

6. OPERATING PLAN AND STRATEGIES

In Federal FY 2016 (October 2015 – September 2016) San Joaquins ridership dropped by 4.7% and ticket revenue dropped by 4.8% from the previous Fiscal Year. However, ridership (1.4%) and ticket revenue (1.3%) were only slightly lower than Amtrak’s forecast.¹ Potential reasons for the decrease include consistently low gas prices over the last few years, competition from new private intercity bus carriers, and declining on-time performance (OTP) prior to FY 2016 (see Table 6.1). In response to these declines, the SJJPA is aggressively pursuing several initiatives during FY 2016/17. Staff has worked closely with Amtrak and host railroads to improve OTP, employing collaborative strategies and open channels of communication to resolve issues impacting OTP. This resulted in significant improvement in OTP between FY 2015 (73.6%) and FY 2016 (84%). Continuing to improve OTP is critical for attracting and growing additional ridership markets, including business travel.

Table 6.1: On-Time Performance of the San Joaquins

On-Time Performance of the San Joaquins (Based on Federal Fiscal Year)	
FY 2012	88.1%
FY 2013	77.7%
FY 2014	75.4%
FY 2015	73.6%
FY 2016	84.0%

Source: Amtrak, 2017.

FY 2017/18 and FY 2018/19 Operating Plan

The San Joaquins’ operating plan for FY 2017/18 and FY 2018/19 will see a transition of service from running all trains the full-length of the corridor to a more flexible service model. While seven daily round-trips will be maintained, two of these round-trips are being planned to start/end at the mid-corridor location of Fresno so they can arrive in Sacramento and the Bay Area by around 8 am. SJJPA is calling this new service “Morning Express Service.” Service would be initiated first to Sacramento, sometime in early 2018. The Bay

¹ Amtrak, 2016

Area service would follow sometime in 2019. Additional details about the Morning Express Service can be found in Chapters 7 and 15.

In addition to optimizing existing trains to better serve demand, increasing the frequency of the San Joaquins remains a key objective. SJJPA will evaluate and pursue cost-effective service expansion opportunities in consultation with the host railroads as capital and operational funding is made available. The most immediate priority for expansion of service is the 8th Daily Round Trip, which is currently being planned for service between Fresno and Sacramento. Additional details about the 8th Daily Round Trip can be found in Chapters 7 and 15. SJJPA continues to coordinate with Caltrans to identify future equipment needs, funding sources, and delivery schedules to accommodate these and other service improvements.

SJJPA is providing input for optimization studies focused on examining strategies to increase capacity for rail service and freeing up equipment. The first phase of work is being led by Caltrans, and includes adding an 8th Daily Round Trip for the San Joaquins, optimizing the schedule to reduce train “meets” while increasing ridership, reducing freight interferences, and reducing the overall run-time. The second phase of work, to be led by CCJPA, will examine current practices to identify what is working and to identify areas for improvement in terms of deployment and scheduling efficiencies. This will be followed by the development of several deployment and scheduling scenarios, all of which will be modeled for increased optimization so as to free up more capacity and allow the increased utilization of existing rolling stock for both the San Joaquins and Capitol Corridor passenger rail services.



SJJPA is also planning to initiate a Thruway Bus Pilot Program. The goal of the pilot program is to allow non-Amtrak passengers to utilize excess seating capacity, while also reducing operating expenses, increasing ticket revenue, and complementing local and regional bus services. SJJPA is currently examining locations and routes for implementing the pilot program, in coordination with State and regional transportation agencies. Additional details on this pilot program can be found in Chapter 15.

To enhance the current service of the San Joaquins, SJJPA is committed to working with Caltrans Division of Rail, Capitol Corridor, Pacific Surfliner, Altamont Corridor Express (ACE), Amtrak, BNSF, UPRR, and regional and local transit providers to improve connecting transit service to the trains and connecting bus service along the San Joaquins Corridor. To help achieve this, SJJPA will utilize its Member Agencies to assist in coordinating improved communications and connectivity.

Operating Strategies

The San Joaquins have great potential for increased ridership, revenue, service coordination, and performance. SJJPA has implemented a number of strategies to improve the San Joaquins. Some of the strategies listed are being implemented with little or no additional resources.

Train Monitoring - On-Time Performance (OTP):

1. Coordinating with the Host Railroads and Amtrak to provide computer displays with real-time viewing of all train movement (freight and passenger) on the San Joaquins Corridor.
2. Conducting weekly conference calls with the Host Railroads and Amtrak to discuss the prior week's OTP. Discussions include the types of delays, the reasons for the delays, and identifying potential solutions so future delays can be prevented.
3. Coordinating with the Host Railroads to bring dispatchers out to tour the San Joaquins Corridor and ride the trains to develop an understanding of the territory being dispatched.
4. Working with the Host Railroads and Amtrak to identify capital and/or system improvements to improve OTP. This includes annual hybrid or train trips over the corridor with the

Host Railroad's and Amtrak's operating and passenger rail personnel. This will allow for a prioritized list of projects agreed to by all parties, which can either be within or outside of the corridor, and that would increase capacity and velocity of the overall system.

Train and Connecting Bus Schedule Adjustments:

1. SJJPA will continue to evaluate existing train and connecting bus schedules and determine if there are potential changes which could improve ridership, revenue, and cost-effectiveness. Schedule adjustments have the potential to improve the San Joaquins performance without additional resources.
2. Closely review bus routes to determine if the routes are being operated as efficiently as possible.
3. Assess operational impacts and potential schedule changes from the implementation of potential new station locations (including Oakley, Hercules, Berkeley, Oakland Coliseum, and Elk Grove, as well as additional stations in the Fresno and Bakersfield metropolitan areas). Additionally, operational impacts of shifting service from the Stockton "San Joaquin Street" station location to the Robert Cabral (ACE) Station in downtown Stockton will be considered.

Service Coordination:

1. Represent the San Joaquins at monthly Capital Improvement Team (CIT) meetings with the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR). Operational issues encountered over the prior month and any upcoming capital and system projects that could affect train performance are discussed at these meetings.
2. Participate in quarterly CIT meetings with the BNSF and UPRR to discuss operational issues encountered over prior months and any upcoming capital and system projects that could affect train performance.
3. Work with the Capitol Corridor JPA, LOSSAN JPA, and Caltrans to provide improved connections to the Capitol Corridor and Pacific Surfliner.
4. Participate in the Bi-Monthly Construction meetings with LOSSAN and Caltrans to identify potential maintenance projects and projects

required to increase service to 8 daily round-trips, as well as to monitor progress on projects in construction.

5. Work with the Federal Railroad Administration on regulatory requirements associated with the San Joaquins, i.e. Positive Train Control.

Near-Term Operating Improvements:

1. Continue to work with the State to secure the capital and operational funding for projects to increase the San Joaquins to 8 daily round-trips.
2. Plan for required improvements and seek capital and operational funding to increase the frequency of the San Joaquins to Sacramento.
3. Work with Amtrak and the Host Railroads (BNSF and UPRR) to initiate Morning Express Service to Sacramento by early 2018 and to the Bay Area in 2019. SJJPA will continue to estimate costs of the 8th Daily Round Trip, along with the compatibility of cycling the equipment for maintenance, crew schedules, as well as increased parking at stations.
4. Work with Caltrans Division of Rail, Amtrak, BNSF, and UPRR to develop train schedules to accommodate the Morning Express Service.
5. Explore operating trains from Fresno in the morning heading south to Bakersfield.
6. Work with Caltrans Division of Rail, Amtrak,

BNSF, and UPRR to explore ways to reduce travel times for trains running from Bakersfield to the Bay Area to under six hours. Examine the feasibility/desirability of terminating Bay Area trains in Emeryville instead of Oakland.

7. Initiate a bus pilot program that would have SJJPA contract directly with bus operators. This would allow specific Thruway bus segments to service non-Amtrak travelers, increasing utilization of existing bus capacity.
8. Work with Amtrak and the Host Railroads on expanding grassroots Safety and Security Program efforts that target communities along the San Joaquins Corridor. This includes presentations at schools, fairs, festivals, and to other special groups, such as farm workers and First Responders. SJJPA has recently brought on several Local Outreach Representatives that will assist in promoting safety by working with Operation Lifesaver (OL) and other organizations. A special effort will be made to reach out to schools, which may include field trips on the San Joaquins to learn about safety around the tracks. Transportation Security Administration (TSA) uniformed Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response (VIPR) teams will be invited to ride the trains as well. VIPR teams are a no-cost resource for expanding and enhancing security through random and unpredictable deployments.

