

ORIGINALDecision No. 66129

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

APPLICATION OF THE COUNTY OF
LOS ANGELES FOR THE WIDENING
AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE EXISTING
ATCHISON, TOPEKA AND SANTA FE
RAILWAY CROSSING NO. 2H-16.7
AT INGLEWOOD AVENUE IN THE CITIES
OF LAWDALE AND REDONDO BEACH.

Application No. 45260

Harold W. Kennedy, County Counsel, by
Ronald L. Schneider, Deputy County
Counsel, for County of Los Angeles,
applicant.

A. M. Shelton, for The Atchison, Topeka
and Santa Fe Railway Company, protestant.
B. A. Peeters, for Commission staff.

O P I N I O N

By this application the County of Los Angeles seeks authority to widen Inglewood Avenue at its crossing with The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company's Harbor Branch line to 64 feet and to improve the crossing protection by supplementing the existing two Standard No. 8 flashing light signals with flashing lights and back lights mounted on 12-foot cantilever arms. The crossing, No. 2H-16.7, is located within the cities of Lawndale and Redondo Beach, which cities have consented to the filing of an application for the street widening and crossing improvement. The present protection at the crossing consists of two Standard No. 8 flashing light signals.

The Commission's staff is in disagreement with the County as to the type of protection that should be installed. It recommends that upon the widening of the Inglewood Avenue crossing the present Standard No. 8 flashing light signals be relocated to positions behind the proposed curb lines and that said signals be supplemented with automatic gates.

The railroad supports the proposal of the County.

A public hearing was held in Los Angeles on May 23 and 24, 1963, before Examiner Chiesa. Oral and documentary evidence having been adduced, the matter was submitted for decision.

The evidence shows that Inglewood Avenue is a principal north-south street and, in the vicinity of the said crossing, is the dividing line between the cities of Redondo Beach and Lawndale. Six hundred feet north of the crossing are the on and off ramps of the San Diego Freeway which overpasses Inglewood Avenue. The railroad and freeway are parallel at Inglewood Avenue, the former crossing at grade and the latter overpassing the street in a northwest-southeast direction, the railroad being south-westerly of the freeway. The angle of crossing is 48° . Approximately four hundred and fifty feet south of the crossing is Manhattan Beach Boulevard, a principal east-west street, which has no interchange with the freeway, making it necessary for traffic on this street desiring to travel north on Inglewood Avenue, or to use the freeway, to cross over the
(1)
Santa Fe track.

(1) Exhibit A, Plate 1.

The track layout near the crossing, west of Inglewood Avenue, consists of a passing track north (generally) of main track and two storage tracks and a spur track on the south side of the main track. East of the crossing there is a spur track north of the main track. (2) The first switch west of the crossing will be only 36 feet from the proposed curb line.

The approach grades are 2 per cent maximum. Maximum speeds of trains and vehicles at crossing are 30 m.p.h. and 35 m.p.h., respectively. There are 10 to 14 trains per day not including switching operations. On January 23, 1959, 24-hour traffic was approximately 13,000.

The general area surrounding the crossing is industrial and residential. Many industries are now located in the vicinity of the crossing and there is considerable vacant property available for further development. Adjacent thereto, surrounding the industrial area are numerous residential developments. The testimony indicates that the entire South Bay district and its "back country" of which this location is a part will in the not-too-distant future become one of the most highly developed industrial and residential sections of Los Angeles County.

The present crossing has a good accident record. No deaths have been recorded and there have been only two injuries since 1931.

The County proposes to improve Inglewood Avenue by increasing the number of lanes to six with a capacity of 26,000 vehicles.

(2) Exhibit A, Plate 2.

There are two lanes at present. There will be three lanes in each direction, one to be used for parking, except at peak travel times when all lanes will be used for continuous movement.

It is the County's position that the protection afforded by two cantilever Standard No. 8 flashing light signals would be adequate and evidence was presented by photographs of several crossings claimed to be somewhat similar to the Inglewood crossing situation showing the lights and their visibility from an approaching motorist's viewpoint. It also showed a motion picture supporting its position. The County's principal objection to the staff recommendation of automatic gates is that their use would create a traffic problem at peak hours, particularly for cars coming off the San Diego Freeway, because gates would detain vehicles for longer periods than overhead flashing lights. The County does not consider the increased cost of automatic gates to be a factor.

The railroad's objection to gates is that they can be damaged by vehicles or by wind conditions. It is not apparent from the record that wind would be a material factor.

The staff contends that cantilever signals, which, incidentally, would be 19 feet in height and extend a distance of nine feet into the first lane of traffic (the so-called parking lane), would not provide adequate protection, particularly in view of the 48° angle of the crossing, and that because of the distance between the two signals, due to said angle of crossing, the back lights should not be used. The staff presented evidence showing that where automatic gates have been installed the incidence of serious accidents has greatly decreased.

Based upon the evidence we find that:

1. Inglewood Avenue is a Secondary County Highway and is planned to be improved to a traffic capacity of approximately double that which exists today.

2. The widening and improvement of the grade crossing at Inglewood Avenue and The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company's Harbor Branch line (Crossing No. 2H-16.7) will not be adverse to the public interest.

3. Because of the present and anticipated future traffic volumes, the adverse crossing angle and the switching tracks in close proximity, the crossing is potentially hazardous and should be protected with the most effective automotive grade crossing protective devices available.

4. Two Standard No. 8 flashing light signals supplemented with automatic gates will provide such protection and with properly designed signal circuits should not unnecessarily impede the flow of vehicular traffic.

O R D E R

IT IS ORDERED that the County of Los Angeles is authorized to widen and improve the grade crossing at Inglewood Avenue and The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company's Harbor Branch line (Crossing No. 2H-16.7) substantially in the manner and in

accordance with plans introduced in this proceeding, subject to the following conditions:

1. That crossing protection shall be by two Standard No. 8 flashing light signals as prescribed in General Order No. 75-B supplemented by automatic crossing gates.
2. The costs of widening and improving the crossing and approaches and of installing the automatic crossing signal protection shall be borne in accordance with existing agreements or agreements to be reached between applicant and the Railway. Should the parties fail to agree, the Commission will apportion such costs by further order.
3. The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company shall bear the maintenance cost of the widened crossing between lines two feet outside of rails and of the flashing light signals and automatic gates.
4. The County of Los Angeles and/or the cities of Lawndale and Redondo Beach shall bear the remainder of the expense of maintaining the crossing and approaches.
5. That within thirty days after the completion of the work hereinabove authorized applicant and protestant shall notify the Commission in writing of the compliance with the conditions hereof.

6. That the authority herein granted shall expire if not exercised within one year, unless time be extended.

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

Dated at San Francisco, California this 4th day of OCTOBER, 1963.

William W. Bennett
President
George W. Fargo
John E. Mitchell

Commissioners

For the reasons set forth in our dissenting views in Decision No. 65531, dated June 4, 1963, we dissent to that part of the order requiring the railroad to bear all of the maintenance costs. We would require that such costs be shared. We concur otherwise.

-7- *Frederick B. Holshoff*
George H. Prover