

9. ESTABLISHMENT OF FARES

SJJPA will work with Caltrans and Amtrak to develop fares ensuring the service is attractive and competitive with other modes of transportation along the corridor. Available ticket types on the San Joaquins are: one-way, round-trip, 10-ride tickets, and monthly passes. The multi-ride tickets, and tickets purchased by seniors, students, military personnel, and children under the age of 15 are sold at a discounted rate. Additionally, Amtrak provides reduced fares for certain national partners, such as AAA members, and for groups of more than 20 people. Following the model of the Capitol Corridor, a “Friends and Family” discount program has been established for the San Joaquins. This enables small groups of 2 to 6 passengers to travel for less every day of the week. Passengers that buy one full fare ticket save 50% on up to five companion fares with the Friends and Family discount. 10-ride tickets are now being restricted for use by one person and will be valid for 60 days from the first use.

The San Joaquins are on a reservation system with tickets sold in advance, providing a limited ability to sell tickets on the train thus turning potential passengers away. SJJPA is working to improve the flexibility and responsiveness of this system. One strategy SJJPA is evaluating is to allow for the overbooking of tickets on an ongoing basis. This approach al-

lows Amtrak to allow ticket purchases to exceed the number of seats and eliminate the problem of Amtrak users being prevented from buying a ticket because a small segment of trip they are attempting to book is full. However, overbooking of tickets is not unlimited (unlike non-reserved ticketing). Only a few tickets would be sold that exceeds the number of “reserved” seats. Café seating would still be available. SJJPA believes it would be rare for passengers having to stand for a long period of time. SJJPA conducted a trial by allowing a 10% overbooking of tickets over the Thanksgiving and Christmas Holidays in 2016 for certain short segments, with no problems reported. SJJPA is committed to continuing this policy during the next holiday season, as well as examining the possibility of allowing overbooking throughout the year.

The current fare management policy on the San Joaquins is to increase the standard “value” fares as San Joaquins trains start to reach capacity. Amtrak recently implemented four new categories of fares when booking a ticket – Saver, Value, Flexible, and Premium. Currently the Value and Flexible fare categories are applied to the San Joaquins. SJJPA is considering adding the Saver fare category as well. Fare categories are coupled with dynamic pricing, meaning the price can change depending on when a ticket



is booked (usually getting higher closer to the trip date). Additionally, SJJPA has expressed concern to Amtrak that dynamic pricing could lead to ridership losses, especially on the San Joaquins given the fact most riders are leisure travelers. SJJPA continues to work with Amtrak to ensure the fare structure works to encourage ridership on the San Joaquins.

FY 2017/18 and FY 2018/19 Fares

The projected fare structure for FY 2017/18 and FY 2018/19 is dependent upon the implementation of revised Amtrak operating pricing policies for FY 2017/18 and FY 2018/19. If operating expenses are stabilized or reduced, a fare increase may not be necessary for these fiscal years. SJJPA will work with Caltrans and Amtrak on the impacts of a revised pricing policy and determine if a fare increase will be required. Additionally, SJJPA will look into other opportunities to increase fare revenue without raising fares, these include but are not limited to:

- Explore smart-card fare collection technology or other current best-fit technology provided it can be incorporated into the Amtrak ticketing structure;
- Explore re-establishing the transit connectivity programs such as the Transit Transfer Program, joint ticketing, and transfer of motorcoach bus routes to parallel local transit services;

- Increase public awareness of the Service to increase ridership and revenue;
- Encourage new riders by promoting discounts for group travel and families;
- Explore with Amtrak moving the San Joaquins back to unreserved ticketing, like the Capitol Corridor and Pacific Surfliner. Any determination will need to include data on the trade-offs between reserved and unreserved ticketing, including if the benefits outweigh the impacts;
- Investigate changes to the existing fare policy of increasing fares as trains begin to reach capacity;
- SJJPA will work to establish a program to subsidize tickets for residents within disadvantaged communities along the San Joaquins Corridor who cannot afford to pay regular San Joaquins fares; and
- SJJPA will work with Amtrak to evaluate fares between Fresno and Sacramento and potentially make adjustments in conjunction with the deployment of Morning Express

Integrated Ticketing/Fare Collection

SJJPA will work with the State and other partners to explore new forms of fare collection that could integrate into a seamless state-wide ticketing system.

