

ORIGINAL

Decision No. 14564.

BEFORE THE RAILROAD COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA.

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In the Matter of the Application
of the City of Venice for a permit
to cross the tracks of the Pacific
Electric Railway Company between
the lines of Mildred Avenue extended
across the tracks of said Pacific
Electric Railway Company in the
City of Venice.

Application No. 10544

George Acret, City Attorney, for Applicant.
R. E. Wedekind, for Pacific Electric Railway Co.
John R. Berryman, Jr., for Los Angeles County
Grade Crossing Committee.
O. O. Clark, for Electric Pier Corporation.

BY THE COMMISSION:

O P I N I O N.

In the above entitled application the City of Venice seeks permission to construct Mildred Avenue at grade across Pacific Electric Railway Company's so-called "Venice Short Line" in the city of Venice, Los Angeles County, California.

Public hearings were held in this matter before Examiner Williams at Venice on December 11, 1924, and January 15, 1925.

On October 18, 1923, the City of Venice filed its application No. 9463 with this Commission, asking permission to construct a grade crossing over said "Short Line" railroad at the same location as applied for in the application now under consideration. By the Commission's Decision No. 13356, dated April 2, 1924,

this application was denied. It was stipulated by the interested parties that, in so far as relevant, the record in Application No. 9463 be considered in evidence in this proceeding. The Commission found in its decision in that proceeding that the grade crossing applied for would be a very hazardous one which was not justified by the public convenience and necessity shown.

The official name of the street involved herein has recently been changed from Mildred Avenue to Eighteenth Avenue, therefore this highway will hereinafter be referred to as Eighteenth Avenue.

Eighteenth Avenue is an east and west highway of the City of Venice. It extends from the business center at the water front eastward a distance of a little more than one mile. It intersects Pacific Electric Railway Company's "Venice Short Line" immediately west of Virginia Avenue. With a crossing constructed over this railroad as applied for herein, Eighteenth Avenue will be open for traffic throughout its entire length. The width of this highway is now 40 feet. It is paved from Ocean Avenue to Cloy Avenue, which is approximately 25% of its total length. That portion of Eighteenth Avenue west of the crossing applied for herein is paved with oil macadam and carries only local traffic.

The territory tributary to Eighteenth Avenue on the south side thereof and east of the railroad crossing involved herein is primarily residential property and is partially developed at this time, with many new residences under construction.

The district both north and south of Eighteenth Avenue west of the "Short Line", as well as the property to the north of Eighteenth Avenue east of this railroad, is classed as industrial property. Under present conditions, vehicular traffic between the district to the south of Eighteenth Avenue east of the "Short Line", and the business center of Venice to the northwest of the proposed

crossing is required to travel northeast along Virginia Avenue to the Washington Boulevard crossing over the said "Short Line", thence westerly to the business center of Venice, or it must travel southwesterly on Virginia Avenue to Electric Avenue or to the Speedway, thence northwesterly to the business center of Venice. The construction of a crossing as applied for herein would afford a shorter and more convenient route for this traffic than either of the two routes referred to above. The Speedway is a narrow highway, only 25 feet in width, and carries a large volume of vehicular traffic; and, because of its narrow width it is found grossly inadequate to meet the traffic needs on Sundays and holidays. The Venice Short Line follows Electric Avenue from Virginia Avenue northwest toward Santa Monica, therefore vehicular traffic on this highway northwest of Virginia Avenue encounters the railroad traffic.

Virginia Avenue is parallel to and on the easterly side of the Venice Short Line and is a part of a road plan to construct a through highway on either side of the said "Short Line" between Los Angeles and Venice. This highway in the vicinity of the proposed crossing is improved with oil macadam and carries a fairly large volume of vehicular traffic, as it affords a connection from Washington Boulevard to the beach. The testimony shows that the City of Venice proposes to widen and pave Virginia Avenue in the near future. Applicant has shown that the grade crossing applied for herein would afford a more convenient route for through traffic on Virginia Avenue to and from the business center of Venice than is afforded under present conditions, where this traffic is required to continue on Virginia Avenue to the Speedway, or to Electric Avenue, referred to above.

The testimony shows that the County of Los Angeles is

now widening and paving Washington Boulevard between Los Angeles and the City of Venice. When the work is completed this highway will have a paved driveway 78 feet in width. The City of Venice plans to continue this improvement of Washington Boulevard throughout that portion which is situated within the city limits to an intersection with the new Leona Avenue highway.

Subsequent to the former proceedings held before the Commission relative to constructing a crossing at Eighteenth Avenue, the City of Venice opened a new boulevard 100 feet in width, known as Leona Avenue, connecting Thirty-first Street near the ocean front with that portion of Washington Boulevard running northeasterly past the city limits. Eighteenth Avenue intersects Leona Avenue immediately south of Pacific Electric Railway Company's Inglewood branch. It is evident that when the Leona Avenue-Washington Boulevard improvement is completed it will attract a very large volume of through vehicular traffic. It is also evident that the present highway system of Venice is inadequate to accommodate this large volume of traffic; therefore it is necessary to enlarge the present highway system.

It is contended that the granting of this application will permit Eighteenth Avenue to be made one of the major highways of the City of Venice and, being such a highway, it will receive a portion of the Washington Boulevard traffic as the City plans to distribute the Washington Boulevard through traffic over four major highways in the city, namely, Leona Avenue, Eighteenth Avenue, Venice Boulevard and Washington Boulevard.

The "Venice Short Line" of the Pacific Electric is an important interurban line between Los Angeles and the west beach cities. There are normally 114 passenger trains operated over

this railroad per day during the week days, with two extra trains on Saturdays and ten extra trains on Sundays, in addition to freight trains. There is at this time a station stop near the proposed crossing, but unless the trains stop to pick up or discharge passengers at this point, they travel at fairly high rates of speed in this vicinity. Eighteenth Avenue intersects the railroad at an angle of about 33 degrees, which would require a sharp turn for northeast-bound traffic on Virginia Avenue desiring to cross the railroad at this location. In the event the proposed crossing is constructed, the acute angle should be abolished by rounding off the corner. The view conditions at the proposed crossing are fairly good at this time.

The Los Angeles County Grade Crossing Committee recommends the granting of this application, contingent upon certain conditions, among which were that Eighteenth Avenue be paved to its connection with Leona Avenue; that an automatic flagman be installed; that the acute corner at the crossing be rounded off, and that a uniformed officer be stationed to protect this crossing during hours of heavy traffic on the highways. The suggestions of this Committee relating to the protection of the grade crossing if constructed were agreed to by applicant.

The evidence shows that the Electric Pier Corporation plans to build a large electric pier at the foot of Center Street in the City of Venice. Center Street intersects Eighteenth Avenue at a point about 300 feet west of the crossing proposed herein. If and when this pier is built, it will materially increase the public necessity of the proposed grade crossing, as the natural outlet for Center Street is Eighteenth Avenue.

It is evident that the proposed crossing if constructed will create a hazardous situation and would ordinarily justify a

grade separation. If a grade separation were to be effected, it would appear desirable to construct the highway under the railroad. In the construction of such a grade separation, underground water would be encountered which would add materially to the cost of the construction, as well as to the maintenance of the same. There are also other physical conditions here, which do not lend themselves readily to a grade separation. The adjoining street intersection; the acute angle of the crossing and the providing for the Inglewood track along the north side of Eighteenth Avenue all add to the difficulties that would be encountered in the construction of such an improvement. Therefore, it appears that a grade separation cannot be justified at this location at this time.

After due consideration of the evidence in this proceeding, it appears that public convenience and necessity require the granting of this application, as the crossing will afford a public convenience for local traffic to the district east of the railroad and south of Eighteenth Avenue, and will in addition afford a public convenience for through traffic leading to and from Washington Boulevard. It is recognized that the grade crossing applied for herein, if constructed, will create a hazardous condition and should be protected with certain restrictions. Applicant has volunteered to maintain a traffic officer at this crossing during those hours on Sundays, Holidays and summer evenings when the volume of vehicular traffic on the highways is heavy. This protection appears justified and should be required. It is evident that the hazard involved also justifies the installation of an automatic flagman to provide protection when the uniformed officer is not on duty.

With these restrictions, it is considered that this application should be granted and it will be so ordered.

O R D E R.

The City of Venice, a municipal corporation of the sixth class in the County of Los Angeles, State of California, having applied to this Commission for an order authorizing the construction of Eighteenth Avenue (Mildred Avenue) at grade across Pacific Electric Railway Company's so-called "Venice Short Line", a public hearing herein having been held, the Commission being apprised of the facts, the matter being under submission and now being ready for decision,

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the City of Venice be and it is hereby authorized to construct Eighteenth Avenue (Mildred Avenue) at grade across Pacific Electric Railway Company's so-called "Venice Short Line" at the location shown on the maps attached to the application.

Said crossing to be constructed subject to the following conditions, nsmely:

(1) The entire expense of constructing the crossing, with a rounded corner adjacent to the westerly side of Virginia Avenue and the southerly side of Eighteenth Avenue, shall be borne by applicant. The cost of its maintenance up to lines two (2) feet outside of the outside rails shall be borne by applicant. The maintenance of that portion of the crossing between lines two (2) feet outside of the outside rails shall be borne by Pacific Electric Railway Company.

(2) The crossing shall be constructed of a width not less than twenty-four (24) feet and at an angle of thirty-three (33) degrees to the railroad, and with grades of approach not greater than two (2) per cent; shall be protected by suitable crossing signs and shall in every way be made safe for the passage thereon of vehicles and other road traffic.

(3) An automatic flagman shall be installed for the protection of said crossing at the sole expense of applicant; said automatic flagman to be of a type and installed in accordance with plans or data approved by this Commission. The maintenance of said flagman shall be borne by Pacific Electric Railway Company.

(4) Applicant shall, within thirty (30) days thereafter, notify this Commission, in writing, of the completion of the installation of said crossing.

(5) If said crossing shall not have been installed within one year from the date of this order, the authorization herein granted shall then lapse and become void, unless further time is granted by subsequent order.

(6) Applicant shall maintain, at its sole expense, a traffic officer for the protection of this crossing during those hours of Sundays, holidays and summer evenings when traffic is heavy, in accordance with a schedule which shall have the approval of this Commission.

(7) The Commission reserves the right to make such further orders relative to the location, construction, operation, maintenance and protection of said crossing as to it may seem right and proper, and to revoke its permission if, in its judgment, the public convenience and necessity demand such action.

For all other purposes, the effective date of this order shall be twenty (20) days from and after the date hereof.

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 14th day of February, 1925.

H. B. Brundage
W. Sealey
Ernest Shore
George D. Squires

Commissioners