

ORIGINALDecision No. 46505

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of the Application of)
 THE CITY OF SAN FERNANDO, a Municipal)
 Corporation of the State of California,)
 for permission and Authorization to) Application No. 32478
 Establish a Crossing at Grade Across)
 the Southern Pacific Railroad (inland)
 route) Right of Way as an Extension)
 of Workman Street in said City.)

Neville R. Lewis for applicant. Randolph Karr for Southern Pacific Company as protestant. H. F. Holly for the Los Angeles County Grade Crossing Committee, Harold R. Allen for San Fernando Chamber of Commerce, and D. P. Loomis, for the City Council of the City of San Fernando, interested parties.

O P I N I O N

The City of San Fernando as applicant alleges that public interest, convenience and necessity require the extension of Workman Street across the Southern Pacific Railroad right of way located in said city. As justification, applicant asserts that San Fernando and the surrounding area have grown in population and that the railroad sought to be crossed at grade is the principal and most heavily traveled railroad running between northern and southern California, particularly with regard to freight traffic.

A public hearing was held before Commissioner Huls and Examiner Rowe in San Fernando on November 2, 1951, at which time oral and documentary evidence was adduced and the matter was duly submitted.

The main-line track of Southern Pacific Company (San Joaquin Valley Line) runs in a northwesterly and southeasterly direction through San Fernando. For the purpose of this opinion it will be assumed that these tracks run north toward San Francisco and south to Los Angeles.

The streets of San Fernando are laid out parallel to and at right angles to the railroad. The main street for northbound vehicular traffic is Truman Street, running parallel to and one block west of the railroad. The principal street for southbound vehicular traffic is San Fernando Road, running parallel to and two blocks west of the railroad. The principal east and west street is Maclay Avenue which crosses the railroad at grade near the Southern Pacific Station at San Fernando. The area of the city east of the tracks is largely residential, while that to the west is residential and business. The principal business district of the city lies in the latter area.

At present there are four crossings all at grade across the railroad in San Fernando, from north to south as follows:

<u>Street</u>	<u>Crossing No.</u>	<u>Distance between crossings</u>
Hubbard Avenue	B-461.0	
Maclay Avenue	B-461.8	0.8 miles
Brand Boulevard	B-461.9	0.1 miles
Jessie Street	B-462.1	0.2 miles

The proposed crossing of Workman Street is located approximately midway between the Maclay Avenue and Hubbard Avenue crossings. Workman Street is an east and west street extending through the city and into Los Angeles where it is

known as Rinaldi Street for a total of approximately four miles. To the east Workman Street extends approximately one-half mile through the eastern portion of the City of San Fernando. These used sections are not now connected as the street is not opened between the railroad right of way and Second Street to the east of the railroad, a distance of about 700 feet. It is the proposal of applicant to extend Workman Street east across the railroad to First Street, a distance of approximately 200 feet, and eventually open Workman Street between First Street and Second Street, although there are no definite authorizations for the latter extension at this time.

From the evidence of record it appears that the City of San Fernando has a population of approximately 14,000, and in the general area which includes said city and adjacent portions of the City of Los Angeles there is a population of approximately 51,700. Both the fire departments of the City of San Fernando and the City of Los Angeles use the Maclay Avenue and Brand Boulevard crossings and in case said crossings are blocked they are required to travel a more circuitous route to their destination, using either the Hubbard Avenue or the Jessie Street crossing.

The testimony shows that an average of 28 trains pass through San Fernando daily. Eight are passenger trains, two are local freight trains and eighteen are through or long freight trains. These long freight trains are composed of about 83 cars. When these long trains are stopped in San Fernando, by company rule they are required to be broken at the Brand

Boulevard and Maclay Avenue crossings. If the crossing were authorized at Workman Street it would be necessary to break such trains at said point also. This would involve longer delays at the present crossings at Brand Boulevard and Maclay Avenue as it takes time to break a train and also to join them together when they proceed on their journey. Most freight trains do not stop but proceed slowly through the city. By agreement this speed does not exceed 25 miles per hour. The railroad expert recommended increasing the train's speed so as to shorten the time the crossings would be closed to vehicular and pedestrian traffic. He stated that this, in his opinion, would not increase the hazard because as much damage can be caused by a train's speed of 25 miles per hour as at 60 miles per hour, and slower speeds invite automobile drivers to attempt later crossings.

There has been a very substantial population growth east of the railroad tracks. In the opinion of many residents of that area, however, a crossing at Workman Street is not in the public interest. They feel that it would transform their quiet and safe community into one of comparative traffic peril if Workman Street would thereby become a through street. The contrary views of the representative of the Chamber of Commerce and other business and civic leaders appear to be based more upon civic desire than actual need. The Highway Division of the State Department of Public Works has advised the Commission that, since no state highways are directly involved, it has no objection to the granting of the application. The engineer who appeared for the Los Angeles County Grade Crossing Committee

stated that in his and the Committee's opinion the existing grade crossings in the City of San Fernando suffice. He asserted that if the Workman Street crossing were opened it would not carry as much traffic as either Macley Avenue or Brand Boulevard ~~and~~ all three were open. Also, in his opinion the number of grade crossings should be kept at a minimum. The only real value to the public in opening Workman Street as a grade crossing would be that passenger trains stopping at the station would block Macley Avenue and Brand Boulevard and not Workman Street. but very few trains stop at San Fernando. Train No. 56, carrying mail and passengers, makes a regular daily stop and others make flag stops there principally to load and unload mail.

The testimony of the fire chief of San Fernando is especially significant. In 1947 his trucks were delayed by blocked crossings for 4 minutes on one occasion. There were four delays so caused in 1948, ranging from 2 to 4 minutes each. In 1950 there were four such delays ranging from 1 to 10 minutes. The 10-minute delay and another of 5 minutes were occasioned by moving trains. In the case of the 10-minute delay, two trains were passing each other, both moving. There have been no delays at crossings in 1951 involving the fire department.

The delays occasioned by trains stopping at the station are very brief, ranging from 1 to 2 minutes. The public benefit of permitting automobiles to cross at Workman Street during such short periods of time cannot be considered substantial. The 5- and 10-minute delays occasioned by the fire departments above referred to would not be eliminated by

opening the proposed crossings because such delays by moving trains would equally affect all three crossings, to wit: Workman Street, Maclay Avenue and Brand Boulevard. Applicant's testimony as to delays to the fire departments, considered alone, indicates no recent need for improved crossings of any type. So far as delays from standing freight trains are concerned, the uncontradicted testimony supports the conclusion that, because of the time involved in breaking such trains at three places instead of two as at present, such opening would be detrimental to the public interest by actually increasing the time of such delays. The mere shortening of the driving distance between certain points on opposite sides of the tracks which would be occasioned by opening Workman Street across the tracks, is of too small benefit to the public to constitute a very considerable factor in determining this application. It is concluded, after weighing the various factors involved, that applicant has failed to show that public convenience and necessity require or justify the granting of the application for a new crossing over this important railroad with its attendant hazards. It is therefore concluded that the application should be denied.

O R D E R

Public hearing having been held, the Commission being fully advised in the premises and the matter having been submitted,

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the above-entitled Appli-
cation No. 32478 be, and the same is, hereby denied.

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

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 4th
day of December, 1951.

R. J. Murray
President
Justice J. C. C. C.
Harold A. Kels
Francis J. Potter
John L. Mitchell
Commissioners