Madera Station Relocation

Background/Defining the Problem

San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJJPA) took on the responsibility of administering and managing the Amtrak San Joaquins on July 1, 2015. SJJPA Governing Board includes representatives of ten Member Agencies (including Madera County Transportation Commission).

SJJPA recognizes that connectivity with other modes of transit is vital to maintaining an effective and efficient transportation system. At the November 2016 SJJPA Board Meeting, SJJPA staff presented an assessment of the existing connectivity between the Amtrak San Joaquins and local transit services (excluding Amtrak Thruway buses). This assessment found that the Madera Station had the worst connectivity of any San Joaquins station (along with Turlock/Denair). The Madera station is located northeast of Madera, where no local or intercity bus service is provided. After the November 2016 SJJPA Board Meeting, SJJPA staff began working with Member Agencies and stakeholders to compile a list of suggestions to increase connectivity.

In addition to the lack of connectivity with public transportation, other major problems were found to exist with the existing Madera Station location at Madera Acres. In particular, the Madera Station has had consistently low San Joaquins ridership. Of the stations served by all 7 San Joaquins daily round trips, the Madera Station has the lowest ridership. In FY 2016, Madera Station had 27,136 passenger on/offs, whereas Hanford had 173,328 passenger on/offs and Merced had 110,317 on/offs (Fresno was the highest with 359,044 passenger on/offs).

The existing Madera station location is a major contributing factor to its low connectivity and ridership. In addition to being located northeast of the City of Madera; the existing Madera Station lacks direct access to or from State Route 99 (see Figure 1); and is surrounded by very low-density development, including a nearby golf course. SJJPA gave the Madera Station a “low” rating for new transit oriented development potential. Although the Madera Station has only 19 parking spaces (lowest of all San Joaquins stations), SJJPA was unable to gain State support for investment in additional parking at this site (see Figure 2).

As part of the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) Final 2016 Business Plan, the CHSRA identified Madera as a new multimodal station. This was the first CHSRA Business Plan that proposed a stop at Madera. CHSRA highlighted Madera Station as an important connection to the San Joaquins service. Due to new funding opportunities provided by the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP), SJJPA identified an opportunity to obtain State resources to move the Madera Station to a new location which could better serve Madera, Madera County, and provide better ridership and revenue for the San Joaquins and future HSR service. In late 2016, SJJPA staff began working with Madera CTC, Madera County, the City of Madera, CalSTA, and the CHSRA to review the negative issues associated with the existing Madera Acres Station location and to discuss the possibility of pursuing moving the Madera Station to a better location.
Figure 1. Existing San Joaquins Madera Station at Madera Acres

Figure 2. Existing Madera Station
Identification and Benefits of Avenue 12 Station Location

SJPPA staff worked with Madera CTC, Madera County, City of Madera and CHSRA over a series of meetings between November 2016 and October 2017 (11/10/16, 12/8/16, 2/17/17, 2/22/17, 4/17/17, and 10/12/17). These meetings included agency staff and elected officials from Madera County and the City of Madera. The result of these meetings was SJPPA staff became focused on the relocation of the Madera Station to Avenue 12 as the near-term and long-term solution for the problems facing the existing station.

There are not many viable alternatives for San Joaquin station locations to serve the City of Madera and Madera County. The station must be located along the BNSF alignment (that the San Joaquin operate on), which is to the east of Madera. A new location needs to have high ridership potential, strong transit connectivity, potential for transit oriented development, good access to State Route 99 and the City of Madera. It should also well serve both the existing and expected future growth of Madera County. The location also needs to be able to accommodate a future HSR station as part of a multi-modal facility and to enable a phased implementation (to minimize any wasted investment/need to close the station during HSR construction). In the discussions with Madera CTC, Madera County, and the City of Madera, two locations were considered as possible sites for meeting the criteria needed for relocating Madera Station: **Avenue 12** and **Avenue 15**. While Avenue 15 is considerably closer in proximity to Central Madera, it lacks direct access to Central Madera and State Route 99 and is a much less desirable location than Avenue 12.

Avenue 12 is the best location for meeting all the criteria needed for a relocated Madera Station. The Avenue 12 Relocated Madera Station site is south-east of Madera and would be located within the Madera State Center Community College (SCCC) Specific Plan (July 1995) boundary about 1 mile east of the new Madera State Center Community College (see Figure 3). This adopted Specific Plan includes a passenger rail station on the BNSF line off Avenue 12. Avenue 12 is one of the primary existing transit corridors in Madera County. The location has excellent connectivity to State Route 99 with a new interchange at State Route 99/Avenue 12 recently completed and further improvements to Avenue 12 are being implemented. Although the potential station location is currently agricultural land, the 1,867-acre SCCC Specific Plan Area has slated this area for future development, which would provide considerable opportunity for transit-oriented development around this station location. In addition, the future growth of Madera County is largely focused to the south and east of Madera and largely along the Avenue 12 corridor (see Figure 3). Although the proposed new location is located south of Central Madera, it is more accessible than the Avenue 15 and existing Madera Acres station locations. In addition to best serving Madera County, the southern location of Avenue 12 has an added benefit for higher ridership potential since it would also be an attractive location for potential riders from Northern Fresno and Clovis. This is important, because the amount of service provided to any Madera Station in the future will depend largely on the amount of ridership the station can generate.
Higher-volume stations will not only have more frequent service, but will also be able to attract more transit-oriented development around the station and will generate more sales tax revenue. Since the Avenue 12 location is largely undeveloped and is near the HSR alignment, it enables a phased implementation of a multi-modal station with HSR with minimal impacts.

Through its formal 2017 Business Plan process, SJJPA identified the desire to relocate the Madera Station away from Madera Acres as a key goal. The intention to relocate the Madera Station was first presented at the January 27, 2017 SJJPA Board Meeting as part of the discussion of key new items proposed to be included in the Draft 2017 Business Plan. The Draft 2017 Business Plan was released to the public on March 1, 2017 and then approved by the SJJPA Board at the March 24, 2017 Board Meeting. At the May 26, 2017 SJJPA Board Meeting, Item 10 focused on the Avenue 12 location as the preferred site for the Relocated Madera Station. At that same meeting, SJJPA approved their Final 2017 Business Plan which included the goal of relocating the Madera Station to improve ridership and connectivity.

**Plans for Implementing the Relocated Madera Station**

The Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) which includes Cap and Trade, as well as, Senate Bill (SB) 1 funding provided an opportunity to fund major improvements for the San Joaquins service. At the July 27, 2017 SJJPA Board Meeting, SJJPA unanimously approved Item 7 which gave the Executive Director the authority to submit a large TIRCP application to CalSTA. This application focused on improvements
and equipment needed to increase San Joaquins and Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) service to Sacramento, but also would include the funding needed to relocate the Madera Station to the Avenue 12 location. Under the title “Madera Station Project”, the staff report for Item 7 from the July 27, 2017 SJJPA Board Meeting states, “The application would include a relocated Madera station in the vicinity of Avenue 12, which will provide increased connectivity to transit, better access to SR-99, have more transit oriented development potential, higher ridership potential, and fit better with the near-term and long-term plans for the region. This relocated station would also better serve the Clovis, and northern Fresno population.” The SJJPA application (which was a joint application with the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission) received over 130 letters of support throughout the San Joaquin Valley and the Sacramento Region. These Letters of support included letters from Madera CTC, Madera County Board of Supervisors, Madera City Council Member Oliver highlighting their support for the TIRCP application and in particular supporting the funding to relocate Madera Station to the Avenue 12 location. These letters highlight the local partnership with SJJPA in this effort and the key benefits of the Avenue 12 location (see attached letters).

On April 26, 2018 CalSTA announced an award of $500.5 million to the SJJPA/SJRRC application (called the “Valley Rail Program”). This was one of the largest awards in the state and included over $26 million for the Madera Station Relocation. However, with the threat of the recall of SB 1 (with Measure 6), funding was withheld until after the November 2018 election (where Measure 6 was defeated).

During 2018, and early 2019, SJJPA continued to work on plans for the Relocated Madera Station at Avenue 12. Design efforts were coordinated with CHSRA, and CalSTA to ensure that the design could accommodate future HSR service and could be implemented in a manner which minimized future construction impacts and enabled the HSR station and trackwork to be implemented in a phased approach. Figure 4 is the latest design for the Relocated Madera Station and shows both the San Joaquins station and the future HSR station.

The next step towards the implementation of the Relocated Madera Station is the formal environmental review process. The contract for this work was approved at the May 31, 2019 SJJPA Board Meeting. The funding for this effort will be secured in August 2019 from the California Transportation Commission, and the environmental process will be initiated. During the environmental phase, the most viable alternatives will be studied. On June 7, 2019 SJJPA staff met with Madera CTC, Madera County, City of Madera, and CSHRA representatives. It was agreed that in advance of initiating the environmental work, additional outreach by SJJPA staff would be done with the City of Madera and Madera CTC. An update of the Madera Station Relocation will be presented at the July 26, 2019 SJJPA Board Meeting in Modesto.
Figure 4. Proposed Design for Relocated Madera Station
Letters of Support

Madera CTC Letter of Support
Madera County Letter of Support
City Council Member Oliver
RE: SJJPA/SJRRC TIRCP 2018 Grant Application – Support for Improved Passenger Rail Service to Sacramento

Dear Secretary Kelly,

The Madera County Transportation Commission (MCTC) would like to express our strong support for the grant application submitted by the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJJPA) and the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRC) that seeks funding under the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP). The proposed project will use existing rail infrastructure to better connect travelers to and from the Sacramento region with the San Joaquin Valley. Because the tracks are already in place, the planned improvements to passenger rail service are cost effective and achievable in a fast timeframe. This is an incredibly unique and important opportunity to dramatically improve the regional transportation network and transform how Californians move through the Central Valley.

The requested grant funding will enable in the near term two more daily round trips for the Amtrak San Joaquin service from Fresno to Sacramento using the BNSF Stockton Subdivision and the UPRR Sacramento Subdivision – with new stations located in Lodi, Elk Grove, Sacramento City College, Midtown Sacramento, Old North Sacramento, and Natomas. These new station locations will serve the region well, and a shuttle connection between the Natomas station and the Sacramento International Airport offers a travel solution for residents throughout the Valley. In addition to improved connectivity for the San Joaquin Valley, we are hopeful the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission also pursues expanded Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) service between Natomas and San Jose and between Merced and Natomas – offering a new direct connection between Sacramento and the Bay Area and more service between the Northern San Joaquin Valley and Sacramento.

The SJJPA/SJRRC proposed rail project would bring major benefits for the entire Central Valley region:

- Better frequency. In order for the service to become a more useful and reliable piece of the Sacramento regional transportation network, it is essential to increase frequency of service.
- Better access in Sacramento. By building new platforms along the Sacramento Subdivision tracks, riders would now have access to multiple stations that serve the region in convenient locations and connect to the Sacramento Regional Transit network.
- Better mobility options. Improving frequency of service to the Sacramento market would provide an attractive way to connect travelers to the state capital— an important opportunity to serve business travelers and respond to economic development patterns.

Member Agencies: County of Madera, City of Madera, City of Chowchilla
The project would also bring significant environmental benefits by reducing car travel and congestion and therefore reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). The GHG benefits of rail would continue to grow over time as frequency increases and rider population grows.

Improved passenger rail is an essential component of the Sacramento region’s future transportation network. Increased frequency will make the service a viable and attractive option for business travelers, leisure travelers, and those living in transit-dependent households. It will facilitate economic growth, encourage transit-oriented development, and increase bicycle and pedestrian activity for connections to the stations.

In the Madera Region, a key area of interest related to this TIRCP 2018 Grant Application is the relocation of the Madera Amtrak Station. In the California High Speed Rail Authority 2016 Business Plan, a High Speed Rail (HSR) station was added in Madera with the intent to have the future state system be the initial connection to the national Amtrak system. The track alignments for both future HSR service and San Joaquin service meet in Madera County, creating the potential for a cross-platform connection between the two services. Currently, there are no other stations in the San Joaquin Valley envisioned to provide such a high-quality connection.

MCTC has collaborated with several of our regional and local partners to analyze an ideal location for station relocation as well as considering the positive effects and impacts a well-planned new Amtrak Station location could yield locally, regionally and state-wide.

The new location has greater potential to capture more riders for Amtrak, as well as HSR, by being situated between Madera County’s two largest and fastest growing communities. The proposed new station would also be an attractive choice for potential riders from the northern Fresno/Clovis metro area, rural communities in norther eastern Fresno County and the Yosemite National Park gateway communities in Eastern Madera County. The location is bound by two State Highway Routes with modern interchange access from each either in place or currently programmed in the near future and is along a route in Madera County that currently serves as the main east-west corridor for those travelling between Madera and Fresno Counties. The new location is in close proximity to the Madera Center College and is currently served by hourly public transit connections from the Cities of Madera and Fresno.

Relocating the Amtrak Station is needed to ensure higher degree of safety and health. The potential to capture more riders on commuter rail being realized via way of a better located Amtrak Station will be a benefit for safety on our increasingly congested roadways and to emissions levels that are output from our automobiles caught in that congestion. Riders who choose to access the new station for their trip have potential to assist conditions and provide congestion and emissions relief not just in Madera, but in all areas of the state where their modal choice for a trip on rail displaces their vehicle.

These numerous benefits correlate with the visions outlined in MCTC’s adopted Regional Transportation Plan. Relocating the current Amtrak Station would provide the Madera Region an important opportunity to see the visions and goals identified in our RTP become a reality.
MCTC strongly supports this plan for improved passenger rail. Overall, we see this project as an important strategy to reduce congestion, improve quality of life, and pursue a comprehensive and more sustainable transportation network for our future.

Thank you for considering the SJTPA/SJRRC grant application.

Sincerely,

Andrew Medellin, Board Chair
Madera County Transportation Commission
December 12, 2017

Brian P. Kelly, Secretary
California State Transportation Agency
915 Capitol Mall, Suite 350B
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SJJPA/SJRRC TIRCP 2018 Grant Application – Support for Improved Passenger Rail Service to Sacramento

Dear Secretary Kelly;

Madera County would like to express our strong support for the grant application submitted by the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJJPA) and the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRRC) that seeks funding under the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP). The proposed project will use rail infrastructure to better connect travelers to and from the Sacramento region with the San Joaquin Valley and the Bay Area. The planned improvements to passenger rail service are cost effective and can be implemented quickly and efficiently. This is an incredibly unique and important opportunity to dramatically improve the regional transportation network and transform how Californians move through the Central Valley and beyond.

The requested grant funding will enable in the near term two more daily round trips for the Amtrak San Joaquin service from Fresno to the Sacramento region using the BNSF Stockton Subdivision and the UPRR Sacramento Subdivision, as well as the extension of Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) service to/from Sacramento. The funding will also enable buildout of new stations located in Lodi, Elk Grove, Sacramento City College, Midtown Sacramento, Old North Sacramento, and Natomas. These new station locations will serve the region well, and a shuttle connection between the Natomas station and the Sacramento International Airport offers a travel solution for residents throughout the Valley.

Extending the ACE service between Natomas and San Jose and between Merced and Natomas will offer a new direct connection between Sacramento and the Bay Area. Increasing frequency of Amtrak San Joaquin service will improve connectivity between the San Joaquin Valley and Sacramento.

The SJJPA/SJRRC proposed rail project would bring major benefits for the entire Central Valley region:

- Better frequency. In order for the service to become a more useful and reliable piece of the Sacramento regional transportation network, it is essential to increase frequency of service.
Better access in Sacramento. By building new platforms along the Sacramento Subdivision tracks, riders would now have access to multiple stations that serve the region in convenient locations and connect to the Sacramento Regional Transit network.

Better mobility options. Improving frequency of service to the Sacramento market would provide an attractive way to connect travelers to the state capital—a significant opportunity to serve business travelers and respond to economic development patterns.

Direct connection to Bay Area markets. Sacramento is part of a growing mega-region with key economic opportunities that depend on easy access to the Bay Area. The proposed ACE extension would complement the existing Capitol Corridor service, connecting Sacramento to different parts of the Bay Area and facilitating future growth.

Overall, this project would also bring significant environmental benefits by reducing car travel and congestion and therefore reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). The GHG benefits of rail would continue to grow over time as frequency increases and rider population grows.

Improved passenger rail is an essential component of the future transportation network for the Northern California mega-region and the greater Central Valley. Increased frequency will make the service a viable and attractive option for business travelers, leisure travelers, and those living in transit-dependent households. It will drive economic growth, encourage transit-oriented development, and increase bicycle and pedestrian activity for connections to the stations.

In the Madera Region, a key area of interest related to this TIRCP 2018 Grant Application is the relocation of the Madera Amtrak Station. In the California High Speed Rail Authority 2016 Business Plan, a High Speed Rail (HSR) station was added in Madera with the intent to have the future state system be the initial connection to the national Amtrak system. The track alignments for both future HSR service and San Joaquin service in Madera County, creating the potential for a cross-platform connection between the two services. Currently, there are no other stations in the San Joaquin Valley envisioned to provide such a high-quality connection.

Madera County has collaborated with several of our regional and local partners to analyze an ideal location for the station relocation as well as considering the positive effects and impacts a well-planned new Amtrak Station location could yield locally, regionally and state-wide.

The new location has greater potential to capture more riders for Amtrak, as well as HSR, by being situated between Madera County’s two largest and fastest growing communities. The proposed new station would also be an attractive choice for potential riders from the northern Fresno/Clovis metro area, rural communities in north/eastern Fresno County and the Yosemite
National Park gateway communities in Eastern Madera County. The location is bound by two State Highway Routes with modern interchange access from each either in place or currently programmed in the near future and is along a route in Madera County that currently serves as the main east-west corridor for those traveling between Madera and Fresno Counties. The new location is in close proximity to the Madera Center College and is currently served by hourly public transit connections from the Cities of Madera and Fresno.

Relocating the Amtrak Station is needed to ensure a higher degree of safety and health. The potential to capture more riders on commuter rail being realized via a better located Amtrak Station will be a benefit for safety on our increasingly congested roadways. Riders who choose to access the new station have potential to assist conditions and provide congestion and emissions relief not just in Madera, but in all areas of the state where they choose to use the rail instead of their private vehicles.

These numerous benefits correlate with the visions outlined in Madera County Transportation Commission (MCTC) adopted Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). Relocating the current Amtrak Station would provide an important opportunity to see the visions and goals identified in the RTP become a reality.

Madera County strongly supports this plan for improved passenger rail. Overall, we see this project as an important strategy to reduce congestion, improve quality of life, and pursue a comprehensive and more sustainable transportation network for our future.

Thank you for considering the SJJPA/SJRRC grant application.

Sincerely,

Max Rodriguez
Chairman

MR/md
January 10, 2018
Brian P. Kelly, Secretary
California State Transportation Agency
915 Capitol Mall, Suite 350B
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SJSPA/SJRRC TIRCP 2018 Grant Application – Support for Improved Passenger Rail Service to Sacramento

Dear Secretary Kelly:

I would like to express my strong support for the grant application submitted by the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (SJSPA) and the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRC) that seeks funding under the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP). The proposed project will use rail infrastructure to better connect travelers to and from the Sacramento region with the San Joaquin Valley and the Bay Area. The planned improvements to passenger rail service are cost effective and can be implemented quickly and efficiently. This is an incredibly unique and important opportunity to dramatically improve the regional transportation network and transform how Californians move through the Central Valley and beyond.

The requested grant funding will enable in the near term two more daily round trips for the Amtrak San Joaquins service from Fresno to the Sacramento region using the BNSF Stockton Subdivision and the UPRR Sacramento Subdivision, as well as the extension of Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) service to/from Sacramento. The funding will also enable buildout of new stations located in Lodi, Elk Grove, Sacramento City College, Midtown Sacramento, Old North Sacramento, and Natomas. These new station locations will serve the region well, and a shuttle connection between the Natomas station and the Sacramento International Airport offers a travel solution for residents throughout the Valley.

Extending the ACE service between Natomas and San Jose and between Merced and Natomas will offer a new direct connection between Sacramento and the Bay Area, while increasing frequency of Amtrak San Joaquins service will improve connectivity between the San Joaquin Valley and Sacramento.

The SJSPA/SJRRC proposed rail project would bring major benefits for the entire Central Valley region:

- Better frequency. In order for the service to become a more useful and reliable piece of the Sacramento regional transportation network, it is essential to increase frequency of service.
- Better access in Sacramento. By building new platforms along the Sacramento Subdivision tracks, riders would now have access to multiple stations that serve the region in convenient locations and connect to the Sacramento Regional Transit network.
Better mobility options. Improving frequency of service to the Sacramento market would provide an attractive way to connect travelers to the state capital – an important opportunity to serve business travelers and respond to economic development patterns.

Direct connection to Bay Area markets. Sacramento is part of a growing mega-region with key economic opportunities that depend on easy access to the Bay Area. The proposed ACE extension would complement the existing Capitol Corridor service, connecting Sacramento to different parts of the Bay Area and facilitating future growth.

Overall, this project would also bring significant environmental benefits by reducing car travel and congestion and therefore reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). The GHG benefits of rail would continue to grow over time as frequency increases and rider population grows.

Improved passenger rail is an essential component of the future transportation network for the Northern California mega-region and the greater Central Valley. Increased frequency will make the service a viable and attractive option for business travelers, leisure travelers, and those living in transit-dependent households. It will drive economic growth, encourage transit-oriented development, and increase bicycle and pedestrian activity for connections to the stations.

In the Madera Region, a key area of interest related to this TiRCP 2018 Grant Application is the relocation of the Madera Amtrak Station. In the California High-Speed Rail Authority 2016 Business Plan, a High Speed Rail (HSR) station was added in Madera with the intent to have the future state system be the initial connection to the national Amtrak system. The track alignments for both future HSR service and San Joaquins meet in Madera County, creating the potential for a cross-platform connection between the two services. Currently, there are no other stations in the San Joaquin Valley envisioned to provide such a high-quality connection.

The new location has greater potential to capture more riders for Amtrak, as well as HSR, by being uniquely situated between Madera County’s two largest and fastest growing communities. The proposed new station would also be an attractive choice for potential riders from the northern Fresno/Clovis metro area, rural communities in northern eastern Fresno County and the Yosemite National Park gateway communities in Eastern Madera County. The location is bound by two State Highway Routes with modern interchange access, and is in close proximity to the Madera Center College that has hourly public transit connections from the City of Madera.

I strongly support this plan for improved passenger rail. Overall, I see this project as an important strategy to reduce congestion, improve quality of life, and pursue a comprehensive and more sustainable transportation network for our future.

Thank you for considering the SJPA/SJRRC grant application.

Sincerely,

Will Oliver
Councilmember