

San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission
Graduate Student Project

BACKGROUND

The San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission is a Joint Powers Authority consisting of the Cities of Escalon, Lathrop, Lodi, Manteca, Ripon, Stockton, Tracy and the County of San Joaquin. The Board of Directors consists of six (6) elected officials appointed by the San Joaquin Council of Governments, and is supplemented by two (2) elected officials appointed by the Alameda County Congestion Management Agency to address rail service issues affecting Alameda County.

The Rail Commission relies significantly on San Joaquin County's Measure K ½ cent transportation sales tax and its ability to leverage other regional, state and federal funding sources. Similar transportation sales taxes in Alameda and Santa Clara Counties contribute toward the operation of the Altamont Commuter Express.

Altamont Commuter Express (ACE) is operated over tracks owned, maintained, and dispatched by Union Pacific Railroad (UP) and the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board (PCJPB), which operates Caltrain. ACE provides service between Stockton and San Jose with stops at Lathrop/Manteca, Tracy, Vasco Road, Livermore, Pleasanton, Fremont, Great America, Santa Clara, and Diridon Station (San Jose). ACE began service between Stockton and San Jose in 1998 with two daily roundtrips. In March 2001, ACE added a third roundtrip, and in August 2006, ACE added a fourth (midday) roundtrip.

This Graduate Student Project Program is designated to support the work of promising graduate students doing research related to, or in conjunction with, transit and/or transportation.

Specifically, the Graduate Student Project Program supports precepted program management for a graduate-level student in a transit systems-related degree program. The student will generate a project report, analysis, product, and/or publishable paper on a topic demonstrating the knowledge of several disciplines related to the improvement of transit, transportation, and travel/commuting status of communities. The student will give a presentation to the Board at the conclusion of the project.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The agency is conducting a variety of activities that are related to our three core functions: (1) being dedicated to passengers; (2) being responsive to change; and (3) being committed to growth. By being dedicated to passengers, we strive to constantly evaluate the transit needs of travelers within the region and the state. Responsive to change, SJRRC will seek to incorporate commuter rail into the ever-changing, cutting-edge transportation trends. As an agency committed to growth, we will strive to provide the best possible alternative transportation options for the expanding population.

Topics:

We are seeking a graduate student to assist us with a research project during the fall 2007 semester. Among our numerous activities, the following two projects would most benefit from a graduate student researcher:

- 1) **ACE as an Environmentally Friendly Transit Agency:** As the world moves into a heightened awareness of preservation and ecology, the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission desires to be on the cutting-edge of “green” technologies and environmentally sound operations. The student will research new products and systems by which ACE can operate under cleaner standards. The student will evaluate all aspects of ACE operations – ticketing, communications/media, rolling stock, and advertising – and recommend ways in which the agency should address its use of assets and resources. The student can research anything from actual products to brand new systems and technologies. Based upon the findings and recommendations from the student, the SJRRC Board of Directors may take action by updating and/or changing the current systems and procedures. The ideal candidate for this project will have concentrated experience in environmental studies and will BE INNOVATIVE.
- 2) **ACE as a Piece of the State’s Complex Transit Puzzle:** Central California, as a gateway to the rest of the state, is connected by many convenient transit options. The ACE Train is just one piece of the puzzle in a world of shuttles, bicycles, buses, trains, and other alternate modes of transportation. SJRRC seeks to “map out” all of these options thereby making it easier for an individual to plan a completely car-free journey. The student will research every possible connection and transfer – in-part via ACE – and design, write, and implement a technical program whereby a website user could essentially plan his/her trip from point ‘A’ to point ‘B.’ The finished product will be incorporated into the existing ACE website for use by the general public. The ideal candidate will have concentrated experience in databases, technology, HTML, and software programming, and will BE INNOVATIVE.

Leadership:

The student will work with Thomas W. Reeves, SJRRC’s Coordinator for Strategic Development and Communications. Thomas can work with the student’s professor

and/or academic advisor to develop a project plan that meets both the needs of the academic program and of the Agency.

Timing:

The project will begin as early as possible in September 2007, and continue through the end of your school's academic semester. At the conclusion of the project, the student will present the project findings to the SJRRC Board of Directors.

Product:

The specifics of the final report would depend on the project and the academic requirements of the student's needs. The agency's general expectation is that this would be a substantial report (20-40 pages), and would include case studies, methodology, findings, recommendations, and appropriate appendices. A Power Point Presentation will also be required as a supplement and summary to the final report, and will be presented to the Board at the conclusion of the project. The project plan will set benchmarks for various components of the project, to ensure that expectations and deadlines are clear to the student, the academic advisor, and to SJRRC.

Funding:

This is a paid project management opportunity. SJRRC has allocated \$5,000 per project for the fall semester project, exclusive of any pre-approved student expenses related to the research.

APPLICATION PROCESS

The SJRRC Graduate Student Project Program is open to students pursuing professional training through Masters or Doctorate programs in transit, transportation, transportation management, transportation systems, transportation policy, planning, environmental engineering, or related fields at accredited institutions of higher learning. Student can be enrolled in full- or part-time study, in online- or classroom-based learning environments.

Application materials:

- **Project Statement** – A two-page summary that includes the following information: the particular topic the student is interested in, the academic course or program the student is enrolled in, the name of the professor/advisor, why the student is interested in the topic, and his/her understanding of the importance of the issue or problem. Any information that could be provided regarding the goal of the analysis, methods of analysis, data sources, a project timeline, and key project benchmarks would be viewed favorably.
- **Letter of Support** – A Letter of Support from an academic professor, advisor, or mentor must accompany the Project Statement. The letter should include the advisor's contact information.

- The student's resume or *Curriculum Vitae*, including contact information.

Please submit them to the address below:

Thomas W. Reeves
Strategic Development & Communication
San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission
Altamont Commuter Express
949 East Channel Street
Stockton, CA 95202
(209) 944-6242
(209) 944-6233 fax
thomas@acerail.com

All complete and timely applications will be reviewed by Thomas W. Reeves, Executive Director Stacey Mortensen, and at least one other member of SJRRC Administration. Staff will notify applicants of the SJRRC decision no later than 5 business days from the time we receive the application.

If you have any questions about the SJRRC Graduate Student Project Program, please contact Thomas W. Reeves.