

Decision No. 34874.

BEFORE THE RAILROAD COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the matter of the application of County of Los Angeles for construction of crossing on Durfee Avenue over right of way of Southern Pacific Railroad Company.

ORIGINAL

Application No. 23585.

J. H. O'Connor, County Counsel, and W. B. McKesson, Deputy County Counsel, for Applicant.

Frank Karr and C. W. Cornell, for Southern Pacific Company, Protestant.

BY THE COMMISSION:

O P I N I O N

In the above numbered proceeding the County of Los Angeles seeks the Commission's authority to construct Durfee Avenue at grade across the main line track of Southern Pacific Company a short distance east of El Monte.

Public hearing was held before Examiner Ager at Los Angeles on October 7, 1940, at which time the matter was duly submitted, and it is now ready for decision.

The master highway plan of the County of Los Angeles shows Durfee Avenue as a street of major importance extending from East Long Beach on the south to Monrovia on the north. Generally speaking it is somewhat parallel to Rosemead Boulevard at distances varying from one-half mile to one and one-half miles but it does not serve the same territory. At the present time a section of the road is open to public travel between Whittier Boulevard on the south and Valley Boulevard on the north, another section between Garvey Avenue on the south and San Bernardino Road on the north, and other small sections at various locations along the route. Much of the

proposed highway, however, exists only on plans and the record indicates that there are no funds available for the construction of any additional portions of it at the present time, nor are there any commitments as to a possible ultimate date of completion.

The particular section involved in this application lies between Whittier Boulevard and San Bernardino Road, the total distance being approximately 7.2 miles, and, except for that portion between Valley Boulevard on the south and Garvey Avenue on the north (a distance of some 1,600 feet), as above stated, is now open to travel. At the present time northbound traffic on Durfee Avenue desiring to continue northerly on this artery is obliged to turn left at the intersection of Durfee and Valley Boulevard, travel westerly a distance of 2,000 feet to the intersection of Valley Boulevard and Garvey Avenue, turn right on Garvey Avenue and travel easterly a distance of 2,000 feet to the intersection of Garvey and Durfee Avenues, and then turn left into Durfee Avenue. Conversely, southbound traffic on Durfee Avenue, from points north of Garvey Avenue and destined to points tributary to Durfee Avenue south of Valley Boulevard, would of necessity reverse the procedure outlined for northbound traffic. Thus it will be seen that vehicles making the above described trip must travel an additional 2,400 feet for each trip made to what would be necessary if Durfee Avenue were connected through as proposed in this proceeding.

The angle of intersection of Valley Boulevard and Garvey Avenue is rather acute and witnesses for the applicant testified that turning movements in this intersection result in many accidents. The record shows, however, that this intersection is signal controlled. Traffic checks taken at the intersection of Durfee Avenue and Valley Boulevard show in excess of 4,000 vehicles per day on Durfee Avenue and some 8,000 per day along Valley Boulevard. Traffic checks at the intersection of Garvey Avenue and Valley Boulevard show a volume of 8,600 vehicles on Valley Boulevard on Sunday,

7,500 on Valley Boulevard on Monday, 20,000 on Garvey Avenue on Sunday and 15,000 on Garvey Avenue on Monday.

Witnesses estimated that, if the crossing was constructed, traffic on Durfee Avenue would increase to 10,000 vehicles per day at the location of the proposed crossing. Such an increase in volume of traffic would require the installation of traffic signals at the intersection of Durfee Avenue and Valley Boulevard, and also at the intersection of Durfee Avenue and Garvey Avenue. In addition, automatic signal protection would be required at the grade crossing and estimates of the cost of this latter protection place it at \$4,505.

The rail line involved is the single track of Southern Pacific Company's main line (Sunset Route), which intersects the proposed location of Durfee Avenue at an angle of approximately 72 degrees. The site of the proposed crossing is about 1100 feet east of the grade separation at Garvey Avenue with this same track (Crossing No. B-496.2-B), constructed at a cost of approximately \$75,000.

A one-week tabulation of the number of train movements at the point involved indicates that the number of trains varies from a minimum of 23 to a maximum of 31 per day. There are no speed restrictions in the area and passenger trains at times attain speeds of 65 miles per hour.

Analysis of the record adduced at the hearing leads us to the conclusion that there is ample justification for a crossing with Southern Pacific Company's tracks at Durfee Avenue. We are not convinced, however, that this crossing should be a grade crossing, but are of the opinion that, where such substantial volumes of traffic (both vehicular and rail) are involved, the grades should be separated. We believe that the first money available for expenditure on Durfee Avenue should be used for this purpose. Until such time as

this separation can be constructed, it does not appear to be unreasonable to require Durfee Avenue traffic to utilize the Garvey Avenue grade separation, which has a capacity far in excess of that now using it.

While it may be true that a number of accidents occur at the intersection of Garvey Avenue and Valley Boulevard, by reason of the turning movements necessitated by persons desiring to travel on Durfee Avenue, so far as we are able to learn these accidents are of a minor nature. On the other hand, should a grade crossing be constructed at Durfee Avenue, and an accident involving a train and a vehicle occur, the consequences would be far more serious. It is quite evident from this record that the hazard which would be created by the construction of the grade crossing as proposed herein far outweighs the minor inconvenience caused to vehicular travel on Durfee Avenue by requiring it to use the more circuitous route. This Commission is charged with the responsibility of doing everything within its power to eliminate the possibility of accidents at grade crossings and it appears to us that we would be remiss in our obligation to the public if we were to authorize the construction of this crossing, knowing what may be anticipated in the way of traffic volume. Under the circumstances and for the reasons set forth above, we believe that the application should be denied and the following Order will so provide.

ORDER

The County of Los Angeles having made application for permission to construct a public highway at grade across the main line track of Southern Pacific Company at Durfee Avenue, a public

hearing having been held, and the matter being under submission and ready for decision;

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the above entitled application be and it is hereby denied.

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

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 10th day of December, 1940.

By & Ricey
Frank D. Dwyer
H. D. Dwyer
Justus F. C. C. C.
Commissioners.