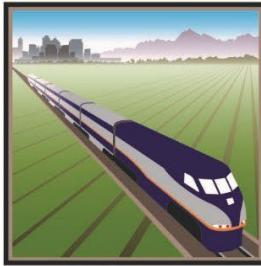


Supervisor **Doug Verboon**, Chair, Kings County
Supervisor **Diane Burgis**, Vice-Chair, Contra Costa County
Supervisor **Patrick Hume**, Vice-Chair, Sacramento County
Supervisor **Vito Chiesa**, Stanislaus County
Mayor **Christina Fugazi**, City of Stockton
Supervisor **Leticia Gonzalez**, Madera County
Supervisor **David Haubert**, Alameda County
Supervisor, **Josh Pedrozo**, Merced County
Supervisor **Amy Shuklian**, Tulare County
Mayor **Freddy Valdez**, City of Firebaugh



San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority

Alternate **Nancy Howze**, City of Hanford
Alternate **Aaron Meadows**, City of Oakley
Alternate **Bobbie Singh-Allen**, Sacramento County
Alternate **George Carr**, City of Hughson
Alternate **Leo Zuber**, City of Ripon
Alternate **Jose Rodriguez**, City of Madera
Alternate **Melissa Hernandez**, Alameda County
Alternate **Matt Serrato**, City of Merced
Alternate **Eddie Valero**, Tulare County
Alternate **Rey León**, City of Huron

SAN JOAQUIN JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY BOARD MEETING

Friday, January 23, 2026 – 10:00 am

Robert J. Cabral Station
Board Room
949 E. Channel Street
Stockton, CA 95202

Teleconference Locations

2222 M Street 3 rd Floor Merced, CA 95340	200 W 4 th Street Government Center Madera, CA 93637	1400 W Lacey Boulevard Board Chambers Hanford, CA 93230
700 H Street Sacramento, CA 95814	3361 Walnut Boulevard Suite 140 Brentwood, CA 94513	2800 W Burrel Avenue Visalia, CA 93291

Members of the public may attend the meeting at the above addresses, or may observe the meeting by using the link or dial-in information below:

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82522454870>
Or Telephone: +1 669 444 9171 US

Persons wishing to address the Authority on any item of interest to the public regarding SJJPA and the Gold Runner Rail Service shall state their names and address and make their presentation. The Authority cannot take action on matters not on the agenda unless the action is authorized by Section 54954.2 of the Government Code. If a member of the public wishes to make a public comment:

1. **Submit written comments to SJJPA staff via email at clerk@sjrrc.com, in which staff will read the comment aloud during the public comment period.**
2. **Complete a Request to Speak form (available at the entrance to the meeting room) and give it to the SJJPA Board Clerk before the Item is considered by the Board.**
3. **Join from the Zoom meeting link and notify staff by alerting them via the “Raise hand” or “Chat” function; call [+1 669 444 9171](tel:+16694449171), dial *9 to raise your hand when you wish to speak, and dial *6 to unmute when you are requested to speak. Please note that if participating using Zoom, all members of the public will be placed on mute until such times allow for public comments to be made.**

MEMBER AGENCIES

Alameda County - Contra Costa County Transportation Authority - Fresno Council of Governments - Kings County Association of Governments - Madera County Transportation Commission
Merced County Association of Governments - Sacramento Regional Transit - San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission - Stanislaus Council of Governments - Tulare County Association of Governments

Public comments should be limited to three (3) minutes per comment.

This Agenda shall be made available upon request in alternative formats to persons with a disability, as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. § 12132) and the Ralph M. Brown Act (California Government Code § 54954.2). Persons requesting a disability-related modification or accommodation in order to participate in the meeting should contact San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission staff, at 209-944-6220, during regular business hours, at least twenty-four hours prior to the time of the meeting.

All proceedings before the Authority are conducted in English. Any writings or documents provided to a majority of the Authority regarding any item on this agenda will be made available for public inspection at the offices of the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission located at 949 E. Channel Street, Stockton, California, 95202 during normal business hours or by calling (209) 944-6220. The Agenda and meeting materials are also available on the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority Website: <http://www.sjjpa.com/Home>.

Disclosures: Directors shall disclose any agenda item in which they have a conflict of interest under State law and acknowledge whether they will recuse from hearing that item. Among other State laws, the Levine Act (Gov. C. §84308) may require recusal on agenda items involving a contract or entitlement before the Authority where a campaign donor is a participant, and the campaign contribution totals more than \$250 within the 12-month period before the decision on the item.

1. Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Verboon

2. Roll Call

3. Public Comment

Persons wishing to address the Authority on any item of interest to the public regarding SJJPA and the San Joaquin Rail Service shall state their names and address and make their presentation. The Authority cannot take action on matters not on the agenda unless the action is authorized by Section 54954.2 of the Government Code. Materials related to an item on the Agenda submitted to the Board of Directors after distribution of the agenda packet are available for public inspection in the Commission Office at 949 E. Channel Street during normal business hours. These documents are also available on the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority website at <https://sjjpa.com/events/> subject to staff's ability to post the documents prior to the meeting. Public comments should be limited to three (3) minutes per comment.

4. Consent Calendar

- 4.1 Approve Minutes of November 21, 2025 Board Meeting
- 4.2 Operating Expense Report
- 4.3 Washington Update

**ACTION
INFORMATION
INFORMATION**

5. San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority 2026 Annual Business Plan Preview

Presented by: Momoko Tamaoki (Deputy Director of Planning, Grants, and Programming)

INFORMATION

6. On-Time Performance and Gold Runner Service Update <i>Presented by: Nathan Alastra (Operations Superintendent) and Jordan Reynoldson (Chief Mechanical Officer)</i>	INFORMATION
7. Board Member Comments	
8. Chief Executive Officer's Report <i>Chris Orlando</i>	
9. Adjournment The next regular meeting is scheduled for March 20, 2026 – 10:00 am	

SAN JOAQUIN JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY
Meeting of January 23, 2026

Item 4.1	ACTION
Minutes of San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority November 21, 2025 Board Meeting	
The regular meeting of the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority (Authority) was held at 10:00 am on November 21, 2025, in the Council Chambers of the City of Antioch, 200 H Street, Antioch, CA. Board Members attended this meeting in person and via videoconference.	
1. Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance	Chair Verboon
Chair Verboon called the meeting to order at 10:01 am and led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.	
2. Safety Briefing	City of Antioch
Nitesh Singh, Antioch Risk and Safety Manager, provided a safety briefing.	
3. Roll Call	
Directors Present: Chiesa, Fugazi, Gonzalez, Shuklian, Alternate Singh-Allen, Vice-Chair Burgis, Chair Verboon	
Directors Absent: Haubert, Pedrozo, Valdez	
4. Public Comment	
Curt Thomas, a member of the public, provided suggestions to the Gold Runner travel schedule(s) to improve service for commuters.	
Faramarz, a member of the public, suggested a Thruway bus stop at Burbank Airport with the reintroduction of the 7 th roundtrip.	
5. Consent Calendar	
5.1 Approve Minutes of September 19, 2025 Board Meeting	ACTION
5.2 Approve 2026 Meeting Calendar	ACTION
5.3 Adopt a Resolution Authorizing the Governing Board to Execute FFY 2026 Gold Runner Intercity Passenger Rail Service Operating Agreement with Amtrak for the Operating Year October 1, 2025 through September 30, 2026 and Authorizing the Interim Executive Director, or Designee, to Negotiate, Award, and Execute Any and All Amendments and Documents	ACTION
5.4 Operating Expense Report	INFORMATION
5.5 Capital Programs Expense Report	INFORMATION
5.6 Washington Update	INFORMATION

There were no comments on this item.

Director Pedrozo joined the meeting at 10:08 am.

M/S/C (Burgis/Chiesa) to approve Item 5.1-5.6 of the Consent Calendar.

Passed and Adopted by the Authority Board on November 21, 2025, by the following vote to wit:

AYES:	7	Chiesa, Fugazi, Gonzalez, Shuklian, Alternate Singh-Allen, Vice-Chair Burgis, Chair Verboon
NOES:	0	
ABSTAIN:	1	Pedrozo
ABSENT:	2	Haubert, Valdez

6. Ad Hoc Antioch Station Working Group Update and City of Antioch Presentation re Antioch Station INFORMATION

Tamika Smith, Director of Rail Services; Bessie-Marie Scott, Antioch City Manager; and Carlos Zepeda, Antioch Assistant Deputy Director, gave a presentation on this item.

Vice-Chair Burgis asked if there have been any additional concerns or incidents occurring at the station recently.

Ms. Smith stated six (6) statements have been submitted by Amtrak's SMART Union members, five referencing fare evaders and one describing a crime that took place at the station in which the Antioch Police Department was dispatched. Ms. Smith also described an incident involving a fare evader that occurred on November 10, which caused a 40-minute delay.

Vice-Chair Burgis asked if the added security and police presence had made a difference with the safety and security concerns.

Ms. Scott and Mr. Zepeda agreed that criminal activity is swiftly addressed with the addition of increased security and new fencing.

Director Chiesa and Chair Verboon thanked the members of the Antioch Station Working Group (Working Group) for their collaboration.

Eddie Gums, a member of the Working Group and member of the public, expressed his gratitude for being involved with the Working Group and shared his hope for the station to remain in Antioch.

7. Adopt a Resolution Approving Amendment 04 to the Agreement with BNSF Railway (BNSF) for Construction of Metal Security Fencing Increasing the Amount by \$527,682 for a New Amount Not-To-Exceed \$2,416,682 and Authorizing the Interim Executive Director to Negotiate, Award, and Execute Any and All Agreements and Documents Related to the Project including Approving Any and All Amendments thereto within Their Spending Authority ACTION

Cameron Paler, Safety and Security Specialist, and Autumn Gowan, Procurement and Contracts Manager, gave a presentation on this item.

Mr. Thomas, a member of the public, asked for clarification on how many incidents occurred in the areas mentioned in the presentation that impacted passenger service.

Chair Verboon stated that information will be shared by staff at a later date.

M/S/C (Fugazi/Chiesa) to approve Amendment 04 to the Agreement with BNSF Railway (BNSF) for Construction of Metal Security Fencing Increasing the Amount by \$527,682 for a New Amount Not-To-Exceed \$2,416,682 and Authorizing the Interim Executive Director to Negotiate, Award, and Execute Any and All Agreements and Documents Related to the Project including Approving Any and All Amendments thereto within Their Spending Authority.

Passed and Adopted by the Authority Board on November 21, 2025, by the following vote to wit:

AYES: 8 Chiesa, Fugazi, Gonzalez, Shuklian, Pedrozo, Alternate Singh-Allen, Vice-Chair Burgis, Chair Verboon
NOES: 0
ABSTAIN: 0
ABSENT: 2 Haubert, Valdez

8. **Adopt a Resolution Approving an Agreement with Jacobs Engineering Group for the San Joaquin Valley Network Integration and Transit-Oriented Development Plan for an Amount Not-to-Exceed \$599,722 and Authorizing the Interim Executive Director, or Designee, to Negotiate, Award, and Execute Any and All Agreements and Documents Related to the Project, Including Approving Any and All Amendments thereto within Their Spending Authority**

ACTION

Momo Tamaoki, Deputy Director of Planning, Grants, and Programming, and Ms. Gowan gave a presentation on this item.

There were no comments on this item.

M/S/C (Burgis/Gonzalez) to approve an Agreement with Jacobs Engineering Group for the San Joaquin Valley Network Integration and Transit-Oriented Development Plan for an Amount Not-to-Exceed \$599,722 and Authorizing the Interim Executive Director, or Designee, to Negotiate, Award, and Execute Any and All Agreements and Documents Related to the Project, Including Approving Any and All Amendments thereto within Their Spending Authority.

Passed and Adopted by the Authority Board on November 21, 2025, by the following vote to wit:

AYES: 8 Chiesa, Fugazi, Gonzalez, Shuklian, Pedrozo, Alternate Singh-Allen, Vice-Chair Burgis, Chair Verboon

NOES: 0

ABSTAIN: 0

ABSENT: 2 Haubert, Valdez

9. Gold Runner Service Food and Beverage Program Update

INFORMATION

Marques Cook, Interim Senior Marketing Manager, gave a presentation on this item.

Vice-Chair Burgis commended staff for their creativity and problem-solving skills.

Mr. Thomas, a member of the public, asked why the costs from Amtrak increased so much over the past few years and commented on the limited healthy food options onboard.

Vice-Chair Burgis asked if the Authority was making an effort to bring in healthier foods.

Mr. Cook explained that the Authority staff aims towards locally sourced products and look for as many alternatives as possible.

David Lipari, Interim Executive Director, described the challenges in providing healthier food options due to their quick expiration dates.

Faramarz, a member of the public, echoed Mr. Thomas and Vice-Chair Burgis' comments and suggested dairy-free options should also be considered.

Written comments were received, and an emailed comment is attached at the end of these meeting minutes.

This was an information item only.

10. Adopt a Resolution Allowing for an Agreement with Compass Group USA, Inc. dba Canteen for an Amount Not-To-Exceed \$3,100,000 to extend the Food and Beverage Program Pilot for the Gold Runner Intercity Passenger Rail Service from January 1, 2026 to December 31, 2026, and Authorizing the Interim Executive Director, or Designee, to Negotiate, Award, and Execute Any and All Agreements and Documents Related to the Project Including Any and All Amendments thereto within Their Spending Authority

INFORMATION

Mr. Cook and Ms. Gowan gave a presentation on this item.

Alternate Singh-Allen left the meeting at 10:45 am.

Mr. Lipari informed the Authority Board that staff is pioneering this proposed alternative food service plan and working through questions and concerns as they arise.

Vice-Chair Burgis thanked Mr. Lipari for the additional background information provided on this item.

Director Fugazi suggested partnerships with food trucks at stations.

There were no public comments on this item.

M/S/C (Burgis/Shuklian) to Allowing for an Agreement with Compass Group USA, Inc. dba Canteen for an Amount Not-To-Exceed \$3,100,000 to extend the Food and Beverage Program Pilot for the Gold Runner Intercity Passenger Rail Service from January 1, 2026 to December 31, 2026, and Authorizing the Interim Executive Director, or Designee, to Negotiate, Award, and Execute Any and All Agreements and Documents Related to the Project Including Any and All Amendments thereto within Their Spending Authority.

Passed and Adopted by the Authority Board on November 21, 2025, by the following vote to wit:

AYES: 7 Chiesa, Fugazi, Gonzalez, Shuklian, Pedrozo, Valdez, Vice-Chair Burgis, Chair Verboon
NOES: 0
ABSTAIN: 0
ABSENT: 3 Haubert, Valdez, Alternate Singh-Allen

11. Discussion and Direction to Staff regarding Fleet Modernization

DISCUSSION/ACTION

Brian Schmidt, Director of Equipment Services, gave a presentation on this item.

Burgis asked for clarification if contractors are specialized for fleet modernization tasks.

Mr. Schmidt confirmed that some contractors are specialized for certain tasks (e.g. brake systems) and others are bid out and generalized (e.g. flooring).

The Board of Directors unanimously directed staff to proceed with engaging in the detailed planning and contracting work associated with the Maintenance and Modernization Project as discussed.

12. Quarterly On-Time Performance and Gold Runner Service Update INFORMATION

Mr. Cook and Nathan Alastra, Operations Superintendent, gave a presentation on this item.

Chair Verboon shared his sentiments with On-Time Performance being affected due to work performed on the tracks.

Faramarz, a member of the public, expressed thanks for bringing back the 7th roundtrip and suggested specific connections to support commuter trips.

This was an information item only.

13. San Joaquin Rebranding Update INFORMATION

Mariah Bryant, Senior Marketing Coordinator, gave a presentation on this item.

Chair Verboon thanked the Board for allowing him to serve as Chairman during these adventures.

There were no public comments on this item.

This was an information item only.

14. Partnership Updates – Allensworth and Castle Air Museum INFORMATION

Rene Gutierrez, Senior Regional Initiatives Coordinator, gave a presentation on this item.

Vice-Chair Burgis suggested staff reach out to the Delta Protection Commission to promote additional partnerships.

Written comments from 'StrongTown Merced' expressed enthusiasm for the recent partnerships.

This was an information item only.

15. Board Member Comments

Chair Verboon shared his experience at the Gold Runner Rebranding Launch event.

16. Interim Executive Director's Report

Mr. Lipari asked staff to introduce the agency's new Onboard Experience Manager, Marissa Cabusas.

17. Adjournment

Chair Verboon adjourned the meeting at 11:54 am.

The next San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority regular meeting is scheduled for: January 23, 2026 – 10:00 am.

From: [REDACTED]
To: Clerk SJRRC
Subject: Comments for November 21 Board Meeting
Date: Friday, November 21, 2025 6:40:20 AM

[You don't often get email [REDACTED] why this is important at
<https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

[The e-mail below is from an external source. Please do not open attachments or click links from an unknown or suspicious origin.]

November 21, 2025

My name is Stan Wilson, [REDACTED]

On my recent trips on the "Gold Runner", nee "San Joaquin" I found the current food service totally unacceptable. Hot sodas and packaged chips of various spicy flavorings, along with cookies is junk food at its best.

Train 713 had these treats laid out neatly in the luggage racks, while Train 710, had stacks of boxes in the deserted cafe car, which passengers needed to rip open to obtain their bag of chips. Perhaps the younger generation appreciates the complimentary service,

And perhaps it suffices for a short trip, but certainly not for a six hour trip with connections to the thruway bus service. The much aligned vending machine service offered in the late 1960's by the Santa Fe's "Golden Gate" and the Southern Pacific's "San Joaquin Daylight"

was far superior to what you are offering today. At least they had hot coffee, cold drinks, and hot and cold sandwiches.along with fruit, and other more healthy entrees. When Amtrak began the San Joaquin service, patrons looked forward to the much improved cafe service.

With the introduction of the bi-level cars, the cafe cars offered tray meals, and a trip on the San Joaquin became delightful. Sadly that didn't last long, but a reduced menu continued. You are making a huge investment in "rebranding" the service. With rebranding comes the

perception that a new and better service is being offered. Your rebranding investment may have been better spent in maintaining an acceptable food service. I will still ride Amtrak, but am advising riders to return to the 19th century practice of brown bagging it.

I understand there is a proposal for a food food truck at Bakersfield, which can be compared to the food vendors that occupy station platforms in third world countries. I certainly hope that the present state of food service will be short lived.

San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority
Operating Expense Report
OCTOBER 2025
33% of Budget Year Elapsed

OPERATING EXPENSES	SJJPA	EXPENSE	YTD
	FY 25/26	THRU	PERCENT
	ALLOCATION	OCT 2025	EXPENDED
Administrative Expenses			
Salaries/Benefits/Contract Help	4,620,670	1,020,070	22%
Office Expense	21,010	2,675	13%
Subscriptions/Periodicals/Memberships	13,800	1,073	8%
Office Equipment Lease	20,000	2,701	14%
Computer Systems	5,460	-	0%
Communications	4,200	671	16%
Motor Pool	20,953	5,869	28%
Transportation/Travel	42,800	10,984	26%
Training	9,917	988	10%
Audits Regulatory Reporting	47,580	10,375	22%
Professional Services Legislative	270,400	73,344	26%
Professional Services Legal	167,280	22,223	13%
Professional Services General	690,650	432,973	63%
Professional Services Grants	254,800	103,280	41%
Publications/Legal Notices	12,500	188	2%
Professional Services Operations	-	-	0%
Communications, Operations	15,105	6,628	44%
Maintenance of Headquarters Structures/Grounds	221,424	52,356	24%
Insurance	170,432	78,458	46%
Insurance Management Fees	10,000	2,333	23%
Security Services/Safety Program	121,066	28,435	23%
Administrative Expenses Subtotal	6,740,047	1,855,624	28%
Marketing Expense			
Marketing & Outreach	1,850,000	757,388	40%
Marketing Expenses Subtotal	1,850,000	757,388	40%
Contract Expense			
San Joaquin Intercity Rail Operations (All Contracts)	100,651,051	11,330,551	11%
Contract Expense Subtotal	100,651,051	11,330,551	11%
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	109,241,098	13,943,563	13%

TG | &A



SAN JOAQUIN
REGIONAL
RAIL COMMISSION

PREPARED BY TAI GINSBERG &
ASSOCIATES, LLC

DEC
2025



MONTHLY REPORT

LATEST LEGISLATIVE &
REGULATORY UPDATES

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Surface Transportation Reauthorization	2
Appropriations Update	3
Legislative Updates	4
Notable December Hearings & Markups	7
USDOT Updates	10
Union Pacific & Norfolk Southern Merger	15

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DECEMBER PRIORITIES

There was not a dull moment in Congress this December. The Senate advanced more than 97 key Trump Administration nominees, including Jared Isaacman for NASA Administrator, while the House successfully passed permitting reform aimed at limiting states' ability to block energy projects on water quality grounds and streamlining federal approvals for artificial intelligence projects. Congress also moved swiftly on defense policy, advancing the FY26 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) through both chambers and into law on December 18.

Federal agencies were equally active with the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) releasing a new proposed rule updating corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) standards, announcing a \$1.5 billion Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), and approving a five-year waiver allowing expanded use of automated track inspection. USDOT also rescinded Biden-era airline fines and continued its audit of states' practices related to non-domiciled Commercial Driver's Licenses.

LOOKING FORWARD

The second session of the 119th Congress will officially convene on January 3, 2026, and will focus heavily on appropriations throughout January. The federal government is currently operating under a Continuing Resolution (CR) that was signed in November to end a 43-day shutdown. Most federal agencies are only funded through January 30, 2026. Three bills (VA/MilCon, Agriculture, and Legislative Branch) have already been signed into law for the full fiscal year. The remaining nine bills, including the transportation funding bill, must be resolved by the end of January.

Health care policy is also expected to be considered next year. On December 17, the House passed a health care bill that does not address the extension of expiring Affordable Care Act tax credits. However, a House Democratic discharge petition has secured the necessary signature threshold to force a vote in January on legislation extending those tax credits through 2028. Several health care tax credit reform proposals did not advance in the Senate earlier in December.

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION REAUTHORIZATION

OVERVIEW

Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee Chair Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) - whose committee has jurisdiction over the highway title - has indicated plans to release a draft surface transportation reauthorization bill by early March 2026 and to hold a markup later that month. House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee Chair Sam Graves (R-MO) has said the House plans to mark up its companion legislation in the “very first part of next year.”

A key issue in the reauthorization debate is how to address the Highway Trust Fund’s ongoing shortfall, set to expire in September 2026. Chair Graves has stated that a vehicle miles traveled (VMT) fee will not be included in the next surface transportation bill. Instead, several alternative approaches have been discussed, including a proposal that would replace the federal gas tax with a user fee based on vehicle weight.

Chair Graves, who previously proposed an annual fee aimed at electric vehicles and hybrids that did not advance, has not publicly identified a specific proposal he intends to support in the upcoming package. House T&I Ranking Member Rick Larsen (D-WA) has also not outlined a preferred approach. Jurisdiction over a VMT fee rests with the House Ways and Means Committee, which has not taken any action on the issue.



*Sen. Shelley Moore Capito
Senate EPW, 11/19/25*

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Industry stakeholders are also engaging more actively in the surface reauthorization process. On December 4, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and more than 20 national organizations, including industry trade associations and labor unions, launched the “Move America Coalition”, an alliance focused on securing timely reauthorization of federal surface transportation programs and supporting long-term investment in America’s infrastructure.

The Coalition has called for funding levels in line with the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) of 2021, as well as efforts to stabilize the Highway Trust Fund and modernize permitting processes as part of the reauthorization bill.



View the full list of Move America Coalition members [here](#).

APPROPRIATIONS UPDATE

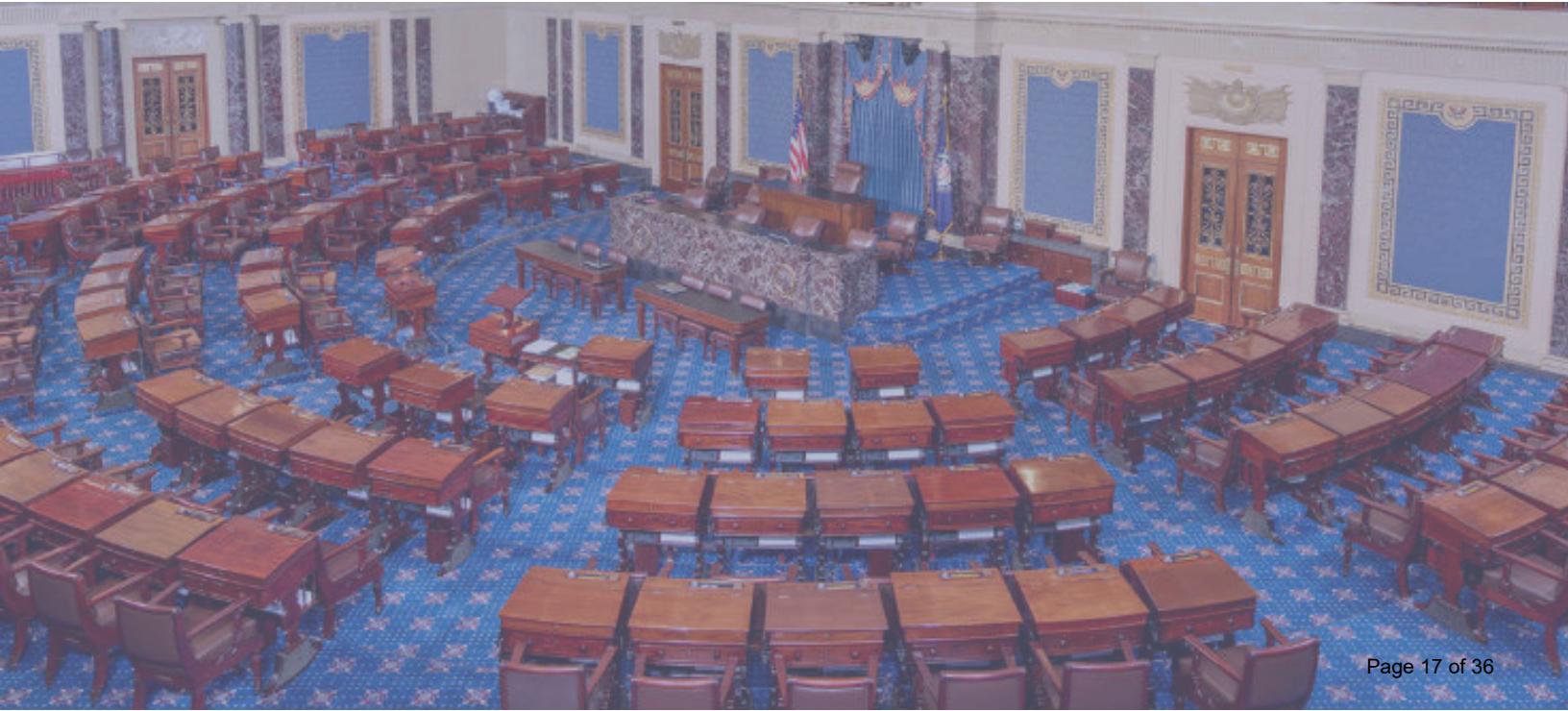
OVERVIEW

After several weeks of negotiations, Senate leadership did not move forward with a government funding package before adjourning for the holidays. As a result, consideration of the legislation has been deferred to early next year — when lawmakers will have a limited window to act ahead of the January 30, 2026, deadline to avoid a partial government shutdown.

SENATE MINIBUS PACKAGE

Throughout much of December, the Senate focused on an FY26 “minibus” package consisting of five appropriations bills: Labor-HHS-Education, Defense, Interior-Environment, Transportation-HUD, and Commerce-Justice-Science. As Congress prepared to adjourn, the package appeared positioned for floor consideration. However, Democratic Senators Michael Bennet and John Hickenlooper of Colorado indicated they would delay advancement of the legislation following a decision by White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Director Russell Vought regarding the National Center for Atmospheric Research. Other senators also raised objections to moving forward. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) said he and Majority Leader John Thune (R-SD) are aligned on advancing funding legislation next month.

Even if the Senate advances the package, additional negotiations will be required. The legislation reflects Senate-only negotiations, and bicameral discussions will not begin until top House Republican appropriators reach a separate agreement on overall spending levels.



LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

PERMITTING REFORM

HR 3898, PERMIT ACT

On December 11, the U.S. House of Representatives passed [H.R. 3898](#), the Promoting Efficient Review for Modern Infrastructure Today (PERMIT) Act, by a vote of 221-205. The bill was sponsored by Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee Chair Mike Collins (R-GA), with T&I Committee Chair Sam Graves (R-MO) as an original cosponsor.

The PERMIT Act would revise the scope of Clean Water Act protections for ephemeral streams and limit states' authority to block certain energy projects based on water quality considerations. It would also establish strict timelines for legal challenges to permits authorizing impacts to wetlands and narrow the ability of individuals, municipalities, and advocacy organizations to bring lawsuits related to unauthorized water pollution discharges. In addition, the legislation would codify the Army Corps of Engineers' use of streamlined nationwide permits for oil and gas pipelines and restrict the Environmental Protection Agency's ability to overturn wetlands permits issued by the Army Corps.

Most Democrats voted against the bill, though Representatives Sanford Bishop (D-GA), Jim Costa (D-CA), Henry Cuellar (D-TX), Don Davis (D-NC), Adam Gray (D-CA), and Marie Gluesenkamp Perez (D-WA) voted in favor. Representative Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA) was the only Republican to vote against the measure. The bill now heads to the Senate for consideration.

HR 4776, SPEED ACT

On December 18, the House passed [H.R. 4776](#), the Standardizing Permitting and Expediting Economic Development (SPEED) Act, a bipartisan legislation sponsored by House Natural Resources Committee Chair Bruce Westerman (R-AR).

The bill would streamline federal permitting processes for infrastructure projects related to artificial intelligence projects. The SPEED Act has support from several major technology companies such as OpenAI, Microsoft, and Micron. The bill cleared the House by a 221-196 vote and now advances to the Senate for review.



Rep. Mike Collins; AP, 1/9/25



Rep. Bruce Westerman; Politico, 4/18/23

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

AVIATION

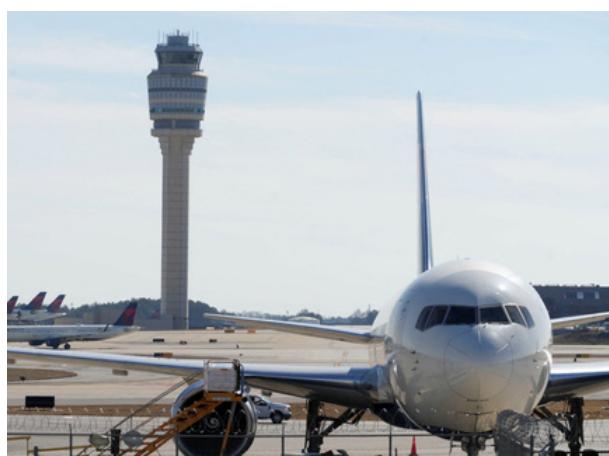
AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS

On December 3, Senate Aviation Subcommittee Ranking Member Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) sent a letter to USDOT Secretary Duffy urging the department to expand its \$10,000 bonus to include all air traffic controllers and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) technicians who worked without pay during the government shutdown. USDOT has stated that the bonuses will be limited to employees who did not miss any workdays during the 44-day shutdown.

In the letter, Senator Duckworth argued that many federal employees took authorized leave for legitimate reasons while continuing to work without pay and should not be excluded from the bonus due to circumstances such as illness or family emergencies.



[View the full letter here.](#)



Reuters, 2/1/25

On December 18, the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee approved the bipartisan [H.R. 6086](#), the Aviation Funding Solvency Act, during a markup by voice vote. The bill, introduced by T&I Committee Chair Sam Graves (R-MO) and Ranking Member Rick Larsen (D-WA), would allow the FAA to continue paying air traffic controllers during future government shutdowns. The legislation will now proceed to the House floor for consideration.

ADVANCED AIR MOBILITY (AAM) NATIONAL STRATEGY

On December 17, USDOT Secretary Duffy announced the first-ever [USDOT Advanced Air Mobility \(AAM\) National Strategy](#). The Strategy is organized around six key pillars - Airspace, Infrastructure, Security, Community Planning and Engagement, Workforce, and Automation - intended to support the development of a national AAM system. The Strategy sets forth 40 recommendations aimed at establishing a resilient foundation for national policy and operations in the sector.

To implement the Strategy, USDOT released a corresponding plan that outlines high-level implementation action items across four distinct strategic action phases, collectively referred to as LIFT. These phases focus on advancing research, engaging stakeholders, developing policy, and deploying technical solutions to support the safe, secure, and coordinated introduction of AAM technologies.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

AVIATION

NDAA HELICOPTER PROVISION

The House-passed National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) included a provision (Section 373) that would expand the circumstances under which military helicopters can operate in Washington, D.C., airspace without broadcasting their location.

National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) Chair Jennifer Homendy stated that the Board “vehemently opposes” Section 373, arguing that it provides the military “unfettered access” to Washington, D.C. airspace and allows training missions in the area. Homendy noted that the provision reverses safety measures implemented after the January 29, 2025, collision between an American Airlines flight and an Army helicopter near Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, a crash that resulted in 67 fatalities. Investigators found that helicopter pilots had difficulty hearing dispatches from National Airport’s traffic control. The NTSB investigation is ongoing.

Senate Commerce Chair Ted Cruz (R-TX) and Ranking Member Maria Cantwell (D-WA) sought to remove the language from the NDAA but were unsuccessful. Instead, the Senate passed an amended version of the bipartisan S. 2503, the Rotorcraft Operations Transparency and Oversight Reform (ROTOR) Act via unanimous consent.

The ROTOR Act would eliminate Section 373 and limit the Army’s ability to disable ADS-B Out on helicopters nationwide. Pentagon spokesperson Sean Parnell stated that the U.S. Department of Defense supports the legislation and “looks forward to continuing the productive dialogue” with Senator Cruz’s committee to finalize the bill. On the Senate floor, Chair Cruz said the ROTOR Act has the “explicit backing” of the White House.

The legislation must still be considered by the House. House T&I Committee Chair Graves (R-MO) has indicated that he would like to see changes to the bill.



US Air Force, 3/25/24

NOTABLE DECEMBER HEARINGS & MARKUPS

DECEMBER 3 - SENATE COMMERCE COMMITTEE NOMINATIONS HEARING

Considered:

- Jared Isaacman to serve as Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA); and
- Steven Haines to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Industry and Analysis.



Jared Isaacman; Reuters 12/3/25

In his opening remarks, Isaacman stated that Transportation Secretary and interim NASA Administrator Sean Duffy had submitted a letter of endorsement to Senate Commerce Members. Isaacman did not provide details on the letter's contents but said Duffy emphasized the importance of permanent leadership at NASA ahead of the Artemis II mission scheduled for next year.

During the hearing, Senator Ed Markey (D-MA) questioned Isaacman about whether Elon Musk was present when President Trump offered him the NASA Administrator role. Isaacman declined to answer directly, stating that multiple individuals were entering and leaving the room at the time, and added, "I don't think it's fair to bring any of them into this matter." Isaacman was asked a similar question during his first confirmation hearing earlier this year.

DECEMBER 3 - HOUSE T&I COMMITTEE, AVIATION SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING: "AMERICA BUILDS: THE STATE OF THE ADVANCED AIR MOBILITY (AAM) INDUSTRY"

Aviation Subcommittee Chair Troy Nehls (R-TX) underscored the importance of modernizing the National Airspace System (NAS) and highlighted developments in electric vertical takeoff and landing (e-VTOL) aircraft, commonly referred to as Advanced Air Mobility. Nehls pointed to the e-VTOL Integration Pilot Program (eIPP) as an example of ongoing efforts and emphasized the need for continued innovation and congressional funding to support emerging aviation technologies.

Witness Kyle Clark, founder and CEO of aerospace company Beta Technologies, testified that the eIPP program would play a key role in advancing domestic AAM deployment, noting increased international competition in the sector. Clark stated that the pilot program could enable initial domestic operations as early as this summer.

NOTABLE DECEMBER HEARINGS & MARKUPS

DECEMBER 8 - SENATE COMMERCE COMMITTEE EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Committee voted on the following nominations:

- Jared Isaacman to serve as Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) (18-10);
- Admiral Kevin E. Lunday to be Commandant of the United States Coast Guard (23-5);
- Ryan McCormack to serve as Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy (18-10); and
- Michael Graham to be a Member of the National Transportation Safety Board (19-9).

The Committee did not consider - as previously scheduled - the nominations of Steven Haines to serve as Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Industry and Analysis; John DeLeeuw to serve as a Member of the National Transportation Safety Board; Robert Harvey to be a Federal Maritime Commissioner; or Richard Kloster to be a Member of the Surface Transportation Board, citing committee attendance issues. These nominations are expected to be taken up at a future session.

DECEMBER 16 - HOUSE T&I COMMITTEE, AVIATION SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING: "THE STATE OF AMERICAN AVIATION"

During the hearing, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Administrator Bedford stated that the USDOT will have committed more than \$6 billion by the end of the year toward telecommunications infrastructure and new radar surveillance systems.

Bedford also said the FAA was not consulted in advance on the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) provision related to military helicopter operations. In response to a question from Representative Tim Burchett (R-TN), Bedford indicated that there are currently no plans to change the two-pilot minimum crew requirement.



FAA Administrator Bryan Bedford
Getty Images, 12/16/25

NOTABLE DECEMBER HEARINGS & MARKUPS

DECEMBER 17 - SENATE COMMERCE COMMITTEE, AVIATION SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING: “FAA’S PLAN FOR ATC MODERNIZATION: EVALUATING PROGRESS, ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESULTS”

During the hearing, FAA Administrator Bedford provided additional information on the impact of the recent government shutdown on air traffic controller training. Bedford stated that while USDOT was able to keep the FAA Academy in Oklahoma City operational during the shutdown, the agency lost several hundred air traffic controller trainees.

Senators also questioned Bedford regarding the timing of his divestment from stock holdings in Republic Airways, the regional airline that he led prior to joining the Trump Administration. Senators Ed Markey (D-MA) and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) voiced their concerns. Bedford responded that his shares have been “terminated” and are pending resissuance under a new organizational structure, after which they will be transferred to his broker for sale.

DECEMBER 17 - HOUSE T&I COMMITTEE, WATER RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING: “WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2026: STAKEHOLDER PRIORITIES”

During the hearing, committee Democrats expressed concerns regarding a Trump Administration policy affecting communications between the Army Corps of Engineers and Congress, stating that it could complicate development of the Water Resources Development Act of 2026.

Since October, the Department of Defense has required officials to obtain approval from its legislative affairs office before communicating with members of Congress, congressional staff, and state elected officials. The policy applies to the Army Corps of Engineers, which is responsible for the construction, operation, and maintenance of dams, levees, navigation channels, and environmental restoration projects.

USDOT UPDATES



AMTRAK BONUSES

On December 11, President Trump and Transportation Secretary Duffy announced an agreement between USDOT and Amtrak's management and board of directors to provide \$900 bonuses to more than 18,000 Amtrak rail workers, marking the company's record year for ridership and revenue. Under the agreement, Amtrak executives will forgo 50 percent of the bonuses they would have received under their existing bonus structure. The board has also eliminated long-term bonuses for senior executives and redirected those funds to union workers. Leaders of the two largest rail unions, SMART-TD and Transport Workers Union, applauded the decision.

Amtrak's executive bonus structure has been a longstanding point of controversy. In FY23, thirteen top executives received a total of \$2.98 million in bonuses. The bonus structure has also been the subject of congressional hearings, as well as legislation that would require full disclosure of bonus payments and the criteria used for those bonuses.

AUTOMATED TRACK INSPECTION WAIVER

On December 5, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) approved a five-year waiver allowing expanded use of automated track inspection (ATI) technology. The waiver comes after a long period during which the FRA had not acted on requests regarding the technology.

Waivers will be granted subject to a dozen conditions, including:

- Providing 30 days' advance notice;
- Identifying subdivisions to be included, which cannot be changed for one year;
- Conducting automated inspection of all main tracks and sidings in those subdivisions at least once a month;
- Reducing visual inspections from twice to once weekly;
- Submitting monthly and annual reports on testing results; and
- Reporting within 24 hours any derailment for tracks covered by the waiver.

Transportation Secretary Duffy said the waiver "will allow U.S. railroads to complement visual track inspections with innovative technology that will identify issues on our rail [network] before they become a serious safety threat for rail passengers and crew." The Association of American Railroads (AAR), which requested the waiver in an April 24, 2025, petition, supports the change. However, in a statement by Jared Cassity, SMART-TD's National Safety and Legislative Director, he stated the waiver "does nothing to improve safety."

USDOT UPDATES

RAIL

BUILD GRANT NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

On December 15, Transportation Secretary Duffy announced a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) through Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grants for FY2026, making \$1.5 billion available for infrastructure projects across the country. The program's goal is to identify transportation projects with the potential for significant local or regional impact, including highway, rail, port, and truck parking projects.

BUILD grants are awarded on a competitive basis for planning or constructing surface transportation infrastructure projects that improve safety; quality of life; mobility and community connectivity; economic competitiveness and opportunity, including tourism; state of good repair; partnership and collaboration; and innovation.

Projects will be prioritized that enhance safety measures, expand transportation options for American families, and:

- Beautify transportation infrastructure with context-appropriate design that enhances user experience while maintaining safety and operational efficiency;
- Improve roadway capacity and make transportation more affordable;
- Enhance the travel experience for families through dedicated facilities for mothers, accessibility for those with disabilities, intuitive design elements, clear signage, intuitive layouts, and predictable operations for caregivers;
- Facilitate tourism;
- Support U.S. energy dominance.



See the NOFO [here](#)

Applications are due February 24, 2026.



USDOT UPDATES HIGHWAY

NHSTA PROPOSED RULEMAKING: FUEL EFFICIENCY STANDARDS

On December 3, President Trump announced a National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) proposed rule titled "Freedom Means Affordable Cars," which updates corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) standards. CAFE standards require that the entire fleet of vehicles sold by a given automaker, on average, become more fuel-efficient over time. Automakers that do not meet the standards have previously been required to pay hefty fines or purchase credits from companies that over-perform on efficiency, such as Tesla and other all-electric companies.

The proposed rule builds on the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, which eliminated CAFE fines. Under President Biden, the NHTSA rules called for vehicles to get 2 percent more fuel efficient every year; the Trump administration is now proposing to revert to the 2022 baseline and improve fuel efficiency by 0.5 percent annually.

NHTSA will accept public comments on the proposed rule until January 20, 2026. The agency will also hold a virtual public hearing on January 7, 2026. Hearing participants will be able to provide oral comments regarding the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (Draft SEIS) that accompanies the proposal. Registration for the public hearing ends on December 31, 2025.

 *See the proposed rule [here](#)*

NHTSA AUTOMATED DRIVING RESEARCH

On December 11, NHTSA released the fourth and final volume of its research effort "FMVSS Considerations for Vehicles with Automated Driving Systems." This research examined potential technical changes to safety standards that would address conformity challenges posed by automated vehicles, which will inform NHTSA's modernization efforts. This multi-year and multi-phased research project examined 81 Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards to determine how they could be applied to innovative vehicle designs, with extensive hands-on research.

Recognizing ongoing changes in the industry, including new entrants and constantly emerging business models, NHTSA is issuing a new Request for Comment. The agency is seeking public input on industry changes, product plans, new concepts, or emerging issues that may affect the scope of the effort since this research was initiated in 2017. Comments will be due 60 days after the notice is published in the Federal Register.

 *Read the research report [here](#)*

USDOT UPDATES HIGHWAY

FMCSA NATIONWIDE COMMERCIAL DRIVER'S LICENSES (CDL) AUDIT

As part of USDOT's nationwide audit into state practices in issuing non-domiciled Commercial Driver's Licenses (CDLs), USDOT found that the New York Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) has been issuing 53 percent of its CDLs in ways the department determined did not comply with federal standards. Transportation Secretary Duffy has threatened to freeze \$73 million from New York and warned that continued noncompliance could lead to decertification of the state's CDL program.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) reported similar findings in Minnesota, where it determined that approximately one-third of CDLs were issued improperly. Secretary Duffy has threatened to pull up to \$30.4 million in Minnesota's federal highway funding if the state does not take corrective action.

Building on these efforts, on December 1, Transportation Secretary Duffy announced the removal of nearly 3,000 CDL training providers from the FMCSA Training Provider Registry (TPR) for failing to equip trainees with the Trump Administration's standards of readiness. Another 4,500 training providers were placed on notice due to potential noncompliance.



“When more than half of the licenses reviewed were issued illegally, it isn't just a mistake —it is a dereliction of duty by state leadership.”

— Secretary Sean Duffy
USDOT Press Release,
12/12/25

”

USDOT UPDATES



AVIATION

WAIVED AIRLINE FINES

USDOT is waiving millions of airline fines issued under former President Biden. This includes \$16.7 million in fines issued to American Airlines (AA) as part of a settlement over the air carrier's treatment of passengers with disabilities, including failing to provide some with adequate assistance and mishandling wheelchairs. USDOT said it will instead require AA to invest \$16.8 million in improvements benefiting passengers with disabilities. Some of these initiatives include requiring the airline to purchase 119 additional wheelchair lifts at Miami, Philadelphia, and Chicago O'Hare airports, as well as mobile devices and software enhancements that will allow American Airlines to track and record passenger wheelchairs point-by-point as they move through the transport process.

USDOT will also waive an \$11 million fine levied against Southwest Airlines over the company's 2022 holiday travel disruptions, when the airline canceled nearly 17,000 flights during a period of severe weather. The \$11 million was part of a \$140 million fine that the Biden Administration had imposed in 2023, which was the largest penalty USDOT had applied to an airline for consumer protection violations. Southwest had agreed to pay a \$35 million fine to the U.S. government, with the remaining \$105 million going to passengers through vouchers and frequent-flier points. To date, Southwest has paid \$24 million to the government. To account for the remaining \$11 million, the order said the airline would receive an \$11 million "credit" to improve its performance.

MAKE TRAVEL FAMILY FRIENDLY AGAIN CAMPAIGN

On December 8, USDOT Secretary Duffy and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. unveiled \$1 billion in federal funding to improve the passenger experience at airports. As part of a campaign to "Make Travel Family Friendly Again," airports will be able to submit projects for funding from the IIJA Airport Terminal Program, which supports modernization improvements at airports and air traffic control facilities across the country.

Eligible projects include:

- Creating more children's play or exercise areas;
- Adding mothers' rooms or nursing pods;
- Reconfiguring security checkpoints to create family screening lanes;
- Building sensory rooms for children with special needs; and
- Other creative terminal projects that focus on enhancing the family travel journey.

 See the NOFO [here](#)

*Applications are due
January 15, 2026.*

UNION PACIFIC AND NORFOLK SOUTHERN MERGER

OVERVIEW

Union Pacific (UP) and Norfolk Southern (NS) filed a formal merger application with federal regulators on December 19. According to a timeline posted on the Surface Transportation Board (STB) website, the filing triggers a statutory 30-day review by the STB for completeness, after which the regulator can accept a complete application or reject it as incomplete. This phase is separate and involves no evaluation of the merger itself. The companies project their proposed transcontinental merger will take more than 2 million trucks off the road annually, boosting the combined system's traffic by 1.4 million intermodal loads and 425,000 carloads.

Outlined in their application, the combined railroad would see revenue growth of \$4.2 billion three years into the merger, with nearly \$1 billion in cost synergies. UP will spend \$1.1 billion in capacity improvements, plus another \$1.1 billion on technology integration and other investments.

INDUSTRY

Industry leaders are weighing in, with Canadian Pacific Kansas City (CPKC) CEO Keith Creel disagreeing with Union Pacific CEO Vena's contention that the UP-Norfolk Southern merger would face minimal regulatory resistance. CPKC will ask the board to ensure that any merger conditions have teeth, Creel says. Creel also stated that CPKC alone will seek merger concessions that might approach the \$750 million figure.

CONGRESS

Members of Congress have also begun to take a stand on the merger. Representatives Bennie Thompson (D-MS), Troy Carter (D-LA), and Cleo Fields (D-LA) have expressed support for the merger, most recently urging STB Chairman Fuchs to conduct a careful review of the proposal. The lawmakers described rail freight as "vital to our states and the country's economy," and stated the merger should help move the U.S. toward "a more efficient, reliable, and competitive transportation network."

LABOR

Labor organizations have expressed differing views. Recently, the Teamsters Rail Conference opposed the proposed merger. The conference, which encompasses a large number of unionized workers at the two railroads, includes two unions: the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) and the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees (BMWE).

The Rail Conference's position differs from that of the largest railroad union in the country, International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers-Transportation Division (SMART-TD), which came out in support of the merger earlier this year after sharing they were guaranteed "that their members would keep their jobs after the merger and be able to use their expertise to ensure safety until they retire."



CONTACT US

TAI, GINSBERG & ASSOCIATES



202-536-6632

SAN JOAQUIN JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY

Meeting of January 23, 2026

STAFF REPORT

Item 5

INFORMATION

San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority 2026 Annual Business Plan Preview

Background:

The primary purpose of the Annual Business Plan (ABP) is to identify the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority's (Authority) intentions for the next two State Fiscal Years (FY) in its management of the Gold Runner, and to request the annual funds required by the Authority to operate, administer, and market the Gold Runner service. As part of its administrative responsibilities of the Gold Runner Service, the Authority must submit the ABP by April 1 of each year in draft form to the Secretary of the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) and in final form by June 30. The ABP is reviewed and approved by the State and used to develop annual appropriation requests to the State Legislature.

As specified in Assembly Bill (AB) 1779, the ABP must include a report on the recent and historical performance of the service; an overall operating plan, including proposed service enhancements to increase ridership and provide for increased traveler demands in the corridor for the upcoming year; short-term and long-term capital improvement programs; funding requirements for the upcoming fiscal year; and an action plan with specific performance goals and objectives. In addition, the ABP must document service improvements (rail and Thruway Bus) to provide the planned level of service, operating plans, and consideration of other service expansions and enhancements.

A draft of the 2026 ABP will be released for public review in late February or the first week of March 2026, allowing for Board, agency, and public input. After the review period and revisions are completed, the official draft of the ABP (for submittal to CalSTA) will be presented for review and approval at the March 20, 2026, Authority Board Meeting.

Key Areas of Continued Focus and Changes Anticipated for the 2026 ABP:

For the 2026 ABP, the Authority will focus on a few key elements:

- Uniform Performance Standards (UPS) - Clearly articulate the pain points or inefficiencies the state investment will address by utilizing updated UPS metrics as a baseline to prioritize projects/initiatives.
- Return on Investments - Estimate the anticipated gains, which include but are not limited to: direct revenue generation, cost savings, efficiency gains, passenger satisfaction, and enhanced regulatory compliance when proposing changes or new projects and initiatives.
- Cross-functional Collaboration/One Team Approach – Require internal departments within the Authority to be united in a shared vision and goal, while understanding the unique needs of each department. With input from various departments, decisions are made with a deeper understanding of all project aspects, which can prevent delays and mitigate risks.

In addition, to provide the most up-to-date and comprehensive ABP possible, updates to ridership and financial figures will be provided, along with a discussion of the status of current and planned

capital projects, and any new and continuing planning initiatives. Based on input from CalSTA and Caltrans, the Draft 2026 SJPPA Business Plan will be substantially shorter than previous SJPPA Business Plans and will be more focused on FY26/27 projects/initiatives.

All chapters of the ABP will be updated to reflect recent focus and/or changes in service as summarized below:

Historical Performance of the Service and Route and Performance Standards and Action Plan - Two chapters will be combined to condense the current Uniform Performance Standards (UPS) document. All figures and tables will be updated with Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2025 data.

Existing Trainsets, New Equipment, and Maintenance – This chapter will be updated to include the Authority's and the State's Intercity Rail Zero Emissions fleet transition strategy. New additions to the chapter will include bilevel cars overhaul modernization, mini-high platforms project initiation, and the wreck/repair process for Gold Runner equipment.

Operating Plan and Strategies – This chapter will be updated to emphasize what the Authority will pursue in the immediate future (FY26/27 and FY27/28) and beyond, such as optimizing core service (full seven daily round-trips) with improved scheduling and On-Time-Performance, planning near-term expansions (8th and 9th round-trips, new stations, and Sacramento Subdivision use), enhancing Thruway Bus efficiency and connectivity through studies, partnerships, strengthening inter-agency coordination with host railroads, other joint powers authorities, and Caltrans, and aligning operations with future high-speed rail. The California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) Draft 2026 Business Plan is expected to be released in early February 2026, and Authority staff are coordinating with CHSRA staff to make sure that the SJPPA Draft 2026 Business Plan is consistent with the CHSRA Draft 2026 Business Plan.

Short-Term and Longer-Term Capital Improvements – This chapter will be updated to rework the narrative and tables to reflect the path forward for the Valley Rail Program and additional Gold Runner service. The chapter will focus on key short-term projects for FY26/27 and will include a table reflecting short-term and long-term projects as an appendix.

Establishment of Fares – This chapter will be shortened and made more visual and strategic. It will continue to focus on the Gold Runner fare methodology, fare increases/normalization, and proposed business class fares. Historical references regarding everyday discounts will be removed.

Service Amenities and Food Service – This chapter will be updated to be more visual and have less text. It will highlight short-term and long-term planned improvements and will continue to describe current amenities.

Marketing and Outreach – The title of this chapter will be changed to “Passenger Experience and Marketing,” and the chapter will be updated to be more visual, and include recent successes that show return-on-investment (ROI), new initiatives, and summarize key initiatives that will continue to promote Gold Runner service.

Annual Funding Requirements and Separation of Funding – These two chapters will be consolidated and language on “Separation of Funding” will be incorporated into the “Annual Funding Requirements” chapter. The new Budget Request Forms and Project Implementation Plans submission requirements were established to justify the funding request and to assign

priority to projects that demonstrate continued alignment with UPS and the Authority's vision, mission, and values.

Safety and Security – This chapter will be shortened and incorporated into the “Passenger Experience” chapter. The text will focus on risk-based prioritization, ensuring that training, coordination and capital improvements are directed to locations and conditions with the greatest safety and security risk. It also highlights targeted capital investments such as fencing, signage, and right-of-way controls that are tied directly to documented risks.

Station Area Development – This chapter will be updated to highlight the following priority station area planning and transit connectivity/Transit Oriented Development (TOD) projects in FY2627 that the Authority will lead or participate in:

- Del Paso/Old North Sacramento Station Area Action Plan
- Move Downtown Plan for downtown Stockton (City of Stockton)
- Madera Station/Transit Center Specific Plan (County of Madera)
- San Joaquin Valley Network Integration and TOD Action Plan
- Kings-Tulare Cross Valley Corridor Implementation
- Fresno Regional Rail Study

Staff will return with a request for board review and approval of the Draft 2026 SJJPA Business Plan in March and the Final 2026 SJJPA Business Plan in May of 2026.

Fiscal Impact:

There is no fiscal impact.

Recommendation:

This is an informational item. There is no action required.

SAN JOAQUIN JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY
Meeting of January 23, 2026

STAFF REPORT

Item 6

INFORMATION

On-Time Performance and Gold Runner Service Update

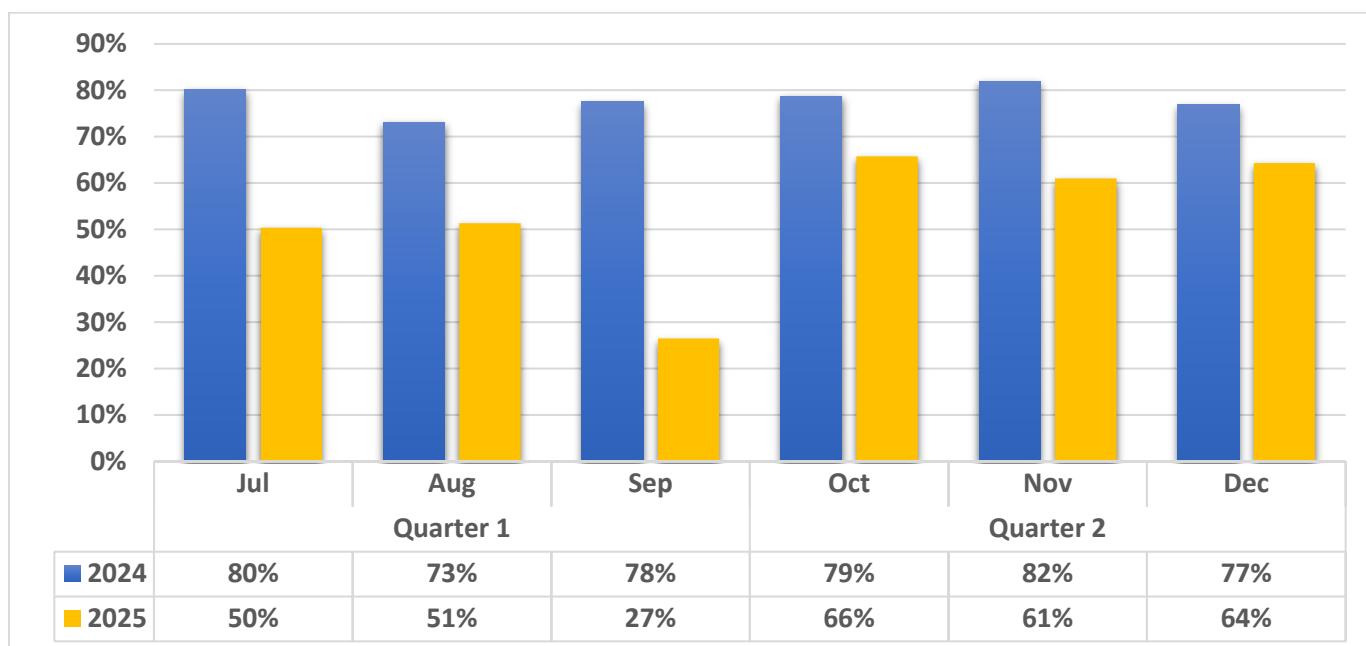
On-Time Performance (OTP):

The FY25/26 second quarter OTP (October 1 – December 31, 2025) has improved from the first quarter; however, there continues to be operational hurdles, particularly related to locomotive mechanical issues. While the disruptions from host railroad track projects have largely been resolved, the state of repair of the Northern California state-owned locomotive fleet and associated delays continue to present challenges to the Gold Runner service, with interruptions impacting overall On-Time Performance (OTP).

During the second quarter of FY25/26, OTP showed modest improvement from the unusually low levels experienced in the prior period but remained below the OTP goal of 83%.

The table below provide an overview of month-over-month OTP performance for FY25/26 to date:

Gold Runner End-Point OTP:



Prior to the mechanical transition of the Northern California state-owned legacy equipment, many of these underlying locomotive issues existed for an extended period, but were less apparent in OTP, as Amtrak utilized Amtrak-owned locomotives to supplement operations on intercity trains. Due to the transition, Amtrak-owned locomotives are no longer available, contributing to the current challenges as the Gold Runner relies entirely on its dedicated equipment. These mechanical issues on the 23 state-owned Locomotives not only affected the individual trains involved but also created a domino effect across the service. Delayed arrivals prevent timely departures for subsequent trips, pushing trains out of their scheduled slots resulting in conflicts with other Gold Runner trains on the corridor. The State of California owns twenty-three (23)

locomotives that are being utilized in the Northern California Fleet. 17 of the 23 locomotives are needed to operate the Gold Runner and Capitol Corridor services. Of the total 23 locomotives, three (3) have been down for multiple years prior to the transition and three (3) others are suffering major failures.

Specific mechanical delay data underscores the scale of the challenge in each month:

- September 2025 – There were 224 instances of mechanical delays, totaling 1,332 minutes.
- October 2025 – There were 225 instances, totaling 1,211 minutes.
- November 2025 – There was a sharp increase, with 2,032 minutes of mechanical delays. Additionally, 10 trains were cancelled outright, and another seven (7) were terminated enroute due to these issues.
- December's mechanical delays are not yet finalized, but preliminary indicators suggest a similar pattern of disruption.

In late December 2025 and early January 2026, locomotive availability issues increased once again, leading to an uptick in ad hoc cancellations and enroute failures. To address the issues and improve service reliability, a decision was made to temporarily cancel one round-trip for a 60-day period starting January 5, 2026. Train pair 713/714 (Oakland to Bakersfield) has been suspended through March 5, 2026. This cancellation reduces the demand on the locomotive fleet, providing additional capacity to accelerate repairs and maintenance without compromising the remaining services. Focusing resources on fleet rehabilitation during this timeframe will minimize unplanned disruptions and position the service for improved performance.

Corrective Actions and Positive steps:

- On August 1, equipment tracking showed 21 bi-level cars not available for service awaiting repairs beyond routine maintenance. Within seven (7) days TASI was able to triage and restore six (6) of those cars.
- TASI and the Authority immediately started assessing the equipment out of service for grade crossing strike damage, since the transition TASI has been able to repair seven (7) cars and one (1) locomotive in under five (5) months for less cost than was previously forecast to repair just one (1) unit under prior regime.
- Locomotive fleet inspections and repairs are ongoing, with a focus on addressing the backlog of deferred maintenance. Challenges with locomotive availability persist; however, staff anticipates further improvements as repair cycles are completed.
- Passenger Car inspections and repairs are ongoing; this has resulted in increased car availability to over 80% up from 70% prior to the mechanical transition on August 1, 2025. Caltrans has made progress in releasing the F59 Overhaul procurement. The F59 locomotive fleet is overdue for a major overhaul, which has led to many of the failures.
- Coordination with host railroads continues. Notably, BNSF has no major track projects scheduled for 2026, which provides a favorable outlook for minimizing external disruptions in the coming year.
- The temporary suspension of the 713/714 train pair will allow for concentrated locomotive maintenance and repair efforts.
- Staff will continue to monitor mechanical delay trends, using data analysis to identify recurring issues and implement corrective measures.

Fiscal Impact:

There is no fiscal impact.

Recommendation:

This is an informational item. There is no action required.