

Decision No. \_\_\_\_\_.

ORIGINAL

BEFORE THE RAILROAD COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA.

Decision No. 18122

THE CITY OF CALEXICO, a municipal corporation,

Complainant,

-vs-

SOUTHERN PACIFIC COMPANY, et al.

Defendant.

Case No. 1040.

William S. Butcher, for City of Calexico,  
George D. Squires, for Southern Pacific Company.

GORDON, Commissioner.

O P I N I O N

In this complaint the City of Calexico states that near a crossing of the Southern Pacific Company on Second Street the railroad company maintains a roundhouse to and from which engines pass with such frequency as to endanger and imperil the safety of the lives of the public using Second Street, and that the grades of approach of the crossing itself are steep and difficult. The complainant asks the Commission to order the railroad company to construct at its own expense an overhead crossing of Second Street so the City can improve the grade in accordance with plans contemplated, which are outlined in the complaint. In its answer the railroad company denies that the crossing is dangerous and that an undergrade crossing is needed, A public hearing was held upon this complaint on April 2 at Calexico.

Second Street runs approximately east and west through the City of Calexico and is the principal thoroughfare reaching the City from the west. New River is west of the tracks, four in number, and the bridge which the City proposes to erect over this

river will be, compared to the railroad, at such a low elevation that from that side a grade separation could readily be made. East of the tracks, however, the grade of the street is practically level with the grade of the tracks and it extends level for some distance easterly. Imperial Avenue, a north and south street, intersects Second Street about 220 feet east of the crossing of Second Street with the easterly track of the railroad company, and this distance necessarily governs the length of the approach which can be built on that side. The plan of the City for a subway shows a grade east of the track of  $6\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.

While I am always in sympathy with any community which seeks to rid itself of its grade crossings, I do not believe that the relief asked for by the City of Calexico should be granted at this time. As the grade crossing exists it is dangerous beyond a doubt. The traffic on the road, consisting to a large extent of 4 and 6-horse teams during the shipping season, is heavy; the grade of approach on the west, as the City states, is steep; the tracks are used more or less continuously during certain periods of the day for switching; and the proximity of the facilities for caring for the engines, results in the tracks adjacent to the crossing being occupied nearly all the time by engines, the exhaust steam from which frightens teams at the crossing.

There are two ways of improving these conditions. The first is by separating grades and the second is by removing the engine facilities. The principal objection to separating grades, along the lines proposed by the City, is that the grade to the east will be so steep that, in the opinion of many of the ranchers who testified, it will be difficult to use with a heavy load; and to construct even the cheapest kind of grade separation, that is a timber structure which would be more or less temporary, it would be necessary for some \$3,500. to be expended, while if a permanent bridge were built the amount would be increased to

\$15,000. It was suggested that if the railroad company would eliminate one or two of the tracks now crossing Second Street and move its main line to the west, the distance between Imperial Avenue and the tracks would be increased to such an extent that a lighter grade of approach could be made. Since the hearing the Southern Pacific Company has submitted plans for such a change, the cost of which would be some \$2,800, an expense which would be additional to the figures given above for the cost of the separation itself. This additional expense, however, would enable the grade to be lightened only to 5 per cent and the rearrangement of the tracks would seriously cramp the facilities of the railroad company, a feature which is undesirable both from the viewpoint of the railroad and the City.

The superintendent of the railroad company testified that it was the intention of the company to remove the engine facilities from Second Street in the near future, regardless of the outcome of this case. When that is done engines will no longer stand near the crossing and the train movements over it will amount to the passage of one train each way per day together with switching incident to caring for the work in the yard, which will not exceed four hours per day.

I am inclined to think that if it were possible to secure a grade of approach on the east of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  or 4 per cent, which I believe should be the maximum grade on a street which is now and for many years will be the principal street to the City of Calexico from a heavily producing agricultural country, the money necessary to secure a grade separation would make commensurate returns at once to both the City and the railroad company. But under existing circumstances, I do not believe the railroad company should be required to assume a portion of the expense of this grade separation until the need for a separation is determined after a readjustment of the engine facilities, and

until a plan has been worked out that will permit of grades of approach which are not excessive. If the relief the City of Calexico seeks to secure is not obtained by the change, it will at least place no obstacles in the way of a separation of grades in the future.

I have no doubt that grade separation will eventually take place at or near the present crossing on Second Street. If the present Second Street were abandoned and a new street opened midway between Third and Second, it seems probable that a 4 per cent grade, or less, could be secured, and by constructing the approaches on the east along curved lines to both Third and Second Streets, much of the congestion which would undoubtedly take place if the approaches led to Second Street alone would be avoided. An objection to this plan lies in the fact that some private property would have to be secured which would add considerably to the cost of the project. This scheme has possibilities, however, which the City of Calexico should study. Feeling, as I do, that the present plan will not give Calexico the relief it wishes, I am unwilling to recommend the construction of a subway. After the engine facilities have been removed, if the situation is not safe and satisfactory there will be no reason why further studies cannot be made by the City and this complaint renewed.

I recommend the following form of order:

O R D E R

The City of Calexico having complained of the condition of the crossing of Second Street with the tracks of Southern Pacific Company; and a public hearing having been held; and it appearing, for reasons set forth in the foregoing opinion, that a grade separation should not be ordered by the Commission at this time;

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED, That this case be and the same hereby is dismissed without prejudice.

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.

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 21<sup>st</sup> day of August, 1917.

Max Nelson  
H. D. Loveland  
Alfred G. ...  
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Commissioners.