting up to 12 round-trips on the BNSF Railway. This expansion aligns with the 2018 California State Rail Plan and the California High-Speed Rail Authority's Draft 2024 Business Plan.
- **Schedule Optimization:** Efforts include reducing trip lengths and travel times, improving train monitoring, adjusting train and connecting bus schedules, and enhancing service coordination to increase ridership and revenue.

Infrastructure and Capital Projects

- **Valley Rail Program:** SJJPA is coordinating with the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRRC) on the Valley Rail expansion, which includes projects like the grade separation at the Stockton Diamond—the busiest rail junction in California.
- **Safety Initiatives:** Collaborations with Amtrak and host railroads aim to reduce incidents along the corridor through infrastructure improvements and educational programs.

Branding and Customer Experience

- **Rebranding Efforts:** The Authority has adopted a resolution to rebrand the San Joaquins service to the "Gold Runner," aiming to enhance public recognition and better reflect the service's scope.
- **Onboard Services:** In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, café car services were suspended. SJJPA introduced locally sourced snack boxes in July 2021 and is exploring

cost-effective alternatives like automated vending machines for long-term onboard food service.

Financial Overview

- **Budget Allocation:** The plan requests annual funds required to operate, administer, and market the San Joaquins, detailing funding requirements for the upcoming fiscal years and outlining both short-term and long-term capital improvement programs.

The Draft Business Plan can be viewed online at: <https://sijpa.com/business-plan/>

FISCAL IMPACT:

No fiscal impact to the approved 2024-25 Overall Work Program and Budget.