

ORIGINAL

Decision No. 67099

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, re the construction of a structure separating the crossing of RESEDA BOULEVARD and the Coast Line railroad tracks of the Southern Pacific Company and a structure separating the crossing of PARTHENIA STREET and the Coast Line railroad tracks of the Southern Pacific Company.

) Application No. 45808
) (Filed September 24, 1963)

Charles W. Sullivan, for applicant.
William E. Johnston and Robert Gibson Johnson,
for Northridge League of Citizens;
Towson T. MacLaren, for Northridge Chamber
of Commerce, protestants.
E. D. Yeomans, for Southern Pacific Company,
Paul McCann, for Valleywide Better Government
Committee, and Arnold Court, interested parties.
W. F. Hibbard and Lloyd Young, for the Commission
staff.

O P I N I O N

The City of Los Angeles (City) seeks an order of this Commission authorizing the crossings at separated grades of Reseda Boulevard (Crossing No. E-449.8B) and of Parthenia Street (Crossing No. E-449.9B) under the Coast Line railroad tracks of Southern Pacific Company (Southern Pacific); the elimination of the existing Reseda Boulevard-Southern Pacific grade crossing No. E-449.8; the establishment of a temporary crossing of Reseda Boulevard at grade (Crossing No. E-449.76); and the allocation of costs between the City and Southern Pacific.

A public hearing was held in Los Angeles before Examiner Rogers on February 4, 1964, and orally argued on February 5, 1964, after which the matter was submitted.

Reseda Boulevard is intended to be a major highway with a paving width of 80 feet, in the City's Master Plan of Highways, extending from the northerly limits of the City to Ventura Boulevard, a distance of approximately $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles. It is the only north-south street which is open to continuous vehicular traffic across the San Fernando Valley between Balboa Boulevard on the east and DeSoto Avenue on the west, a distance of approximately 5 miles.

Parthenia Street is a secondary highway extending from VanNuys Boulevard on the east to Topanga Canyon Boulevard on the west, a distance of approximately 9 miles. When completed it will have a paving width of 60 feet.

The nearest public crossing west of Reseda Boulevard is at DeSoto Avenue (Crossing No. E-446.8) a distance of approximately 3 miles and the nearest crossing to the east is at Lindley Avenue (Crossing No. E-450.4) a distance of approximately $1/2$ mile. Both crossings are at grade.

At the present time Parthenia Street, from the west, terminates at Reseda Boulevard south of the Southern Pacific right of way. Traffic intending to proceed north on Reseda Boulevard or east on Parthenia Street must turn left on Reseda Boulevard approximately 350 feet and across the right of way. At this point Parthenia Street runs east from Reseda Boulevard. The City seeks authority to continue Parthenia Street from the west directly across Reseda Boulevard and under the Southern Pacific track at a slight angle, meeting the existing Parthenia Street approximately 900 feet east of

Reseda Boulevard. This will require a railroad bridge structure and the deadending of Eddy Street on the west side of the underpass and of a portion of Parthenia Street on the east side of the underpass. It will also require the deadending of Eddy Street on the southeast side of the Parthenia Street bridge and the termination of Darby Avenue at the Parthenia Street underpass north of the tracks.

The proposed construction is No. 12 on the Commission's priority list of separated grades (Decision No. 66484 dated December 17, 1963, in Case No. 7683) and No. 4 in Los Angeles County on such list of separations.

A City engineer stated that the City Planning Commission has approved the proposed separation of grades and that the proposal conforms to the City's Master Plan of Highways and Freeways. The engineer further stated that it is the City's contention that this is one crossing and that the proposal involves two bridge structures in order to expedite traffic. He also stated that this crossing will serve the San Fernando State College which will accommodate 20,000-25,000 students, one-third of whom are estimated to originate south of the Southern Pacific tracks. This college is immediately east of Reseda Boulevard and north of Nordhoff Street, the next major highway north of Parthenia Street. In addition to this college, the land use plan of the Northridge District of the City contemplates a substantial area of multiple residential and commercial and industrial development, adjacent

to the railroad and Reseda Boulevard, and extending from Roscoe Boulevard westward to the city limits.

The Assistant General Manager of the Los Angeles City Traffic Department presented studies showing the estimated traffic at present and in the future. At present, 30,000 vehicles per day use Reseda Boulevard south of Parthenia Street and 27,820 use said street north of Parthenia Street. Also, 14,130 per day use Parthenia Street west of Reseda Boulevard and 8,330 use Parthenia Street east of Reseda Boulevard. As a result of the grade crossing which requires all traffic intending to go east or west on Parthenia Street across Reseda Boulevard to merge with the Reseda Boulevard traffic, 34,300 vehicles per day cross the tracks on Reseda Boulevard. It is estimated that in 1970 the volume of traffic on Reseda Boulevard south of Parthenia Street will increase to 36,000, and that in 1980 such traffic will increase to 50,000. During the same period the traffic on Parthenia Street is expected to increase from approximately 14,000 vehicles west of Reseda Boulevard and 8,300 east thereof to 16,000 and 12,000 respectively in 1970, and 22,000 and 18,000 respectively in 1980. The witness also stated that after freeways parallel to existing highways are opened there is a temporary drop in the highway traffic but that such traffic eventually returns to the pre-freeway opening level.

The record shows that various freeways are either in existence or are to be constructed in the San Fernando Valley. Those to be constructed include a Reseda freeway which is expected to be in the vicinity of the existing Reseda Boulevard and will tie on to the Ventura freeway on the south and a proposed Simi Freeway on the north, and a proposed Whitnall Freeway, an east-west

highway immediately north of Roscoe Boulevard. These various freeways are contemplated but the locations or construction dates are not firm.

The assistant commander of the Traffic Bureau of the Los Angeles Police Department, testified that the Los Angeles Police Department has a substation on Vanowen Street just west of Reseda Boulevard; that this station is the only station serving the area; that this station is south of Parthenia Street; that Reseda Boulevard is the principal access road for service to the area north of the Southern Pacific right of way; that the passage of trains and the lowering of the crossing gates hinder the flow of traffic on Parthenia Street and Reseda Boulevard; that on May 21, 1962, there was one occasion in which traffic across the right of way was delayed for 20 minutes by train in the intersection; and that on June 6, 1962, there was an occasion when the traffic was delayed for approximately 25 minutes due to a train on the intersection. It was his opinion that the establishment of the grade separations will assist the Police Department in the performance of its duties.

The City estimated the cost of the complete structure separating both Reseda Boulevard and Parthenia Street from the Southern Pacific coast line tracks to be \$4,255,300 which figure includes \$321,000 for separation, surfacing, curbs, gutters, and sidewalks; \$60,000 for sanitary sewers; \$228,000 for a storm drain; \$837,000 for the bridge structures and retaining walls; \$58,000 for signs, signals, and lights; and \$2,100,000 for rights of way. The estimates include \$257,000 for the bridge structure on Reseda Boulevard and \$500,000 for the bridge structure on

Parthenia Street. The protestants argue that \$257,000 is the only legitimate bridge structure cost as they contend the Parthenia Street crossing is a new crossing and should be entirely paid for by the City. The traffic at present on Parthenia Street uses Reseda Boulevard as part of its roadway. The matter would be simple if Reseda Boulevard were named a combination of Reseda Boulevard and Parthenia Street across the tracks. In our opinion the project involves but one grade separation and it will be considered as such.

There were contentions by protestants and interested parties that other streets, namely White Oak Avenue and Winnetka Avenue, which streets do not cross the tracks, should be opened before the proposed crossing, inasmuch as the cost of separating the grade at either point would be much smaller than the cost of the Reseda Boulevard, Parthenia Street crossing. The record shows that the Los Angeles City Council has determined to construct this structure as proposed prior to the construction of any other crossing.

The owner of a building supply firm situated on the southeast corner of Reseda Boulevard and Parthenia Street objected to the crossing. The proposed Parthenia Street extension will go through the middle of his business property. The City has determined that it desires a crossing as requested. This being so, if the Commission authorizes the crossing, any injury to this party

will be a matter to be properly considered in a condemnation proceeding.

The City and Southern Pacific will attempt to reach an agreement relative to the allocation of costs and relative to plans for the project. If they are unable to agree, they will request a further hearing before the Commission to resolve said matters.

Upon the record herein the Commission finds that:

1. Reseda Boulevard and Parthenia Street are each a public highway in the City of Los Angeles, California.

2. Reseda Boulevard crosses Southern Pacific's Coast Line (between Los Angeles and San Francisco) track at grade.

3. Parthenia Street west of Reseda Boulevard terminates thereat approximately 200 feet south of Southern Pacific's track, and east of Reseda Boulevard terminates thereat, approximately 150 feet north of said track.

4. Reseda Boulevard is a major north-south highway on the City's Master Plan of Highways and extends a distance of approximately $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles in the city limits. It will have a curb to curb width of 80 feet.

5. Parthenia Street is a secondary east-west highway in the City's Master Plan of Highways extending a distance of approximately 9 miles in the city limits. It will have a curb to curb width of 60 feet.

6. The area along Parthenia Street both east and west of Reseda Boulevard is zoned for both industrial and limited industrial purposes.

7. The area along Reseda Boulevard north and south of the Southern Pacific tracks has various zoning restrictions including

commercial, industrial, and residential.

8. There is a grade crossing at Lindley Avenue approximately 3,000 feet east of Reseda Boulevard and a grade crossing has been authorized at Corbin Avenue approximately 8,000 feet west of Reseda Boulevard. Lindley Avenue terminates approximately 3,000 feet north of the Southern Pacific tracks and is designated as a secondary highway. The two named crossings are the nearest crossings to Reseda Boulevard.

9. The present average daily traffic on Reseda Boulevard across the Southern Pacific track is approximately 34,300 vehicles.

10. The only police station in the area is near Reseda Boulevard south of the Southern Pacific tracks, and the crossing is sometimes blocked for periods ranging from 10-25 minutes due to train movements thereon.

11. Various streets in the vicinity of Reseda Boulevard which now do not cross the Southern Pacific right of way could be improved with separated grade crossings at a lower cost than the estimated cost of the structure or structures required at Reseda Boulevard and Parthenia Street at the Southern Pacific tracks, but the City does not contemplate constructing any crossing at separated grades prior to the crossing referred to in this application.

12. The total estimated cost of the separation structures and facilities required to place Parthenia Street and Reseda Boulevard under the Southern Pacific's tracks is \$4,255,300, including rights of way acquisitions.

13. The separation of grades as requested in the application will require the acquisition by the City of various commercial properties and enterprises on and along Parthenia Street

and Reseda Boulevard. Except as to the railroad's property, here concerned, the costs of such acquisition and the damages resulting therefrom are matters to be considered by a court of competent jurisdiction.

14. Public convenience, necessity and safety require that both Reseda Boulevard and Parthenia Street cross the tracks and right of way of Southern Pacific at separated grades, and that the existing grade crossing at Reseda Boulevard be eliminated. The division of costs and the design of the structure or structures should be determined jointly by the City and Southern Pacific, and if an agreement cannot be reached within a reasonable time, a further hearing should be held to determine the proper division of costs.

15. The City should be authorized to construct a temporary crossing of the Southern Pacific tracks at grade in lieu of and in the vicinity of Reseda Boulevard and Parthenia Street for use during the construction of the separated grades.

16. Southern Pacific should be authorized to construct a temporary shoofly track at grade across and around the construction site during construction.

Upon the foregoing findings the Commission concludes that the application should be granted subject to the conditions set forth in the ensuing order.

O R D E R

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. The City of Los Angeles is authorized to construct Reseda Boulevard and Parthenia Street at separated grades under Southern Pacific Company's Coast Line of tracks in the City of Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, at the locations substantially as described and in the manner shown on Exhibit 3 to be identified as

Crossings Nos. E-449.8B and E-449.9B, respectively. Clearances shall conform to the provisions of General Order No. 26-D.

2. Concurrently with the commencement of construction of the Reseda Boulevard structure the City of Los Angeles shall abolish the grade crossing of Reseda Boulevard (Crossing No. E-449.8) to use by the public. The City shall also take such steps as required to prevent pedestrians from crossing the track at grade pending completion of Crossing No. E-449.8B.

3. During construction of the separations, Southern Pacific Company is authorized to construct and operate a temporary shoofly around the construction sites and across Reseda Boulevard. Upon completion of the structures, tracks shall be restored to the original alignment and the shoofly shall be abandoned and removed.

4. During construction of the separations the City of Los Angeles is authorized to construct and operate a temporary detour roadway around the construction site and across the Southern Pacific tracks at Crossing No. E-449.76 which crossing shall permit access to and from both Reseda Boulevard and Parthenia Street. This crossing shall be protected by Standard No. 8 flashing light signals (General Order No. 75B) supplemented by automatic crossing gates. Upon completion of the structures the temporary road shall be removed and the use of the said temporary crossing shall be terminated.

5. Construction and maintenance costs shall be borne in accordance with an agreement or agreements to be entered into between the City of Los Angeles and Southern Pacific Company, and a copy of said executed agreement, together with plans approved by the railroad, shall be filed with the Commission within sixty days after the effective date of this order. Should the parties fail to agree, the Commission will apportion the cost of construction and maintenance by further order.

6. Within thirty days after completion, pursuant to this order, the City of Los Angeles shall so advise the Commission in writing. This authorization shall expire if not exercised within two years, unless time be extended or if above conditions are not complied with. Authorization may be revoked or modified if public convenience, 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 14th day of April, 1964.

William W. Bennett
President

John F. H. Hill

Wesley A. Hoag

George A. Hoover

Frederick B. Holhoff
Commissioners