



Alameda, Contra Costa, Fresno, Kern, Kings, Los Angeles, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Tulare
Partners: Amtrak, Caltrans Division of Rail, BNSF Railway Company, Union Pacific Railroad

REPRESENTING COUNTIES ALONG THE SAN JOAQUIN RAIL CORRIDOR

MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, February 3, 2011
10:45 a.m. – 12:55p.m.
Castle Conference Center
Atwater, CA

Item 1 – Call to order and Announcements: (10:50 a.m.)

Amtrak arranged to have a special flag stop adjacent to Castle Conference Center in Atwater, CA for the San Joaquin Valley Rail Committee attendees traveling from the North and South bound directions.

Committee Chair John Pedrozo welcomed everyone in attendance and thanked everyone for returning to Merced. Committee Chair Pedrozo leads the Committee introductions. All in attendance introduce themselves and the county or agency they are representing. Committee Chair John Pedrozo extended his thanks to Amtrak for providing lunch

Item 2 – Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items Only:

- A. Committee Chair Pedrozo asked for comments from members of the public.-No public comment.
- B. After verifying that there was a quorum, Committee Chair Pedrozo moved on to entertain a motion for the approval of the San Joaquin Valley Rail Committee meeting minutes from the previous, November 4, 2010, meeting. Merced Member Angelo Lamas approved the minutes. Los Angeles Member Bruce Heard seconded the motion. Lee Stetson of Mariposa County also seconded the motion with a correction to an error on page 6, Item 6, second paragraph; the minutes sight Madera County where Mariposa County should be sighted. Motion to approve granted with one abstention.

Item 3 – Committee Member Information Items:

Committee Member Robert Snoddy of Kern County stated that Kern Council of Governments (KCOG) is going to be adding an Agenda Item for the next meeting in April 2011. KCOG is considering a new start feasibility study for Kern county area to study the feasibility of using Amtrak system as it is currently used as it transitions for High Speed Rail as an alternate commuter system: starting in Shafter or Wasco to as far south as Arvin. KCOG is looking ahead five or six years as they would like to continue to use existing infrastructure for a commuter/feeder system.

Item 4 – Guest Speaker: San Joaquin Corridor Environmental Study:

Committee Chair Pedrozo introduced Mr. Tom Dodson. Mr. Dodson, Environmental Consultant working on the San Joaquin Corridor EIR brought up the previous discussion of the San Joaquin Corridor and future Amtrak rail operations within the corridor. He had reviewed the quarter plan and attempted to assimilate the corridor plan with his program. He stated that the last year has been taken up with defining future rail operations on the San Joaquin Corridor through the year 2030 and taking that information to do a model with BNSF to see how the trains would operate and which schedules they would operate on.

Mr. Dodson is preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) to have a program document laying out the requirements for train operations and infrastructure improvements necessary to support train operations.

- Division of Rail (DOR) will be lead agency in California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)
- Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) will be lead in National Environmental Quality Act (NEPA)

Mr. Dodson went on to explain that when the federal government is selecting projects they lean more towards “shovel ready” projects or projects that can be converted quickly. The priority is to create the base environmental document that can meet all of the needs. He stated that a preferred operating scenario needs to be selected and presented the different scenarios:

- A. Alternative operating scenarios:
 - a. How can rail operations improve/ provide better service to communities along tracks?
 - b. Bus system extensive and allows people to utilize intercity rail system.
 - c. Use of 20 trains instead of 22 - 20 train operations with 2 starting in the middle of the route.
- B. Define rail infrastructure. Address improvements needed to support alternative operational scenarios:
 - a. Double tracking.
 - b. Providing new Amtrak maintenance facility.
 - c. New rolling stock:
 - i. Replacing older rolling stock.
 - ii. Providing additional train sets.
 - d. New Station in Stockton.
 - e. New mid-route layover facility.
 - f. Modifying bus system to support proposed 20 train operation system.
- C. Define the future roll of intercity passenger rail relative to proposed high speed rail operation.

Part of what is to be looked at will be how current intercity passenger rail can continue to service the corridor once high speed rail is in place. Secondary routes that were noted in the strategic plan were discussed. Public outreach will begin at the beginning of March to present preferred alternative for the EIR/EIS. Mr. Dodson will work with the committee to set up public workshops throughout the San Joaquin Corridor. Janice “Jano” Mei Camacho, the new DOR staff person to the SJVRC will assist Mr. Dodson on setting up the community outreach meetings.

Mr. Dodson reiterated that there is a 24 month schedule with 12 months remaining and provided an outline for how the remaining time will be spent. He then opened the floor for questions and comments.

Committee Chair Pedrozo asked if there were any questions for Mr. Dodson.

Committee Vice Chair Vito Chiesa of Stanislaus noted that they were provided with an outline of the time line for the project. He asked if Mr. Dodson is going to make a Matrix of time and planning. He also asked if the Councils of Government (COGS) would be the lead agency.

Mr. Dodson noted that he will create a Matrix; he then directed the lead agency question to Lee Goldenberg (Caltrans DOR) commenting that the COGS should be a key component for the outreach effort.

Mr. Goldenberg, commented that COGS will probably be the best resource to go to for outreach meetings, but urged the committee members to use any approach that works best for in their region for outreach activities and meetings.

Supervisor Matt Machado of Stanislaus, asked if the official process has started for the Notice of Preparation (NOP)?

Mr. Dodson stated that it has not yet started and the reason is so he can have community feedback as well as feedback from the Federal Railway Administration. The NOP should come out in April and formally initiate the process.

Committee Chair Pedrozo stated that for Merced County, he would like to have a presentation to the board, so when Merced's COG meets, the board can first see the information then present it to the COG so all city representatives are present.

Mr. Dodson stressed that he wants to work with everyone to present the information in the best way possible for each community. His goal is to meet each community's objectives for communication.

Committee Chair Pedrozo also noted that he is concerned with various economic issues.

Mr. Dodson stated that he will provide very broad numbers for requirements and facilities and provide information as to why the particular alternatives are being considered.

Committee Chair Pedrozo also asked who will be paying for the double tracking. Will it be Amtrak? BNSF?

Mr. Dodson provided the broad answer that most track used by Amtrak is owned by BNSF in the central San Joaquin Valley. Funding will be provided by federal, state, and BNSF, in terms of improvements. He stated that he doesn't foresee the locals contributing to the construction.

Leo Hoyt of Caltrans DOR stated that the process is being started on the NEPA clearance and is the basis of the 20 year State Rail Plan and Service Development Plan which qualifies the corridor for federal money and should it be available in the future. One of the goals is to get all

the intercity corridors in California to be able to apply for federal dollars, as available and compete effectively so federal money can be obtained.

Tom Blalock of Alameda County asked if only communities in San Joaquin County would be included in the study?

Mr. Dodson assured him that the entire corridor would be included in the study

Committee Chair Pedrozo asked if there is existing BNSF right of way for double tracking or if it will need to be purchased?

Mr. Dodson shared that most BNSF Right of Way has enough room for double track. Not much property will need to be acquired for this project.

- Attendee Clark Thompson asked if preferred alternatives are going to be identified prior to the completion of the EIR.

Tom Dodson said yes, they will be identified.

Item 5 – Reports:

A. Amtrak California / Train Operations

Mike Edwards / Greg Santos

Mike Edwards of Amtrak started the Train Operations Report for the final quarter of 2010 by explaining they were going to use a new streamlined approach to the reports by touching on the four “hot topics”: Passenger Train Interference, Freight Train Interference, Equipment Failures, and Debris/Trespasser issues. For the month of October, the total operating score was 91.7%. Train No. 703 had 2 trespasser strikes. For the month of November the total operating score was 88.6%. For December the total score was 93.8%.

Sacramento Member Ed Coviello asked if more of the equipment failure was from Amtrak or Caltrans owned equipment? Mike answered that it is both and it is from normal wear and tear.

Mr. Blalock noted that since most of the interferences were created by our own trains, should the schedule be tweaked or asked if the schedule is determined by freight rail’s regular schedule. Mr. Edwards answered that it is determined by freight train schedule. Greg Santos, Amtrak added that if double track continues to be added then the numbers would improve.

Mr. Edwards made comment of a special SWAT training that took place in Merced. SWAT received interactive training on train safety, locomotive equipment and its components.

B. San Joaquin Passenger Service

Anthony Chapa

Anthony Chapa, Amtrak started with December FY11. The ridership numbers were up 5.6% which puts ridership, hopefully, on track to reach one million passengers this year. Anthony noted that the trend with state owned rail service is looking good for this FY. Ridership is continuing to increase. On time performance (OTP), plays large part in return customers and

customer satisfaction. The Pacific Division is number one in the country with OTP. San Joaquin Corridor trains are in the top five in the country for OTP.

Committee member Machado, asked if ridership from each particular station is tracked individually, noting that Stanislaus has two stations?

Mr. Chapa replied that yes they do track each station individually and he could provide that information at the next meeting.

Customer Service – San Joaquin up 4% for month of November. The overall score for December was 94% which is three points above goal. Mr. Chapa noted that the restroom cleanliness is what brings the scores down the most and said that a contract has been received and a second cleaner will start as soon as everything approved. He is currently working with the state's Marketing Branch on signs for restrooms with courtesy messages.

Los Angeles Member Hank Fung asked how Customer Service Survey responders are selected and if there is currently an incentive to filling out the survey.

Mr. Chapa said that when credit cards are used, the customers are sent a request to fill out a survey. The state is currently working on a new questionnaire. Hoping new customer service surveys will hopefully dig down and track better. Mr. Chapa answered that there is not currently an incentive in place.

Debbie Mullins, Caltrans said that by March they are hoping to have Division of Rail staff on trains, conducting on board surveys.

Mr. Chapa opened the floor for questions.

C. Amtrak Police Operations

Captain James Martino

Captain James Martino, Amtrak Police, started by informing the group that Amtrak Police are continuing to work with TSA, doing high visibility at stations throughout the entire system. They have been doing a lot of work between Hanford and Bakersfield in response to increased larceny and other crimes. The increased visibility is getting good customer response and positive comments.

Captain Martino explained a new program that has started in the East – Rail Safe to encourage local agencies to be more active in patrolling and protecting local transit stations. They are trying to get as many officers as they can to provide uniform presence at the stations to deter crime and create high visibility.

Operation Lifesaver will soon launch a community coalition to highlight rail safety issues that have been going on in Fresno. Fresno's Chief of Police, Executives, and school officials will be attending to lay out plan for rail safety issues. He also commented on the Merced SWAT training exercise. Captain Martino noted that there will be training in Oakland with TSA.

Mr. Snoddy asked if the TSA is going to get involved in rail?

Richard Sampson, member of the public asked where the Comet Cars are now and what is being done to them?

Mr. Hoyt stated that they have had minimal brake work done and have been moved to Beech Grove, Indiana, and Caltrans is currently in the process of identifying ongoing overhaul funding to rebuild the Comet Cars to put them in intercity service. Roughly \$20 million will be needed to overhaul the cars and rebuild them in a configuration that will meet the customers' expectations.

F. BNSF Railway Company

Committee Chair Pedrozo noted that BNSF was unable to attend due to weather. UP was not present either.

G. Amtrak California Marketing

Debbie Mullins

Debbie Mullins, Caltrans, gave an update that the Amtrak California website was moving along nicely. The website has a new language converter, ability to convert to 52 languages. Currently the marketing team is working on creating an application to be available on Smartphones. She shared that the 2011 Transit Transfer Passes have been printed and distributed and that they were printed on security paper. Amtrak California's Facebook page has been launched and had over 120,000 members in the six months since it started.

Ms. Mullins shared an equipment update that Cars are being updated with new Amtrak California logo. The spring campaign for the new creative will go up on billboards all over the state. Fresno will be the first launch. The new art will be making trains look sleek and clean, there are twenty four new tag lines. Merced will be coming soon.

H. Amtrak Thruway Bus/ Schedule Change

Rick Peterson

Rick Peterson, Amtrak, discussed the connectivity of train services. He has been working on two situations involving long distance trains connecting with the San Joaquin trains. The Coast Starlight and Union Pacific allowed a schedule change to do track work; Coast Starlight is now running two hours later both North and South bound. As a result, the South bound Coast Starlight is making connections in Martinez. The second situation he discussed is that there is currently no connection between the San Joaquin and the Sunset Limited.

Mr. Peterson shared that for the Spring/Summer Timetable, two stops would be added in the Palm Springs area. He also shared that a basic agreement has been made with Red Bluff to move the bus stop to the transit facility.

Member Mr. Fung asked if the April Service Change date had yet to be determined? Mr. Peterson said that the date will be May 9, 2011.

Item 7 - Member Comments and Suggestions for Future Agenda Items:

Committee Chair Pedrozo started the item by saying that he did not have any announcements. He handed the floor to Mr. Goldenberg to discuss future quarterly meetings.

Mr. Goldenberg pointed out that on the back of the agenda was a listing of dates for upcoming quarterly meetings. The dates have been adjusted to try to accommodate as many schedules as possible; five of the next seven meetings will be had on a fifth Thursday of the month. This will allow SJVRC meetings to have fewer conflicts with other board meetings. High Speed Rail will be invited to the next meeting; the Caltrans marketing agency will also be invited to present the new campaign for Amtrak California. It was noted that meeting with probably be in Fresno.

Committee member Machado, wanted to add a future agenda item. He reminded the Committee that in July there had been discussion of closing the gap in rail service between Bakersfield and Los Angeles. Mr. Lamas recalled that there had been discussion of drafting a letter between Caltrans and High Speed Rail. He wanted to know if the letter had been drafted and dispersed?

Mr. Goldenberg informed the Committee that the state cannot draft a letter due to conflict of interest but let the Committee know that they could. Mr. Goldenberg thought that a subcommittee should be formed to address these issues and report back to the board. He asked Mr. Lamas to take the lead for the subcommittee and let him know that he could receive help from Caltrans with the letter drafting. Mr. Lamas agreed that he would be happy to lead the subcommittee.

Committee member Machado, asked if these items could be added as an ongoing agenda item to keep the discussion alive. Committee Chair Pedro agreed that he would like to see it on future agendas.

Mr. Lamas wanted to clarify that it is a letter to the High Speed Rail Authority supporting closing the gap between Bakersfield and Los Angeles by providing passenger rail service. Mr. Goldenberg told the committee that Ms. Camacho can be contacted by parties interested in joining the subcommittee and they would let Mr. Lamas know of the interested parties.

It was asked if all handouts and informational items could be posted to the SJVRC website. Ms. Camacho and Mr. Goldenberg assured that all information would be posted to the website prior to the next meeting.

Item 8 – Adjournment (12:55 p.m.)

Committee Chair Pedrozo thanked the committee for returning to Merced and thanked Amtrak again for providing lunch.