

AB 1779 FAQs

(Revised September 25, 2012)

Why form a JPA to take over governance/management of the San Joaquin intercity passenger rail service?

Response

The co-authors, sponsors, and supporters of AB 1779 believe that the San Joaquin intercity rail service rail service would become substantially more successful in the future by following the governance/management model of the Capitol Corridor JPA.

In 1996, the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority (CCJPA) was created to oversee the administration of the Capitol Corridor service under the provisions of Senate Bill 457 (SB 457). Over the last 15 years, without direct financial contribution by member agencies, the CCJPA has successfully managed the Capitol Corridor between Auburn and San Jose. Capital investments, cooperation with the Union Pacific freight railroad, and state support have allowed for dramatic increases in the frequency of service (increases of 400 percent between Sacramento and Oakland), and the Capitol Corridor intercity passenger rail service has the highest on-time performance in the nation for intercity service.

In addition to more cost effective administration and operations, the CCJPA model has shown that there are several other potential benefits to local authority administration of intercity passenger service including:

- The ability to have a stronger voice in advocating for service improvements and expansions
- Local decision-making that is more responsive and adaptive to passenger issues
- The ability to take better advantage of joint marketing and partnerships with local agencies
- More engagement by local communities to support the service

AB 1779 emulates the CCJPA model which has worked so well with the Capitol Corridor intercity passenger rail service.

What are the main provisions of AB 1779?

Response:

Assembly Bill 1779 will enable the transfer of administrative responsibility of the San Joaquin intercity passenger rail service from the Department of Transportation to a new joint powers authority. Following the model of the CCJPA, AB 1779 is permissive legislation which would enable regional governance/management of the existing San Joaquin intercity passenger rail service between Bakersfield-Fresno-Stockton-Sacramento-Oakland.

AB 1779 defines the composition of the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJJPA), and extends the time for creating the SJJPA and executing an interagency transfer agreement with the Department of Transportation to June 30, 2015. AB 1779 ensures that for not less than a three-year period, the level of state funding for intercity rail service in the San Joaquin corridor shall be maintained at least to the level of service in the corridor at the

time of the transfer, providing fiscal stability that will allow appropriate planning and operation of these services. In order to transfer responsibility of the San Joaquin intercity passenger rail service to the SJJPA, AB 1779 requires that the transfer must result in administrative or operating cost reductions. Finally, AB 1779 enables local resources to be used to expand San Joaquin service or to offset and redirection, elimination, reduction, or reclassification of state resources for operating the San Joaquin intercity passenger rail service as determined by local agencies.

Who supports AB 1779?

Response:

AB 1779 is sponsored by the Central Valley Rail Working Group, the San Joaquin Valley Regional Policy Council, Sacramento Regional Transit, and the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission. To date, the following entities have submitted formal letters of support for AB 1779 (more are expected):

- Central Valley Rail Working Group (*sponsor*)
- San Joaquin Valley Regional Policy Council (*sponsor*)
- Sacramento Regional Transit (*sponsor*)
- San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (*sponsor*)
- California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley
- San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District
- California Central Valley Economic Development Corporation
- California Transit Association
- Sacramento Area Council of Governments
- San Joaquin Council of Governments
- Stanislaus Council of Governments
- Madera County Transportation Commission
- Merced County Association of Governments
- Tulare County Association of Governments
- Contra Costa Transportation Authority
- Fresno Council of Governments
- Fresno County
- Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors
- Mayor of Fresno
- Steve Cohn, Sacramento City Council, CCJPA Board member, SACOG Board Member, and Sacramento RT Board Member
- City of Modesto
- City of Merced
- City of Lodi
- City of Elk Grove
- City of Turlock
- City of Sacramento
- City of Stockton
- City of Visalia
- City of Selma
- City of Mendota
- City of Fowler

- City of Kingsburg
- City of Huron
- City of Corcoran
- City of Tracy
- City of Manteca
- Fresno Regional Workforce Investment Board
- Greater Stockton Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Fresno Chamber of Commerce
- Sacramento Metro Chamber of Commerce
- San Joaquin Partnership
- San Joaquin Regional Transit District
- Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority
- Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor Agency

Central Valley Rail Working Group Member Agencies are: Sacramento Regional Transit District, Sacramento Area Council of Governments, City of Sacramento, City of Elk Grove, City of Galt, County of Sacramento, San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission, San Joaquin Council of Governments, San Joaquin Regional Transit District, City of Stockton, City of Manteca, City of Lodi, County of San Joaquin, Stanislaus Council of Governments, City of Turlock, City of Modesto, County of Stanislaus, Merced County Association of Governments, City of Merced, and County of Merced.

San Joaquin Valley Regional Policy Council Member Agencies are: Fresno Council of Governments, Kern Council of Governments, Kings County Association of Governments, Madera County Transportation Commission, Merced County Association of Governments, San Joaquin Council of Governments, Stanislaus Council of Governments, Tulare County Association of Governments, and San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Why do we need a JPA now?

Response:

The leadership of the sponsors of AB 1779 (CVRWG, SJVRPC, San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission, and Sacramento Regional Transit) as well as its supporters demonstrates that the Central Valley is ready to take on the responsibility of regional governance/management of the San Joaquin intercity passenger rail service. Improved intercity rail service is important to the future of California and supports the state's sustainability goals and regional governance/management of the Capitol Corridor service has shown that the JPA structure to be effective in reducing costs and improving intercity rail service.

Southern California is moving forward with legislation to enable regional governance of the Pacific Surfliner service. If they succeed, and AB 1779 does not move forward, the San Joaquin service would be left as the only state-service not under regional governance/management. The San Joaquin service already is at a disadvantage to the Capitol Corridor in terms of advocating for the service at the state level. This disadvantage would grow even larger if the regional governance of the Pacific Surfliner moves forward.

There is a real synergy with the Southern California regional governance effort. The CVRWG and SJVRPC are supporting the Southern California bill (SB 1225) and the LOSSAN Board is supporting AB 1779. Having both measures move forward in partnership helped them pass through the Legislature.

How did AB 1779 get started?

Response:

Late in 2011, the Central Valley Rail Working Group (CVRWG) became aware of the efforts in Southern California for a regional governance initiative for the Pacific Surfliner (San Luis Obispo-Los Angeles-San Diego) intercity passenger rail service. A subcommittee was formed of the CVRWG to investigate pursuing a similar initiative for the San Joaquin intercity passenger rail service. Based on the findings of their subcommittee, the CVRWG decided to move forward with assessing the interest and support from Central Valley Regional Transportation Planning Authorities south of Merced for regional governance of the San Joaquin intercity passenger rail service. After hearing about the potential initiative, the San Joaquin Valley Regional Policy Council (SJVRPC) made regional governance of the San Joaquin intercity passenger rail service a legislative priority for 2012, and joined as a sponsor for the legislation. Assemblymember Galgiani accepted the requests of representatives of the CVRWG to carry the legislation.

Does AB 1779 have bi-partisan support?

Response:

Yes. Assemblymember Olsen and Senator Cannella have joined on as co-authors in addition to Assemblymembers Perea, and Dickinson, and Senators Wolk and Padilla. On May 30, AB 1779 passed on the Assembly Floor with a bi-partisan 64-11 vote and on August 29, AB 1779 passed on the Senate Floor with a bi-partisan 31-3 vote. On August 30, AB 1779 passed Assembly Concurrence with a bi-partisan 62-16 vote. In addition, the long list of agencies and organizations throughout the Central Valley supporting AB 1779 is bi-partisan.

Is this bill premature, especially as California is undertaking a major high-speed rail planning and implementation project?

Response:

The San Joaquin trains are a vital passenger rail service in the Valley that needs support and expansion now. An improved and expanded San Joaquin intercity passenger rail service will provide a critical transportation option with or without a state-wide high speed rail service. If the high speed rail program goes forward, CHSRA proposes to potentially move some existing San Joaquin service and/or operate new intercity express trains in the first construction segment until such time as the first true high speed trains go into operation. In other regions, JPA's have been an effective framework for ensuring that high speed rail infrastructure and services are compatible with the desires of the local communities. Moreover, AB 1779 is permissive – not mandatory. In the end, if the region or the state views the JPA as premature, for whatever reason, the parties will not approve any transfer agreement.

Does the CHSRA support AB 1779?

Response:

The CHSRA has no formal position on AB 1779.

AB 1779 is not directly related to the statewide high-speed rail project. Supporters of AB 1779 include both supporters and opponents of the proposed statewide high-speed train project.

AB 1779 promotes improved and efficient management of the existing San Joaquin intercity passenger rail service. This is consistent with the goals of the State of California and should be supported by the Administration.

The San Joaquin intercity rail service has the 5th highest ridership in the nation and has high on-time performance, with ridership increasing why do we need a JPA?

Response:

The San Joaquin intercity passenger rail service is a successful service with increasing ridership. The sponsors and supporters of AB 1779 believe that under regional governance/management, the San Joaquin intercity passenger rail service will become even more successful.

In addition to more cost effective administration and operations, the CCJPA model has shown that there are several other potential benefits to regional governance/management of intercity passenger service including:

- The ability to have a stronger voice in advocating for service improvements and expansions
- Local decision-making that is more responsive and adaptive to passenger issues
- The ability to take better advantage of joint marketing and partnerships with local agencies
- More engagement by local communities to support the service

It has been nearly twenty years since the San Joaquin service expanded service between the Bay Area and the Central Valley (4 daily round trips) and today there are only two daily round trips between Sacramento and Bakersfield. The sponsors and supporters believe that following the CCJPA model, more efficient management, and stronger advocacy from regional governance/management of the San Joaquin intercity passenger rail service will result in greater frequencies of service and even higher ridership and overall performance.

Does the San Joaquin service have a “regional” function like the Capitol Corridor? Doesn’t the San Joaquin corridor acts as the “spine” of intercity passenger service in the state, connecting the Capitol Corridor and Pacific Surfliner?

Response:

The Capitol Corridor is not limited to a "regional function". It is an “intercity” rail service connecting the Sacramento region to the Bay Area region. The Capitol Corridor also has extensive bus feeder services which greatly extend the areas of the state connected to this service. The San Joaquin intercity passenger rail service is

not different. It directly serves and connects the San Joaquin Valley and connects the San Joaquin Valley to the Bay Area. It also has extensive bus feeder services.

The HST system will be the “spine” of the state rail services connecting the three existing state-supported services. The San Joaquin intercity passenger rail service can never serve this role; this is why the state is looking to invest well over \$60 billion in a statewide HST system.

Won't coordination with Surfliners be more difficult if a JPA takes over management of the San Joaquin service?

Response:

No. Coordination with the Surfliners will not be more difficult. The Capitols JPA has been coordinating with the San Joaquin intercity passenger rail service since it took over the responsibilities for administering the Capitol Corridor. The San Joaquin and Capitol Corridor even share trains. It should be noted that the Pacific Surfliners are also looking to be administered by a JPA (see SB 1225).

What if addition capacity of the railroads operating within the San Joaquin corridor does not materialize, making it difficult to achieve additional rail passenger services?

Response:

Over the years, there has been a very modest increase in frequency of service on the San Joaquin line. Since 1993, the number of round trips between the Bay Area and the Central Valley has remained the same at four daily round-trips. An additional daily round trip between Sacramento and Bakersfield was added in 1998 and another in 2001. Additional service has not materialized for the San Joaquin service, suggesting that it has been difficult to achieve additional rail passenger service in this corridor.

The model of the Capitol Corridor with the JPA has worked very well, and has resulted in great increases in frequency for that corridor. The difficulties in achieving additional passenger rail service in the San Joaquin Corridor are actually an argument for having a JPA be responsible for administering the San Joaquin service, considering this structure has worked so well with the Capitol Corridor.

Strong local and regional support is needed to get improved service in the San Joaquin corridor. The JPA is an effective structure to get strong local and regional support needed to achieve increased frequencies in this corridor.

Why is the bill's intent that level of service at the time of transfer be maintained, yet it does not specify sources of revenue if there are shortfalls. How is this acceptable?

Response:

The state shall provide funding for at least the same level of service at the time of the transfer for at least 3 years following the transfer of service. This provides the fiscal stability that will allow for appropriate planning and

operation of each of the intercity passenger rail services. This is similar to the language in SB 457 which led to the initiation of the Capitol Corridor JPA. Without a commitment by the state to at least maintain the funding of the service for some period of time, there would be little incentive by the potential member agencies to go through the effort of establishing a JPA, selecting a managing agency, and negotiating an interagency funding agreement with the state.

The Capitol Corridor JPA has managed to increase service dramatically without any local or regional funding with state funding. Shortfalls have not occurred over the last 15 years with the Capitol Corridor under the administration of the CCJPA. The CCJPA has been considered to be a great success and the existing government codes that enabled the CCJPA did not specify “sources of revenue if there are shortfalls”. California has made commitments to support intercity rail and sustainability goals; cutting intercity funding would not be consistent with these goals.

Will the San Joaquin service require a state subsidy after 3 years?

Response:

Yes. All conventional intercity rail services in this country require operational subsidies. The San Joaquin intercity passenger rail service is expected to continue to depend on state funds to subsidize its operations.

Like the Capitol Corridor model, AB 1779 requires that the JPA demonstrate that it can administer the San Joaquin service more cost-effectively than it is currently being done by Caltrans Division of Rail in order for the responsibility of the service administration to be transferred to the JPA.

Caltrans Division of Rail would continue to have prominent and important roles with the San Joaquin intercity passenger rail service even after the administration responsibility is turned over to a JPA. In addition to the state continuing to provide the funding necessary for service operations, administration and marketing, Caltrans Division of Rail would continue to be responsible for the development of the Statewide Rail Plan, coordination and integration between the three state-supported intercity passenger rail services, grant applications to the federal government, and developing state budget requests – like they have been for the Capitol Corridor under the CCJPA.

Isn't this just another layer of government?

Response

No. For direct service delivery, a regional JPA would provide decision-making closer to the customers and the operations and more cost-effective administration of the San Joaquin intercity passenger rail service.

If funding decisions are to be made at the county level, who will take care of the many “off line” counties that are now connected by buses?

Response

Decisions would not be made at the “county level”. The JPA would be comprised of up to 11 members from 11 counties (Sacramento, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare, Kern, Alameda, and Contra Costa). Like the CCJPA decisions regarding “off-line” counties that are connected by bus services would be determined by the San Joaquin JPA. The annual Business Plan of the JPA would require a two-thirds majority vote. The JPA would hold regular public meetings. Caltrans would retain its role as the statewide coordinator and would be responsible for developing the Statewide Rail Plan. The San Joaquin JPA’s Business Plans must be consistent with Statewide Rail Plans and future CHSRA Business Plans.

Will the San Joaquin corridor be able to expand with more cost-effective service under a JPA?

Response

Like the Capitol Corridor model, AB 1779 requires that the JPA demonstrate that it can administer the San Joaquin service more cost-effectively than it is currently being done by Caltrans Division of Rail in order for the responsibility of the service administration to be transferred to the JPA.

The model of the Capitol Corridor with the JPA has worked very well, and has resulted in great increases in frequency for that corridor. Strong local and regional support is needed to get improved service in the San Joaquin corridor. The JPA is an effective structure to get strong local and regional support needed to achieve increased frequencies in this corridor.

Wouldn’t pursuing federal dollars for intercity rail service be best handled at the state level?

Response

The JPA will not eliminate the state role with conventional intercity service in the San Joaquin Corridor. The state would still be responsible for pursuing federal dollars for this corridor and the other two state-supported corridors. However, based on the CCJPA experience, the sponsors and supporters of AB 1779 believe that having a JPA responsible for the administration of the San Joaquin intercity passenger rail service would greatly increase the ability for the San Joaquin corridor to advocate for San Joaquin service improvements in both Sacramento and Washington D.C.

Doesn’t California need a single statewide service coordinator to preserve the rights of all riders from all counties of California and the rest of the country?

Response

If the San Joaquin service is transferred to the JPA, the state would still retain this role (as they have with the Capitol Corridor).

Caltrans Division of Rail would continue to have prominent and important roles with the San Joaquin intercity passenger rail service even after the administration responsibility is turned over to a JPA. In addition to the state continuing to provide the funding necessary for service operations, administration and marketing, Caltrans Division of Rail would continue to be responsible for the development of the Statewide Rail Plan, coordination and integration between the three state-supported intercity passenger rail services, grant applications to the federal government, and developing state budget requests. The San Joaquin JPA's Business Plans must be consistent with Statewide Rail Plans and future CHSRA Business Plans.

Is it the intent of the JPA to withdraw the San Joaquins from a statewide time table?

Response

The JPA has not been formed, and has not met. The agencies that are sponsoring and supporting AB 1779 have expressed no intent to withdraw the San Joaquin intercity passenger rail service from the statewide time table.

This effort claims to have support throughout the Central Valley, but who supports this south of Merced? Do Hanford, Visalia, Fresno, and Bakersfield support this?

Response

The San Joaquin Valley Regional Policy Council (SJVRPC) is one of the sponsors for AB 1779. The SJVRPC member agencies that are south of Merced include: Madera County Transportation Commission, Fresno County Association of Governments, Kings County Association of Governments, Tulare County Association of Governments, Fresno Council of Governments, and Kern Council of Governments. The SJVRPC made AB 1779 a top legislative priority for this year. In addition, letters of support have been submitted by the Madera County Transportation Commission, Fresno Council of Governments, Tulare County Association of Governments, the Mayor of Fresno, Fresno County, the City of Visalia, the City of Selma, the City of Mendota, City of Kingsburg, City of Corcoran, City of Huron, City of Fowler, the Fresno Regional Workforce Investment Board, the CA Partnership for the Central Valley, the California Central Valley Economic Development Corporation, Greater Fresno Area Chamber of Commerce, and the SJV Air Pollution Control District.

The City of Bakersfield, City of Hanford, Kings County Association of Governments, and Kings County Board of Supervisors oppose AB 1779.

Has most of the outreach for AB 1779 been to the northern San Joaquin Valley?

Response

No. Since many of the local agencies between Sacramento and Merced have submitted letters of support for AB 1779, it appears that there has been substantial outreach to those agencies. Relatively little outreach was necessary north of Merced because of the existence and strong support of the Central Valley Rail Working Group (CVRWG). The CVRWG is made up of 20 agencies (from Sacramento to Merced) working in partnership for rail improvements in the northern San Joaquin Valley since 2006. This working group is staffed by the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRC). The CVRWG was the original sponsor for AB 1779. Once the CVRWG decided to further explore regional governance of the San Joaquin intercity passenger rail

service, it tasked the SJRRC to focus on reaching out to the counties south of Merced. The presentations and meetings made by the SJRRC staff since January 2012 include:

- Presentations:

CVRWG (4) , SJV Regional Policy Council (2), SJV Directors' Mtg (5) Fresno COG (2), Tulare CAG, Madera CTC, Kern COG (2), SJRRC (3), Valley Voice, CA Partnership for SJV, Fresno Co., StanCOG (2), Kings CAG, SJV Rail Committee (2), Kings Co. (2), CA Central Valley EDC, Greater Stockton Chamber of Commerce, City of Wasco, SJ COG (2), City of Corcoran, City of Hanford, Regional Governance Initiative Working Group (3), Greater Fresno Chamber of Commerce, Sacramento Metro Chamber of Commerce, San Joaquin Partnership, CA Realtors Association, RailPac/NARP

- Meetings:

Directors of SJV RTPAs, Sac RT, CCJPA, LOSSAN Board, SANDAG, Mayor of Fresno, SJVRC, Caltrans Director, Caltrans Director of Planning, Caltrans DOR, Amtrak, Fresno Co. Supervisors Perea & Case, Alameda CTC, Contra Costa TA, CHSRA, Governor's Office, Kern Co. Supervisor Watson, Kern Chamber of Commerce, City of Fresno, SJV Air Pollution Control District, City of Visalia, CA Partnership for SJV, Fresno Workforce Board, EDC Serving Fresno Co., Office of Speaker Perez, Staff for SJV Assembly/Senators, Save Bakersfield, Kings Co. Sup. Verboon, Citizens for CAHSR Accountability, City of Bakersfield, BT&H Agency, City of Wasco, City of Hanford, Hanford Council Members Irwin & Jameson, Mayor of Hanford, RailPac, Kings County, Regional Governance Initiative Subcommittee, SJV Rail Committee Subcommittee, SPUR, Transform,