

ORIGINAL

Decision No. 71683

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, to widen
and improve Southern Pacific
Company's Burbank Branch Line
Crossing of NORDHOFF STREET.

Application No. 48062
(Filed November 17, 1965)

Roger Arnebergh, City Attorney,
by Charles E. Mattson, for
applicant.

Randolph Karr and Walt A. Steiger,
by Walt A. Steiger, for Southern
Pacific Company, protestant.

Ronald I. Hollis, for the Commission
staff.

O P I N I O N

Applicant City proposes to widen, realign and improve Nordhoff Street to accommodate additional vehicle and pedestrian traffic and to widen and alter Crossing No. BY-446.7 at grade of Nordhoff Street and the Southern Pacific Company's Burbank Branch Line.

A public hearing was held in Los Angeles, California, on October 13, 1966, before Examiner DeWolf, at which time three witnesses testified and seven exhibits were received in evidence on behalf of applicant; one witness testified for protestant and the matter was submitted.

The applicant alleges that the public need will be served by the proposed improvement of the crossing; that it has prepared plans for the widening, realignment and improvement of Nordhoff Street and for the proposed relocation of the flashing light signals behind the curb line of the widened crossing.

The applicant alleges that this crossing is in the area of the Chatsworth District Land Use Plan, approved by the City Planning Commission on January 30, 1964, and which proposes industrial uses for both sides of Nordhoff Street in the vicinity of the subject crossing. There are several very large parcels in this area which have already been rezoned to an industrial classification and have been developed with operating plants. Other parcels are destined to be rezoned for industrial uses in the near future.

It is further alleged that this area is rapidly developing; the rate of growth will increase with the advent of time; there will be a corresponding increase in the number of vehicles using these streets and highways; unless Nordhoff Street is widened at the location involved, a traffic bottleneck will rapidly develop; the proposed widening and improvement of the grade crossing is vitally needed to obviate traffic congestion and to assure smooth traffic flow on Nordhoff Street.

The dedicated portion of this section of Nordhoff Street at present varies from 30 feet to 100 feet in width and is improved with paving for only a short distance on both sides of the railroad crossing. Running to the west and beginning approximately 150 feet west of Canoga Avenue, Nordhoff Street is completely unimproved, while the segment of Nordhoff between the crossing and a line 340 feet easterly thereof is undergoing street improvements.

Canoga Avenue in this vicinity is improved with two lanes of paving. As additional rezoning is approved, street improvements will be provided for these important traffic arteries in this area.

Traffic over the existing grade crossing is presently limited to two paved lanes, one each way. At present, therefore, it is difficult for vehicles meeting at the crossing to negotiate it at the same time. Inasmuch as Nordhoff Street runs through the central portion of this large developing industrial area, its importance for the movement of industrial traffic will greatly increase as more land is occupied. The nearest grade crossing is located approximately one mile to the south at Roscoe Boulevard, itself a very busy intersection.

Nordhoff Street is designated as a major highway on both the City and the County Master Plan of Highways from Topanga Canyon Boulevard to Osborne Street (also a major highway), a distance of approximately ten miles. It is also listed in the City Engineer's Select System of Streets and Highways as eligible for improvement with gasoline tax funds.

The diversion of public funds for the construction of a grade separation at the Nordhoff Street crossing at this time would postpone the construction of the separation of other existing crossings which are more urgently required.

The City proposes improvement of this grade crossing to a 52-foot instead of the existing 30-foot roadway width to increase the efficiency of the movement of all types of vehicles including those of service and emergency nature. A traffic count taken on Nordhoff Street west of Winnetka Avenue, July 29, 1964, shows a traffic flow of 5,722 vehicles during a 24-hour period.

A witness for the applicant who testified as an expert described the congested traffic conditions expected when the subdivision improvements are completed on the south side of the street. No immediate subdivision improvements are planned for the north side of the street, and it is not proposed to improve the north side of the street at this time but to wait for further industrial development of the land to the north, which was estimated to take place in about five years. Applicant's witnesses testified that these improvements were originally included among the conditions for approval of the recording of Tract No. 18376 at the southeast corner of Nordhoff Street and Canoga Avenue in 1962. The crossing widening was a necessary continuation of other street widening work required in Nordhoff Street adjacent to the tract. Because of the lengthy proceedings involved in the widening of the railroad crossing, the City later deleted the crossing work from the subdivision requirements and in lieu thereof undertook the crossing widening as a City project after accepting a bond and entering into an agreement with the tract developer covering his portion of the costs. Full financing is alleged to be available for this project and a contract will be awarded soon after authorization for the crossing widening is obtained.

Flashing lights, the cost of which was apportioned 50 percent to the City and 50 percent to the railroad, were installed at the crossing and placed in service on December 31, 1964, pursuant to Decision No. 64641, Case No. 7406.

The witness the railroad presented as an expert testified that the increasing traffic at this intersection required that it be protected by installation of flashing lights augmented by automatic gates (estimated to cost about \$10,000, relocation of the lights alone would cost about \$1,600). He stated that flashing lights afford more protection to the outside lanes of traffic than to the inside lanes while the addition of automatic gates gives additional protection to the inside lanes of traffic during heavy use of the intersection. The witness for the railroad further testified that this installation is an interim improvement which will require further change and relocation at a later date when the north side of the roadway and intersection is improved. Then these flashing lights and gates would have to be moved again probably within five years due to further widening of the pavement and installation of other improvements such as medians and islands. The witness for the railroad testified that there are at least two train movements per day and occasionally four movements, while the main line trains have been routed this way when other routes are closed by flood but this only happens about once every other year.

The City did not oppose the recommendations of the railroad, with which Commission staff concurred, for the installation of flashing light signals augmented by automatic gates at this location, but the City does oppose payment in full for the cost of automatic gates.

The only issue involves apportionment of the cost of installation of the crossing protection which applicant requested be done on a 50-50 basis while the railroad contends that these are changes which the City has initiated and are interim improvements

which will have to be moved at a later date so the City should bear 100 percent of the cost of the installation of this temporary interim crossing protection.

The Commission finds that:

1. The separation of grades at the proposed widened and improved crossing is not justifiable at the present time for the reason that train volumes at this crossing are relatively low. Furthermore, there are a number of main line crossings within the same area which have a higher priority for grade separation consideration.

2. The railroad does not oppose the application of the City to improve the crossing. The only issues concern the necessity for the installation of interim improved crossing protection and the apportionment of the cost of the installation of the interim automatic crossing protection.

3. The recommendation of the Railroad engineer for improving the protection of the railroad crossing of Nordhoff Street (Crossing No. BY-446.7), when the street is widened and realigned, by installation of two Standard No. 8 flashing light signals supplemented with two automatic crossing gates is reasonable, and should be adopted, and any traffic signals to be installed at the intersection of Nordhoff Street and Canoga Avenue should be coordinated with the railroad signals.

4. Public health, safety, convenience and necessity require that the protection of the crossing at Nordhoff Street in the

City of Los Angeles be upgraded by installation of two Standard No. 8 flashing light signals (General Order No. 75-B) supplemented with two automatic crossing gates, to be done with the widening and realigning of said crossing, as provided in the following order.

5. The cost of installing the automatic gates and signal protection shall be borne equally by the City and the railroad.

6. The cost of maintenance of the protective devices at the crossing herein shall be borne as provided by Section 1202.2 of the Public Utilities Code.

O R D E R

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. The City of Los Angeles is authorized to widen and improve the grade crossing at Nordhoff Street and the Southern Pacific Company tracks (Crossing No. BY-446.7) substantially in the manner and in accordance with the plans introduced in this proceeding including moving and relocating of the flashing red lights to accommodate the installation of automatic gates and subject to the conditions as herein set forth.

2. The work required to be performed at said crossing between lines two feet outside of rails and the work of installing signals and automatic gates shall be performed by the Southern Pacific Company.

3. Southern Pacific Company shall bear the entire cost of preparing the tracks to receive the pavement for the widened portions of the crossing between lines two feet outside of rails and the full cost of improving the present crossing between such lines.

4. The cost of installing the signal protection including the automatic gates shall be borne equally by the City of Los Angeles and the Southern Pacific Company.

5. After installation of the automatic crossing protection has been completed, the Southern Pacific Company shall physically maintain them as long as they may remain in place. The maintenance cost of said signals shall be apportioned equally between the Southern Pacific Company and the city in accordance with and pursuant to the provisions of Section 1202.2 of the Public Utilities Code.

6. The City of Los Angeles shall bear the remainder of the expense of constructing the proposed widened crossing and approaches.

7. Within thirty days after the completion of the work hereinabove authorized applicant and protestant shall notify the Commission in writing of compliance with the conditions hereof.

8. The improvements herein provided for are to be completed within one year from the date of this order.

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

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 13th day of DECEMBER, 1965

[Signature]
President

[Signature]

[Signature]
Commissioners

Frederick B. Holoboff
Commissioner did not participate in the disposition of this proceeding.

Commissioner George G. Grover did not participate in the disposition of this proceeding.

Slope 2:1 to join
Grade Only

- 4" Crushed Aggregate Base or 4" Processed Natural Material per SLD Plan B-3688
- 4" Conc. Sidewalk keyed to curb per SLD Plan B-3675
- 6" Crushed Aggregate Base or 6" Processed Natural Material per SLD Plan B-3688
- 6" Processed Natural Material per SLD Plan B-3688
- 4" Conc. Curb & Gutter Type C per SLD Plan B-3682 a=2, b=8"

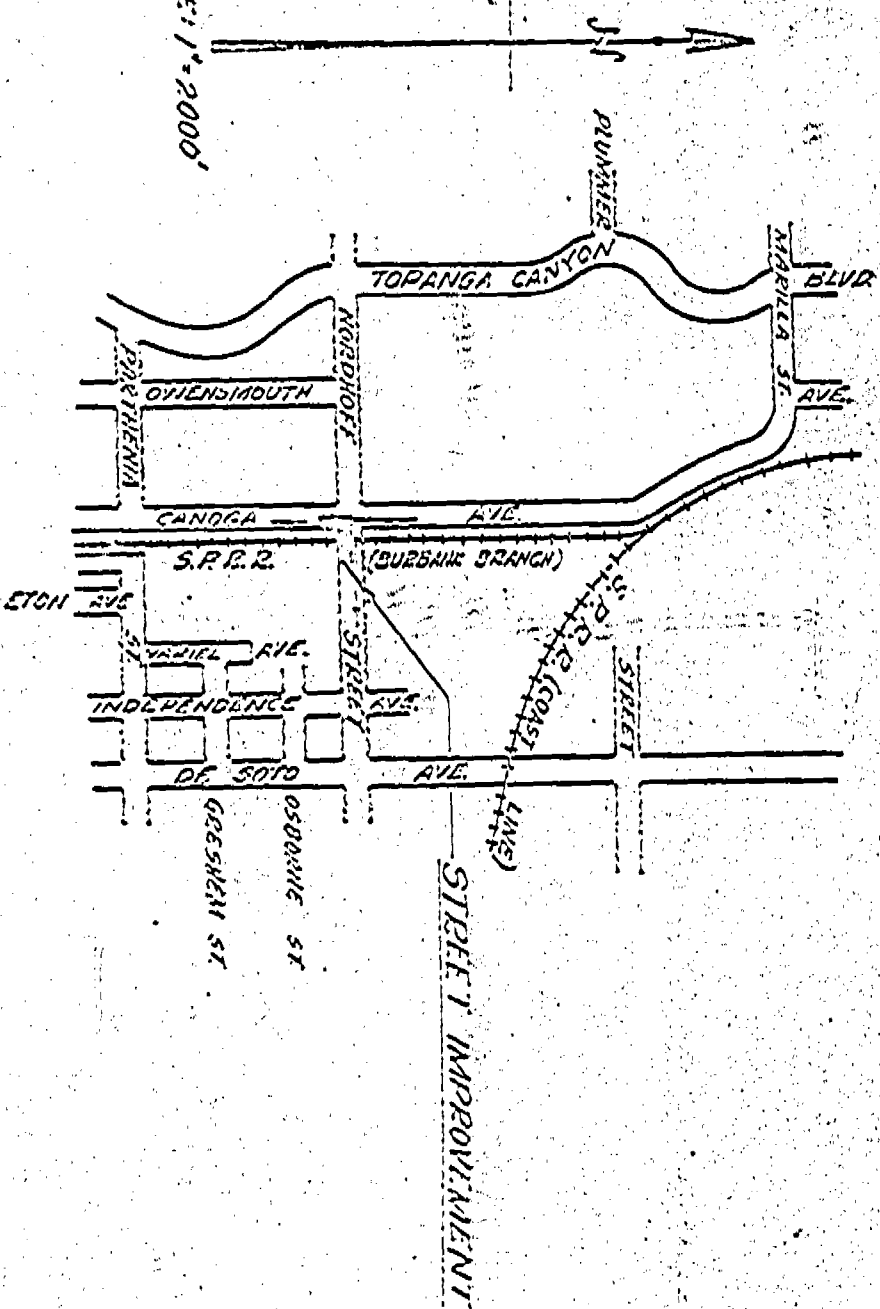
1" A.C.B.

2' x 6" Header to remain in place

Exist. point

NORDHOFF STREET

SCALE: 1" = 2000'



KEY MAP