

ORIGINALDecision No. 56373

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of the application
of THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES, a
municipal corporation, to con-
struct TUJUNGA AVENUE at grade
across the tracks of the Coast
Line of the Southern Pacific
Company.

Application No. 39208

Roger Arnebergh and Alan G. Campbell, for the
City of Los Angeles. E. D. Yeomans and
Walter A. Steiger, for the Southern Pacific
Company, protestant. H. F. Christenson, for
the Commission staff.

O P I N I O N

By this application the City of Los Angeles seeks authority to construct Tujunga Avenue, in San Fernando Valley, at grade across the tracks of the Coast Line operation of the Southern Pacific Company. The Coast Line is one of Southern Pacific's main lines between Los Angeles and San Francisco.

A public hearing was held in Los Angeles before Examiner Mark V. Chiesa. Oral and documentary evidence having been adduced, the matter was submitted for decision.

Tujunga Avenue is a north-south street situated in the eastern part of the San Fernando Valley and is presently open and improved between San Fernando Road, at Tuxford Street, on the north, and Ventura Boulevard on the south, a distance of approximately six and a quarter miles, except for the portion between Sherman Way and Vanowen Street, a distance of one-half mile, which segment is dedicated as a public street with a minimum width of 50 feet.

The Southern Pacific tracks cross Tujunga Avenue in a generally east-west direction approximately midway between Sherman Way and Vanowen Street. At present Tujunga Avenue is not improved or open to traffic between Sherman Way and said tracks. Between the tracks and Vanowen Street it is an unimproved dirt street open to travel. There are no improved means for pedestrian crossing of the tracks and there are no sidewalks. The tracks are on a fill which rises approximately seven feet above the level of the street and surrounding area. The only present travel at the location of Tujunga Avenue across the said tracks is by a few pedestrians, mostly school children attending the Sun Valley Junior High School situated a little over one-quarter mile north of the proposed crossing. The closest improved streets that can now be used by persons desiring to travel between points north and south of the tracks in the vicinity of Tujunga Avenue are Vineland Avenue, which crosses the Southern Pacific tracks at grade, one-half mile east, and Lankershim Boulevard, which is a separated underpass, one-half mile west. There is no sidewalk at the Vineland Avenue crossing.

At the proposed Tujunga Avenue crossing there is a main line track, a passing track known as the Hewitt Siding, extending westerly from Tujunga Avenue and paralleling the main track to the south, and a portion of an industrial spur track which comes off of the passing track at Tujunga Avenue and runs easterly of Tujunga Avenue and south of the main line.

The city is proposing a street crossing 43 feet in width, having a center divider strip, consisting of a raised concrete curb or island two feet in width, for the separation of traffic moving in

opposite directions. This center dividing curb will commence approximately ten feet on either side of the rails and will extend approximately 100 feet in each direction. The plans provide for two lanes of traffic in each direction for a distance of approximately 110 feet on either side of the rails, at which point the street will begin to narrow to a two-lane highway. Curbs will be provided along the approach grades, which grades will be 3.1 percent for the northerly approach and 5.4 percent for the southerly approach.

Under present conditions the view of an approaching motorist, from either direction, would be unobstructed as to oncoming trains; however, due to the approach grades, the view as to oncoming motor vehicles will be somewhat impaired, which is the reason for providing the center divider curb.

Two automatic flashing light signals with full track circuit controls would be installed. Sidewalks, although not included in the original plans, would also be constructed along the approaches and across the railroad right of way as part of the city's highway maintenance program.

Under the city's Master Plan of Highways, Vineland Avenue and Lankershim Boulevard are designated as major highways, used principally for through traffic, while Tujunga Avenue, situated midway of said two major streets, is a so-called secondary highway intended more for the accommodation of local traffic. Major highways are planned for the valley at one-mile intervals running in both north-south and east-west directions and will have six traffic lanes. Secondary highways are also to be at mile intervals midway between the major highways, and are planned as four-lane streets.

At its crossing with the Southern Pacific tracks, Vineland Avenue is now a two-lane street and Lankershim Boulevard has six lanes at the underpass. The record shows that the Vineland Avenue crossing, now protected only by two wigwag signals, requires additional protection. Applicant and protestant are aware of this need. The volume of traffic along the said two streets is now practically at capacity during the morning and evening peak periods. Although evidence of record indicates that the completion of the Hollywood Freeway, located approximately one mile westerly of and generally parallel with Lankershim Boulevard, and the contemplated widening of Vineland would to some extent alleviate the present periods of congestion along said streets, the record also shows that the eastern portion of San Fernando Valley is growing rapidly in population and industry. The city contends that the proposed crossing is necessary to improve present traffic conditions for through travel, provide a more convenient movement on local streets, and for future public convenience and necessity as well.

From Burbank Junction the Coast Line of the Southern Pacific Company crosses the San Fernando Valley area of the City of Los Angeles in a north-westerly direction for a distance of approximately sixteen miles. The angle at the crossing of the tracks with Tujunga Avenue is slightly in excess of 103 degrees. The principal streets in that portion of San Fernando Valley lying to the southwest of San Fernando Road are laid out in a true north-south and east-west direction. Between and including Vineland Avenue, which is one-half mile east of and parallel with Tujunga Avenue, and Woodman Avenue, which is three miles west of and parallel with

Tujunga Avenue, there are at present six crossings located and spaced from east to west as follows:^{1/}

<u>Crossing No.</u>	<u>Street</u>	<u>Distance Between Crossings</u>	<u>Kind of Crossing</u>	<u>Protection*</u>
E-459.3	Vineland Ave.	1.0 miles	Grade	2 W
E-458.6-B	Lankershim Blvd.	0.5 miles	Separation	Separation
E-458.1	Laurel Canyon Blvd.	0.8 miles	Grade	2 FL AG
E-457.3	Bellaire Ave.	0.3 miles	Grade	2 FL
E-457.0	Coldwater Canyon Rd.	0.8 miles	Grade	2 W
E-456.2	Woodman Ave.		Grade	2 W

* W - Standard No. 4 Upper Quadrant Wigwags
 FL - Standard No. 8 Flashing Light Signals
 AG - Automatic Crossing Gates

The area immediately north of the proposed crossing, bisected by Tujunga Avenue, is known as Sun Valley and had a population, as of February 1956, of 41,939. Immediately south of the crossing is the community of North Hollywood, with a population, as of February 1956, of 91,724. The population of the entire San Fernando Valley, as of said date, was 571,563, with an estimated population, as of July 1957, of 627,300.

Protestant railroad contends that the establishment of a crossing at Tujunga would create an additional traffic hazard and that present conditions do not require the opening of said street; that traffic congestion on Lankershim Boulevard will be relieved

^{1/} This section of the valley, generally, is in the north portions of North Hollywood and Van Nuys, and is somewhat more densely populated than the area west of Woodman Avenue but less populated than the area southerly of Burbank Boulevard, one of the major east-west streets.

by the completion of the Hollywood Freeway; that Vineland Avenue should first be improved at least to a four-lane highway; and that another crossing will lead to accidents without commensurate benefits to the public.

The accident record (Exhibit No. 26) for the past thirty years at the two nearest grade crossings, Vineland Avenue and Laurel Canyon Boulevard, is not considered to be high for grade crossings in urban areas, however, at the Vineland Avenue crossing, within the past five years, there have been eight accidents resulting in six deaths and two injuries.

The Commission having considered the entire record is of the opinion and finds that public convenience and necessity, resulting from an increase in population and consequent motor vehicle travel, outweigh the attendant dangers involved, and therefore require the establishment of a crossing at Tujunga Avenue. The Commission also considers additional safety measures at the Vineland Avenue crossing necessary and in the public interest, and will so provide in the order. The application will be granted.

O R D E R

A public hearing having been held in the above-entitled matter, the Commission being fully advised in the premises, and good cause appearing,

IT IS ORDERED:

(1) That the City of Los Angeles be, and it hereby is, authorized to construct Tujunga Avenue at grade across the Coast Line tracks of Southern Pacific Company substantially in the manner and at the location described in the application, said crossing to

be identified as Crossing No. E-459.1. Width of crossing shall be not less than 48 feet and grades of approach not greater than six percent, and sidewalks not less than five feet in width shall also be constructed along the approaches on both sides of the street and across the railroad right of way. Construction shall be equal or superior to Standard No. 2 of General Order No. 72. Protection shall be by two Standard No. 8 flashing light signals as specified in General Order No. 75-B.

(2) That the authority hereinabove granted in paragraph (1) of this order shall not become effective for any purpose unless the City of Los Angeles and/or Southern Pacific Company shall, prior to or concurrently with the construction of the Tujunga Avenue Crossing, widen the Vineland Avenue Crossing No. E-459.6 and its approaches to a minimum of 48 feet, with grades of approach not to exceed six percent, provide at least one pedestrian crossing of a minimum width of five feet, and also replace the existing two wigwags with two Standard No. 8 flashing light signals as specified in General Order No. 75-B, supplemented by automatic crossing gates.

(3) That the costs of construction shall be borne in accordance with the existing agreement between the City of Los Angeles and Southern Pacific Company. Maintenance costs outside of lines two feet outside of rails shall be borne by the City of Los Angeles and between such lines by Southern Pacific Company.

Within thirty days after completion, pursuant to this order, applicant shall so advise the Commission in writing. This authority shall expire if not exercised within one year, unless time be extended, or if above conditions are not complied

with. Authorization may be revoked or modified in the event that public convenience and necessity or safety so require.

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

Dated at San Francisco, California,
this 17th day of MARCH, 1958.

Paul A. Winter President
William H. ...
E. J. Fox
Commissioners