

Chapter 2: Existing Service Characteristics, Service Parameters, and Route Profiles

Evaluating the Existing Network

As outlined in Chapter 1, SJJPA currently oversees 14 Thruway Bus routes connecting the Gold Runner rail network to destinations across California and Nevada. The bus network serves a diverse array of markets with various partnership structures, financial considerations, and operational constraints. Each route thus requires an in-depth analysis of its context and performance to understand opportunities for strategic improvements and to work towards optimizing the entire network.

In order to evaluate each route, and the network as a whole, key metrics and characteristics were analyzed including ridership, bus-only ticketing implementation, cost effectiveness, partnership and contracting structures, vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and passenger miles traveled (PMT). These characteristics provide an understanding as to how well the Thruway Bus network is and where potential opportunities for change may exist.

A summary of the existing and planned Thruway Bus network is listed below in **Table 1**. More detailed information regarding each route, bus stop location, and route schedule is available on the Gold Runner website.¹

As ridership trends and cost considerations evolve, SJJPA has continued to evaluate and optimize the Thruway Bus network. This has included interventions ranging from tactical schedule adjustments to the development of new routes. Most recently, SJJPA launched Route 40 in January 2026, which provides direct service between Merced and San Jose. In late July 2026, SJJPA is set to launch Route 5 providing an improved connection to Redding, which will replace Route 3R. In June 2026, SJJPA significantly modified service on Route 18 with the following changes: discontinued service to Santa Maria, seasonal service to Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, and continued year-round service between Hanford and Visalia through a partnership with local transit operators.

¹ Gold Runner, <https://goldrunner.com/>

Table 1. Existing and upcoming Thruway Bus route destinations and frequencies

No.	Route	Daily Round Trips
1^{1,2}	Bakersfield – San Diego	1
	Fresno-Los Angeles	1
	Bakersfield-Los Angeles	9 ²
1C	Bakersfield – Santa Monica	2
3¹	Stockton – Chico	3
	Sacramento – Chico	1
	Stockton – Sacramento	1
	Stockton – Davis	4
3R³	Chico – Redding (RABA)	2
5	Sacramento – Redding	2
6¹	Stockton – San Jose	2
	San Jose – Santa Cruz	2 ⁴
7¹	Martinez – Arcata	2
	Martinez- Santa Rosa	2
10	Santa Barbara – Las Vegas	1
15	Yosemite – Mammoth Lakes (seasonal)	2
15A	Merced – Yosemite	4
15B	Fresno – Yosemite (seasonal)	2
18⁵	Visalia – Hanford	1
	Hanford – San Luis Obispo	Seasonal
19¹	Bakersfield – San Bernardino	2
40	Merced – San Jose	2
99¹	Emeryville – San Francisco	5 ⁶

¹ Additional service is operated around Thanksgiving, Christmas, Spring Break, and Labor Day.

² Route 1 operates 9 daily round trips between Bakersfield and Los Angeles – 4 of these round trips serve duplicate connections to the same Gold Runner train with varying stopping patterns. See *Appendix A* for further information.

³ Route 5 will replace Route 3R service, with implementation planned for late July 2026.

⁴ SC Metro operates all day service between San Jose – Santa Cruz; 2 round trips connect with Route 6

⁵ Route 18 service pattern was modified in June 2026 from daily service between Visalia, Hanford, and Santa Maria to a segmented service pattern with daily service between Visalia and Hanford, and seasonal service between Hanford and San Luis Obispo

⁶ Route 99 runs 19 daily round trips, with funding split between SJJPA, CCJPA, and Amtrak in proportion with the number of connecting services. SJJPA accordingly funds 5 of these round trips.

Ridership

Ridership is a key component of understanding the performance of a route. Ridership data is derived from monthly route-level performance reports as well as daily ridership data. This data highlights demand patterns by day of week, trip time, and stop location for each route, enabling SJJPA to evaluate demand at each of these levels. Understanding travel patterns allows SJJPA to tailor service to exhibited demand and ensures favorable train connections. Performance of each route varies by market demand. The highest ridership routes in the network are Route 1 and Route 3, as they provide connections to some of the largest markets in the state including Los Angeles, San Diego, and Sacramento.

Bus-only ticketing

Chapter 1 describes SB-742 and the ensuing provision for bus-only ticketing on Thruway Bus routes. Bus-only ticketing represents an opportunity to capture additional ridership beyond Gold Runner train riders, especially on bus routes that are not served or are underserved by other operators. Currently, three Gold Runner Thruway Bus Routes do not have bus-only ticketing activated (Route 1, 3, and 6). This is primarily due to challenges in meeting SB-742 requirements related to coordination around overlapping services provided by other agencies or operators. Strategies to implement bus-only ticketing are a key consideration in developing recommendations for the future, as this represents a potential avenue to boost route revenue and cost effectiveness.

Partnership and contracting structures

Existing routes operate under both private and public operators with a majority of the routes operated by private operators under contract with Amtrak. Public operators mostly employ a variety of contracting structures that affect SJJPA's responsibilities for compensation to the operator. Partnerships therefore have the ability to significantly impact the cost effectiveness of a route, and represent a key consideration in planning for the future of the network. For example, Gold Runner partners with public operators, like Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS), Santa Cruz Metro (SC Metro), Kings Area Regional Transit (KART), and Redding Area Bus Authority (RABA), each with distinct contracting structures. Agreements with private operators are often simpler due to the direct contracting structure, whereas public operators may serve additional stakeholders with different needs and priorities, necessitating more complex agreements. In addition, some public operators are unwilling to guarantee connections to Gold Runner trains or run service 365 days a year which can greatly reduce the effectiveness of the connecting services for Gold Runner train passengers.

As a potential model to be applied to other existing or future routes, SJJPA is adapting the contracting structure from Route 3R to launch Route 5. This model involves a public

operator with guaranteed connections to Gold Runner service, a diversified set of funding mechanisms from local/regional and state sources, bus-only ticketing for all bus stop pairs, and integrated Amtrak ticketing.

Cost Effectiveness

Cost effectiveness is a valuable concept to understand the overall performance of a route. As discussed in Chapter 1, cost effectiveness is defined in California Government Code, Section 14035.2a(3), which notes that routes are deemed cost effective if they reach the *break-even point*, defined as the point where revenue generated from both the bus and train portions of the trips made by Thruway Bus riders meets or exceeds the cost of providing the corresponding Thruway Bus route.

Cost effectiveness can be represented by the cost recovery ratio metric, which compares the operating costs of a route with the abovementioned combined total ticket revenue generated from both bus trips and connected train trips. This ratio is calculated by dividing the revenue by the costs, whereby a cost recovery ratio at or above 100% signifies that a route has met the break-even point and can be considered “cost effective” as per the definition laid out in the California Government Code.

This metric is valuable because it not only reveals the ability of the route to meet market demand, but also factors in the costs required to operate the route and the route’s ability to recover these costs through revenue. Cost effectiveness data has been provided by Amtrak for October 2024 through September 2025. Amtrak’s fiscal year is from October to September and does not follow the fiscal year of Caltrans or SJJPA, which is from July to June.

Table 2Error! Reference source not found. includes the latest available data on annual ridership, operating cost, and cost recovery ratio for all routes (see *Appendix B* for detailed cost effectiveness tables for available years by route).

Route 99 is the most cost-effective route of the network, in part due to its short length and high ridership. Route 1 and Route 3 also exhibit a high-cost recovery ratio, reflecting the success in serving high demand markets and offsetting the higher costs caused by the distance of these routes. In addition, Route 19 shows a positive net income trend and has recently become cost-effective.

Low cost-effectiveness on Routes 15/15A/15B, Route 7, and Route 1C result in the highest net cost for SJJPA, and reflect factors including low ridership, high operating costs, and limited integration with Gold Runner service. These routes need to be prioritized for identifying optimization strategies to improve their performance in the near future.

Cost recovery ratios are not available for Route 3R, Route 10, Route 18, and Route 40. Route 3R, Route 10, and Route 18 are under interline agreements, and Amtrak has not provided SJJPA with comprehensive cost recovery data on these routes. Route 40 is a new route with insufficient data to determine cost recovery.

Table 2: Annual ridership (FY 25) and cost effectiveness data (Oct 2024 - Sep 2025) by route¹

No.	Route	Annual Ridership (FY 25)	Annual California System Revenue (Oct '24 – Sep '25)	Annual Operating Cost (Oct '24 – Sep '25)	Cost Recovery Ratio (Oct '24 – Sep '25)
1	Fresno – Bakersfield – San Diego	221,418	\$9,536,577	\$6,381,082	149%
1C	Bakersfield – Santa Monica	32,899	\$1,010,609	\$1,142,129	88%
3	Stockton – Redding	153,403	\$4,688,269	\$3,231,275	145%
3R	Chico – Redding (RABA)	4,616	Not available	\$396,000	Not Available
6	Stockton – Santa Cruz	27,043	\$830,028	\$641,228	129%
7	Martinez – Arcata	46,809	\$1,556,314	\$3,044,503	51%
10	Santa Barbara – Las Vegas	32,280	\$515,660	Not Available	Not Available
15¹	Yosemite – Mammoth Lakes	4,566	\$72,783	\$381,221	19%
15A¹	Merced – Yosemite				
15B¹	Fresno – Yosemite				
18A	Hanford – Santa Maria	10,623	\$126,730	~\$75,000	Not Available
18B	Hanford – Visalia (KART)		Not Available		
19	Bakersfield – San Bernardino	41,705	\$1,674,702	\$1,635,106	102%
40	Merced – San Jose	4,707 (Jan-Apr '26)	Not Available	\$244,355 (Jan-Mar '26)	Not Available
99	Oakland – San Francisco	42,758	\$1,734,075	\$510,745	340%

Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and Passenger Miles Traveled (PMT)

¹ Ridership and cost data are combined across Routes 15/15A/15B

Table 3 shows total VMT and PMT by route derived from bus portions of passenger trips. This metric reveals part of the impact Thruway Bus service has on removing cars from the road network and lowering greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, representing a key quantifiable benefit of the Thruway Bus service that may not be immediately apparent from an analysis of purely financial data. This metric is thus important to consider in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the benefits of each route. While the available data only includes VMT and PMT attributed to the bus portion of passenger trips, additional data including VMT and PMT attributed to train connections to and from the respective bus routes would facilitate a comprehensive assessment of the Thruway Bus service's impact in reducing GHG emissions.

In 2026, the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation released guidance for the Statewide VMT Mitigation Program. The program recognizes access to transit as a key strategy for reducing automobile travel and allows developers to satisfy California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) VMT mitigation requirements by contributing to a state fund that supports affordable housing in transit-accessible locations. While the program does not directly fund transit operations, it reinforces the importance of demonstrating how transit services reduce both VMT and associated GHG emissions.¹

For SJJPA, this highlights the value of tracking the transportation and environmental benefits generated by the Thruway Bus network. All routes serve more PMT than the VMT they generate, with some routes performing more efficiently than others in this regard. For example, Route 1 and 1C together exhibit the highest PMT, generating an estimated 1.4 million VMT while serving a total of 32.8 million annual PMT. Route 19, while only traveling 0.27 million annual VMT, serves 6.5 million annual PMT, representing the highest ratio of PMT to VMT – while this route just reaches the break-even point in terms of cost effectiveness, considering VMT and PMT reveals additional benefits of the route that go beyond revenue produced. These 3 routes together serve approximately 24 passenger miles per vehicle mile traveled, illustrating how these services contribute to shifting intercity trips from personal vehicles to bus services and in turn transport these passengers in a more efficient and sustainable manner, reducing overall roadway congestion, fuel consumption, and GHG emissions.

Quantifying these benefits enables SJJPA to demonstrate how the Thruway network contributes to the State's climate, housing, and VMT reduction goals, while strengthening

¹ Statewide Vehicle Miles Traveled Mitigation Program Guidance, https://lci.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/AB-130-Statewide-VMT-Mitigation-Program-Guidance_063026_Final.pdf

the case for transit-oriented investment in communities served by high-performing corridors such as Route 1.

Table 3: Annual Vehicle Miles Traveled and Passenger Miles Traveled by Route

Route	Annual Vehicle Miles Traveled (FY 25)	Annual Passenger Miles (April 2025 – March 2026)
Route 1	1,171,802	32,830,611
Route 1C	191,917	
Route 3	694,413	9,366,492
Route 3R	106,580	423,812
Route 6	125,268	1,954,351
Route 7	532,170	5,777,566
Route 10	336,530	5,447,640
Route 15	Not available	259,813
Route 18	157,607	1,114,067
Route 19	267,910	6,501,620
Route 40	171,368	263,494
Route 99	30,843	390,825

Governance

Chapter 1 discusses a high-level overview of the current contract structure for Thruway Bus and Procurement. This chapter will go into further detail outlining the existing governance structure and types of contracts that are involved.

Structure of Existing Governance Framework

The State of California funds the management and operation of Thruway Bus service through SJJPA, and SJJPA procures the management and operation of the Thruway Bus network via an operating agreement with Amtrak.

Although SJJPA does not directly manage the day-to-day operation of the Gold Runner Thruway Network, it oversees the program through strategic planning, contract management, and coordination with Amtrak contracted bus operators, Caltrans, local transit agencies, and other stakeholders. SJJPA works with Amtrak to establish service expectations, monitor contractor performance, ensure contractual compliance, and support funding, budgeting, and reporting requirements that help maintain reliable and efficient service.

SJJPA also leads long-term planning and continuous improvement efforts by analyzing ridership, cost, on-time performance, customer feedback, and travel demand to identify opportunities for service enhancements. The agency coordinates route and schedule changes, improves connections between buses and trains, supports passenger information and marketing initiatives, and works with regional partners to strengthen first and last mile connectivity. During service disruptions, special events, and infrastructure

projects, SJJPA collaborates with Amtrak and operating partners to minimize impacts on passengers and maintain seamless regional mobility.

In addition, SJJPA is in charge of fare policy for both Gold Runner train and Thruway Bus routes, including bus-only ticketing. In 2018, SJJPA changed the fare policy to no longer require reserved ticketing. This meant that passengers would no longer see fare fluctuations based on seat demand and instead only have one fare per station pair, making pricing more predictable and affordable for passengers.¹

Governance Agreements

The **Interagency Transfer Agreement (ITA) between Caltrans and the SJJPA** provides that Caltrans funds SJJPA, who then funds both the Gold Runner rail service and the associated Thruway Bus routes. More specifically, the agreement transfers responsibility from Caltrans to SJJPA to administer Gold Runner service, including the Thruway Bus network. The agreement outlines the State's responsibility to provide funding for Gold Runner service and Thruway Bus operations.

The **Master Agreement between the SJJPA and Amtrak** provides that SJJPA reimburses Amtrak based on the cost of operating Gold Runner and Thruway Bus services. Amtrak holds and manages all contracts with bus operators.² The Master Agreement also outlines performance measures Amtrak needs to meet. More specifically, the agreement defines the service routes and schedules that Amtrak will provide via passenger rail and Thruway Bus feeder service. Amtrak oversees the bus operators and manages a team of operations and contract management staff to implement what is set out in the agreement.

Thruway Bus Operating Contract Types

In **dedicated contracts between Amtrak and private bus operators**, Amtrak pays operators for route operation. Funding comes fully from SJJPA funds via ticket revenue and PTA funds. While SJJPA can help facilitate stakeholder outreach, it does not have a contractual relationship with the operator running the service. Operators under this type of contract include *Alvand*, *American Star*, *Avalon*, and *Whitecastle* running on most of the routes in the network.

Interline service agreements with private bus operators were set up so private operators could cover the cost of running the service by receiving revenue from bus tickets and a portion of the train tickets with bus connections. Because of the reliance of this type of agreement on ticket sales, interlining agreements were supposed to reduce a route's

¹ Changes to Amtrak San Joaquins Fare Policy Aimed at Benefitting Passengers, <https://sjjpa.com/sjjpa-fare-policy-change/>

² The ITA does stipulate that SJJPA has the authority, under ITA to procure bus services directly

annual operating cost for SJJPA. In order to ensure adequate payment to the operator, Amtrak (via SJJPA) can provide minimum revenue guarantees to the operator which are applicable in the event of a revenue shortfall. In these cases, SJJPA (through Caltrans) will provide the remainder of funds required to meet the guarantee, usually drawing from PTA funds. Routes 3R and 10 are examples of interlined routes with minimum revenue guarantees.

Public bus operator agreements provide that public transit operators will transport Gold Runner customers in addition to non-Gold Runner passengers. These routes can have different considerations depending on context, with various compensation structures possible like with private operators. Amtrak currently contracts with three public bus operators – RABA for Route 5, SC Metro for a portion of Route 6 (San Jose to Santa Cruz) and YARTS for Routes 15, 15A, and 15B. Each of the agreements were individually negotiated with distinct specifications and compensation details. While SJJPA does not hold operating contracts with bus operators, it still ultimately decides upon what service is run, where it operates, and how much service it runs.

While public operator agreements can provide benefits from leveraging existing services and resources, these agreements need to be evaluated for compatibility with the goals of the Thruway Bus service, as public operators often have other services and priorities beyond the Thruway Bus network’s goal of complementing Gold Runner service.

Table 4 Error! Reference source not found. below shows the operator(s) by route, the operator type, and the contract agreement type.

Table 4: Operator and Contract Type by Route

Route	Route	Operator	Operator Type	Agreement Type
1	Fresno – Bakersfield – San Diego	Alvand	Private	Direct
1C	Bakersfield – Santa Monica	Alvand	Private	Direct
3	Stockton – Redding	Avalon	Private	Direct
3R	Chico – Redding (RABA)	RABA	Public	Interline
6	Stockton – San Jose	Whitecastle	Private	Direct
	San Jose – Santa Cruz	SC Metro	Public	Direct
7	Martinez – Arcata	American Star	Private	Direct
10	Santa Barbara – Las Vegas	Alvand	Private	Interline
15	Yosemite – Mammoth Lakes	YARTS	Public	Direct
15A	Merced – Yosemite	YARTS	Public	NA
15B	Fresno – Yosemite	YARTS	Public	NA

18	Hanford – San Luis Obispo	American Star	Private	Direct
	Hanford – Visalia	KART	Public	Non-Binding MOU
19	Bakersfield – San Bernardino	Alvand	Private	Direct
40	Merced – San Jose	American Star	Private	Direct
99	Oakland – San Francisco	American Star	Private	Direct

Route Profiles

Route 1: Fresno - Bakersfield - Los Angeles - San Diego

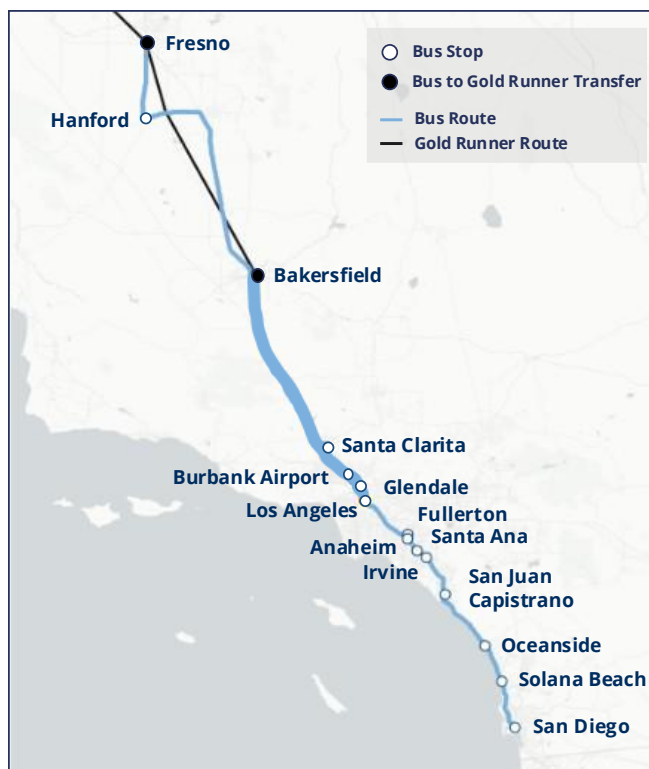


Figure 1. Map of Route 1 – the route operates primarily between Bakersfield and Los Angeles, with 1 round trip from Bakersfield to San Diego and 1 round trip from Fresno to Los Angeles.

Service Overview

Route 1 operates along the corridor connecting Fresno, Bakersfield, Los Angeles, and San Diego. This route connects most of the major population centers in Southern California to the Gold Runner service at Bakersfield and Fresno and is the highest ridership route in the SJJPA Thruway Bus network.

Schedule

The trunk of the route operates between Bakersfield and Los Angeles with nine daily round trips. One round trip operates from Fresno to Los Angeles and one round trip from Bakersfield to San Diego. Four of the Bakersfield to Los Angeles trips constitute a second bus connecting to the same Gold Runner train while operating under a different service pattern (See *Appendix A*). This route offers transfer opportunities to and from all Gold Runner trains, with transfer times ranging from 4 to 18 minutes. Error! Reference source not found. below shows Route 1's routing, daily round trips, and scheduled travel time.

Table 5: Schedule, Scheduled Travel Time, and Daily Round Trips

Routing	Daily RT	Scheduled Travel Time
Bakersfield – Los Angeles	9	2h 10m – 2h 30m
Bakersfield – San Diego	1	6h 30m – 8h 40m
Fresno – Los Angeles	1	4h 45m

Ridership

Route 1 had over 221,300 total riders in FY25. **Figure 2** below represents a chart of annual ridership by fiscal year, starting from FY22.

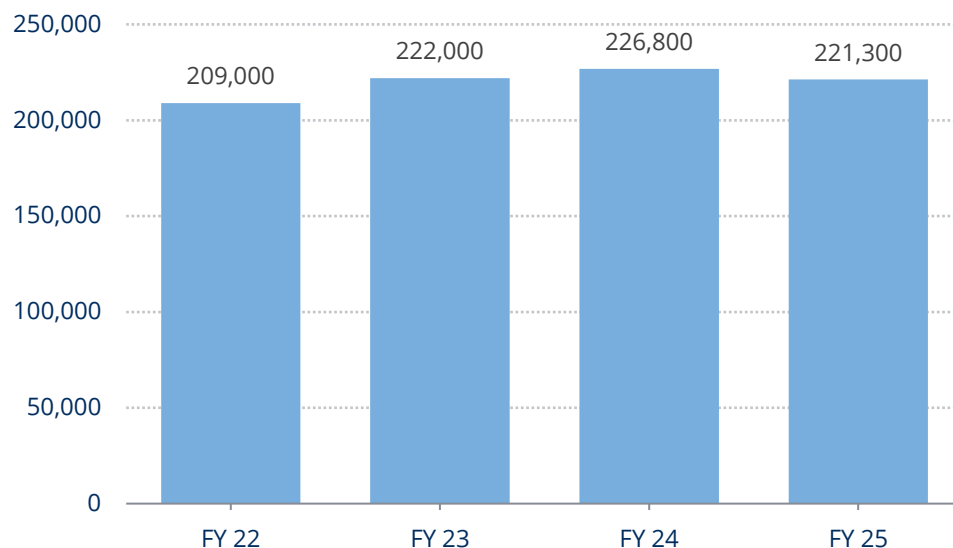


Figure 2. Annual ridership on Route 1 by fiscal year

Ons and offs by stop are listed in Error! Reference source not found. below. Bakersfield and Fresno are the two Gold Runner transfer stations on this route, with 239,300 and 8,400 ons and offs respectively. Other than Gold Runner transfer stations, Los Angeles Union Station has the highest ridership at just under 200,000 ons and offs for Route 1. Union Station provides many transfer opportunities to a robust Southern California transit network. Transfer options include metro connections to the A, B, and D lines and Metrolink connections to Orange County, Perris Valley, Riverside, Antelope Valley, and Ventura County. Union Station provides riders with more choices and access than any other Gold Runner Thruway stop. The second highest ridership non-transfer station is San Diego, which exhibits high ridership even with just one round trip per day. While this route exhibits the highest ridership in the network, total Route 1 ridership declined by 2.4% between FY 24 and FY 25, largely driven by ridership declines in Los Angeles and San Diego. This is in contrast with the network's overall COVID-19 recovery trend.

Table 6: *Ons and offs by stop for Route 1 comparing FY 24 and FY 25.*

STOP	ONS/OFFS (FY 24)	ONS/OFFS (FY 25)
<i>Bakersfield (Transfer)</i> ^{1,2}	243,852	238,354
Los Angeles	201,075	196,220
San Diego	10,852	9,808
<i>Fresno (Transfer)</i> Error! Bookmark not defined.	7,229	7,844
Santa Clarita ¹	8,076	8,024
Burbank Airport ¹	7,376	7,306
Glendale	5,831	5,547
Hanford	3,699	3,947
Oceanside	2,303	2,362
Anaheim	1,784	1,919
Santa Ana	1,488	1,595
Fullerton	1,384	1,477
Irvine	1,181	1,347
Solana Beach	457	490

¹ Ons/offs at Bakersfield and Fresno include transfers to/from Gold Runner trains.

² Ons/offs at Bakersfield, Santa Clarita, and Burbank Airport represent combined ons/offs on Route 1 and Route 1C.

Partnerships and Finances

Route 1 is operated under a direct contracting agreement between Amtrak and Alvand, a private operator.

Bus-only ticketing is not active on this route. Although the route has high ridership and is cost-effective, the implementation of bus-only ticketing remains a way to increase cost-effectiveness and public benefits as the network continues to develop in the future. SJJPA faces challenges with the implementation of bus-only ticketing on this route due to the well-established nature of travel along this corridor – under the existing private operator contract for Route 1, SJJPA would need to coordinate with existing intercity and local/regional bus operators that offer overlapping service before being able to implement bus-only ticketing as per the stipulations of SB 742.

Operating costs on Route 1 totaled just over \$6,381,000 between October 2024 and September 2025. Total California system revenue between October 2024 and September 2025 related to Route 1 totaled around \$9,537,000. This translates to a cost recovery ratio of 149%, signifying that Route 1 met the threshold for cost effectiveness in 2024/2025 as it has for all years with available data, even preceding COVID-19.

Route 1 had the highest increase in operating cost between FY 22 and FY 25 of any Gold Runner Thruway route. Expenses increased by 121% from \$2.9 million to \$6.4 million in three years as shown in **Figure 3**. Increased expenses are in part attributable to service increases. While Route 1 is currently and has historically been a very cost-effective route, rising costs to operate this route combined with slowing ridership growth is something that should be closely monitored by SJJPA in the future.

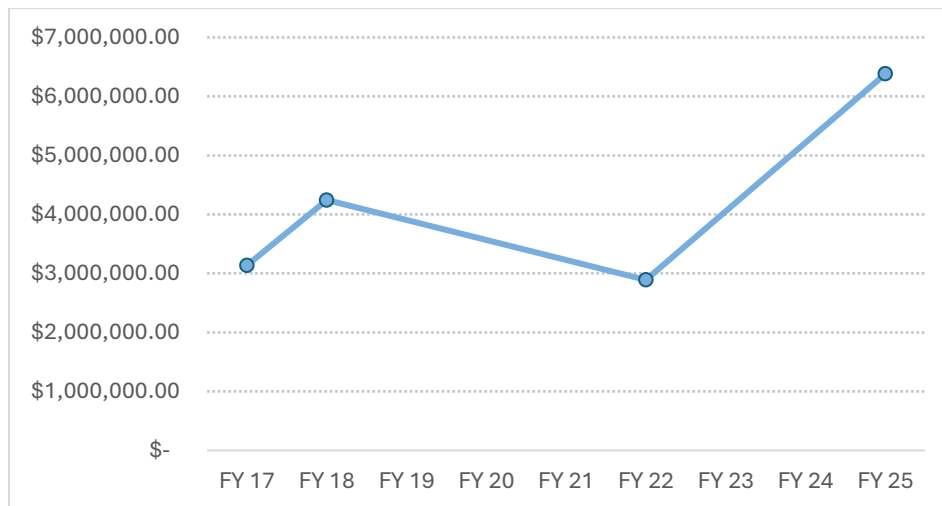


Figure 3. Annual Route 1 expenses by fiscal year

Route 1C: Bakersfield – Santa Monica

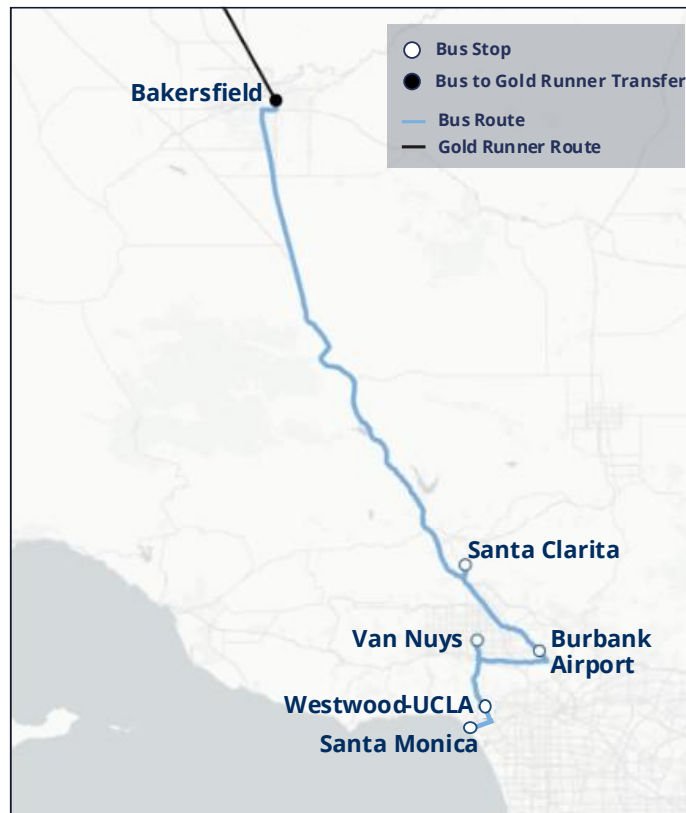


Figure 4. Map of Route 1C

Service Overview

Route 1C connects Bakersfield, Santa Clarita, Burbank Airport, Van Nuys, Westwood-UCLA, and Santa Monica along the I-5 corridor. This route connects cities in the Los Angeles metropolitan area to Gold Runner service at Bakersfield but faces relatively low ridership south of Van Nuys. The route formerly extended to Torrance, but this segment was discontinued due to low ridership.

Schedule

This route is served by two daily round trips, with transfer opportunities to and from Gold Runner trains scheduled between 2:00 and 5:00 PM. Transfer times range from 6 to 17 minutes. Error! Reference source not found. below shows Route 1C's routing, daily round trips, and scheduled travel time.

Table 7: Schedule, Scheduled Travel Time, and Daily Round Trips

Routing	Daily RT	Scheduled Travel Time
Bakersfield – Santa Monica	2	3h 30m

Ridership

Route 1C had just under 32,900 total riders in FY25. **Figure 5** below represents a chart of annual ridership by fiscal year, starting from FY23. Ridership grew with a 1,800-rider increase from FY23 to FY24, followed by a smaller 600 rider increase from FY24 and FY25. As Route 1C is close to reaching the cost-effectiveness threshold, its modest ridership gains are positive indicators that with strategic interventions, this route may achieve cost effectiveness.

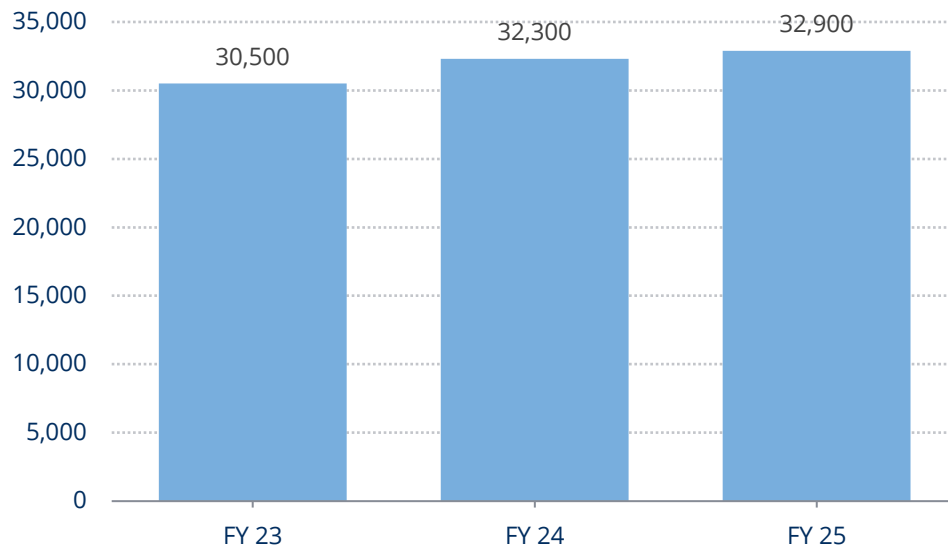


Figure 5. Annual ridership on Route 1C by fiscal year

Ons and offs by stop are listed in Error! Reference source not found. below. Route 1C shares stops with Route 1 at Bakersfield, Santa Clarita, and Burbank Airport, with indicated ons/offs at these stops representing combined values across both routes. Like Route 1, Route1C connects with Gold Runner trains at Bakersfield. Route 1C bus stops south of Van Nuys, especially Santa Monica, demonstrate low ridership. The circuitous route between Bakersfield and Van Nuys via Burbank Airport increases travel time compared to the fastest route via I-405. Other than Bakersfield, Van Nuys has the highest ridership on this route while Santa Monica Pier has the lowest.

Table 8: *Ons and offs by stop for Route 1C, for the latest year of available data (Mar 2025 – Feb 2026)*

STOP	ONS/OFFS (MAR '25 – FEB '26)
<i>Bakersfield (Transfer)¹</i>	239,318
Van Nuys	12,543
Santa Clarita ²	7,955
Burbank Airport ²	7,312
Westwood-UCLA	6,918
Santa Monica Pier	1,462

Partnerships and Finances

Route 1C is operated under a direct contracting agreement between Amtrak and Alvand, a private operator.

Bus-only ticketing is active for this route; however, the implementation of bus-only ticketing is correlated with a modest increase of 1,800 riders between FY 23 and FY 24, and 600 passengers between FY 24 and FY 25. See *Appendix C* for a monthly analysis of Route 1C ridership.

Operating costs on Route 1C totaled over \$1,142,100 between October 2024 and September 2025. Total California system revenue related to Route 1C totaled just under \$1,010,600. This translates to a cost recovery ratio of 88%, signifying that Route 1C did not meet the threshold for cost effectiveness in 2024/2025. While Route 1C was marginally cost effective in FY 17, increasing operating costs outpacing ridership increases have led to decreased cost effectiveness for the route.

¹ Bakersfield ridership (ons and offs) includes transfers.

² Ons/offs at Bakersfield, Santa Clarita, and Burbank Airport represent combined ons/offs on Route 1 and Route 1C.

Route 3 & 3R: Stockton – Sacramento – Chico – Redding



Figure 6. Map of Route 3 and 3R

Service Overview

Route 3 connects Stockton to Chico via Sacramento. Passengers can take advantage of timed transfers to Route 3R at Chico, which continues to Redding. This route connects cities in the Central Valley to Gold Runner service at both Sacramento and Stockton. Route 3 and 3R together represent the second highest performing route in the network after Route 1, with especially high ridership occurring between Stockton and Sacramento.

Route 3R was implemented as a first step towards developing the new Thruway Bus Route 5 service between Redding and Sacramento. Route 3R will be replaced by Route 5 in late July 2026, with Route 5 offering more direct service between Redding and Sacramento along the I-5 corridor. Route 5 will reduce travel times, improve transfer opportunities, and connect Sacramento International Airport (SMF) to the Thruway bus network. SJJPA has partnered with Caltrans and Shasta Regional Transportation Agency (SRTA) since 2018 to develop Route 5 (formerly known as the “Salmon Runner”).

RABA has access to diverse funding sources that alleviate pressure on PTA funds disbursed through SJJPA to initiate the new route. These funding sources include annual 5311(f) operations funding through Caltrans, one-time State Highway Account funds, and

annual Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds transferred from Tehama County. This partnership and funding model planned for Route 5 and operated by RABA, will be used to evaluate whether such arrangements can be used for other routes across the Thruway Bus network.

Schedule

Currently, Route 3 follows multiple service patterns, with its primary trunk serving the Stockton-Sacramento corridor with 8 round trips. 4 of these round trips continue to Davis, while 3 continue to Chico. The route has 1 additional round trip between Sacramento and Chico.

Route 3 offers transfer opportunities to and from every Gold Runner train, with transfers primarily planned at Stockton with transfer times 10 to 65 minutes. The single round trip between Sacramento and Chico offers transfers to Gold Runner trains at Sacramento, with transfer times between 4 and 14 minutes.

Route 3R serves Chico to Redding daily with two roundtrips and timed transfers to and from Route 3 at Chico. Error! Reference source not found. below shows Route 3 and Route 3R's routing, daily round trips, and travel time.

Table 9: Schedule, Scheduled Travel Time, and Daily Round Trips

Routing	Daily RT	Scheduled Travel Time
Stockton – Chico (Route 3)	3	3h 10m – 3h 40m
Sacramento – Chico (Route 3)	1	1h 55m
Stockton – Sacramento (Route 3)	1	1h 0m – 1h 20m
Stockton – Davis (Route 3)	4	1h 35m – 1h 55m
Chico – Redding (Route 3R)	2	1h 35 min

Ridership

Route 3 and 3R had 153,500 total riders in FY25. **Figure 7** below represents a chart of annual ridership by fiscal year, starting from FY22.

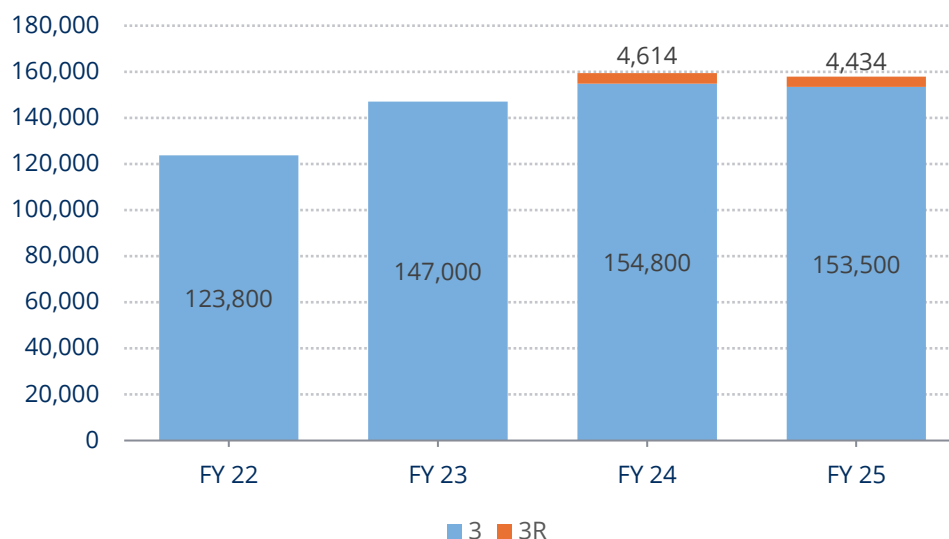


Figure 7. Annual ridership on Route 3/3R by fiscal year

Ons and offs by stop are listed in Table 10 below. Stockton San Joaquin Street is the primary train-to-bus transfer station on this route, with over 125,000 annual ons/offs. Stockton has two stops – Stockton San Joaquin Street Station with transfer opportunities to Gold Runner service, and Stockton Cabral Station which is served by ACE rail. Sacramento has by far the highest ridership of the bus stops, followed by Chico. Although Sacramento is a transfer station for one daily round trip, only a very small portion of the 113,145 riders comes from rail transfers.

Route 3’s ridership did not decline when it was truncated to Chico, signifying that Route 3R has been successful in serving the affected riders while ridership has additionally increased elsewhere along Route 3.

Table 10: Ons and offs by stop for Route 3, for the latest year of available data (Mar 2025 – Feb 2026)

STOP	ONS/OFFS (MAR '25 – FEB '26)
Stockton (Amtrak) (Transfer) ¹	125,035
Sacramento ²	113,145
Chico	29,833
Davis	16,218
Redding	4,522

¹ Ons/offs at Stockton include Gold Runner transfers

² Sacramento is both a stop destination and a transfer point with only a small portion of ridership coming from Gold Runner transfers (1RT from Sacramento to Chico)

Marysville	4,537
Elk Grove	4,018
Oroville	3,292
Lodi	2,873
Red Bluff	1,903
Stockton (ACE)	1,722

Partnerships and Finances

Route 3 is operated under a direct contracting agreement between Amtrak and Avalon, a private operator. Bus-only ticketing is not active on Route 3. While Route 3 is high performing, the implementation of bus-only ticketing could be a way to increase cost-effectiveness and benefits as the network continues to develop in the future. Like with Route 1, Route 3 faces challenges with the implementation of bus-only ticketing on this route due to the well-established nature of travel along this corridor. Using the current private operator contracted by Amtrak, SJJPA would need to coordinate with existing bus operators that offer overlapping service before being able to implement bus-only ticketing as per the stipulations of SB 742. SJJPA is exploring potential partnerships with public transit operators that would allow bus-only ticketing along this route.

Route 3R is contracted separately between Amtrak/SJJPA and RABA. This contract constitutes an interlining agreement, with RABA receiving the ticket revenue between Chico and Redding, as well as a minimum revenue guarantee funded by SJJPA to cover operating costs not covered by ticket revenue.

Operating costs on Route 3 totaled just over \$3,231,200 between October 2024 and September 2025. Route 3R does not have sufficient operating cost data and revenue. Total California system revenue related to Route 3 totaled just under \$4,688,300. This translates to a cost recovery ratio of 145%, signifying that Route 3 met the threshold for cost effectiveness in 2024/2025.

Route 6: Stockton – San Jose – Santa Cruz



Figure 8. Map of Route 6 and SC Metro service to Santa Cruz

Service Overview

Route 6, which connects Stockton to San Jose, is operated by private bus operator Whitecastle. Route 6 offers transfers in San Jose to SC Metro’s Route 17, connecting passengers to and from Santa Cruz.

Schedule

Route 6 runs from San Jose to Stockton with two daily round trips, offering one morning and one evening transfer to Gold Runner service in each direction. Transfers to northbound Gold Runner service are scheduled at 11 minutes, while transfers to southbound Gold Runner service are scheduled at 65 minutes. Route 6 connections between San Jose and Santa Cruz operate on an all-day schedule with headways between 15 minutes and 1 hour.¹ **Table 11** below shows Route 6’s routing, daily round trips, and scheduled traveled time.

¹ <https://scmetro.org/routes/route-17/>

Table 11: Schedule, Scheduled Travel Time, and Daily Round Trips

Routing	Daily RT	Scheduled Travel Time
Stockton – San Jose	2	2h 5m - 2h 15m
San Jose – Santa Cruz (via SC Metro)	<i>All Day Service</i>	45-60m

Ridership

Route 6 had over 29,800 total riders in FY25. **Figure 9** below represents a chart of annual ridership by fiscal year for Route 6, starting from FY22. Since FY22, Route 6 ridership slowly increased year over year with the biggest jump from FY22 to FY 23 of 6,500 riders. Ridership is now at approximately 75% of the ridership in FY 19 but recovery is slowing, potentially due to changing travel patterns post-COVID-19.

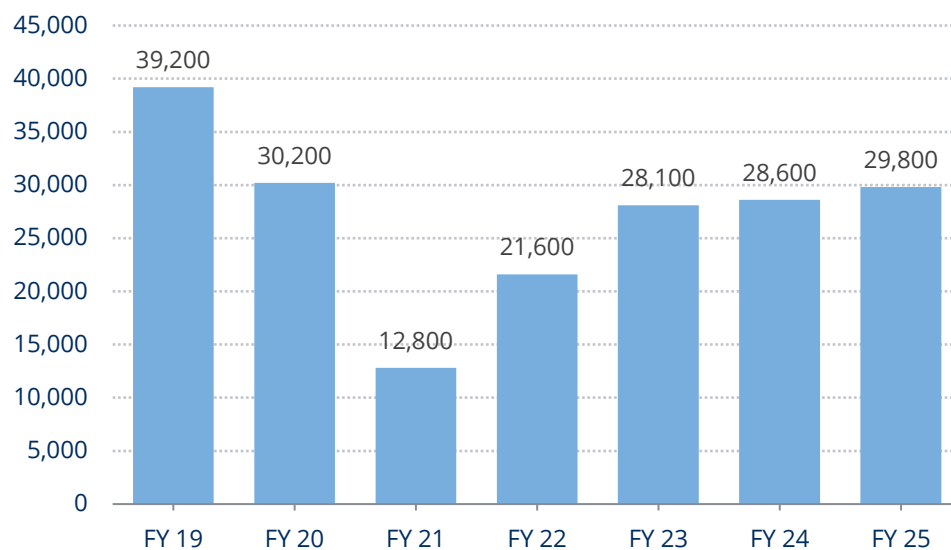


Figure 9. Annual ridership on Route 6 by fiscal year

Ons and offs by stop are listed in **Table 12** below. The Gold Runner transfer station at Stockton has 26,100 ons and offs. Other than Stockton, Route 6 experiences its highest ridership at its terminus in San Jose, signifying the high proportion of riders using this route to travel between the Central Valley and the Bay Area. Most other stops demonstrate relatively low ridership.

The recent implementation of Route 40 connecting Merced and San Jose may draw San Jose riders away from Route 6 as Route 40 offers more direct travel between some Central Valley destinations and San Jose. Route 40 reduces the trip time between San Jose and Merced, and to destinations south of Merced, by over one hour. Since San Jose is the anchor stop for Route 6, revenue may decline as Route 40 ridership continues to develop. An analysis of early ridership data between January and May 2026 indicates that Route 6 ridership has declined by 23-40% compared to the same months in 2025. This coincides with the implementation of Route 40 in January 2026 (see section *Route 40: Merced – San Jose* for more information on Route 40).

Table 12: *Ons and offs by stop for Route 6, for the latest year of available data (Mar2025 – Feb 2026)*

STOP	ONS/OFFS (MAR '25 – FEB '26)
Stockton (Amtrak) (Transfer) ¹	26,110
San Jose ²	22,584
Stockton (ACE)	1,790
Dublin-Pleasanton	1,945
Fremont Park and Ride	1,883
Livermore	1,203
Tracy	1,091
Scotts Valley	No Data
Santa Cruz	No Data

Partnerships and Finances

Route 6 is operated under a direct contracting agreement between Amtrak and Whitecastle, a private operator. San Jose-Santa Cruz service is operated through a partnership between Amtrak and SC Metro.

Bus-only ticketing is not active on Route 6. In the 2026 SJJPA Business Plan, SJJPA identified it as a priority for FY 26-27 to open this route to bus-only ticketing. This may represent a strategy to recover potential ridership losses after the implementation of Route 40, by opening the route to additional passenger markets that do not overlap with Route 40.

¹ Stockton ridership includes transfers.

² Ridership only includes passengers on Route 6 between San Jose and Stockton.

Operating costs on Route 6 totaled just over \$641,200 between October 2024 and September 2025. Total California system revenue related to Route 6 totaled a little over \$830,000. This translates to a cost recovery ratio of 129%, signifying that Route 6 met the threshold for cost effectiveness in 2024/2025. This route was also cost effective in FY 19 prior to COVID-19.

Route 7: Martinez – Santa Rosa – Arcata/Cal Poly



Figure 10. Map of Route 7

Service Overview

Route 7 is one of the longest routes in the Gold Runner Thruway Bus network, connecting Martinez to Napa, Santa Rosa, and destinations farther north including Ukiah, Eureka, and Arcata. Route 7 currently connects with Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART) at Petaluma.

This route runs two daily round trips from Martinez to Santa Rosa and another two round trips from Martinez to Arcata/Cal Poly-Humboldt via Santa Rosa. It offers connections to most Gold Runner trains at Martinez with transfer times between 7 and 50 minutes.

Schedule

Route 7 schedules were recently updated to skip low ridership stops at Laytonville, Leggett, and Garberville on one of two daily round trips in order to decrease travel times to meet federal requirements for bus operations. Additionally, the updated schedules improve bus transfer opportunities in Ukiah while aligning northbound and southbound services to improve the attractiveness of bus-only trips. Even with the updated schedules, the length of the route poses operational complexities related to driver shifts, with the full route scheduled to take up to 6 hours and 50 minutes. As a result, the current schedule includes a 40-minute rest stop at Ukiah. **Table 13** below shows Route 7's routing, daily round trips, and scheduled travel time.

Table 13: Schedule, Scheduled Travel Time, and Daily Round Trips

Routing	Daily RT	Scheduled Travel Time
Martinez – Santa Rosa	2	1h 15m – 2h 15m
Martinez – Arcata	2	6h 35m – 6h 50m

Ridership

Route 7 had 45,000 total riders in FY25. **Figure 11** below represents a chart of annual ridership by fiscal year for Route 7, starting from FY 19. Route 7 ridership has nearly recovered to pre-COVID levels, with FY 25 ridership amounting to 95% of the route's ridership in FY 19. Ridership for the route has increased every year since FY 21. Route 7 has relatively high ridership (third highest in the Gold Runner Thruway system after Route 1 and Route 3) but induces disproportionately high operating costs due to its length. Despite this limitation, shortening Route 7 is challenging since the northern end of the route contributes a substantial amount to ridership and has limited alternative connections to major metropolitan areas in California.

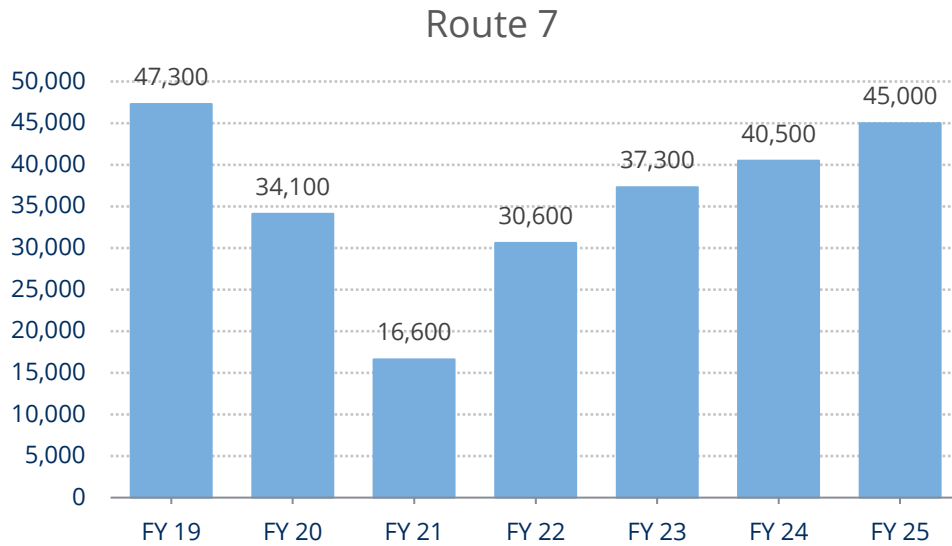


Figure 11. Annual ridership on Route 7 by fiscal year

Ons and offs by stop are listed in **Table 14** below. The Gold Runner transfer station at Martinez has 35,000 ons and offs. Other than Martinez, Route 7 experiences its highest ridership at Santa Rosa with 10,800 ons and offs, while the Arcata and Cal Poly stops combined yield nearly 9,000 ons and offs. Eureka, Napa, and Ukiah also contribute substantial ridership to the route.

Table 14: Ons and offs by stop for Route 7, for the latest year of available data (Mar 2025 – Feb 2026)

STOP	ONS/OFFS (MAR '25 – FEB '26)
<i>Martinez (Transfer)</i> ¹	35,062
Santa Rosa	10,794
Eureka	5,750
Napa	5,313
Arcata (TC)	5,284
Ukiah	5,103
Vallejo	3,678
Arcata (Cal Poly)	3,620
Petaluma	3,053
Rohnert Park	2,613
Fortuna	1,802
Laytonville	1,691

¹ Martinez ridership (ons and offs) includes transfers

Willits	1,643
Garberville	1,090
Cloverdale	575
Healdsburg	447
Leggett	92

Partnerships and Finances

Route 7 is operated under a direct contracting agreement between Amtrak and American Star, a private operator. Bus-only ticketing is active on Route 7.

Route 7 schedules have been updated to allow ample time for transfers with HTA service between Ukiah and Eureka. However, transfers between services are not guaranteed as HTA operates its service independently and is not required to modify its operations to accommodate Thruway bus transfers.

Operating costs on Route 7 totaled over \$3,044,500 between October 2024 and September 2025. Total California system revenue related to Route 7 totaled just over \$1,556,300. This translates to a cost recovery ratio of 51% signifying that Route 7 did not meet the threshold for cost effectiveness in 2024/2025. In FY 17, Route 7 demonstrated substantial cost effectiveness with a 136% cost recovery ratio. In FY 18 the route showed a slight revenue loss. However, Route 7's cost recovery ratio has dipped sharply in recent years, primarily due to increasing operational costs outpacing ridership increases. Operational costs have increased by 159% since FY 22, while ridership has only increased by 47% in the same timeframe.

Route 10: Santa Barbara to Las Vegas



Figure 12. Map of Route 10

Service Overview

Route 10 connects Las Vegas and Santa Barbara via Bakersfield. The route was established through an interlining agreement that combined the former Routes 9 and 10. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Route 9 operated between Bakersfield and Las Vegas but was suspended during the pandemic and has not been resumed as a standalone service. Route 10, which previously operated only between Bakersfield and Santa Barbara, was extended to assume Route 9's routing, creating a continuous service between Las Vegas and Santa Barbara.

The route is now over 430 miles long and is the longest route in the Gold Runner Thruway system. Due to its substantial distance paired with moderate ridership, Route 10 only operates one daily roundtrip. When compared to services provided by the rest of the Thruway system, a similar percentage of Route 10 passengers board or alight at the Gold Runner transfer station in Bakersfield. The concentration of ons and offs at the Gold Runner connection indicates that despite Route 10's length, its usage patterns are consistent with the other Gold Runner Thruway routes.

Schedule

Route 10 runs one round trip per day, providing afternoon connectivity to the Gold Runner at Bakersfield. Transfer times range from 17 to 48 minutes. A one-way trip takes 11 hours and 35 minutes, much of that travel time occurring between Las Vegas and Mojave. Error! Reference source not found. **Table 15** below shows Route 10's routing, daily round trips, and scheduled travel time.

Table 15: Schedule, Scheduled Travel Time, and Daily Round Trips

Routing	Daily RT	Scheduled Travel Time
Las Vegas – Santa Barbara	1	11h 35m

Ridership

Route 10 had 32,300 total riders in FY25. **Figure 13** below represents a chart of annual ridership by fiscal year for Route 10, starting from FY 22. While ridership peaked in FY23, it has since declined in the subsequent years despite the implementation of bus-only ticketing. Strategies to stabilize this trend may be needed in order to ensure the route is financially sustainable in the future.

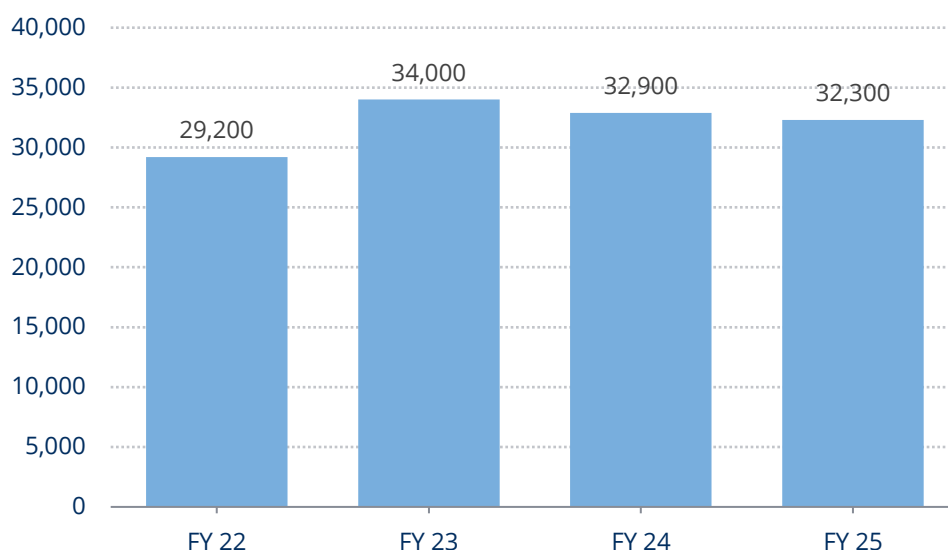


Figure 13. Annual ridership on Route 10 by fiscal year

Ons and offs by stop are listed in **Table 16**Error! Reference source not found. below. Other than the Gold Runner transfer stop at Bakersfield, the highest ridership on this route occurs at Oxnard with nearly 9,800 ons and offs, followed by Santa Barbara and Las Vegas with 5,100 and 5,000 respectively. Both ends of the route contribute significantly to the

route's overall ridership. Barstow has two stations, both with lower ridership, with the Barstow Bus station exhibiting especially low ridership.

Table 16: *Ons and offs by stop for Route 10, for the latest year of available data (Mar 2025 – Feb 2026)*

STOP	ONS/OFFS (MAR '25 – FEB '26)
<i>Bakersfield (Transfer)</i> ¹	29,859
Oxnard	9,787
Santa Barbara	5,068
Las Vegas Strip	5,015
UCSB	4,431
Las Vegas Downtown	4,426
Ventura	2,802
Mojave	2,317
Barstow Amtrak	1,713
Santa Paula	1,292
Carpinteria	1,003
Barstow Bus	782
Tehachapi	570
Fillmore	405

Partnerships and Finances

Route 10 is operated under a direct contracting agreement between Amtrak and Alvand, a private operator. Reliable operating cost and cost effectiveness data for Route 10 are not available due to the nature of the interlining agreement; however, as part of the interlining agreement, the operator receives a minimum revenue guarantee of up to \$292,000 to offset any operating revenue not covered by ticket sales. Reliable cost data for Route 10 is necessary to evaluate route performance and determine appropriate changes for the future of the service.

California system revenue related to Route 10 totals almost \$515,700. Due to a lack of total cost information from Amtrak for Route 10, the cost-effectiveness of this route is undetermined at this time.

¹ Bakersfield ridership (ons and offs) includes transfers.

Route 15, 15A, & 15B: Yosemite Routes



Figure 14. Map of Route 15/15A/15B

Service Overview

Routes 15, 15A, and 15B services are provided by the public operator YARTS. These routes link the Yosemite Valley to the Gold Runner via Merced (Route 15A) and Fresno (Route 15B). Because SJJPA only contributes a relatively small portion of the funding for these routes, accommodating Gold Runner schedules is not the top priority for YARTS service. As a result, bus schedules are not well aligned with Gold Runner train schedules. Furthermore, buses are only required to wait 15 minutes if Gold Runner trains are late, which may not guarantee transfers for passengers, hindering the benefit of these routes to Gold Runner passengers.

Schedule

Route 15 and Route 15B are seasonal routes, with two daily round trips on each during their respective seasons. Route 15A runs year-round, operating between three round trips in the winter and six round trips in July and August. Up to four of these daily round trips serve the Gold Runner station at Merced. However, due to the provisions of the agreement with YARTS derived from YARTS' own service goals focusing on transporting workers and tourists within Yosemite, connections to the Gold Runner are inconsistent, scheduled between 8 minutes and 1 hour and 45 minutes. As previously noted, where connections

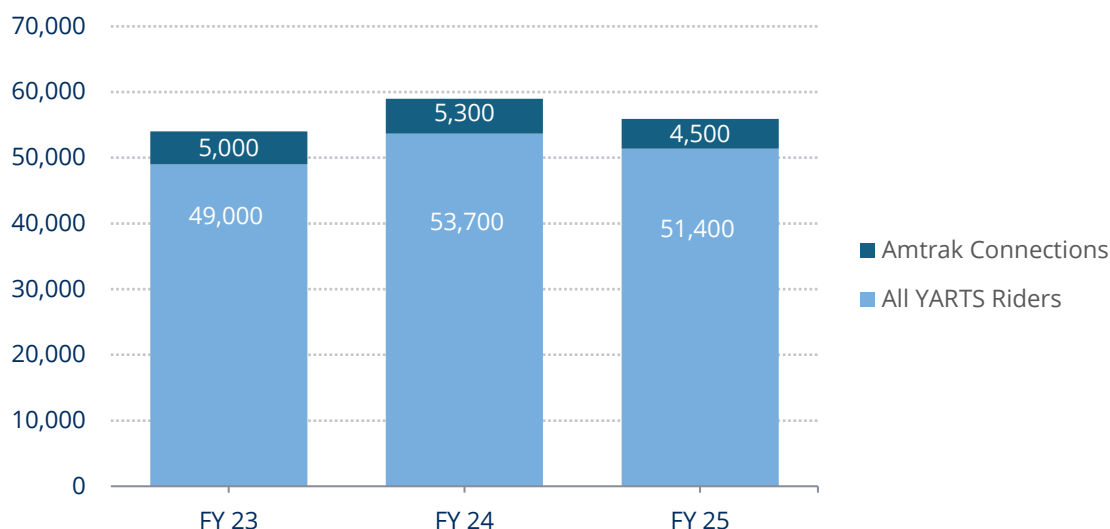
exist, YARTS buses are not required to wait more than 15 minutes for Amtrak trains. The lack of timed connections between the Gold Runner and YARTS routes generates unreliability that can manifest in substantial travel time costs. **Table 17** belowError! Reference source not found. shows Route 15/15A/15B’s routing, daily round trips, and scheduled traveled time.

Table 17: Schedule, Scheduled Travel Time, and Daily Round Trips

Routing	Daily RT	Scheduled Travel Time
15 Yosemite – Mammoth Lakes	2	3h 35m
15A Merced – Yosemite	3-6	2h 21m – 3h 29m
15B Fresno – Yosemite	2	2h 5m – 2h 40m

Ridership

Route 15/15A/15B¹ had just over 4,500 Gold Runner transfer passengers in FY25. **Figure 15** below represents a chart of combined annual ridership by fiscal year for the three routes, noting total YARTS ridership compared to Gold Runner transfer passengers. The number of Gold Runner transfer passengers in FY25 was only 8% of the total YARTS FY25 ridership.



¹ FY25 ridership data does not include Route 15

Figure 15. Annual ridership on Route 15/15A/15B by fiscal year

Ons and offs by stop are listed in **Table 18** below. Route 15, 15A, and 15B all experience the highest ridership at Yosemite Curry Village at 1,300 ons and offs, followed by Yosemite Valley Lodge and Yosemite Visitor Center with 900 and 600 ons and offs respectively. The Gold Runner transfer station at Merced experiences 4,400 ons and offs. Many stops exhibit low ridership below 100 annual passengers, including Fresno despite providing seasonal transfers to Gold Runner service. Gold Runner related ridership does not contribute significantly to YARTS' overall ridership, reflecting the conflicting priorities between YARTS and SJJPA in offering this service.

Table 18: Ons and offs by stop for Routs 15/15A/15B, for the latest year of available data (Mar 2025 – Feb 2026)

STOP	ONS/OFFS (MAR '25 – FEB '26)
<i>Merced (Transfer)¹</i>	3,442
Yosemite Curry Village	1,296
Yosemite Valley Lodge	884
Yosemite Visitor Center	628
Mariposa (Midtown)	209
Mariposa (Park & Ride)	180
El Portal	157
Midpines	95
Lee Vining	78
Oakhurst	18
Mammoth Lakes	4
Coarsegold	4
<i>Fresno (Transfer)¹</i>	1

Partnerships and Finances

Routes 15/15A/15B are operated under a direct contracting agreement between Amtrak and YARTS, a public operator. The nature of the agreement allows YARTS to determine its schedules based on its own service priorities, inhibiting robust integration with Gold Runner service. SJJPA, through Amtrak, pays YARTS a daily rate per bus by route. The YARTS contract does not include fuel cost adjustment or liquidated damages provisions.

Because this route is run by a public operator, bus-only ticketing is automatically active. The majority of YARTS riders are not Gold Runner transfer passengers.

¹ Ons/offs at Merced and Fresno include Gold Runner transfers

The Gold Runner Thruway contributed approximately \$381,200 toward Route 15, 15A, and 15B operating costs between October 2024 and September 2025. Total California system revenue related to Routes 15, 15A, and 15B totaled just under \$73,000. This translates to a cost recovery ratio of 19%, signifying that the YARTs routes to Yosemite failed to meet the cost effectiveness threshold for SJPA in 2024/2025 by a significant margin.

Route 18: Santa Maria – Hanford – Visalia (Route modified in June 2026)



Figure 16. Maps of Route 18: service pattern through May 2026 (left), service pattern starting June 2026 (right)

Service Overview

Until May 2026, Route 18 operated from Hanford to Santa Maria, San Luis Obispo, and Visalia, with one daily round trip. **Figure 16** shows the original route through May 2026 compared with the modified route offering seasonal service from San Luis Obispo to Hanford and year-round service via KART between Hanford and Visalia. The new service pattern started in June 2026.

Route 18 was reconfigured due to declining ridership and poor cost effectiveness, making it difficult for the private operator, American Star, to profit from the route. While post-COVID ridership has recovered systemwide, Route 18 has failed to experience a sustained recovery, with ridership maintaining a 57% decline since FY 18. Due to the withdrawal of the operator from the original service, the route has been reconfigured to focus resources

on seasonal service around proven periods of high demand. This is anticipated to lower the cost of running the route and maximize the route's cost recovery.

Schedule

Starting March 31, 2026, Route 18 operated on a reduced schedule only running one round trip per day on Friday through Monday. After May 31, 2026, Route 18 was discontinued and operations between Hanford and Visalia were taken over by KART. Since July 1, 2024, SJJPA contributes to the route, where KART operates two round trips between Hanford and Visalia with Gold Runner transfers at Hanford. Service from Hanford to Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo will run seasonally based on peak university-based travel periods. Service to Santa Maria has been discontinued. Error! Reference source not found. **Table 19** below shows Route 18's routing, daily round trips, and scheduled travel time.

Table 19: *Schedule, Scheduled Travel Time, and Daily Round Trips*

Routing	Daily RT	Scheduled Travel Time
Visalia – Hanford	2	30m – 40m
Hanford – San Luis Obispo	Seasonal	1h 05m – 1h 15m

Ridership

Route 18 had over 10,600 total riders in FY25. **Figure 17** below represents a chart of annual ridership by fiscal year for Route 18, starting from 2021. Route 18 ridership declined by approximately 18% between FY 24 and FY 25.

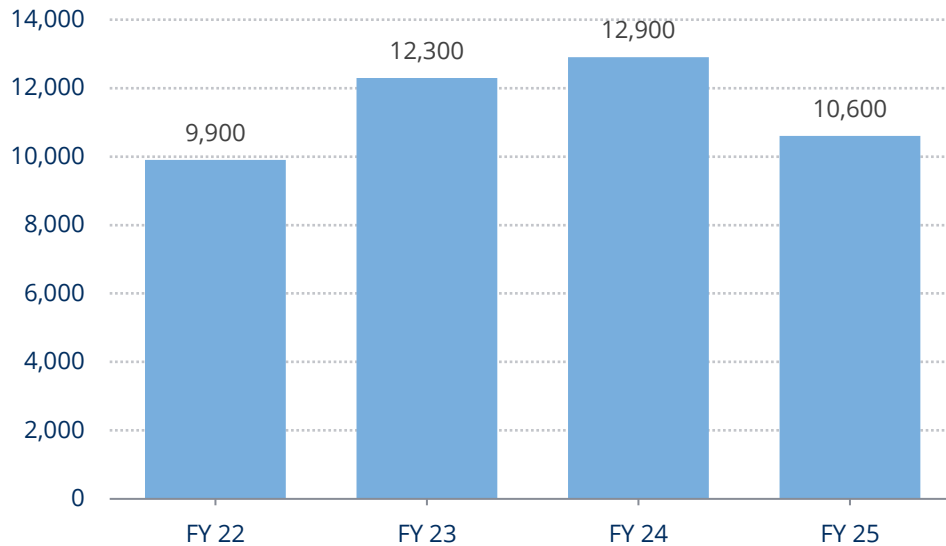


Figure 17. Annual ridership on Route 18 by fiscal year

Ons and offs by stop are listed in Error! Reference source not found. below. Other than the Gold Runner transfer station at Hanford, the two San Luis Obispo stops together contributed the highest ridership with roughly 4,900 ons and offs. While this represents a modest level of ridership, annual data reveals a strong seasonality to ridership patterns, suggesting that the majority of ridership to San Luis Obispo occurs during peak university-related travel periods, supporting the decision to reduce service on a seasonal basis. Visalia also exhibited relatively low ridership with 2,170 annual passengers, but this service has been chosen to continue year-round due to lower operating costs and the feasibility of a partnership with the local public transit operator. Santa Maria has a similarly low level of ridership, with 2,000 annual ons and offs, and has been discontinued due to ridership not sufficiently justifying costs along this segment of the route. This ridership data does not yet reflect the recent changes to the Route 18 service pattern.

Table 20: Ons and offs by stop for Route 18, for the latest year of available data (Mar 2025 – Feb 2026)

STOP	ONS/OFFS (MAR '25 – FEB '26)
<i>Hanford (Transfer)</i> ¹	8,957
San Luis Obispo	3,199
Visalia	2,170
Santa Maria	2,003
San Luis Obispo (Cal Poly)	1,735

¹ Hanford ridership (ons and offs) includes transfers

Grover Beach	1,454
Paso Robles	1,097
Atascadero	419
Lemoore	414

Partnerships and Finances

Route 18 was originally operated by Orange Belt Stages which went out of business in 2020. Following Orange Belt Stage’s closure, American Star operated the route through an interline agreement with Amtrak. After American Star recently opted to pull out of this agreement due to poor performance, SJJPA and Amtrak sought a new partnership structure to reconfigure the route.

Route 18 is now operated under a direct contracting agreement between Amtrak and American Star for seasonal service between Hanford and San Luis Obispo. An SJJPA contract with public operator Kings County Area Public Transit Agency (KCAPTA) permits KART to operate the year-round segment between Hanford and Visalia. In the future, Visalia Transit is expected to operate additional service on this route as part of the Cross Valley Corridor Phase 1¹. KART service does not operate on Sundays and on New Years Day, Presidents Day, Memorial Day, 4th of July, Labor Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.

Bus-only ticketing has always been active on Route 18 but has not sufficiently counteracted the route’s decline in ridership in recent years.

Comprehensive operating cost and cost effectiveness data for Route 18 are not available due to the nature of the Amtrak interlining agreement. A financial review of Route 18 determined that even in pre-pandemic ridership levels, the route was not cost effective with a cost recovery ratio of 61%. Declining ridership has led to sustained decreases in cost effectiveness, and in order to break even and sustain the original service plan the route would require an additional 27,900 annual passengers.

¹ The Cross Valley Corridor Plan proposes a transit corridor between Lindsay and Lemoore, including connectivity between Hanford and Visalia. Phase 1 focuses on improved express bus service along the corridor.

Route 19: Bakersfield – Riverside – San Bernardino



Figure 18. Map of Route 19

Service Overview

Route 19 connects Bakersfield to Riverside and San Bernardino via Pasadena. Route 19 formerly extended to Indio and Hemet, but these portions of the route were discontinued in 2020 due to low ridership.

Schedule

Route 19 runs two daily round trips from Bakersfield to San Bernardino, offering connections to the Gold Runner in both directions between 10:30 AM and 12:45 PM and between 4:00 and 5:00 PM. Transfers are scheduled between 6 and 22 minutes. **Table 21** Error! Reference source not found. below shows Route 19's routing, daily round trips, and scheduled travel time.

Table 21: Schedule, Scheduled Travel Time, and Daily Round Trips

Routing	Daily RT	Scheduled Travel Time
Bakersfield – San Bernardino	2	4h 5m

Ridership

Route 19 had just over 41,700 total riders in FY25. **Figure 19** below represents a chart of annual ridership by fiscal year for Route 19, starting from 2021. Ridership has remained largely stable in recent years; however, there was a slight decline from FY 24 to FY25.

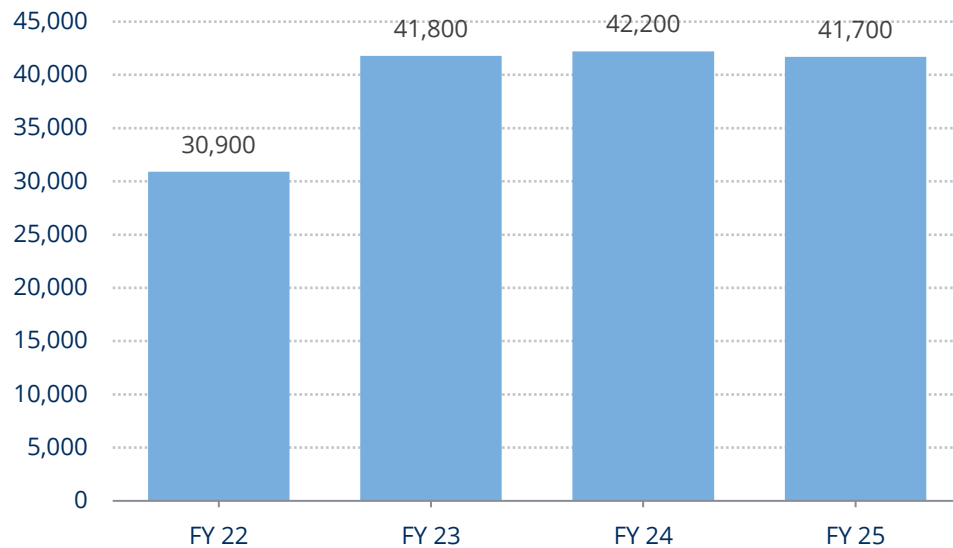


Figure 19. Annual ridership on Route 19 by fiscal year

Ons and offs by stop are listed in **Table 22** below. Besides Bakersfield, which is a Gold Runner transfer station with 40,000 ons and offs, Riverside exhibits the highest ridership with 15,300 ons and offs, followed by Ontario and San Bernardino. However, given the population in the Inland Empire region, ridership in this area is lower than expected.

Table 22: Ons and offs by stop for Route 19, for the latest year of available data (Mar 2025 – Feb 2026)

STOP	ONS/OFFS (MAR '25 – FEB '26)
<i>Bakersfield (Transfer)</i> ¹	39,935
Riverside	15,365
Ontario	8,732
San Bernardino	8,370
Pasadena	5,502
Claremont	4,650
La Crescenta	388

¹ Bakersfield ridership (ons and offs) includes transfers.

Partnerships and Finances

Route 19 is operated under a direct contracting agreement between Amtrak and Alvand, a private operator. Bus-only ticketing is active on this route.

Operating costs on Route 19 totaled a little over \$1,635,100 between October 2024 and September 2025. Total California system revenue related to Route 19 totaled nearly \$1,674,700. This translates to a cost recovery ratio of 102%, signifying that Route 19 just met the threshold for cost effectiveness in 2024/2025. This is an improvement over years past where cost recovery was between 69% and 94%. In 2020, SJJPA reduced service from 4 round trips to 1 round trip, and in October 2021, service increased to 2 round trips, where it stands today. The change to 2 round trips focused on the highest performing trips, and had a positive impact on cost effectiveness, even as costs continued to rise. However, with costs expecting to rise in the future, SJJPA may need to examine additional measures to increase ridership and revenue for the service.

Route 40: Merced – San Jose

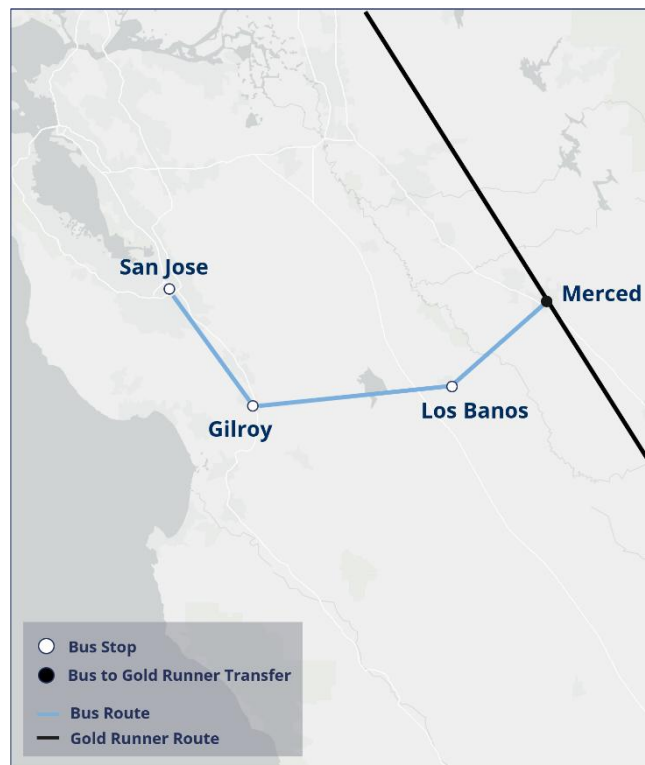


Figure 20. Map of Route 40

Service Overview

Route 40 was implemented in January 2026, connecting San Jose and Merced. This route offers a direct alternative for many passengers traveling between the Central Valley and

Bay Area compared to Route 6, which connects Stockton to San Jose. For passengers travelling between San Jose and Merced, Route 40 saves between 45 minutes and 2 hours of travel compared to Route 6, which offers a less direct journey with a transfer in Stockton. As a result, Route 40 is expected to divert some ridership from Route 6. Route 40 is also positioned to provide an important connection from early phases of California High-Speed Rail service to the Bay Area.

Schedule

Route 40 runs two daily round trips from San Jose to Merced, with Gold Runner connections available in the morning and evening. Transfer times are scheduled between 10 and 44 minutes. **Table 23** below shows Route 40's routing, daily round trips, and scheduled travel time.

Table 23: Schedule, Scheduled Travel Time, and Daily Round Trips

Routing	Daily RT	Scheduled Travel Time
San Jose – Merced	2	2h 35m

Ridership

Route 40 was implemented in January 2026 and thus has limited historical ridership data. Available ridership data from January 2026 to April 2026 is illustrated below in **Figure 21**. Available Route 40 monthly ridership for 2026 **Figure 21**. The ridership data available since Route 40 was opened indicates strong ridership growth. As the route matures, it will be critical to determine where ridership stabilizes and the corresponding impact to Route 6 ridership.

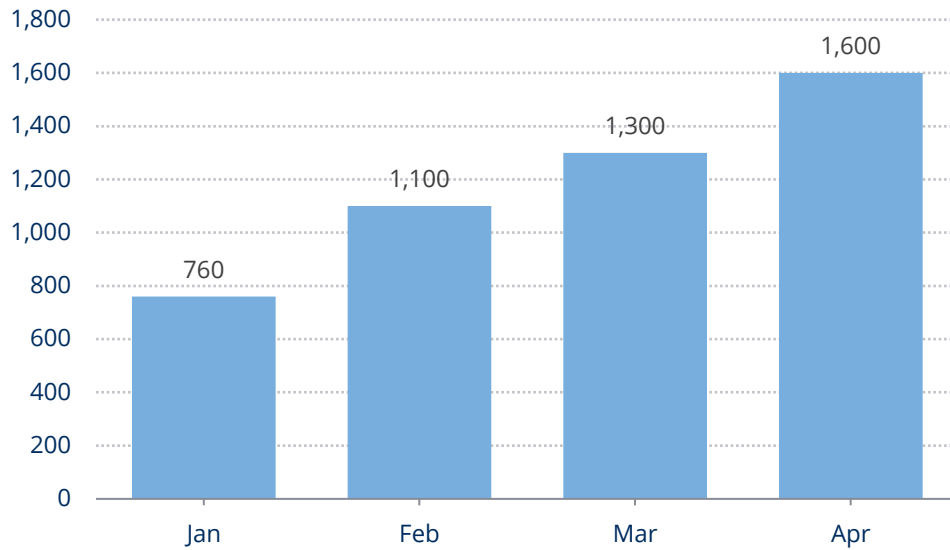


Figure 21. Available Route 40 monthly ridership for 2026

Ons and offs by stop between January 2026 and April 2026 are listed in **Table 24****Error! Reference source not found.** below. The Gold Runner transfer station at Merced has 4,400 ons and offs. San Jose has 4,300 ons and offs, signifying that the vast majority of passengers on this route are traveling between Merced and San Jose. San Jose's high ridership is largely attributable to its position as a major population center and its extensive connectivity to the broader Bay Area transportation network.

Table 24: Ons and offs by stop for Route 40, for the latest available data (January 2026 – April 2026)

STOP	ONS/OFFS (JAN '26 – APR '26) ¹
Merced (Transfer) ²	4,446
San Jose	4,252
Gilroy	459
Los Banos	257

¹ As Route 40 is a recent implementation, data is only available between January 2026 and April 2026.

² Merced ridership (ons and offs) includes transfers.

Partnerships and Finances

Route 40 is operated under a direct contracting agreement between Amtrak and American Star, a private operator. Bus-only ticketing is active on this route.

Reported operating costs between January and March 2026 were just over \$244,300. Cost effectiveness data is not yet available for this route.

Route 99: Emeryville – San Francisco

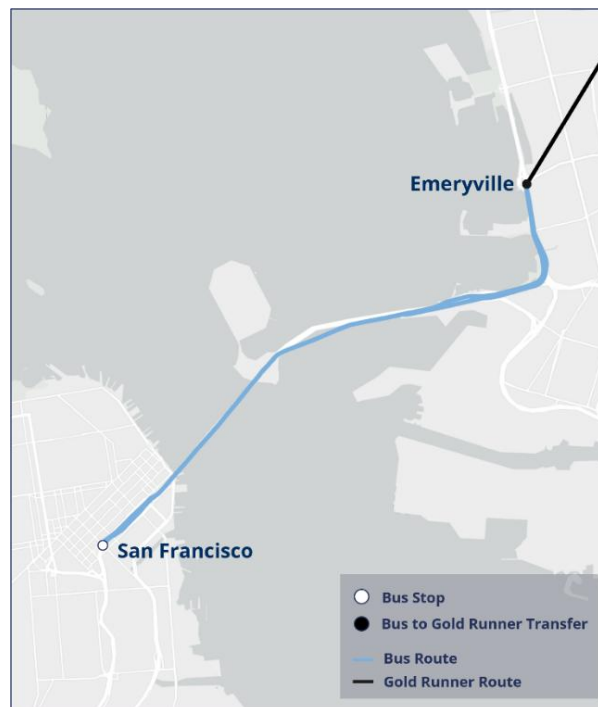


Figure 22. Map of Route 99

Service Overview

Route 99 connects San Francisco and Emeryville. This is the shortest route in the Gold Runner Thruway Bus network. While this connection is also served by BART and local bus operators, Route 99 represents a valuable and popular option for Gold Runner train passengers who may carry luggage or who may prefer a seamless connection to facilitate their journey to and from San Francisco.

Schedule

Route 99 has 19 daily round trips, 5 of which connect to the Gold Runner at Emeryville between 8:00 AM and 10:00 PM. SJJPA partially funds this route, providing funding for the 5 round trips that connect to the Gold Runner. Route 99 is a jointly managed route that is funded by SJJPA, CCJPA, and Amtrak. Gold Runner transfer times are scheduled between 6

and 18 minutes. Error! Reference source not found. **Table 25** below shows Route 40's routing, daily round trips, and scheduled travel time.

Table 25: Schedule, Scheduled Travel Time, and Daily Round Trips

Routing	Daily RT	Scheduled Travel Time
Emeryville – San Francisco	19	0h 25m – 0h 30m

Ridership

Route 99 had 42,800 total riders in FY25. **Figure 23** below represents a chart of annual ridership by fiscal year for Route 99, starting from 2021. Route 99 ridership has been relatively constant since FY 22 and exhibits a 94% ridership recovery since FY 19.

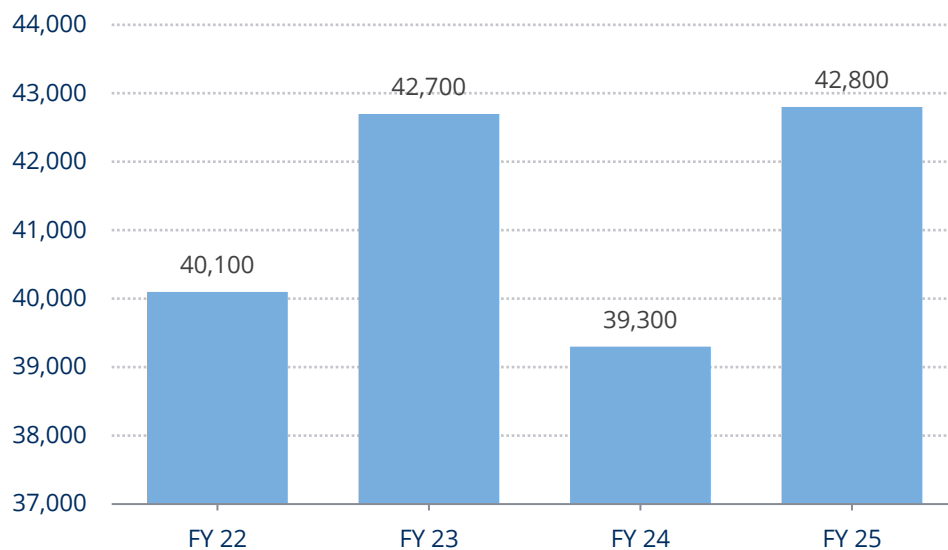


Figure 23. Annual ridership on Route 99 by fiscal year

Ons and offs by stop are listed in **Table 26** Error! Reference source not found. below. Because Route 99 only has two stops, total ons and offs are identical for both.

Table 26: Ons and offs by stop for Route 99, for the latest year of available data (Mar 2025 – Feb 2026)

Stop	Ons/Offs (Mar '25 – Feb '26)
Emeryville	43,246
San Francisco	43,246

Partnerships and Finances

Route 99 is operated under a direct contracting agreement between Amtrak and American Star, a private operator, with financial contributions shared between SJJPA, Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority (CCJPA) and long-distance Amtrak services. SJJPA is responsible for financing 22% of the route's operating costs, proportionate with the number of trips that are intended to connect with Gold Runner service at Emeryville.

Bus-only ticketing is not active on Route 99 because similar service is offered by AC Transit, the local transit agency.

SJJPA contributions toward Route 99 operating costs totaled just over \$510,700 between October 2024 and September 2025. In the same period, Route 99 contributed to \$1,734,100 of revenue for SJJPA related systems across the state. This translates to a cost recovery ratio of 340%, signifying that Route 99 exceeded the threshold for cost effectiveness in 2024/2025. This route is the most cost-effective route in the Gold Runner Thruway Bus system. The route's short length results in low operating costs, which are easily offset by the route's substantial ridership.

A stop for Route 99 at the Transbay Transit Center is currently being negotiated and would improve the intermodal connectivity provided by the route. The bus stop at San Francisco is located outside of the Salesforce Transit Center, with the terminal itself underutilized since the pandemic. Negotiations between Transbay JPA, AC Transit, Greyhound, CCJPA and SJJPA have been ongoing (with Amtrak taking the lead). The point of contention has been the high cost to use the terminal, knowing that using the station will save the route ~5-10 minutes and will give passengers an improved experience due to improved shelter options. However, Route 99 has high performance metrics and is an important Gold Runner Thruway Bus Route, and is otherwise not likely to be the focus of further optimization or modification for this study.

Conclusion

Chapter 2 establishes a baseline assessment of the Gold Runner Thruway Bus network by evaluating each route's ridership, financial performance, operating characteristics, partnership structure, and role within the broader passenger rail network. While the routes serve different markets and operating environments, several common themes emerge that help identify priorities for future improvements.

Overall, network performance varies considerably. Routes 1, 3, 6, 19, and 99 currently meet or exceed the State's cost effectiveness threshold, while Route 1C, Route 7, and the Yosemite services (Routes 15, 15A, and 15B) fall below the threshold and may benefit from service or operational adjustments. The analysis also shows that ridership alone does not determine performance. Operating costs, route design, transfer opportunities, partnerships, and integration with Gold Runner rail service all contribute to a route's financial success.

The network continues to evolve through recent service changes, including the implementation of Route 40, the upcoming replacement of Route 3R with Route 5, and the restructuring of Route 18. As additional performance data becomes available, these changes should continue to be monitored and incorporated into future planning efforts.

The findings presented in this chapter provide the foundation for Chapter 3, which evaluates networkwide strategies and route specific recommendations to improve ridership, strengthen rail connectivity, enhance the customer experience, and increase the overall cost effectiveness of the Gold Runner Thruway Bus network.

Appendix A:

Route 1 serves multiple connections to the following Gold Runner trains:

NB Buses 5713 & 5813 connect to	Gold Runner train 713 at 8:58AM
NB Buses 5715 & 5815 connect to	Gold Runner train 715 at 10:58AM
NB Buses 5717 & 5817 connect to	Gold Runner train 717 at 2:02PM
NB Buses 5719 & 5819 connect to	Gold Runner train 719 at 4:02PM
SB Buses 5702 & 5802 connect to	Gold Runner train 582 at 4:10PM
SB Buses 5710 & 5810 connect to	Gold Runner train 586 at 6:10PM
SB Buses 5712 & 5812 connect to	Gold Runner train 785 at 7:44PM

Route 3 serves multiple connections to the following Gold Runner trains:

NB Buses 3715 & 3815 connect to	Gold Runner trains 534 and 734 at 4:05PM in Sacramento and train 715 at 3:19PM in Stockton
SB Buses 3710 & 3810 connect to	Gold Runner train 710 at 10:05AM in Stockton

Appendix B:

Route 1

FY	Revenue	Expense	Net	Recovery Ratio	ROI
16-17	\$9,736,951.00	\$3,135,909.00	\$6,601,042.00	310%	210.5%
17-18	\$8,557,377.00	\$4,243,720.00	\$4,313,657.00	202%	101.6%
21-22	\$5,872,466.00	\$2,890,109.00	\$2,982,357.00	203%	103.2%
24-25	\$9,536,577.00	\$6,381,082.00	\$3,155,495.00	149%	49.5%

Route 1C

FY	Revenue	Expense	Net	Recovery Ratio	ROI
16-17	\$1,529,214.00	\$1,483,384.00	\$45,830.00	103%	3.1%
17-18	\$1,290,350.00	\$1,758,691.00	\$(468,341.00)	73%	-26.6%
21-22	\$507,224.00	\$903,871.00	\$(396,647.00)	56%	-43.9%
24-25	\$1,010,609.00	\$1,142,129.00	\$(131,520.00)	88%	-11.5%

Route 3

FY	Revenue	Expense	Net	Recovery Ratio	ROI
16-17	\$5,589,502.00	\$2,235,279.00	\$3,354,223.00	250%	150.1%
17-18	\$5,017,204.00	\$2,618,838.00	\$2,398,366.00	192%	91.6%
21-22	\$2,690,751.00	\$1,652,505.00	\$1,038,246.00	163%	62.8%
24-25	\$4,688,269.00	\$3,231,275.00	\$1,456,994.00	145%	45.1%

Route 6

FY	Revenue	Expense	Net	Recovery Ratio	ROI
16-17	\$1,220,592.00	\$1,104,748.00	\$115,844.00	110%	10.5%
17-18	\$1,164,072.00	\$1,280,825.00	\$(116,753.00)	91%	-9.1%
21-22	\$400,639.00	\$277,292.00	\$123,347.00	144%	44.5%
24-25	\$830,028.00	\$641,228.00	\$188,800.00	129%	29.4%

Route 7

FY	Revenue	Expense	Net	Recovery Ratio	ROI
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16-17	\$2,643,212.00	\$1,949,426.00	\$693,786.00	136%	35.6%
17-18	\$2,289,601.00	\$2,310,428.00	\$(20,827.00)	99%	-0.9%
21-22	\$718,302.00	\$1,174,546.00	\$(456,244.00)	61%	-38.8%
24-25	\$1,556,314.00	\$3,044,503.00	\$(1,488,189.00)	51%	-48.9%

Route 10

FY	Revenue	Expense	Net	Recovery Ratio	ROI
16-17	\$1,119,632.00	\$1,196,949.00	\$(77,317.00)	94%	-6.5%
17-18	\$984,346.00	\$1,269,862.00	\$(285,516.00)	78%	-22.5%
21-22	\$134,245.00	-	\$134,245.00	-	-
24-25	\$515,660.00	-	\$515,660.00	-	-

Route 15

FY	Revenue	Expense	Net	Recovery Ratio	ROI
16-17	\$340,584.00	\$380,236.00	\$(39,652.00)	90%	-10.4%
17-18	\$221,406.00	\$432,495.00	\$(211,089.00)	51%	-48.8%
21-22	\$94,032.00	\$137,873.00	\$(43,841.00)	68%	-31.8%
24-25	\$72,783.00	\$381,221.00	\$(308,438.00)	19%	-80.9%

Route 18

FY	Revenue	Expense	Net	Recovery Ratio	ROI
16-17	\$715,252.00	\$966,466.00	\$(251,214.00)	74%	-26.0%
17-18	\$729,140.00	\$970,293.00	\$(241,153.00)	75%	-24.9%
21-22	\$63,503.00	-	\$20,344.00	-	47.1%
24-25	\$126,730.00	-	\$46,634.00	-	58.2%

Route 19

FY	Revenue	Expense	Net	Recovery Ratio	ROI
16-17	\$2,152,807.00	\$2,300,087.00	\$(147,280.00)	94%	-6.4%
17-18	\$1,977,263.00	\$2,849,079.00	\$(871,816.00)	69%	-30.6%
21-22	\$856,901.00	\$1,234,783.00	\$(377,882.00)	69%	-30.6%
24-25	\$1,674,702.00	\$1,635,106.00	\$39,596.00	102%	2.4%

Route 99

FY	Revenue	Expense	Net	Recovery Ratio	ROI
16-17	\$1,928,779.00	\$723,752.00	\$1,205,027.00	266%	166.5%
17-18	\$1,657,456.00	\$723,311.00	\$934,145.00	229%	129.1%
21-22	\$1,107,429.00	\$275,537.00	\$831,892.00	402%	301.9%
24-25	\$1,734,075.00	\$510,745.00	\$1,223,330.00	340%	239.5%

Appendix C:

Route 1C ridership has rebounded well following COVID-19. The inclusion of bus only ticketing for Route 1C seems to have modestly contributed to a ridership recovery trend that existed prior to that possibility. However, upon the implementation of bus only ticketing on Route 1C, bus-only tickets sold for this Gold Runner route helped offset the decline in the amount of connecting tickets sold.

