

Decision No. 46836.

ORIGINAL

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of the Application of)	
The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe)	
Railway Company for authority to)	Application No. 33037
establish a special charge for)	
passengers occupying reserved coach)	
seats.)	

Appearances

Frederick G. Pfrommer, for applicant.
James K. Gibson, for the staff of the
Public Utilities Commission of the
State of California.

OPINION

The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company is a common carrier of passengers by railroad. By this application, it seeks authority to establish a limited number of reserved seats on its streamlined trains operating between Oakland and Bakersfield and to assess a special service charge for passengers occupying such seats.

Public hearing of the application was held at San Francisco on February 15, 1952, before Commissioner Potter and Examiner Jacopi.

The present operations and the reserved seat proposal were explained by applicant's western general passenger agent. Coach-class service is provided on applicant's streamlined trains known as Golden Gate Nos. 60, 61, 62 and 63 operating between

Applicant provides coordinated rail-bus service between San Francisco and Los Angeles and certain intermediate points, including points in the San Joaquin Valley. In these operations, rail service is provided between Oakland and Bakersfield. Connecting bus service is operated between San Francisco and Oakland and between Bakersfield and Los Angeles. The bus portions of the operations are not involved in the reserved seat proposal.

Oakland and Bakersfield. This service is in addition to the regular coach-class service on other trains. The coach fares for transportation on both types of trains are the same. On the streamlined trains, nonreserved individual reclining seats are provided without additional charge. Assertedly, some of applicant's patrons have requested that reserved seats be made available on these trains. According to the witness, these requests indicated that business associates and also family groups desired to be seated together and to be assured of exclusive occupancy of the seats for the entire rail journey.

To satisfy these requests and as an experiment to determine the general public demand for reserved seats, it is proposed to designate as a reserved seat car one of the 52-seat coaches now operated in each of the streamlined trains. The other coaches would be continued on a nonreserved basis. The reserved seat cars would be placed at the head-ends of the trains and, to avoid confusion, would be placarded as reserved seat units. The seat checks issued by the conductors to passengers in these cars would differ from those used in the other coaches. Assertedly, a similar method of operating both classes of coach service in applicant's streamlined trains between Los Angeles and San Diego has been very successful.²

Applicant proposes to establish a special service charge for reserved seats in the coaches. This charge would be in addition to the regular coach fares.³ For one-way movements from and to the terminals and other nearby points, the service charge would

2

See Decision No. 46221 of September 25, 1951, in Application No. 32712.

3

Reserved seat charges would not apply to travel in nonreserved seat coaches.

be 75 cents. The charge from or to intermediate points would be 25 cents or 50 cents, depending upon the distance involved. Applicant's chief rate clerk stated that these service charges were designed to cover the additional costs involved in handling the seat reservations and to impel passengers to cancel those not needed in time to permit reassignment of the seats to other persons. He pointed out that the charges were no higher than those now applicable between the same points served by Southern Pacific Company's streamlined trains.

Applicant's reserved seat proposal, according to the western general passenger agent, would not result in depriving nonreserved seat passengers of accommodations, except possibly during a few unusually heavy weekends or holidays when all extra equipment would be in use. He offered an exhibit showing the number of available and of occupied coach seats on the two scheduled southbound streamlined trains when they passed Pinole. The exhibit covered the daily movements during one week in July 1951 and one week in February 1952. It showed that the ratio of passengers to the total number of coach seats on the trains ranged from 43 percent to 93 percent, except on three trips. On Friday and Saturday, July 13 and 14, 1951, the ratios were 116 percent and 100 percent, respectively. On Friday, February 1, 1952, it was 119 percent. It was pointed out, however, that the figures were based upon the number of chair seats in the coaches and that other accommodations on the trains were available to the passengers. Comparable conditions were said to prevail on the two northbound streamlined trains.

⁴ It was shown that, in addition to the coach seats, 36 seats in the lounge car, 7 seats in the men's and in the women's lounges in each coach, and 34 seats in the diner, were regularly provided on the streamlined trains.

According to the witness, applicant has endeavored at all times to provide sufficient coach seats for its patrons to the extent that streamlined coaches and adequate motive power were available. Assertedly, it will continue to do so. It was pointed out, however, that the diesel motive power regularly assigned to the streamlined trains is able to handle not more than 13 cars and still maintain scheduled times of arrivals and departures. Additional cars involve the use of more powerful diesel equipment which is not available at times because of heavy movements elsewhere on applicant's system.

No one appeared in opposition to the granting of the application. According to the record, applicant sent a copy of the application to chambers of commerce of the principal cities served by the streamlined trains and to the county clerks of the various counties through which the trains operate. In addition, the Commission's secretary sent notices of the hearing to chambers of commerce, travel organizations and other persons believed to be interested.

The record shows that the reserved coach seat accommodations that applicant would establish have been requested by its patrons. The proposed special service charges appear to be no greater than necessary to cover the additional costs involved and to induce persons holding seat reservations that are not needed to cancel them in time to make the seats available for reassignment to others. The evidence is persuasive that special service charges are necessary to assure satisfactory operation of the proposed reserved seat service for the public and that the sought charges are reasonable.

Upon careful consideration of all of the facts and circumstances of record, the Commission is of the opinion and hereby

finds that the establishment of special service charges for reserved coach seats as proposed is justified. The application will be granted.

ORDER

Based upon the evidence of record and upon the conclusions and findings set forth in the preceding opinion,

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company be and it is hereby authorized to establish the special service charges for reserved coach seats on its streamlined trains operating between Oakland and Bakersfield and intermediate points, as proposed in the application filed in this proceeding.

IT IS HEREBY FURTHER ORDERED that the authority herein granted shall expire unless exercised within ninety (90) days after the effective date of this order.

This order shall become effective twenty (20) days after the date hereof.

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 11th day of March, 1952.

A. T. [Signature]
President
Justice F. [Signature]
Harold P. [Signature]
[Signature]
Commissioners