

ORIGINAL

Decision No. 56257

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of the Application of)
PACIFIC ELECTRIC RAILWAY COMPANY, a)
corporation, under General Order)
No. 75-B, for authority to substitute)
form of crossing protection at)
Florence Avenue, Crossing No. 6L-5.23)
on its Los Angeles-Long Beach Line,)
and to eliminate human flagman at)
said crossing.)

Application No. 38981

E. D. Yeomans for applicant.

Fred R. Metheny for the County of Los Angeles,
interested party.

Howard Christenson for the Commission.

O P I N I O N

By the application herein, filed on April 15, 1957,
pursuant to General Order No. 75-B, Pacific Electric Railway Company,
hereinafter referred to as Pacific, seeks authority to change its
protection at Crossing No. 6L-5.23, Florence Avenue, on its
Los Angeles-Long Beach Line as follows:

Present Protection

- 2 Reflectorized No. 1 Crossing Signs
- 2 Advance Warning Signs
- 2 No. 3 Wigwags
- Human Flagman, 6:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m.

Proposed Protection

- 2 Reflectorized No. 1 Crossing Signs
- 2 Advance Warning Signs
- 2 No. 8 Flashing Light Signals,
supplemented by flashers on cantilever
arms suspended over the highway.

In its application, the applicant alleges that existing maximum speed for trains across Florence Avenue is thirty miles per hour when human flagman is on duty, and twenty miles per hour at all other times; that if this application is granted, there will be established, concurrently with the installation of automatic protection and the removal of the human flagman, a maximum speed of twenty miles per hour at all times for all trains consisting of freight trains of Pacific and passenger trains of Metropolitan Coach Lines; that the human flagman at this crossing costs \$12,839 per annum; that the cost of the new signal protection would be \$8,626; that Metropolitan Coach Lines participates in the cost of the flagman under the allocation of the operating costs of the tracks; that in Application No. 38745 Pacific is asking the Commission to grant a rental on these joint facilities and allocate the division of capital expenses; and the applicant suggests that the allocation of the cost of the new signal protection between Pacific and Metropolitan Coach Lines be considered in Application No. 38745. At the time of the hearing herein, Application No. 38745 had been decided (Decision No. 55469).

The record in this proceeding, other than the above-mentioned statement in the application, is silent with respect to the assessing of capital costs to the Metropolitan Coach Lines. The order which follows does not, therefore, assess any of the capital costs of crossing protection to Metropolitan.

A public hearing on the instant application was held in Los Angeles before Examiner Kent C. Rogers on December 16, 1957, and the matter was submitted. The County of Los Angeles appeared as an

interested party and presented evidence. A staff witness appeared in support of the proposition that automatic crossing gates should be installed at the crossing.

Pacific provides rail freight service between Long Beach, San Pedro, Bellflower, Watts, and Los Angeles. Metropolitan Coach Lines provides rail passenger service between said points. Between Los Angeles and Long Beach the service is provided over a private right of way running in a north-south direction. Between Los Angeles and Watts, including the Florence Avenue Crossing, there are four main tracks. South of Florence Avenue and extending to Nadeau Street, applicant has two side tracks on the east side of the right of way in addition to the said four tracks. The two side tracks are employed by the applicant for the purpose of making up freight trains destined to be routed over its Whittier line to a connection with Southern Pacific Company's east by-pass at Santa Fe Springs. The northernmost switch on the side tracks is approximately 700 feet from the south side of Florence Avenue (Exhibit No. 1) and the switching movements frequently activate the present warning signals. In addition, there is an average of 339 train movements on weekdays across Florence Avenue, including 301 passenger train movements and 38 freight train movements (Exhibit No. 4). Approximately 30,000 motor vehicles cross the tracks at Florence Avenue in a day, and at the present time traffic on Florence Avenue is warned of the approach of any train by wigwags and by the flagmen while on duty from 6:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. Three men are required to perform this service at a total salary of \$1,217 per month (Exhibit No. 2).

By Decision No. 54531, dated February 11, 1957, in Application No. 37570, the Commission authorized a replacement of rail

passenger service with motor coach service on the Bellflower line which will eliminate 38 of the passenger trains. Metropolitan has also filed Application No. 38628 requesting authority to abandon rail passenger service on its San Pedro line which application, if granted, would eliminate 58 additional passenger trains per day.

Applicant's witness, Southern Pacific Company's public project engineer, estimated that the cost of the proposed No. 8 flashing light signals plus flashers on cantilever arms would be \$8,554. This sum does not include the cost of two speed traps to be installed on the eastern track south of Florence Avenue in the vicinity of the side tracks. These speed traps, which would cost approximately \$1000 each, would bring the total cost of the change in protection to approximately \$10,500.

The Commission staff witness recommended that applicant install automatic crossing gates. The applicant states that it does not consider such installation to be practicable due to the frequency of movements of vehicular and train traffic. During the hours of 4 p.m. and 6 p.m., applicant alleges, automatic crossing gates would be in motion for a total of approximately thirty minutes of the two-hour period. The automatic gates would cost approximately \$16,500 according to the applicant's witness, plus the cost of speed traps.

By the authority of the Commission, crossing protection, similar to that proposed herein, was installed at the Slauson Avenue crossing of applicant's Los Angeles-Long Beach Line, herein referred to, on August 31, 1956. This crossing, No. 6L-4.23, is one mile north of Florence Avenue. Prior to said date, there was automatic protection and a crossing guard at Slauson Avenue, similar to that now at Florence Avenue. Applicant's witness said that the volume

of traffic is similar at each crossing, that the visibility is approximately the same, and the number of lanes of traffic is the same, namely, two in each direction.

A Los Angeles County traffic engineer testified that he believed the County has approved the proposed type of crossing protection and that it would have no objection to the installation of crossing gates if no additional interruption to traffic resulted, and provided that in either instance no portion of the cost were charged to the County.

A Los Angeles County traffic study engineer testified that the three major street crossings on Florence Avenue west of the tracks, and the three major crossings east of the tracks, have progressive preset timing permitting a speed of 24.1 miles per hour on Florence Avenue; that the average daily traffic thereon is 30,000, of which approximately 2,300 cross the track during the morning peak hour and the same number cross the track during the evening peak hour; that 46 trains cross Florence Avenue between 7 and 9 p.m., and 40 trains cross said street between 4 and 6 p.m.; that the average delay to vehicular traffic is 26 seconds, and that the average delay for each train with automatic crossing gates with speed traps would vary from a minimum of 26 seconds to a maximum of 41 seconds for each passenger train depending on the setting of the gate-timing device. The witness concluded that in no instance can the delay be reduced by automatic crossing gates and that such vehicular delay will be increased if maximum timings are used; that the installation of gates without time-out and speed trap circuits would require that the advance warning period be set so as to provide sufficient time for the fastest train; and that this could result in an advance

warning period of 50 to 60 seconds for the slower trains; and that, therefore, if automatic crossing gates are required, speed traps and time-out circuits must be used.

An associate transportation engineer of the Commission testified concerning the visibility, width of the street, and accidents since 1952, at the Florence Avenue and Slauson Avenue crossings, at each of which there are four tracks. He said that Slauson Avenue is 48 feet in width and that an average of 34,000 cars per day cross the tracks; that from a point in the middle thereof, 100 feet from the tracks, there is a visibility of 944 feet along the tracks in each direction; that no one has been killed there since March 12, 1952, at which time twenty persons were injured in one accident; that there have been no accidents occasioning injuries to persons since said date, and that there has been a total of only fourteen accidents at the crossing since said date. Florence Avenue, he said, is 70 feet in width; the visibility measured in the same manner as at Slauson Avenue is only 145 feet; that since April, 1952, there have been nineteen accidents thereat which resulted in four deaths and seven injuries.

We find that for the safety of the public, removal of the crossing guard requires the installation of automatic crossing gates together with adequate timing devices.

We further find that applicant should be required to pay the entire cost thereof inasmuch as it will realize a saving of over \$1,200 per month through the removal of the human flagmen.

O R D E R

A public hearing having been held, the Commission having made the foregoing findings and based thereon,

IT IS ORDERED that the Pacific Electric Railway Company is authorized to substitute two standard No. 8 flashing light signals

(General Order No. 75-B) supplemented with automatic crossing gates in lieu of two No. 3 wigwags and a human flagman at Crossing No. 6L-5.23, Florence Avenue. Said gates shall be installed with suitable time-out circuits to prevent abnormal operation of signals during switching operations. Circuit diagrams and a description of the operation of the proposed signals and gates shall be filed with the Commission for its approval prior to commencing construction.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the applicant shall bear the entire cost of the installation of said protection.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that within thirty days after completion pursuant to this order, applicant shall so advise the Commission in writing. This authorization shall expire if not exercised within one year unless time be extended.

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

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 18th day of FEBRUARY, 1958.

[Signature]
President
[Signature]
[Signature]
[Signature]
Commissioners