

Decision No. 69556

ORIGINAL

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Investigation into the status,
safety, maintenance, use and
protection or closing of the
crossing at grade of the lines
of SOUTHERN PACIFIC COMPANY
in the County of Los Angeles,
California, with Woodruff
Avenue; Crossing No. BK-497.1-C.

Case No. 8110
(Filed January 12, 1965)

Randolph Karr and John Gordon, for Southern Pacific Company; and Royal M. Sorenson, for City of Downey, respondents.
Mitchell M. Brockman, for the Commission staff.

O P I N I O N

A public hearing on the above-entitled matter was held before Examiner Rogers in Los Angeles on May 25, 1965, and the matter was submitted subject to the filing of concurrent briefs. Briefs were filed by the Southern Pacific Company (Railroad) and the City of Downey (City). The matter is ready for decision.

At the conclusion of the staff's presentation counsel for the Railroad moved for dismissal on the ground that there was a failure of proof to support any order changing the existing protection at the crossing. This motion was taken under submission. It will be denied.

The investigation concerns the crossing at grade of Woodruff Avenue (Crossing No. BK-497.1-C) in the City. It was to determine, among other things, whether or not public health, safety

and welfare require the relocation, widening, closing or other alteration of the crossing; the installation and maintenance of additional or improved protective devices at the crossing; and, if any changes are made, on what terms the work should be done and how the cost should be apportioned.

An Associate Transportation Engineer of the Commission staff investigated the crossing, made a report thereon (Exhibit 1) and testified at the hearing. His evidence is summarized as follows: The crossing consists of one drill track at an angle of 90 degrees to Woodruff Avenue. This drill track is 2,730 feet in length from the Railroad's Santa Ana Branch originating at a point 1,800 feet easterly of Woodruff Avenue and ending approximately 930 feet west thereof. There are several spurs from the drill track serving several industries including four west thereof served by three spurs. The crossing is approximately 1,000 feet southerly of the Santa Ana Branch crossing of Woodruff Avenue which crossing is protected with four Standard No. 8 flashing light signals. Approximately 200 feet north of the crossing Stewart & Cray Road extends from the west to an intersection with Woodruff Avenue and terminates at Woodruff Avenue. This intersection is provided with traffic signals.

The area in the vicinity of the crossing is for light industrial purposes except the southwest quadrant which presently has no improvements. Woodruff Junior High School and Gaudin Elementary School are located approximately 0.6 mile southerly of the crossing and in the immediate vicinity of Woodruff Avenue.

Woodruff Avenue is improved to a width of 80 feet between curbs. The present protection at the crossing consists of two Standard No. 1 reflectorized crossing signs installed on August 14, 1957. The visibilities at the crossing from points 100 feet north and south of the drill track are as follows: In the northeast quadrant, 110 feet; in the northwest quadrant, 104 feet; in the southeast quadrant, 200 feet; and in the southwest quadrant, 1,000 feet.

The accident record since December 20, 1959, is as follows:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Direction and Speed of Train</u>	<u>Time of Day</u>	<u>Direction and Speed of Vehicle Involved</u>
6/3/63	Eastbound, 1 mph	4:25 a.m.	South, 45 mph
8/3/60	Westbound, 3 mph	12:40 a.m.	North, 25 mph
12/20/59	Eastbound, standing	7:40 p.m.	South, 10 mph

None of the accidents resulted in any injuries or deaths. There is no illumination at this crossing, the nearest being a mercury vapor lamp at the intersection of Stewart & Gray Road and Woodruff Avenue.

The average daily traffic consists of four switching movements, but this varies from zero to as many as 11 movements a day, depending on the number of cars delivered and picked up at the four industries west of the crossing.

A 24-hour vehicle traffic count taken by the City on February 23, 1965, showed 16,160 vehicles moving over the crossing.

This traffic varied from 29 vehicles per hour in the non-peak periods to as many as 1,700 vehicles per hour during the morning and afternoon peak periods. This traffic volume is expected to increase upon completion and opening of a new Broadway Department Store at the intersection of Woodruff Avenue and Firestone Boulevard approximately one-quarter mile north from this crossing. The Downey Unified School District school buses use this crossing approximately 32 times a day. Approximately one-half of these buses are empty.

The posted vehicle speed limit is 40 miles per hour on Woodruff Avenue. However, the record shows that due to the visibility the legal speed limit at the crossing is 15 miles an hour.

The staff engineer concluded that, based on the volume of vehicular traffic on Woodruff Avenue, the restricted visibility of the trains on the drill track and the accident record, a need for automatic crossing protection exists. He recommended that the following be done:

1. Install four Standard No. 8 flashing light signals as minimum protection. Backlights may be omitted on the signals to be located on the medians.
2. Co-ordinate the traffic signals at the nearby intersection of Stewart & Gray Road and Woodruff Avenue with the railroad crossing protection.
3. Install transition traffic striping delineated with reflector buttons for approximately 200 feet in advance of the median areas.

4. Install nine button reflectors on the approach ends of medians.
5. Install two 20,000 lumen mercury vapor lights.

The City presented evidence that the County of Los Angeles had granted the Railroad a franchise for the drill track effective June 8, 1951 (Exhibit 4), and that pursuant to Section 7 thereof the costs of all warning devices at the crossing are to be paid by the Railroad. Such an agreement or requirement is, of course, of no force or effect as far as this Commission is concerned, inasmuch as it has the exclusive jurisdiction to prescribe the terms of any crossing and to apportion the costs thereof (Public Utilities Code Section 1202).

The City urged that no additional protection is needed at the crossing. If protection is required by the Commission, however, it agrees with the recommendations of the staff engineer except that reflectorized paint should be substituted for button reflectors.

The Public Projects Engineer for the Railroad testified that the drill track has at present three spurs therefrom west of Woodruff Avenue. The first of these spurs serves H. M. Royal, Inc., the second serves the Golden West Pipe and Supply Company and the Triangle Distributing Company, and the third serves Holm Royal, Inc. The switch point for the H. M. Royal, Inc., spur is approximately 22 feet west of the west curb of Woodruff Avenue. During the year 1964 there were 117 carloads into these spur tracks from the drill track and approximately the same number of empties out of these spur tracks. Movements are made early in

C. 8110 GH*

the morning and late in the afternoon and in delivering a car to H. M. Royal, Inc., two movements across Woodruff Avenue are required due to the proximity of the switch point to Woodruff Avenue. This witness stated that in his opinion the existing protection is adequate at the present time if two 20,000 lumen mercury vapor lights are added at the crossing. He stated, however, that flashing light signals are not adequate; that they have some effect for two years after installation and thereafter the accident rate goes back to the prior rate. He recommended that the crossing protection, if modified, be flashing light signals supplemented with automatic crossing gates, and that the protection be co-ordinated with the protection at Stewart & Gray Road. He said that due to the short space between the switch for the H. M. Royal, Inc., spur, and the curb there should be a manual button on the west side of Woodruff Avenue so that any trains proceeding from the west across Woodruff Avenue would come to a complete stop and a member of the train crew would operate the crossing gates before crossing Woodruff Avenue. The witness stated that on a normal day trains will occupy the crossing approximately four times and that on each occasion the crossing will be closed about one and a half minutes.

The witness testified that the total cost of the crossing protection, exclusive of any co-ordination of the Stewart & Gray Road signal, would be \$18,430, and that the costs should be apportioned 50 per cent to the City and 50 per cent to the Railroad. The witness further stated that the annual maintenance cost would be approximately \$812.

Findings

The Commission finds that:

1. The Santa Ana Branch of the Railroad extends approximately southeast and northwest. A drill track branches west from this line approximately 1,800 feet east of Woodruff Avenue and crosses Woodruff Avenue at a 90 degree angle and terminates approximately 930 feet west of Woodruff Avenue.

2. Stewart & Gray Road is approximately 200 feet north of the crossing of Woodruff Avenue by the drill track; is parallel to the drill track and terminates on the east at Woodruff Avenue. The intersection of Stewart & Gray Road and Woodruff Avenue is protected by regulation traffic control signals. Approximately 16,160 vehicles per day use Woodruff Avenue in both directions across the drill track.

3. Woodruff Avenue is improved to a width of 80 feet between curbs. There are two lanes for moving traffic plus a parking lane on each side of Woodruff Avenue. A left turn lane for northbound traffic turning left from Woodruff Avenue on to Stewart & Gray Road extends from south of the drill track crossing to Stewart & Gray Road.

4. The drill track serves four industries west of Woodruff Avenue by means of three spurs. The switch point of the first spur immediately west of Woodruff Avenue is located approximately 22 feet west of the west curb of Woodruff Avenue. Approximately 117 carloads of freight were shipped in or out of the four industries west of Woodruff Avenue in the year 1964. Each of said

movements required the movement of the empty car on the drill track. The delivery of a car to the first spur west of Woodruff Avenue requires two movements across Woodruff Avenue. There is an average of four switching movements per day across Woodruff Avenue and the number of such movements vary from zero to 11 a day. Each movement across Woodruff Avenue closes the crossing for approximately one and a half minutes and such movements are made early in the morning or late in the afternoon.

5. The legal speed limit for vehicles on Woodruff Avenue under the present view conditions is 15 miles per hour. The posted speed limit is 40 miles per hour.

6. The drill track crossing of Woodruff Avenue is not illuminated and the only warnings of the crossing consist of two Standard No. 1 reflectorized crossing signs. Visibility of the crossing is restricted in three quadrants. Since 1959 there have been three accidents at the crossing in which there were no injuries or deaths.

7. Approximately 32 loaded or unloaded school buses traverse the crossing each school day.

8. The protection at the crossing is inadequate. The crossing is hazardous to trainmen and the public using the crossing, and public health, safety and welfare require that the crossing be protected as stated in the order herein, and that the protection be co-ordinated with traffic signals at Stewart & Gray Road and Woodruff Avenue.

9. Fifty per cent of the costs of the signal protection at the crossing should be allocated to the Railroad and 50 per cent

should be allocated to the City. The City at its expense should co-ordinate the traffic signals with train movements, and install raised center dividers, lighting and traffic striping.

10. The allocation of the cost of maintaining protective devices at the crossing should be deferred until further order of the Commission.

11. The motion to dismiss should be denied.

Conclusion

The Commission concludes that the crossing herein considered should be protected as set forth in the ensuing order; that the protection should be co-ordinated with the traffic signals at Stewart & Gray Road; that the cost of installation of the protective devices at the crossing should be apportioned as set forth in the ensuing order; that the allocation of maintenance costs of such protection should be deferred; and that the motion to dismiss should be denied.

O R D E R

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. The Southern Pacific Company shall replace its existing protection at the Woodruff Avenue crossing in the City of Downey

(Crossing No. BK-497.1-C) with four Standard No. 8 flashing light signals supplemented with automatic crossing gates to be actuated by highway circuits supplemented with push button controls as shown on Exhibit No. 9 in this proceeding. Back lights may be omitted from the signals to be located on the raised center dividers. The cost of installing the automatic crossing protection shall be allocated 50 per cent to the railroad and 50 per cent to the City of Downey.

2. The City at its expense shall:

- (a) co-ordinate the operation of traffic signals at Stewart & Gray Road and Woodruff Avenue with train movements to avoid conflicting aspects of the traffic signals and railroad crossing protection.
- (b) Install two 20,000 lumen mercury vapor lights at the crossing.
- (c) Install raised center traffic dividers with reflective transition striping to accommodate railroad crossing protection.

3. The allocation of crossing signal maintenance costs shall be deferred until further order of the Commission.

4. Within thirty days after completion of the work hereinabove ordered the Southern Pacific Company and/or the City of Downey shall notify the Commission in writing of the compliance with the conditions hereof.

5. Improvements herein provided for are to be completed within one hundred eighty days from the effective date of this order.

6. The motion to dismiss is denied.

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

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 19th day of AUGUST, 1965.

Fredrick B. Holbrook
President
John E. DeWitt
George T. Traver
Augusta
William A. Bennett
Commissioners