

Decision No. 36274

BEFORE THE RAILROAD COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of the Application of)
the CITY OF VISALIA, a municipal)
corporation of the County of Tulare,)
State of California, for permission)
to construct a public street at)
grade across the tracks of the)
Southern Pacific Railroad Company.)

Application No. 25386

ORIGINAL

E. I. FEEMSTER, City Attorney of Visalia, for applicant.

R. S. MYERS, for Southern Pacific Company, protestant.

BY THE COMMISSION:

O P I N I O N

The City of Visalia, a municipal corporation, has applied for authority to construct a public street, known as Jacob Street, at grade across the tracks of the Southern Pacific Company. Southern Pacific Company protested the granting of the application and a public hearing was held before Examiner Gannon at Visalia on March 4, 1943.

Visalia is located in one of the agricultural districts of the San Joaquin Valley. From 1937 to the present time there has been a marked increase in population, especially since the commencement of the war. This fact, together with the establishment of U. S. Army Air Fields in the vicinity, and the advent of certain war industries in the community, has caused a housing shortage and encouraged the development of dormant sections of the city.

There are few north and south through streets in

Visalia, especially in the northwestern section, and of these Willis Street carries the burden of traffic. Aside from being one of the main traveled routes to the commercial and business section, it is used by school students to a considerable extent and is also designated as a truck route. It is also one of the direct routes to Sequoia Airfield, located about eight miles north of Visalia. The nearest through street west of Willis Street is Divisadero Street, which is approximately .7 of a mile distant. The territory between Willis and Divisadero Streets north of Southern Pacific Company's tracks and extending beyond the city limits has developed to the extent that it now comprises more than 20 per cent of the entire population of Visalia. In keeping with such development the necessity for another through street has arisen. The city of Visalia has made plans to extend, open, and improve Jacob Street, which lies parallel to and about .3 of a mile west of Willis Street and is located between Willis and Divisadero Streets. At present Jacob Street extends southerly from the north city limits to Grove Street, from which point it is closed for about 1,400 feet, resuming again at School Street and continuing thence southerly to the Union High School located on West Main Street. The city plans to open the closed portion from Grove Street to School Street, crossing Southern Pacific Company's track immediately north of School Street.

The record discloses that the opening of Jacob Street would greatly benefit the school population of the north and northwest sections of Visalia. Two elementary schools, the High School, and the Junior College would be affected. It is necessary for children living south of the railroad tracks to attend an elementary school located north of the tracks, and for students

living in the north and northwest sections to attend Junior High School, High School, and Junior College located south of the railroad tracks. If Jacob Street were opened it would reduce the distance traveled to and from school for a considerable number of students, and it would also contribute to their safety in traveling back and forth. It would provide another north and south cross-town street direct to the High School. Many children ride bicycles to and from school and travel on Willis Street which supports heavy traffic. Opening Jacob Street would afford the children an alternate and safer route.

In addition to the benefits derived by the public schools were Jacob Street to be opened, it was pointed out at the hearing that the Jacob Street extension would tend to divert traffic from Willis Street, thereby relieving the congestion on Willis Street which is daily becoming more acute. Also, the school Recreation Park and Athletic Field, located immediately south of Southern Pacific Company's tracks on Jacob Street, is used by townspeople as well as students, and the Jacob Street crossing would be utilized advantageously by them. In the absence of a crossing at Jacob Street certain north and south crosstown traffic, including school children, have used a road through the Visalia Cemetery and thence on Giddings Avenue. This is a narrow roadway not constructed for heavy traffic and, being on private property, may be closed to public travel at any time.

Southern Pacific Company operates its Visalia Branch through Visalia at about right angles to Jacob Street. The operations over the railroad average one freight train per day in each direction, and the speed is relatively slow within the city limits of Visalia.

In view of the existing conditions the opening of Jacob Street across the tracks of Southern Pacific Company appears to be a measure commensurate with the growth and development of the city of Visalia, and the application will therefore be granted. The opening of the crossing should be contingent upon the improvement of Jacob Street as a through street, and the following order will so provide.

O R D E R

A public hearing having been held in the above-entitled matter and the Commission being duly advised,

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the city of Visalia is authorized to construct a public street, known as Jacob Street, at grade across the tracks of Southern Pacific Company at the location described in the application and as shown by the map attached thereto. Said crossing shall be identified as Crossing No. BAC-252.4. The authority is granted subject to the following conditions:

(1) Applicant shall bear the entire construction expense as well as maintenance cost outside of lines two feet outside of rails. Southern Pacific Company shall bear maintenance cost between such lines. Width of crossing shall be not less than 66 feet and grades of approach not greater than two per cent. Construction shall be equal or superior to Standard No. 2 of G.O. No. 72. Protection shall be by three Standard No. 1 crossing signs (G.O. 75-B). Physical obstruction to the view of the crossing on the southwest corner shall be reduced sufficiently to provide an unobstructed view of the crossing for a distance of at least one hundred feet.

(2) Within thirty days after completion pursuant to this order, applicant shall advise the Commission in writing of such completion.

(3) This authorization is contingent upon the opening, extension, and improvement of Jacob Street by the city of Visalia, as outlined in the application, and shall become void if not exercised within one year from the effective date of this order, unless the time be extended or if above conditions are not complied with. Authorization may be revoked or modified if public convenience, necessity or safety so require.

The effective date of this order shall be the date hereof.

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 6th day of April, 1943.

Francis R. Haven

M. J. Barkin

Richard K. Ketcher

W. M. Elmer

COMMISSIONERS