

NHW:IR

Decision No. 19307

ORIGINAL

BEFORE THE RAILROAD COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

_____)
In the matter of the application of)
SOUTHERN PACIFIC COMPANY for an order)
authorizing the construction at grade)
of two railroad tracks across Middle-) Application No. 13703.
field Road in the vicinity of Redwood)
City, County of San Mateo, California.)
_____)

Henry W. Hobbs, for Applicant.

BY THE COMMISSION:

O P I N I O N

This is an application by the Southern Pacific Company to construct two tracks at grade across Middlefield Road in the vicinity of Redwood City, San Mateo County. A public hearing was held at Redwood City on December 9th, 1927, before Examiner Rowell.

Middlefield Road is a paved county highway leading from Redwood City to Palo Alto and passing through the residential districts of Menlo Park and Atherton lying east of the Southern Pacific Company's main line tracks. It carries considerable local traffic and in addition, since the completion of the Dumbarton Bridge across San Francisco Bay during the past year, there is also a certain amount of through traffic, this road being one of the main routes to and from the westerly approach to the bridge. A traffic count, taken during November of this year, shows that during a twelve-hour period from 10:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M., 1,187 vehicles used the crossing. At a point some 1,800 feet south of Redwood

City Limits, this road crosses the Southern Pacific Company's so-called Dumbarton line, this being the connection between the main line at Redwood Junction and Newark on the Oakland-Santa Clara Line. This line was constructed in 1910, and in 1918 a passing track, which previously ended immediately west of the crossing with Middlefield Road, was extended easterly across the road a sufficient length to permit the track to hold a seventy-four car freight train, the reason for the extension being to avoid holding these long trains across streets in Redwood City. In connection with this extension, it was necessary to relocate the wye track crossing with Middlefield Road, this wye track being used by trains which it might be desired to move south on the main line.

At the time these crossings over Middlefield Road were constructed, no authority from this Commission was obtained and it is such authority which is sought in the present application. The County of San Mateo was notified of the hearing and as no protest from the County or other parties was entered, we see no objection to granting the authority requested.

There seems to be some question in regard to the type of protection that should be afforded the users of the highway at these crossings. The construction of the passing track has no doubt created an additional hazard of accident and the recent opening of the Dumbarton bridge has increased the amount of vehicular traffic at this point. The Company has just completed the installation of an automatic flagman at the crossing which,

according to the record, is so wired that it will be operated by train movements on either the main line or the passing track. The line from Redwood Junction to Newark is strictly a freight connection, being used to route freight trains between San Francisco by way of Niles and Tracy to the San Joaquin and Sacramento Valleys and Eastern points. A considerable portion of freight moving in and out of San Francisco by way of Southern Pacific lines passes over this track, much of it moving at night. The Middlefield Road crossing is but 3,000 feet from the junction of this line with the double track main line of the Coast Division and as a result, these freight trains pass over the crossing at slow speed blocking the highway for a considerable time and it is also frequently necessary for trains to stop on the crossing on account of meets with other trains, or until such time as the towerman can permit them to pass through the Redwood Junction interlocking plant on the Coast Division main line. As a result of this, the automatic flagman will no doubt operate many times and often for a considerable length of time when no real hazard to vehicular traffic exists.

According to the testimony of the Commission's engineer, an automatic flagman is not a satisfactory means of protection at this particular crossing because of the nature of the railroad traffic and it is his opinion that the particular hazard at this crossing is the liability of vehicles colliding with the side of freight cars standing or passing over the crossing at night. The dark red color, which is the customary painting for freight cars, causes them to be especially inconspicuous at night and it has been demonstrated that headlights of an automobile do not illuminate such objects in time to permit the driver to stop. At the particular point of crossing, the Middlefield Road is in more or less open territory where it can be expected that motor vehicles will

travel at maximum speed and it is the opinion of the Commission's engineer that such vehicles should receive adequate advance warning that they are approaching a railroad track. He accordingly recommends that an overhead sign be suspended across the highway at this crossing and that this sign be illuminated at night.

Considering the conditions at this particular crossing, there appears to be considerable merit in this suggestion and we believe that the order granting this crossing should provide for such a warning sign. As to the question of whether or not an automatic flagman is an appropriate form of protection, we think that such installation at this location would afford additional protection to the public if it was so constructed that it will not operate for long periods of time unnecessarily and it is, therefore, suggested that the Company submit to the Commission, for approval, plans for so controlling the operation of this automatic flagman.

O R D E R

Southern Pacific Company, a corporation, filed the above entitled application with this Commission, asking for authority to construct a passing track and wye track at grade across Middlefield Road in the vicinity of Redwood City, County of San Mateo, State of California, as hereinafter set forth, a public hearing having been held, the Commission being apprised of the facts, the matter being under submission and ready for decision, therefore,

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that permission and authority be and it is hereby granted to Southern Pacific Company to construct a passing track and wye track at grade across Middlefield Road in the vicinity of Redwood City, County of San Mateo, State of California, at the locations hereinafter particularly described and as shown by the map (Western Division Drawing R-200) attached to the application.

DESCRIPTION OF CROSSINGS

Center line of Passing Track to be constructed across Middlefield Road near Redwood Jct.

Commencing at a point on the northeasterly side of the Middlefield Road, running between Redwood City and Newark, distant thereon 62 feet more or less northwesterly from the intersection of said northeasterly line of the Middlefield Road with the northerly line of South Side Avenue; thence westerly a distance of 101 feet more or less, parallel to and distant 13 feet southerly measured at right angles from the center line of the main line of the Central Pacific Railway from Redwood Jct. to Newark, to a point on the southwesterly line of the said Middlefield Road distant thereon 22 feet more or less southeasterly from the intersection of said southwesterly line of the Middlefield Road with the said center line of the main line of the Central Pacific Railway from Redwood Jct. to Newark.

Center line description of Wye Track to be constructed across Middlefield Road near Redwood Jct.

Commencing at a point on the northeasterly side of the Middlefield Road running between Redwood City and Newark, distant thereon 48 feet more or less northwesterly from the intersection of said northeasterly line of the Middlefield Road with the northerly line of South Side Avenue; thence westerly in a straight line across the Middlefield Road a distance of 87 feet more or less to a point on the southwesterly line of the said Middlefield Road distant thereon 55 feet more or less southeasterly from the intersection of said southwesterly line of the Middlefield Road with the said center line of the main line of the Central Pacific Railway from Redwood Jct. to Newark.

The above crossings shall be identified as Crossing No. DAB-26.7.

Said crossings to be maintained subject to the following conditions, namely:

(1) The entire expense of maintaining the crossings in good and first-class condition for the safe and convenient use of the public shall be borne by applicant.

(2) Said crossings shall be maintained substantially in accordance with Standard No. 3 in General Order No. 72 of this Commission and shall be maintained without superelevation and of a width to conform to those portions of said road now graded, with the tops of rails flush with the pavement, and with grades of approach not exceeding one (1) per cent; shall be protected by suitable

ble crossing signs and shall in every way be made safe for the passage thereover of vehicles and other road traffic.

(3) Said crossings shall be further protected by overhead signs conforming with Standard No. 2 in General Order No. 75 of this Commission, suspended across the highway at or near the point of crossing. Said signs shall be visible to traffic moving in each direction on the highway and shall be illuminated at night.

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

(5) The Commission reserves the right to make such further orders relative to the location, construction, operation, maintenance and protection of said crossings 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 authority herein granted shall become effective on the date hereof.

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 6th day
February
of ~~January~~, 1928.

Leon Whitell

Ed Seaney

Ernest Beatty

Thos D. Lott

M. A. Linn

Commissioners.