




November 28, 2018

To: Members of the Board of Directors

From: Jennifer L. Bergener, Managing Director 

Subject: Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor Trends for the Third Quarter of Federal Fiscal Year 2017-18

Overview

A report on ridership, revenue, and on-time performance trends for passenger rail services on the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo rail corridor, including the Pacific Surfliner, Metrolink, and COASTER, covering the third quarter of federal fiscal year 2017-18, is presented for consideration.

Recommendation

Receive and file as an information item.

Background

The 351-mile Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) rail corridor travels through a six-county coastal region in Southern California and is the busiest state-supported intercity passenger rail corridor in the United States. The LOSSAN rail corridor includes 41 stations and more than 150 daily passenger trains, with an annual ridership of more than 2.9 million on Pacific Surfliner intercity trains and 4.5 million on Metrolink and COASTER commuter trains.

Discussion

This report provides an update on the performance of the passenger rail services on the LOSSAN rail corridor by presenting the current trends of the service in three specific areas: usage (ridership and passenger miles), efficiency (revenue and farebox recovery), and quality (on-time performance and customer satisfaction). The report includes the Pacific Surfliner intercity passenger rail service, as well as commuter rail service on Metrolink's Ventura County Line (VCL) and Orange County Line (OCL), and the North County Transit District's COASTER system. Amtrak national data is included for comparative purposes. The reporting period is the third quarter of federal fiscal year (FFY) 2017-18, covering the months

of April, May, and June 2018. This report has been delayed due to extensive delays in the Amtrak reporting process.

Usage

For the third quarter of FFY 2017-18, total LOSSAN rail corridor ridership on the three services was 2,112,379, a 1.0 percent decrease when compared to the same period the previous year. A 24-month ridership chart for the LOSSAN rail corridor, with the specific performance of each service, can be found in Figure 1.1.

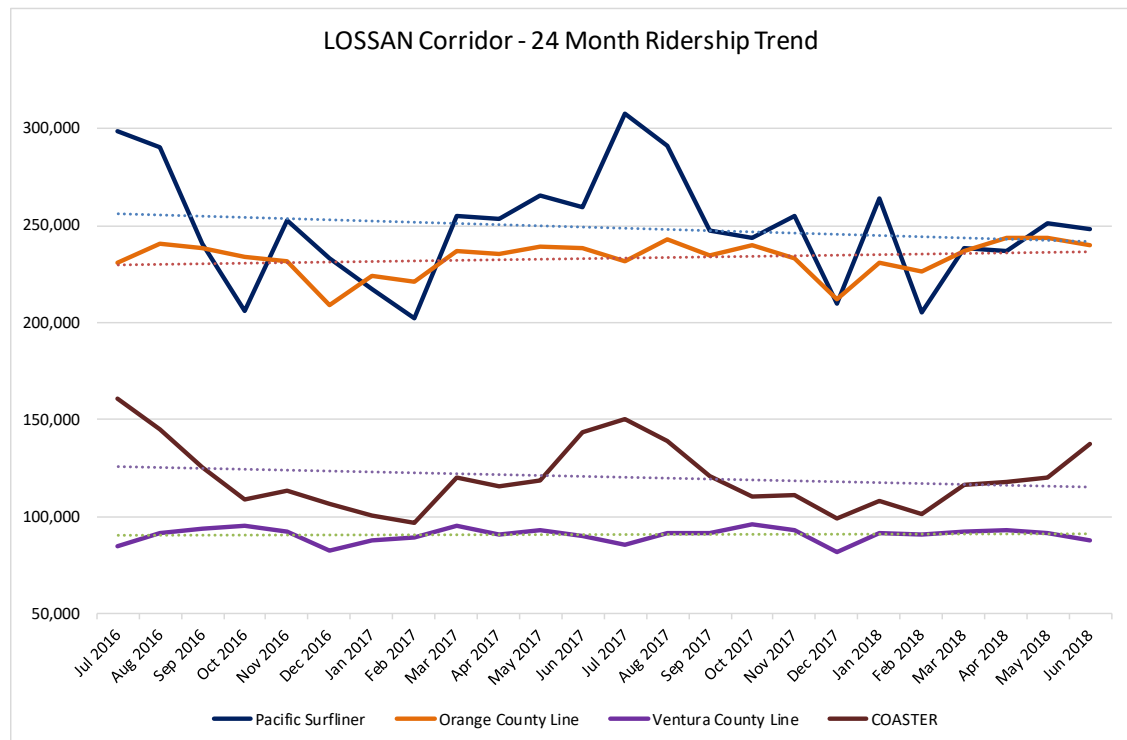


Figure 1.1

The 24 months of ridership data included in Figure 1.1 provides a more accurate indicator of the overall growth along the corridor. Due to seasonal variances, a complete ridership trend is difficult to discern from a single 12-month period. Including 24 months of data accounts for the seasonal variation and provides sufficient information to allow for the development of a linear trendline for each service. In addition to this overall corridor data, details on the performance of each service are provided below.

Pacific Surfliner

A large part of the overall decline of LOSSAN rail corridor ridership can be attributed to the Pacific Surfliner (San Luis Obispo to San Diego) intercity passenger rail service ridership, which decreased during the third quarter of FFY 2017-18 by 5.4 percent when compared to the same period last year. This decline reverses the previous year's ridership increase and puts ridership at pre-2016 levels as is demonstrated in Figure 1.2. Pacific Surfliner ridership in this report includes Metrolink and COASTER pass holders utilizing the Rail 2 Rail (R2R) Program, which allows Metrolink monthly pass holders and COASTER passengers to ride Pacific Surfliner trains within the stations identified on their valid fare media, subject to certain restrictions. This is the first full quarter that includes peak-period service between Los Angeles and Ventura – Santa Barbara counties which was implemented in April 2018. A separate staff report was prepared with a detailed analysis on the impact of the peak-period service as well as the ridership decreases experienced.

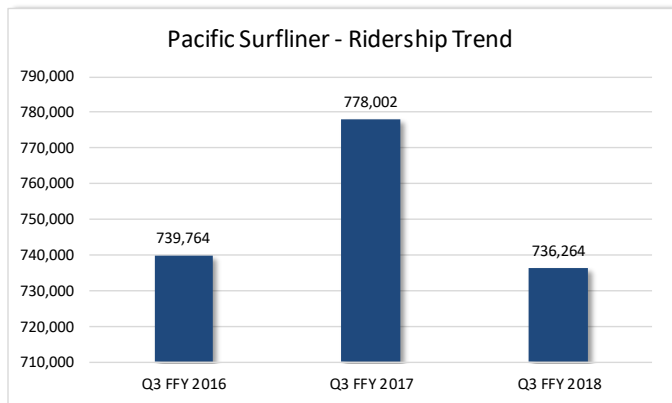


Figure 1.2

Metrolink

Overall LOSSAN rail corridor ridership was positively impacted by the minor ridership increases experienced by Metrolink's OCL as demonstrated in Figure 1.3. The VCL, which serves East Ventura to Los Angeles, experienced a 0.1 percent ridership decrease in the third quarter compared to the same period last year. The OCL, which serves Los Angeles to Oceanside, saw a 2.1 percent increase in ridership over the same report period in the prior year.

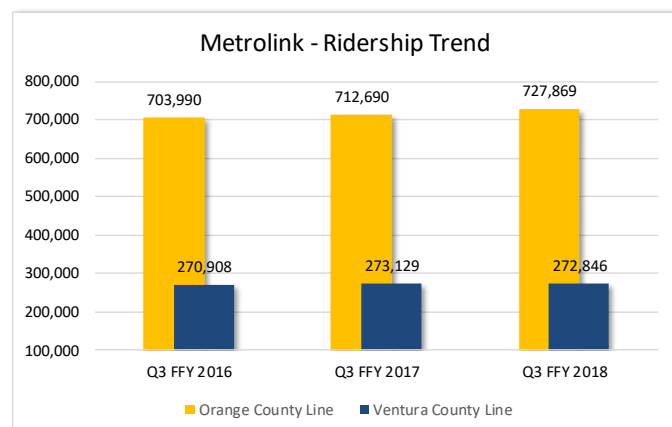


Figure 1.3

Metrolink system ridership increased by 1.6 percent in the third quarter of FFY 2017-18 when compared to the same period in FFY 2016-17.

Historically, Metrolink's official ridership has been based on conductor counts. Beginning in FY 2016-17, Metrolink began transitioning from conductor counts to ticket sales as the primary ridership metric. Beginning with the second quarter report of FFY 2017-18, Metrolink ridership has been reported based on the ticket sales metric. Historical performance has also been updated to reflect ticket sales. Past corridor trends reports will differ from the currently reported ridership values, since those values were based on conductor counts. Metrolink pass holders riding Pacific Surfliner trains, utilizing the R2R Program, averaged 1,181 per weekday for the third quarter of FFY 2017-18, which is a decrease of 11.0 percent compared to the same period last year.

COASTER

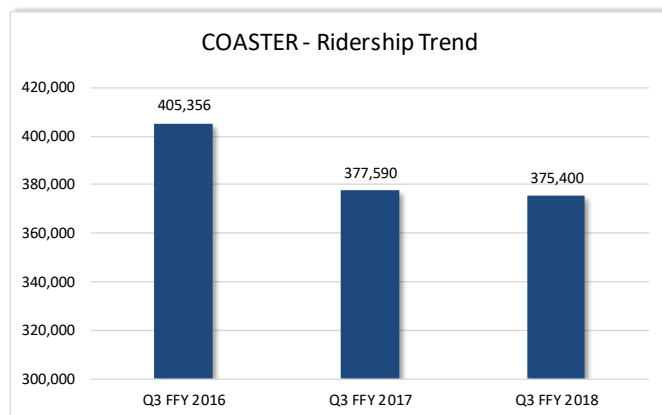


Figure 1.4

COASTER (serving Oceanside to San Diego) ridership saw a decrease of 0.6 percent during the third quarter of FFY 2017-18, when compared to the same period the prior year as shown in Figure 1.4.

The third quarter of FFY 2017-18, saw an average of 167 total COASTER pass holders per day on Pacific Surfliner trains,

utilizing the R2R program. This was a decrease of 46.2 percent when compared to last year. This decrease is consistent with the forecasted loss associated with the elimination of two COASTER stations from the R2R Program in October 2017.

Amtrak System

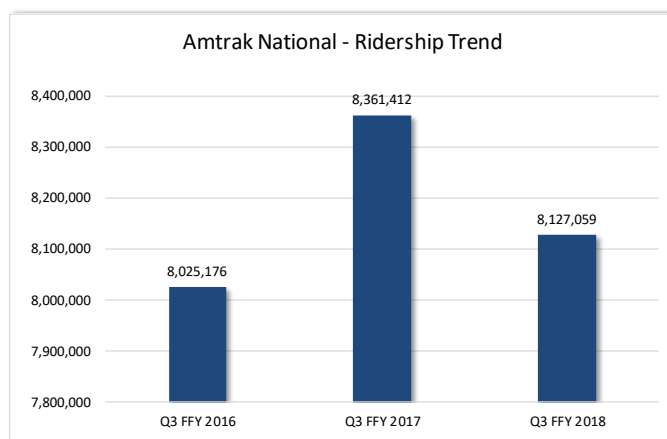


Figure 1.5

Amtrak service nationwide had a cumulative ridership decrease of 2.8 percent for the third quarter of FFY 2017-18 compared with the same period the prior year, as demonstrated in Figure 1.5.

Amtrak's Coast Starlight (Seattle to Los Angeles) likewise saw ridership decrease by 3.9 percent in the

third quarter compared with the same period last year. The Capitol Corridor (Auburn/Sacramento to Oakland and San Jose) and the San Joaquins Corridor (Sacramento/Oakland to Bakersfield) are the other two California State-supported intercity passenger rail services operated by Amtrak, and although serving significantly different markets, do provide a comparison to the Pacific Surfliner service. Ridership on the Capitol Corridor increased by 4.8 percent and San Joaquins ridership decreased by 7.9 percent in the third quarter compared to the same period last year.

Passenger Miles

A passenger mile is defined as one passenger traveling one mile. As an example, 10 passengers, each traveling 100 miles, would then generate 1,000 passenger miles. This metric depicts the growth in passenger usage and distance traveled.

The Pacific Surfliner generated over 63.8 million passenger miles during the third quarter of FFY 2017-18, which is a 4.6 percent decrease compared to the same period in the prior year. Factoring in the average pounds of carbon dioxide emissions per passenger mile in a private automobile versus riding on passenger rail, those 63.8 million passenger miles resulted in a reduction of over 22,990 metric tons of greenhouse gases. The impact that this has on the environment cannot be understated. The pollution eliminated is the equivalent of burning over 25,000,000 pounds of coal.

Efficiency

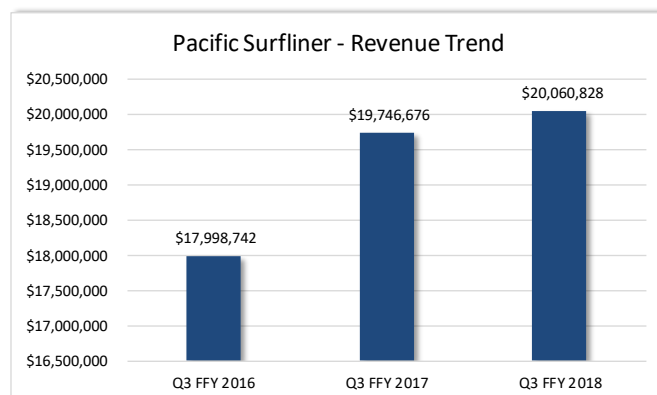


Figure 1.6

Revenue

Despite the overall loss in ridership, the Pacific Surfliner's ticket revenue growth trend continued with a modest increase of 1.6 percent for the third quarter of FFY 2017-18 when compared with the same period in the prior year as shown in Figure 1.6. This can be attributed to growth in business class ridership

and increased revenue associated with the fare restructuring instituted in March 2018.

For the Capitol Corridor, total revenue increased by 2.4 percent for the third quarter, whereas the San Joaquin corridor saw a decrease of 14.4 percent, and the Coast Starlight decreased by 6.9 percent.

Farebox Recovery

The Pacific Surfliner is legislatively required to achieve a minimum of 55 percent farebox recovery. As a performance measure, farebox recovery is normally calculated on an annual basis. Expenses throughout the year are not linear and can cause significant fluctuations in the farebox recovery ratio from quarter to quarter.

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Division of Rail and Mass Transportation (DRMT) reports quarterly to the California Transportation Commission (CTC) on all state-supported corridors via the *California Department of Transportation's Intercity Passenger Rail Operations Report*. On October 17, 2018, Caltrans DRMT reported to the CTC on the third quarter of FFY 2017-18 (fourth quarter of state fiscal year 2017-18) and indicated the Pacific Surfliner realized a 72.2 percent farebox recovery ratio.

Quality

On-Time Performance

The methodologies for calculating on-time performance (OTP) vary significantly between intercity and commuter rail services. Commuter trains are considered late if trains arrive six or more minutes late to the terminal location. Pacific Surfliner trains are considered late if trains arrive 15 or more minutes after scheduled arrival times.

In the third quarter of FFY 2017-18, average endpoint Pacific Surfliner OTP was 83.8 percent, which was a 29.9 percent increase over the prior year. All-station OTP, which is calculated by combining and averaging OTP at each station, averaged 86.0 percent. By comparison, the endpoint OTP on the Capitol Corridor averaged 87.9 percent, and the San Joaquins averaged 79.9 percent during the report period. Amtrak system wide endpoint OTP averaged 75.1 percent for the third quarter.

A monthly OTP trend for the Pacific Surfliner can be seen in Figure 1.7. The LOSSAN Agency continues to work collaboratively with our partners to identify operational improvements that can favorably impact OTP. A primary goal of the October 2017 schedule change was to improve reliability and OTP, and as is indicated by Figure 1.7, favorable results are being seen from these efforts. January 2018 saw a significant dip in OTP. However, this was as a result of the

weather-related delays that were experienced throughout the corridor during that month.

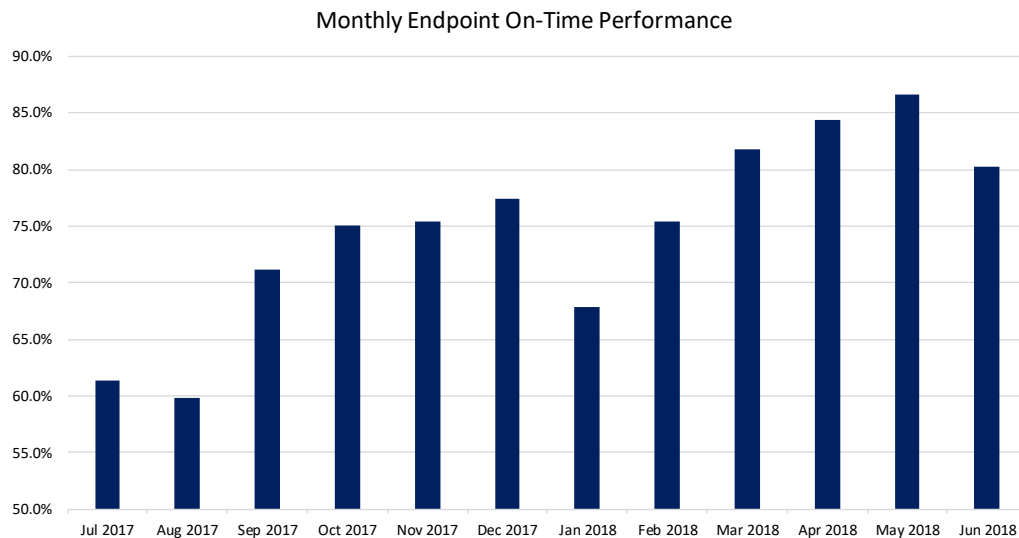


Figure 1.7

Customer Satisfaction

Amtrak reports an Electronic Customer Satisfaction Index (eCSI) score monthly for all routes, in which a 'very satisfied' percentage is calculated out of 100 passengers via surveying. For the third quarter of FFY 2017-18, the Pacific Surfliner scored an average eCSI of 88 percent. Analysis has shown that the biggest drivers for this continue to be issues with reliability or on-time performance, and a lack of information given about problems or delays on the train.

Additional Performance Indicators

Food and Beverage Sales

The LOSSAN Agency's focus on improving service quality and the customer experience has prompted additional attention to the food and beverage selections offered in the Pacific Surfliner Café car. Continual effort is being made to ensure that menu items are meeting the expectations of our passengers. As part of that effort, LOSSAN Agency staff closely monitors food

<u>Sales Category</u>	<u>Quarter 3 FFY 2016-17</u>	<u>Quarter 3 FFY 2017-18</u>	<u>Increase</u>
Baked Goods	\$94,451	\$118,238	25.2%
Beer	\$320,754	\$286,827	-10.6%
Beverages	\$298,937	\$341,591	14.3%
Dairy Products	\$3,985	\$7,914	98.6%
Packaged Snack Foods	\$790,693	\$905,850	14.6%
Fresh Prepared Foods	\$190,571	\$167,535	-12.1%
Liquor	\$111,152	\$128,078	15.2%
Miscellaneous Merchandise	\$5,678	\$6,197	9.1%
Salads	\$19,090	\$15,395	-19.4%
Wine	\$390,768	\$428,371	9.6%
	\$2,226,079	\$2,405,995	8.1%

Figure 1.8

and beverage sales in an effort to gauge the success of what is being offered and to highlight items that need to be adjusted.

For the third quarter of FFY 2017-18, food and beverage sales increased by 8.1 percent over the same quarter in the prior year. The significant decrease in the sale of salads is due to a change in the way that Amtrak categorizes some food items as of the previous quarter. Details on the performance of each specific sales category are included in Figure 1.8.

Amtrak Thruway Bus Service

Pacific Surfliner rail service is supplemented by Amtrak's network of Thruway buses that connect passengers throughout the LOSSAN rail corridor. The bus routes function as part of the Pacific Surfliner service and include:

- Route 4: Los Angeles to Santa Barbara/Goleta. Two daily one-way trips.
- Route 17: Santa Barbara to San Luis Obispo to Oakland (where it connects with Capitol Corridor). Eleven daily one-way trips.
- Route 39: Fullerton to Palm Springs and Coachella Valley. Four daily one-way trips.

For the third quarter of FFY 2017-18, ridership on these three routes decreased by 14.0 percent when compared to the same period in the prior year.

Additional Metrics

A summary table of the ridership, revenue, and OTP for the LOSSAN rail corridor can be found in Attachment A. There are additional performance indicators that were previously included as attachments to this report, items such as boardings/alightings by station and ridership/revenue by station pair. Due to issues with the data received from Amtrak, these items are not included with this report. They will be included with future reports, once the data issues with Amtrak have been resolved.

Summary

This report provides an update of trends for the usage, efficiency, and quality of the passenger rail services on the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo rail corridor, including the Pacific Surfliner, Metrolink, and COASTER for the third quarter of federal fiscal year 2017-18. During the third quarter, total Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo rail corridor ridership decreased by 1.0 percent compared to the same period last year. The strong growth trend of ridership and revenue experienced by the Pacific Surfliner over the past few quarters has waned, with ridership decreasing by 5.4 percent, and revenue increasing by 1.6 percent, when compared to the same period last year.

Attachment

- A. Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor Performance Summary, Third Quarter Federal Fiscal Year 2017-18

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