

Decision No. 18301

ORIGINAL

BEFORE THE RAILROAD COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the matter of the application of the Petaluma & Santa Rosa Railroad Company, a corporation, for authority to remodel its passenger equipment, so as to operate the same with one employee.
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Application No. 13544.

Mr. Donald Geary and Mr. E. H. Maggard,
for Applicant.

WHITSELL, COMMISSIONER:

O P I N I O N

In this application the Petaluma and Santa Rosa Railroad Company, a corporation, asks for permission to install one-man passenger car operation. A public hearing was held in this matter at Santa Rosa on March 19th, 1927.

The tracks of the Petaluma and Santa Rosa Railroad Company extend in three directions from Sebastopol, viz: to the Southeast to Petaluma, a distance of 16.65 miles, to the Northeast to Santa Rosa, a distance of 7.76 miles and to the Northwest to Forestville, a distance of 7.18 miles. In addition to these three trunk lines, there is a branch line diverting from the Sebastopol-Petaluma Line at Liberty and extending in a westerly direction to Two Rocks. This branch line is approximately 5 miles in length and is operated exclusively for freight service.

The record shows that all passenger service on this system is rendered by single-car trains, except for two round trips daily between Sebastopol and Santa Rosa when a trailer car is handled for the purpose of carrying express. These cars are of a size and type used generally in interurban electric railway train service. At the

present time the cars are manned with a motorman and conductor. The passenger trains handle a small amount of express, consisting principally of cream, eggs and small packages, which produces, on the average, an income of about \$300. per month. No mail is handled on these trains. The passenger service consists of the following trains:

Between Sebastopol and Petaluma, 11 trains per day in each direction, except on Sundays when the service is reduced to 10 trains, these trains being distributed throughout the day between 6:00 A.M. and 11:00 P.M. This line hauls about 35 per cent of the total number of passengers carried on the entire system.

Between Sebastopol and Santa Rosa, 18 train movements in each direction per day. In general, this is hourly service between 7:00 A.M. and 11:00 P.M. This line carries about 50 per cent of the total passengers carried on entire system.

Between Sebastopol and Forestville, 15 train movements in each direction per day, which results in approximately an hourly service between 7:00 A.M. and 11:00 P.M. This line carries about 15 per cent of the total passengers carried on entire system.

The record shows that the maximum speed of the passenger trains is between 30 and 35 miles per hour. The passenger cars operate on a definite schedule with positive meets. The time schedule is liberal enough so that the trains ordinarily have no difficulty in maintaining their schedule.

In addition to the passenger service, the company operates freight trains over its lines. The company has 7 freight motors. Normally, two freight trains per day in each direction take care of the entire freight shipments. Additional freight trains are required during the harvest season (July to September, inclusive) to move deciduous fruits, consisting largely of apples. The record shows that in addition to the passenger trains, there are never more than two freight trains operated on any one of the three trunk lines enumerated above at one time. It is estimated that the maximum speed of these freight trains is 25 miles per hour. All the freight trains are run as extras under No. 31 Train Orders and are required to protect against

all regular trains and must be able to stop within the range of vision.

The company maintains a telephone line along its tracks with stationary phones spaced at various intervals, which are shown on the timetable, as follows:

Sebastopol-Petaluma Line - 9 telephones, with an average distance of 1.7 miles between phones;

Sebastopol-Santa Rosa Line - 5 phones, with an average distance of 1.3 miles between phones; and

Sebastopol-Forestville Line - 4 phones, with an average distance of 1.4 miles between phones. .

In addition to the stationary phones, each crew carries a portable head-set phone which affords a means of getting in touch with the dispatcher, by attaching it to the telephone wire at any point along the line.

This utility's record shows the following operating results from passenger service during the past seven years:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Passengers Carried</u>	<u>Allocated Expense</u>	<u>Gross Earnings</u>	<u>Net Earnings</u>
1920	652,540	\$ 85,590.83	\$115,451.04	\$ 29,860.21
1921	658,644	112,607.15	117,921.71	5,314.56
1922	491,672	112,941.04	96,653.68	16,287.36
1923	408,175	111,863.40	78,593.00	33,270.40
1924	358,852	88,945.52	62,939.27	26,006.25
1925	279,962	74,646.25	48,513.07	26,133.18
1926	273,789	82,671.04	46,269.10	36,401.94

This record clearly indicates that the passenger business of this utility is steadily declining and unless some material change takes place, in the way of an increase in volume of business, a modification of rates or a reduction of the operating expenses, the company will continue to incur substantial losses from this service. The record indicates that no material saving can be effected by a reduction in the number of trains without seriously interfering with the service. Applicant contends that if the passenger service is further reduced the loss in revenue will exceed the saving in operating expenses.

The application now under consideration looks toward a decrease in operating expense without a reduction in the service. E. H. Maggard, President and General Manager of the Petaluma and Santa Rosa Railroad Company, testified that the company did not expect to make any profit out of the passenger business and desired to operate it as long as it would at least pay actual operating expenses.

The matter of establishing one-man car operation for interurban electric passenger service is a subject which justifies very careful consideration, especially on single track lines which are not protected by block signals and over which freight trains are also operated. In this particular case, where the train service is infrequent, it appears that in order to maintain the passenger service which is a material benefit to this community, every reasonable modification, consistent with safety to the travelling public and the employees of this railroad, should be effected so as to reduce the operating expenses to a minimum. The company contends that conditions do not justify the expense of installing block signals on its line and furthermore the diminishing revenue from passenger service does not warrant this expenditure if it is required solely for this class of operation.

From the record in this proceeding, with particular reference to the few trains operated on applicant's tracks, it appears that one-man car operation could be put into effect without endangering the lives of the travelling public and the employees of this company if the operation is conducted under rigid enforcement of certain regulations and safety restrictions. Under these conditions, a trial of such service would appear to be justified in this case. It is very important that if the passenger cars are to be operated by one man, all freight trains should be operated at such speed that they can at all times stop within the range of their vision. This means that in operating around sharp curves where the view is restricted and also in cases where the view is impaired by fog or other unfav-

orable weather or physical conditions, the speed of freight trains should be reduced and motormen of freight trains should at all times be prepared to stop within their range of vision. It appears reasonable that if this utility is permitted to put one-man car operation into effect, the maximum speed of freight trains on curves should be reduced to 8 miles per hour where the clear view is less than 500 feet and also the utility should provide telephone facilities at locations where the speed of freight trains is restricted. Such additional phone facilities could be provided by the installation either of stationary phones or drop lines with jack outlets. Appropriate equipment should be provided on all passenger cars operated by one man, including safety doors and dead-man control.

In view of the fact that this is somewhat of an experimental plan, it would seem proper that the permission to operate single passenger cars with one man should be granted on a trial basis for a limited time, after which the Commission can determine from the results obtained whether or not the order should be extended indefinitely, modified or annulled. If it is found that one-man car operation is hazardous to the travelling public, or the employees of this utility, permission to continue such operation should be revoked, regardless of the expense which has been incurred by the utility in converting its cars for one-man car operation, and this utility should accept this permissive authorization with a definite understanding that the expense incurred will not be considered as an argument or evidence against a modification or an annulment of this order if it is found that one-man car operation is not satisfactory and is ordered discontinued. This utility's rules and regulations should be modified to meet the situation and the utility should report to the Commission at frequent intervals as to what means it is employing to enforce the regulations governing one-man car operation and the results therefrom. Men that are employed on one-man car

operation should first be thoroughly examined, both as to their physical condition and as to their knowledge of the rules and regulations and should be re-examined at definite intervals. If one-man car operation is put into effect, the man in charge of the car should receive tickets and make change for passengers only when the car is standing.

The record shows that the company has already converted one of its cars for one-man operation at an expense of about \$1,200. This expense covers the cost of providing dead-man control, sanders, safety doors and other incidental improvements.

The Petaluma and Santa Rosa Railroad Company's Line on Sebastopol Avenue crosses the Main Line track of the Northwestern Pacific Railroad Company at a point about 2000 feet south of the latter company's station, in the City of Santa Rosa. Trains on Northwestern Pacific line travel at speeds as high as 30 miles per hour over this crossing. At the present time it is the practice for applicant's trains to flag over the tracks of the Northwestern Pacific. The fact that the Main Line of the Northwestern Pacific is paralleled by a passing track on the west side and a side track on the east side, presents a condition which materially adds to the hazard of this crossing, as the view of the Main Line may be seriously impaired by cars standing on either or both of these side tracks near the crossing. If one-man car operation is to be put into effect on applicant's tracks, reasonable protection should be provided at this grade crossing. Such protection could be afforded by either human flagman or an appropriate form of an interlocking plant, to be approved by the Commission.

Petaluma and Santa Rosa Railroad Company's tracks on Fourth Street in the City of Santa Rosa cross a branch line of the Southern Pacific Company in the north portion of the city. This track of Southern Pacific terminates at a point about one-half mile to the west of the crossing. The record shows that the speed of

Southern Pacific trains over this crossing is restricted to six miles per hour and that but one passenger train each way and several freight trains are operated daily over it. At the present time trains on the electric line flag over the Southern Pacific track. In view of the slow movement of trains on the Southern Pacific line, it appears that applicant can operate its trains over this crossing with a reasonable degree of safety by coming to a stop before crossing the tracks and not proceeding thereover until after the motorman has ascertained that it is safe so to do by looking in both directions without leaving his car and restricting the maximum speed of trains on the Southern Pacific line to six miles per hour.

The record shows that it has been the practice of the Petaluma and Santa Rosa Railroad to illuminate the markers of its trains with electric lights, power for which is supplied from the trolley line. This means of lighting does not appear to be sufficiently dependable for such an important service and in the interest of safety this utility should provide oil burning lights for train markers so that these lights will not be affected by an interference with the electric current on the line or if the trolley is off the wire.

The following form of order is recommended:

O R D E R

The Petaluma and Santa Rosa Railroad Company, having made application to remodel its passenger equipment and thereafter put into effect one-man car operation, a public hearing having been held, and the matter having been duly submitted and now being ready for decision, therefore, basing an order on the record and foregoing opinion

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that Petaluma and Santa Rosa Railroad Company be and it is hereby authorized to remodel its passenger

equipment by installing thereon safety doors, dead-man control and other appropriate equipment and thereafter operate single passenger cars with one man as a trial proposition for a period of six (6) months under the following conditions, viz:

(1) The rules of this utility shall be made appropriate for one-man car operation and shall be submitted to the Commission for approval before being made effective.

(2) Operators of one-man passenger cars shall be examined, both as to their physical condition and also as to their knowledge of the rules and regulations, before entering such service and re-examined at intervals not exceeding six (6) months.

(3) Lights used as markers on all trains on the Petaluma and Santa Rosa Railroad Company shall be illuminated by oil or other dependable source of energy independent of trolley current.

(4) The operation of freight trains must be so restricted that they can, at all times, be stopped within range of the vision of the motorman.

(5) The maximum speed of freight trains must be reduced to twelve (12) miles per hour around curves when the clear view is one thousand (1000) feet or less and eight (8) miles per hour where the clear view is five hundred (500) feet or less.

(6) Convenient facilities for telephone communication by train operators with the train dispatcher must be provided at intervals not greater than one thousand (1000) feet around curves, where speed of freight trains is herein restricted.

(7) This utility shall file with the Commission monthly reports, showing what means have been taken to ascertain whether or not the safety rules for one-man car operation, as prescribed in this order, are being carried out by the operators of trains on this utility's system and the results of same.

IT IS HEREBY FURTHER ORDERED that in the event one-man car operation for passenger service is put into effect on applicant's line, the grade crossings of the tracks of the Petaluma and Santa Rosa Railroad Company with the tracks of the Northwestern Pacific

Railroad Company, at Sebastopol Avenue, and Southern Pacific Company, at Fourth Street near "F" Street, in Santa Rosa, shall be protected as follows:

Crossing with Northwestern Pacific Railroad
on Sebastopol Avenue:

Applicant may have the option of protecting this crossing either by means of an interlocking plant or by human flagmen. If it is determined to protect the crossing by means of an interlocking plant, such equipment shall be provided at the sole expense of applicant. The maintenance thereafter shall be borne fifty (50) per cent by applicant and fifty (50) per cent by Northwestern Pacific Railroad Company. Said interlocking plant shall be of a type and installed in accordance with plans and data to be approved by the Commission.

If applicant elects to protect this crossing by means of human flagmen, the entire expense of providing this protection shall be borne by applicant. The length of time that such human flagman is to remain on duty at this crossing shall be sufficient to flag all train movements on applicant's line over the tracks of the Northwestern Pacific Railroad Company.

Crossing with Southern Pacific Company
on Fourth Street near "F" Street:

All motors, trains and cars operating on applicant's track shall be brought to a full stop before crossing the Southern Pacific line and shall not pass over the crossing until motorman has ascertained, by looking in both directions, that it is safe so to do. The motorman shall make his inspection of the Southern Pacific line from the front end of his car and shall not be required to go on the ground at the crossing.

IT IS HEREBY FURTHER ORDERED that the maximum speed of all trains, motors, engines and cars operated on Southern Pacific Company's tracks over the crossing with the Petaluma and Santa Rosa Railroad Company's line on Fourth Street near "F" Street, in the City of Santa Rosa, shall be reduced to six (6) miles per hour.

IT IS HEREBY FURTHER ORDERED that the authority herein granted shall remain in full force and effect for a period of six (6) months from the date of this order, after which the Commission will, by subsequent order, extend this time or modify or annul the order as conditions appear to warrant.

The Commission reserves the right to make such further orders in this matter 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.

The foregoing Opinion and Order are hereby approved and ordered filed as the Opinion and Order of the Railroad Commission of the State of California.

The effective date of this order shall be twenty (20) days from the date hereof.

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 29th day of April, 1927.

Ernest A. Smith
H. B. Brundage
Clarence
Leon Whittell

Commissioners.