

ORIGINAL

Decision No. 71172

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Application of the COUNTY OF VENTURA to construct a street crossing (Alamos Canyon Road) over the Southern Pacific Railroad (Coast Route) west of the Town of Simi in the County of Ventura.

Application No. 47664
(Filed June 11, 1965;
Amended April 27, 1966;
Further Amendment June 1, 1966)

John W. Wissinger, Deputy District Attorney,
and Allen C. Weber, for applicant.
Randolph Karr and Walt A. Steiger, by Walt A. Steiger, for Southern Pacific Company,
protestant.
James C. Basile, for Moreland Investment Company,
interested party.
Lloyd C. Young, for the Commission staff.

O P I N I O N

The County of Ventura (County) requests authority to construct Alamos Canyon Road, either at grade or separated, across or over the tracks of the Southern Pacific Company (Southern Pacific) at a point approximately one and one-half miles west of the town of Simi, California.

Public hearing was held at Ventura on April 27 and 28, 1966, before Examiner Robert Barnett. The matter was submitted on the latter date. On June 1, 1966, applicant filed a petition to set aside submission in accordance with Rule 75 of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure. This petition asks that the application be amended to include a request for authorization to construct a crossing at separated grades as an alternate proposal to the original request for authorization to construct a crossing at

grade. As no request was made for a hearing to take further evidence, we shall treat the petition as an amendment to the amended application.

Appendix "A" attached hereto, is a diagram of the area.

Moreland Investment Company (Moreland) proposes to build a residential and light commercial development on approximately 5,100 acres located north of the Southern Pacific tracks. These tracks are in a deep cut just east of the proposed crossing. Los Angeles Avenue, a state highway, is located approximately 300 feet south of the tracks and, near the point of the proposed crossing, parallels the tracks. There is no public access from the area of the proposed development to Los Angeles Avenue near the proposed crossing but there is a private grade crossing at this location; the proposed crossing will provide needed access. Los Angeles Avenue, in this area, is to be realigned to improve its usefulness. Oak Park Road (Crossing No. E-430.9), located approximately 1,350 feet west of the proposed crossing, provides access across the Southern Pacific tracks from Los Angeles Avenue to a County park north of the tracks. This road is not suitable for carrying heavy traffic volumes to the proposed development. A proposed freeway is to be located approximately 1,500 feet north of the crossing and should be completed by 1972.

Estimated traffic volume over the proposed crossing is shown in a traffic study (Exhibit No. 2) as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Homes</u>	<u>24-hr. Vehicular Vol.</u>	<u>Peak Hour Vol.</u>
1967	50	200	35
1970	500	2,000	350
1972 ^{1/}	600	2,400	420
1975 ^{2/}	800	380	75
1980 ^{2/}	Ultimate Development	560	100

1/ Freeway interchange estimated 24-hour volume 3,200; peak volume 550.

2/ Freeway interchange estimated 24-hour volume 4,650; peak volume 750.

Applicant originally proposed to provide for this traffic by constructing Alamos Canyon Road at grade over the Southern Pacific tracks. However, applicant is willing to construct a crossing at separated grades if the Commission so orders.

Applicant's primary reason for preferring a grade crossing rather than a grade separation is cost. An engineer testified on behalf of applicant that the estimated cost of a grade separation is \$429,814; of a grade crossing, \$176,407. Other factors which were considered in making the choice of a grade crossing were the safety experience of the County with Standard No. 8 flashing lights augmented by gates; the amount of vehicles that would use the crossing after the freeway was built; and the number and speed of train movements over the crossing.

On cross-examination it was brought out that \$146,000 of the estimated cost of the grade separation is for the realigning of Los Angeles Avenue. However, the County was going to realign Los Angeles Avenue regardless of the crossing at Alamos Canyon Road. If a grade separation could be built without the need to

realign Los Angeles Avenue the cost would be \$283,000. Even this cost was considered by the witness to be excessive.

Another witness of applicant testified that the grade crossing estimate of \$176,407 included approximately \$95,000 for relocation of Los Angeles Avenue, and that the grade separation estimate of \$429,814 included some funds (not itemized) for relocation of Los Angeles Avenue. He added that it was not necessary to relocate Los Angeles Avenue if a grade crossing were constructed, but that it would be necessary to relocate Los Angeles Avenue if a grade separation were constructed. At this location, in his opinion, the cost of a grade separation is approximately \$349,000 more than the cost of a grade crossing.

The County is considering closing Oak Park Road. An exchange of property with Moreland may be effected whereby the portion of Oak Park south of the Southern Pacific tracks would be exchanged for property north of the tracks. This exchange would remove the need for access to the park from Los Angeles Avenue. A new road, north of the tracks, would be built from the park to Alamos Canyon Road.

The average daily traffic estimates were based solely on residential occupancy forecasts. No allowance was made for the use of the crossing by construction workers and materialmen, nor was any allowance made for the use of the crossing by persons traveling from Los Angeles Avenue to the proposed freeway, nor for service vehicles in the area, such as milk trucks, maintenance trucks, garbage trucks, and police and fire vehicles.

Southern Pacific's public project engineer testified that the railroad track proposed to be crossed is the main line track

between Los Angeles and San Francisco. There are four passenger train movements and 12 to 16 freight movements per day over the proposed crossing. The speed of these trains at this point is from 60 to 65 mph. In addition, extra trains move over this track at any time during the day or night. In the witness's opinion, a separation at grade is the safest construction for this crossing.

This witness submitted estimated cost figures for a grade separation. In his opinion it should not cost more than \$50,000 additional to construct a grade separation rather than a crossing at grade; \$100,000 additional at most. He pointed out that a grade separation would save the cost of installing and maintaining signals, gate arms, predictors, realignment of track, and a drainage system. He based his estimated cost on his recent experience with constructing similar bridges over Southern Pacific's Palmdale-Colton-San Bernardino line.

A staff engineer recommended that a grade separation be constructed at the proposed crossing. His recommendation is based on the fact that the Southern Pacific main line is in a deep cut (approximately 25 feet) just east of the proposed crossing, which will facilitate construction, and that such a separation is practical, will provide the safest type of crossing, and will eliminate delays to vehicular traffic by movement of long freight trains. In his opinion, a grade separation should be built now while the area is undeveloped rather than at a later date when land acquisition and construction costs will be higher.

The staff witness presented an exhibit which showed the total cost of building a grade separation to be \$237,000 with the cost to the County only \$130,475. He estimated that the cost to the County of a grade crossing would be \$75,000. His conclusion was that the County would incur additional costs of approximately \$55,475 by constructing a grade separation rather than a crossing at grade.

The witness's cost figures are based on applicant's cost figures for a grade separation, but eliminating all costs of relocation of Los Angeles Avenue. In the staff witness's opinion, all costs relating to the relocation of Los Angeles Avenue were improperly included in estimated costs of both the grade separation, and the grade crossing, as these costs are not attributable to the need for the crossing. The witness also assumed that Oak Park Road would be closed and the County thereby would be able to obtain the benefits of Public Utilities Code Section 1202.5(b) and of the Grade Separation Fund.

The staff witness's estimate is:

COST OF SEPARATED GRADES

Alamos Canyon Road approach to separation structure (1,000 feet)		\$ 21,250
Separation structure		170,000
Alamos Canyon Road - Onsite cut		3,500
Offsite cut		18,000
Drainage		2,600
		<u>\$215,350</u>
10% contingencies		21,535
	Total	<u>\$236,885</u>
	Rounded	\$237,000

ATTRIBUTABLE SHARES ASSUMING
ALLOCATION FROM GRADE SEPARATION FUND
AND CLOSE OF OAK PARK ROAD CROSSING

Southern Pacific share	13% ^{1/}	\$ 30,800
County share	43.5%	103,100
State share	43.5%	103,100
		<u>\$237,000</u>

1/

3% of the 13% represents the estimated savings to Southern Pacific from the closing of the Oak Park Road crossing.
(See Public Utilities Code Section 1202.5(b).)

TOTAL COST TO COUNTY TO BUILD
ALAMOS CANYON ROAD AT SEPARATED GRADES

Grade Separation		\$103,100
Alamos Canyon Road approach to grade separation not allowable in Grade Separation Fund estimate		14,875
Offsite Cut work not allowable in Grade Separation Fund estimate		12,500
	Total Cost	<u>\$130,475</u>

The various estimates of construction costs to build Alamos Canyon Road at separated grades that are in evidence in this case are based on differing assumptions. The County's

estimate includes some costs properly allocable to the realignment of Los Angeles Avenue, and some costs for Alamos Canyon Road that are not properly allocable to the grade separation. The estimate of Southern Pacific is based upon a design for an overpass that is similar to one already built by Southern Pacific which design is not necessarily of the same type that the County used in making its estimate. Also, the overpass recommended by Southern Pacific has a different angle of approach from Los Angeles Avenue to the point of crossing the tracks. The staff estimate is merely an extract from the County's estimate, with certain factors eliminated.

No plans for an overpass were submitted at the hearing, therefore, our authorization will be subject to our further approval of plans to be submitted to the Commission.

Findings of Fact

The Commission finds that:

1. Moreland Investment Company proposes to build a large residential and commercial development north of the Southern Pacific main line track approximately one and one-half miles west of the town of Simi, California.
2. Access to this development from Los Angeles Avenue south of the track is required near the point where Alamos Canyon Road crosses the track.
3. There are four passenger train movements and 12 to 16 freight movements per day over the proposed crossing. The speed of these trains at this point is from 60 to 65 mph. In addition, extra trains move over this track at any time during the day or night.
4. Ultimate development in this area will cause more than 560 vehicles per day to utilize the crossing. Prior to ultimate

development, and before a proposed freeway is constructed north of the crossing, over 2,400 vehicles per day will utilize the crossing.

5. The cost of realigning Los Angeles Avenue should not be included in either the estimated cost of constructing a grade crossing or a grade separation.

6. The additional cost of constructing a grade separation, when compared with the cost of constructing a crossing at grade, is not excessive and is commensurate with the added benefits that a grade separation will effect.

7. Public convenience, necessity, and safety require that the proposed crossing be constructed at separated grades.

8. This grade separation project will directly result in the elimination of an existing grade crossing at Oak Park Road.

Based on the foregoing findings of fact the Commission concludes that the application should be granted to construct a crossing at separated grades over the tracks of the Southern Pacific Company.

O R D E R

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. The County of Ventura is hereby authorized to construct a crossing at separated grades over the tracks of the Southern Pacific Company at a point approximately one and one-half miles west of the town of Simi, California.

2. The County of Ventura shall submit to the Commission appropriate plans approved by the Southern Pacific Company for the construction of said overpass.

3. Construction and maintenance costs shall be borne in accordance with agreements to be entered into between the parties and a copy of said executed agreements shall be filed with the Commission prior to commencement of construction. Should the parties fail to agree the Commission will apportion the costs by further order.

4. This authorization shall expire if not exercised within three years unless time be extended. 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 27th day of AUGUST, 1966.

Frederick B. Holoboff
President

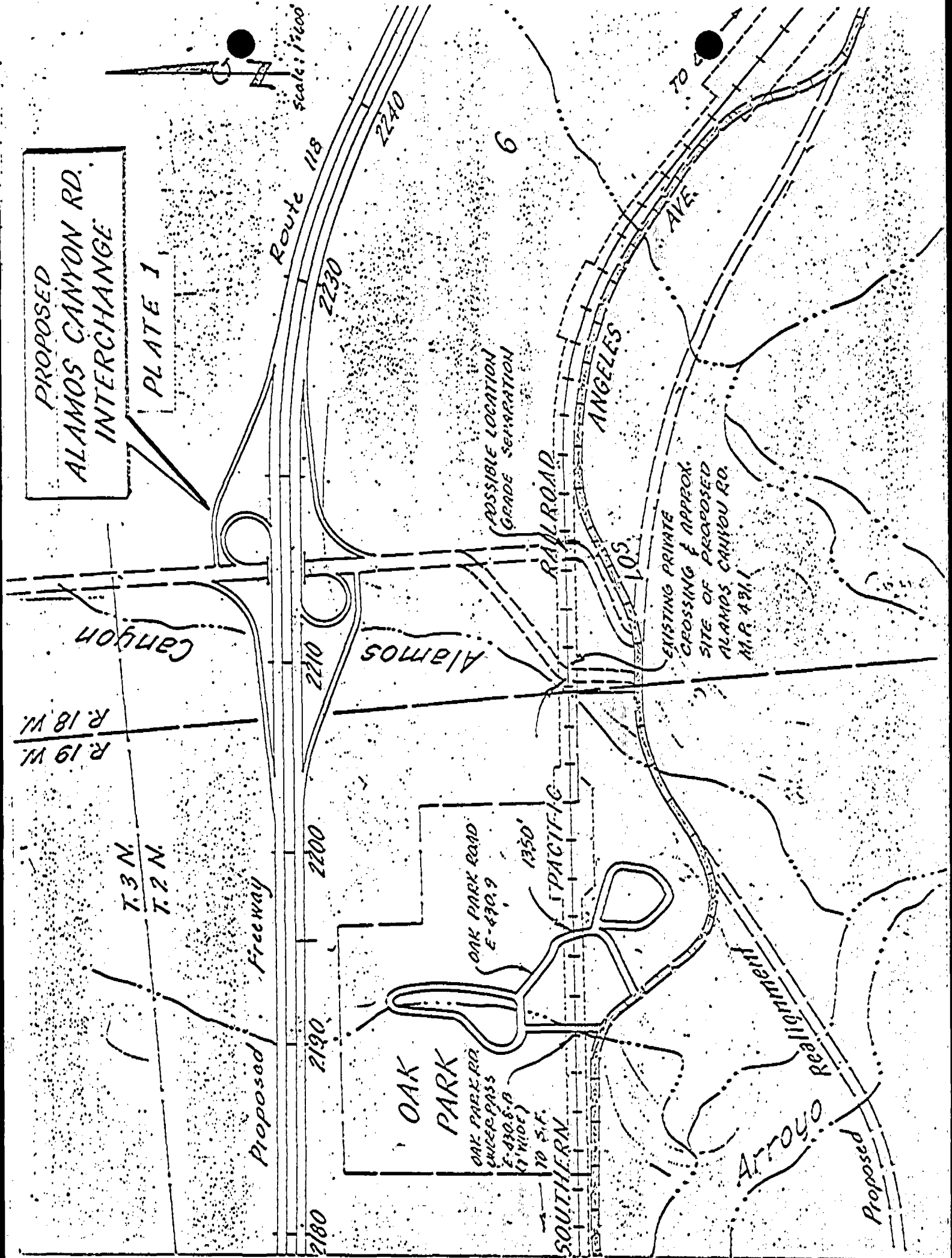
George L. Grover

Augusta

William C. Bennett

Commissioners

Commissioner Frederick B. Holoboff, being necessarily absent, did not participate in the disposition of this proceeding.



APPENDIX A