

ORIGINAL

Decision No. 5282

DECISION NO. _____

BEFORE THE RAILROAD COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA.

MARK E. HILTON, et al.,
Complainants,

vs.

PACIFIC ELECTRIC RAILWAY
COMPANY, a corporation,
Defendant.
.....

CASE NO. 1150.

Griffith Jones & Warren Williams for
Complainants.
Frank Karr for Defendant.

LOVELAND, Commissioner.

O P I N I O N

Complainants, residents in the portion of Los Angeles County adjacent to and served by the Florence Avenue Station of the Pacific Electric Railway Company, allege that the operation of the cars and trains of the Pacific Electric Railway across Florence Avenue is conducted at a high rate of speed; that interurban cars do not stop at Florence Avenue to take on and discharge passengers and that passengers desiring to journey to or from points reached by the interurban system of the Pacific Electric Railway Company are compelled to take local cars to either Los Angeles or Watts and at such points transfer to the interurban cars and trains; that Florence Avenue is the logical and practical point at which the residents of the community should be permitted to board and leave the interurban cars and that a stop should be made at such point.

Complainants ask that the Commission make its order

compelling the stopping of all interurban trains at Florence Avenue for the purpose of taking on and discharging passengers, and that the speed of all through cars be reduced to such rate as may in the opinion of the Commission be considered reasonable and safe.

The defendant, Pacific Electric Railway Company, filed answer denying the material allegations of the complaint.

A public hearing was held at Los Angeles on November 23, 1917, the matter was duly submitted and is now ready for decision.

The station of Florence Avenue is located in Los Angeles County south of the southerly city limits of the City of Los Angeles and between the stations of Florence Park and Nadesan. The Pacific Electric Railway Company operates a four track line between the junction of its private right of way at Ninth Street and Central Avenue, Los Angeles, to Watts, the two inner tracks being used by the through trains of the Long Beach, Newport Beach, Redondo, San Pedro, Whittier and La Habra lines. These trains make no local stops excepting at Vernon Avenue, Los Angeles, where a safety stop is made before crossing the tracks of the Los Angeles Railway Corporation. The two outside tracks are used by the freight trains and for the local service between Watts and Los Angeles as cared for by the Watts-Annandale-South Pasadena line local cars serving all stops between Los Angeles and Watts.

Witnesses for complainants testified that Florence Avenue was an extremely busy crossing and that it was used by an average of nine hundred (900) automobiles on week days and approximately fifteen hundred (1500) on Sundays. The

estimated speed of through cars over the crossing, as observed by various witnesses, ranged from twenty five to forty miles per hour. Several accidents have occurred at this crossing which it was thought would have been avoided had a speed restriction been imposed or if all trains, both through and local, were required to stop at Florence Avenue. Witnesses testified that the schedule of the Watts-Innendale-South Pasadena line was not dependable and that frequently intending passengers were required to wait long periods before the arrival of a car destined Los Angeles, and that frequently the operation of freight trains on the outside or local tracks interfered with the schedules of the local cars. About one thousand people reside in the district which is served by the Florence Avenue stop, and witnesses testified that it was not convenient for passengers destined to or from any point beyond Watts and served by the through trains which did not stop at Florence Avenue to be obliged to use the local cars to and from Watts, and there transfer to the through cars. Complaint also existed that the advantage of special excursion rates from Los Angeles to beach points was not available to Florence Avenue patrons as it was necessary to pay the local fare to and from Watts in order to board the beach trains.

The Pacific Electric Railway Company provides service on the local line serving Florence Avenue on a five minute headway from 6.00 to 8.55 A. M.; on a ten minute headway from 8.55 A.M.; to 3.35 P. M.; on a five minute headway from 3.35 to 6.15 P. M.; on a ten minute headway from 6.15/ to 12.05 A. M. with service through the early morning hours on a varying headway from fifteen minute to one hour intervals. In addition

extra trips are provided out of Los Angeles on week days (except Saturdays) between the hours of 4.47 and 5.37 P. M. , which reduces the interval between local trains to a two and one-half minute headway. Some difficulty had been experienced due to the operation of freight trains on the local tracks, notwithstanding that the freight trains were scheduled at the same speed as the passenger trains. Congested conditions at the approach to the Central Avenue Yard in Los Angeles have delayed the movement of northbound freight trains into the yard and have resulted in some delay to early morning trains arriving at Los Angeles. These conditions will be corrected when some track revision is completed which will provide better means of access to the Central Avenue freight yards.

The through trains of the Pacific Electric Railway using the inside tracks at Florence Avenue serve the Long Beach, San Pedro via Gardena and via Dominguez, Newport, Santa Ana, and Redondo via Gardena lines. The great volume of traffic over the lines between Los Angeles and Watts was the reason for the construction of two additional tracks for the handling of the through trains and even with the facility afforded by the additional tracks and the elimination of stops between Los Angeles and Watts by the through trains the time consumed by trains between Los Angeles and Long Beach is now from five to six minutes greater than was used at the time the line was first opened. This is due to the great volume of traffic that has developed incidental to the settlement of the various communities served by the Southern Division of the Pacific Electric Railway Company. In addition to the regular traffic on the lines above mentioned, there are a number of extra trains being

operated for the transportation of employees of the various ship-building plants at Wilmington, Long Beach and San Pedro.

The records of the Pacific Electric Railway indicate that a total of 549,706 passengers were transported during the month of October, 1917, on the through trains passing Florence Avenue on the inside tracks, all of whom would have been delayed if an additional stop were to be authorized at that point.

The complaints regarding irregularity of service on the local line do not appear from the evidence to have been present during the months immediately preceding the hearing and I am not convinced that they have occurred in the past with sufficient frequency to justify an order as to a revision of the method of conducting the local service. The schedule that is effective offers service with a frequency, especially during the rush hours of the morning and evening, that is practically the same as street car service, in fact, better than the service enjoyed by many communities of greater population. As to the speed of the through cars operating over the inside tracks at Florence Avenue, the Pacific Electric Railway Company have a special rule in the time-table of their Southern Division which restricts the speed of trains crossing Florence Avenue to twenty miles per hour. The speed of cars is frequently checked by inspectors and an exhibit was filed consisting of twenty-three test reports showing surprise tests on through trains made during the months of September, October and November, 1917, and all the reports indicate that the speed restriction was observed by motormen of the through trains.

As to the matter of accidents which have occurred at

Florence Avenue crossing and the safety that would be provided if all trains, through and local, were to be required to stop before crossing Florence Avenue in either direction, the crossing is protected by a standard automatic wigwag signal and bell which furnishes visible and audible warning of the approach of trains and cars. Investigation has been made by the Commission of all fatalities that have occurred at this crossing during the last four years, and in no case has it appeared that the accident was one for which the Railway Company was responsible or that could have been avoided by any action on the part of the Company or its employees. I cannot recommend the establishment of a regulation that would require the stopping of all trains at any particular highway crossing when such regulation does not appear necessary and especially when such regulation would result in the slowing down of schedules and inconvenience over a half million through passengers per month.

After careful consideration of all the evidence in this case, I am of the opinion and find as a fact that the service now rendered by the Pacific Electric Company on its Watts-Armandale-South Pasadena line is of sufficient frequency to properly serve the stop at Florence Avenue, and that no showing has been made which would justify an order requiring all trains, both through and local, to stop at Florence Avenue for the purpose of receiving and discharging passengers. I am also of the opinion and find as a fact that the speed regulation now imposed by the Pacific Electric Railway Company and which requires speed of trains to be reduced to twenty-miles per hour when crossing Florence Avenue is a reasonable and proper regulation, and that such speed is not excessive or

dangerous to the public using the highway crossing at such point.

I recommend the following form of order.

O R D E R

A public hearing having been held in the above entitled proceeding, the matter having been duly submitted and the Commission being fully advised and basing its order on the findings of fact as set forth in the preceding opinion,

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that this complaint be and the same hereby is dismissed.

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 5th day of April, 1918.

Max J. Kelly
J. H. Ireland
Chas. Gordon
Edwin O. Edgerton

Commissioners.