

ORIGINALDecision No. 71071

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Application of City of Compton, a
Municipal Corporation, to construct
widened crossing over the Southern
Pacific Company's San Pedro Line,
subject to provisions of Sections
1201-1205 of the Public Utilities
Code of the State of California.

Application No. 47334
(Filed March 2, 1966)

Lloyd A. Bulloch, City Attorney, and
Don Robins, for the City of Compton,
applicant.
Randolph Karr and Walt A. Steiger, by
Walt A. Steiger, for the Southern
Pacific Company, protestant.
W. F. Hibbard, for the Commission staff.

O P I N I O N

Applicant seeks authority to widen the existing crossing of Alondra Boulevard (Crossing No. BG-494.3) over the Southern Pacific Company's (Southern Pacific) San Pedro Branch Line. Attached Appendix A is a diagram showing details of the existing crossing and the proposed improvements.

Public hearing was held before Examiner Robert Barnett at Los Angeles on May 17, 1966, at which time the matter was submitted.

Alondra Boulevard is a primary east-west arterial highway with on-and-off ramp connections, to the Harbor Freeway, approximately four miles to the west, and to the Long Beach Freeway, approximately one and one-half miles to the east, of the crossing.

Alameda Street is a major north-south highway paralleling the San Pedro Branch Line. At certain points on its route Alameda Street separates into two streets located on each side of the San Pedro Branch Line; which is the case at the Alondra Boulevard crossing. The San Pedro Branch Line, at this crossing, consists of one branch line track and two side tracks running in a north-south direction between the City of Los Angeles and Los Angeles Harbor. Average daily traffic over the crossing is approximately 14,000 vehicles.

Applicant proposes to widen the existing crossing from its present width of 60 feet, to 76 feet. The crossing is presently protected by two Standard No. 3 wigwags synchronized with four traffic signals at the westerly approach to the crossing, and with one traffic signal at the easterly approach to the crossing. Applicant proposes to protect the widened crossing with two Standard No. 8 flashing light signals synchronized with traffic signals at the adjacent intersection. Neither Southern Pacific nor the staff opposed the widening of the crossing, but they both recommend that automatic gates with predictors be included in the crossing protection. There is also a dispute as to apportionment of costs.

Applicant's Evidence

Applicant's engineer testified that the primary purpose for widening the crossing is to provide a better right-turn movement for large trucks; secondarily, to provide better sight distance. At present the width of Alondra Boulevard at the crossing is 60 feet; the westerly approach to the crossing is 72 feet wide; and the easterly approach is 60 feet wide. There

are two lanes for vehicular traffic in each direction; each lane being 12 feet wide. Applicant's proposal provides for these four lanes plus two eight-foot curb lanes and a 12-foot left-turn pocket straddling the center line. The widened crossing will permit westbound truck movements turning north into the westerly roadway of Alameda Street and eastbound truck movements turning south into the easterly roadway of Alameda Street to make their turns without climbing the curb or swinging out into the middle of Alameda Street. The left-turn pocket will facilitate left-turn movements from Alondra Boulevard into Alameda Street.

The witness for applicant is opposed to automatic gates at the crossing because they will require two six-foot wide traffic islands straddling the center line of the crossing. The space for these traffic islands will have to come from the space allocated to the curb lane, thereby reducing the space in which trucks can make right turns and also causing a misalignment of traffic lanes; traffic lanes within the crossing will be out of line with the traffic lanes on either side of the crossing. Even if the proposed crossing were 80 feet wide, thus providing sufficient right-turn space, the traffic islands would still cause a misalignment of traffic lanes and, therefore, would be bad. In the opinion of this witness the misaligned traffic lanes could precipitate more accidents than the gate arms would prevent. There have been only three minor train-vehicle accidents at this crossing in the past nine years and none of them involved personal injuries. Transition striping, a means of guiding vehicular traffic from one line of travel to another, might to a degree

alleviate the problem of misaligned traffic lanes but, in the witness' opinion, it is not a satisfactory solution. He wants straight traffic lanes through the crossing.

Southern Pacific's Evidence

Southern Pacific's engineer testified that Southern Pacific does not oppose the granting of this application providing that the crossing is protected by Standard No. 8 flashing light signals augmented by automatic gates with predictors, and that the cost of installing the protection is equitably shared. Southern Pacific considers equitable sharing to be a fifty-fifty split of the cost of protecting the existing width of the crossing with the City to pay 100 percent of the costs directly attributable to the widening of the crossing.^{1/}

In the area where the Alondra Street crossing is located the proximity of overhead wires and the force of high winds render gate arms of more than 35 feet impractical. If the crossing were widened to 76 feet, or to 80 feet, gate arms of a length of 35 feet would be inadequate. Therefore, four rather than two gate arms are required to adequately protect the crossing, and two of them must be built on islands near the center of the crossing. As the widening of the crossing is solely for the benefit of the City, with no benefit accruing to the Southern Pacific, the City should bear the total expense of the costs attributable to the

^{1/} The witness estimated the total cost of the improved protection to be \$24,800 of which \$3,600 is directly attributable to the widening of the crossing; the difference of \$21,200 would be shared fifty-fifty.

widening: the two additional gates. Southern Pacific will not charge for any reasonable easement across the tracks needed by applicant.

The witness for Southern Pacific based his opinion of the efficacy of automatic gates on numerous studies that indicate that the degree of protection provided by Standard No. 8 flashing light signals is so greatly enhanced by the installation of automatic gates that to forego their installation would be a serious mistake. Automatic gates give pronounced notice that there is a train approaching. Gates cannot be misconstrued by drivers, as flashing lights may be, to mean for example, that a train is near the crossing but perhaps not going to cross, or has just crossed. Also, the gates would prevent an accident in a situation where a train is stopped near a crossing and blocks the view of another train, on an adjacent track, that is moving through the crossing.

This same witness presented much testimony on the beneficial use and value of grade crossing predictors. This testimony was not contradicted and no substantial issue was raised which requires discussion.

Staff Evidence

A Commission staff engineer testified that there were 10 through movements and 15 switching movements of trains through the crossing. The speed limit through the crossing for trains is 20 MPH and for vehicles is 30 MPH. Fourteen thousand vehicles use the crossing daily, including 10 school buses. He recommended that the crossing be protected by Standard No. 8 flashing light signals augmented by automatic gates with predictors, and that

all costs of the improvements be shared fifty-fifty by applicant and Southern Pacific. In his opinion both the public and the Southern Pacific will benefit from the improved protection and the City and the Southern Pacific have an equal responsibility to provide such protection.

Findings of Fact

1. Applicant proposes to widen Alondra Boulevard over the tracks of the Southern Pacific Company to facilitate the right-turn movement of trucks from Alondra Boulevard onto Alameda Street and to increase sight distances for all traffic over the crossing.
2. At present, trucks turning right onto Alameda Street often climb upon the curb or veer out into the middle of the street.
3. Standard No. 8 flashing light signals augmented by automatic gates with predictors increase safety at grade crossings.
4. At the proposed crossing a single gate arm should not be over 35 feet in length to avoid the hazards of overhead wires and strong winds.
5. To provide reasonable protection at the crossing, widened to at least 76 feet, four Standard No. 8 flashing light signals, each augmented by automatic gates with predictors, should be installed.
6. Grade crossing predictors should be installed to eliminate unnecessary actuation of the gate arms.
7. Southern Pacific has agreed to provide an easement, without charge, over its tracks so that the crossing may be widened to at least 80 feet. ✓

8. Public convenience, necessity, and safety require that the Alondra Street grade crossing be protected by four Standard No. 8 flashing light signals each augmented by automatic gates with predictors.

9. Both the applicant and Southern Pacific will benefit from the improved grade crossing protection.

10. Costs should be apportioned as set forth in the ensuing order.

The Commission concludes that the application should be granted subject to the conditions set forth.

O R D E R

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. The City of Compton is authorized to widen Alondra Boulevard across the tracks of the Southern Pacific Company (Crossing No. BG-494.3) to a width of at least 76 feet.

2. There shall be installed at the crossing four Standard No. 8 flashing light signals each augmented by automatic gates with predictors.

3. The railroad signals and adjacent traffic signals shall be interconnected so that in the preemption phase initiated by an approaching train, the traffic signals regulating movement of

traffic from the crossing area shall first display a green interval of sufficient length to clear all vehicles from the track area.

4. The installation costs of the grade crossing protection shall be apportioned equally between applicant and the Southern Pacific Company.

5. The maintenance costs of the grade crossing protection shall be apportioned between applicant and the Southern Pacific Company pursuant to and in accordance with Section 1202.2 of the Public Utilities Code.

6. The Southern Pacific Company shall bear 100 percent of the costs of preparing track necessary within the limits of the widened crossing, and any paving work within lines two feet outside of outside rails in the existing crossing.

7. Applicant shall bear 100 percent of all other costs of widening the crossing and approaches including the cost of traffic signal coordination.

8. The Southern Pacific Company shall bear the cost of maintenance of the widened crossing within lines two feet outside of outside rails and applicant shall bear the maintenance costs of the crossing and approaches outside of said lines.

9. Within thirty days after completion of the work herein authorized, the City of Compton and the Southern Pacific Company shall each notify the Commission in writing of their compliance with the conditions hereof.

10. All crossing protection and coordination thereof specified in this order shall be fully installed, completed, and placed in operable condition before the widened crossing is fully opened to the public.

11. The improvements and changes herein provided for are to be completed within one year of the effective date of this order unless time is extended.

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

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 2nd day of AUGUST, 1966.

E. N. Mitchell
President

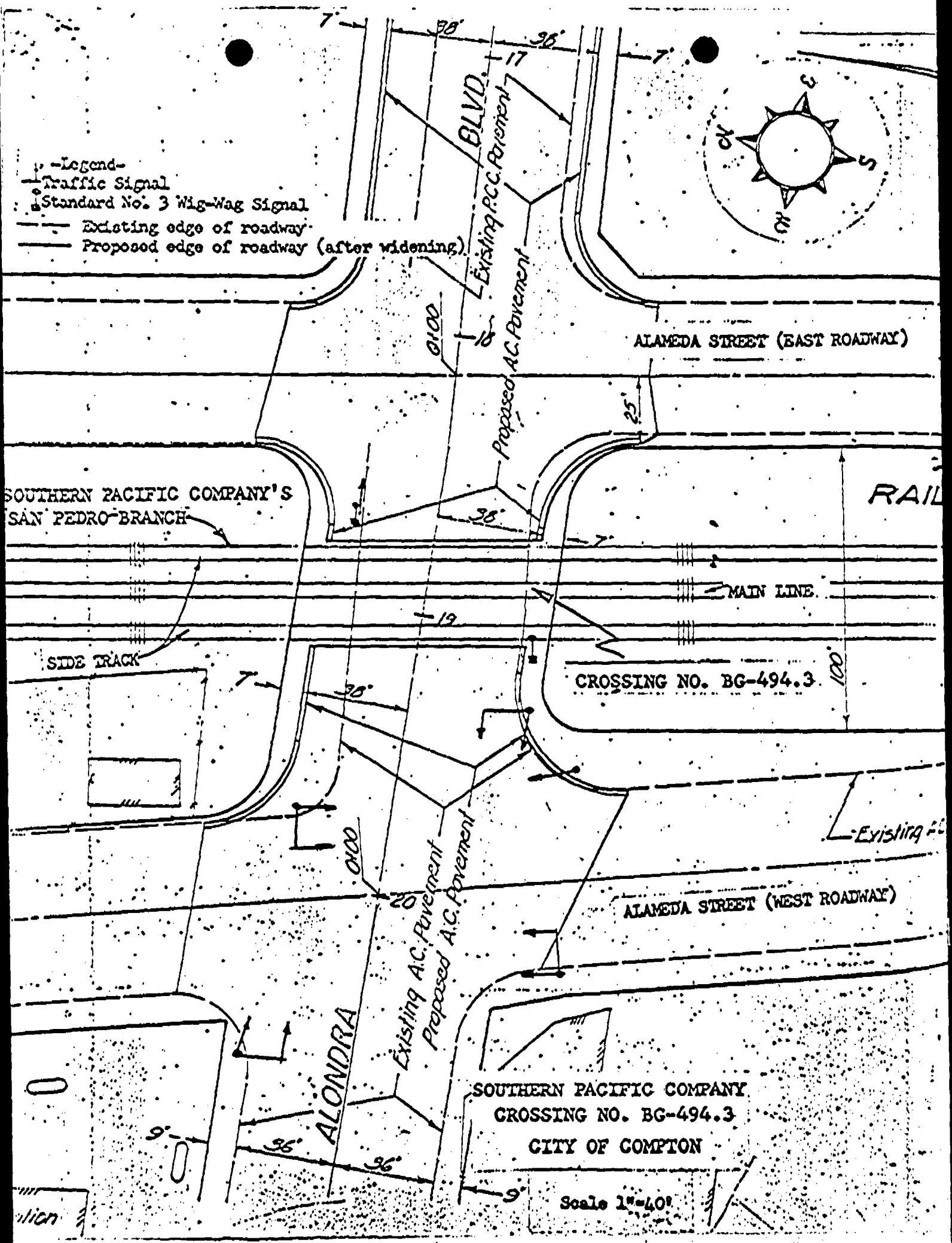
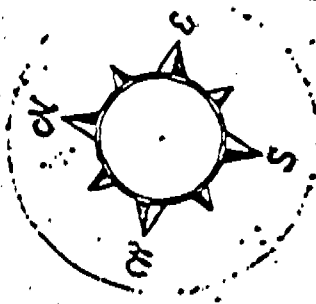
George L. Grover

Fredrick B. Holbrook

Angela

William G. Bennett
Commissioners

- Legend-
- Traffic Signal
 - ⊙ Standard No. 3 Wig-Wag Signal
 - - - Existing edge of roadway
 - Proposed edge of roadway (after widening)



APPENDIX A