

**ORIGINAL**

Decision No. 72839

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 construct )  
MASON AVENUE at grade across the )  
tracks of the Southern Pacific )  
Company's Burbank Branch Line. )

Application No. 48751  
(Filed August 29, 1966)

Roger Arnebergh and Charles E. Mattson,  
by Charles E. Mattson, for the City of  
Los Angeles, applicant.  
Randolph Karr and Walt A. Steiger, by  
Randolph Karr, for Southern Pacific  
Company, protestant.  
George R. Abbott, for Safety and Driving  
Instruction Section, Los Angeles City  
Schools, interested party.  
Ronald I. Hollis, for the Commission staff.

O P I N I O N

Public hearings on the above application were held before Examiner Rogers in Los Angeles on December 5, 1966 and January 4 and 26, 1967. Briefs were filed and the matter was submitted.

By the application the City of Los Angeles (City) seeks authority to extend Mason Avenue at grade across the Southern Pacific Company's Burbank Branch. (See Appendix A hereto attached.)

Los Angeles Pierce College (college) occupies an area in Los Angeles County bounded by DeSoto Avenue on the west, Winnetka Avenue on the east, Victory Boulevard, also known as Topham Street, on the north, and approximately Aetna Street on the south. The Burbank Branch is immediately north of and parallel to Victory

Boulevard. Mason Avenue is a north-south street parallel to and midway between DeSoto Avenue and Winnetka Avenue, which are one mile apart. Mason Avenue ends on the north side of the Burbank Branch right-of-way (Exhibit 13). South of the Burbank Branch and opposite the southern end of Mason Avenue, there is a road into the college campus which provides access to the various college facilities including three parking lots. One lot immediately south of Victory Boulevard and on the east side of the road will hold 1,560 vehicles. A lot in the east central portion of the campus will hold 800 vehicles. A lot in the southern portion of the campus will hold several hundred vehicles. Calvert Street, an east-west street, terminates on the west at the east side of Winnetka Avenue. The college road enters the campus from Winnetka Avenue and passes the parking lots. The principal vehicular entrances to the campus are the two above described. There is no vehicular access from the south at present and only a narrow road used for agricultural equipment from the west (Exhibit 7).

Mason Avenue extends from the Burbank Branch on the south to the Southern Pacific's Coast Line on the north, a distance of approximately three miles. Between said points it crosses Vanowen Street, Sherman Way, Saticoy Street, Roscoe Boulevard, Parthenia Street and Nordhoff Street. Roscoe Boulevard, Nordhoff Street and Victory Boulevard are to be major highways on the City's Master Plan of Highways and Freeways. The others, and Mason Avenue, are to be secondary highways (Exhibit 4). A proposed Whitnall Freeway will be parallel to Victory Boulevard and approximately two miles north thereof (Exhibit 3). The freeway will have on-off ramps at two of the three north-south streets in the vicinity of the college, i.e., Winnetka Avenue, Mason Avenue and DeSoto Avenue. Final determination of which two streets will have such ramps has not been made.

As planned, Mason Avenue (Exhibit 1) will be 76 feet wide where it connects with Victory Boulevard. The campus road commences south of Victory Boulevard and opposite Mason Avenue. It is 64 feet in width. The intersection of Mason Avenue, Victory Boulevard and the campus road is to be controlled by traffic signals which will be coordinated with railroad signals at the Mason Avenue crossing which is to be protected by three Standard No. 8 flashing light signals supplemented with crossing gates.

An assistant district engineer in the Los Angeles Bureau of Engineering of the City of Los Angeles testified that the project to connect Mason Avenue and Victory Boulevard was initiated in 1964; that it is in conformity with the City's Master Plan of Highways and Freeways; that full financing is available for the construction; that the project was initiated as a part of an overall program for improving and upgrading the highways in the vicinity of Pierce College; that one of the entrances to the college parking lots is the southerly projection of Mason Avenue south from Victory Boulevard; and that plans are nearing completion for the full widening of Victory Boulevard adjacent to Pierce College. The witness further testified that the widening of Victory Boulevard is being accomplished in two stages; that the first contract will be for the construction of Victory Boulevard for 1,500 feet east and west of Winnetka Avenue; that advertising for bids in this work is scheduled for the next thirty days; that the second project will be to widen Victory Boulevard past Mason Avenue and DeSoto Avenue; and that the Mason Avenue crossing is independent of the work on Victory Boulevard and is scheduled to be constructed as soon as all approvals and easements have been obtained.

The head of the Transportation Unit of the Los Angeles City Planning Department testified that the proposed crossing primarily will serve Pierce College; that it will relieve north-south traffic loads being carried by DeSoto and Winnetka Avenues; that it will reduce the doubling up of east-west traffic on Victory Boulevard; that Victory Boulevard is a major highway; that a crossing at Mason Avenue would provide an important traffic connection for the general public as well as college students; that construction of the grade crossing will facilitate the movement of public service and emergency vehicles to and from the college; that the college is located in the Canoga Park statistical area (Exhibit 5); that in 1940 the population of the area was approximately 4,500 persons; that in 1960 it was approximately 57,000 persons; that the 1966 estimate is approximately 80,000 persons; and that the 1970 and 1980 projections are, respectively 97,000 and 138,000 persons. The witness further testified that the crossing is needed to give access to the college from the north and to reduce existing congestion at the intersection of Mason Avenue and Vanowen Street (the first street north of Victory Boulevard), which intersection forms the last alternative southbound traffic choice between DeSoto and Winnetka Avenues; that the proposed Whitnall Freeway will be located approximately two miles north of Victory Boulevard; that due to increased traffic from the said freeway entering the college more crossings will be needed for access to the college, and that the college draws students from the entire city.

The engineer in charge of the Engineering Division of the Department of Public Utilities and Transportation of the City of Los Angeles testified that he is responsible for the evaluation, coordination and recommendations in the matters of safety at railroad crossings; that he was informed by a railroad representative that there are two movements on the Burbank Branch daily; and that he agreed to recommend gates on the Mason Avenue crossing.

The Valley District Traffic Engineer for the Los Angeles City Department of Traffic testified that it is important that the continuity of Mason Avenue be established by the early opening of the proposed crossing; that the crossing is necessary to improve the circulation and the distribution of traffic in the portion of Los Angeles bound by Roscoe Boulevard on the north, Corbin Avenue on the east, Ventura Boulevard on the south, and the city limits on the west; that the area will experience a population increase of approximately 115,000 persons and an employment increase of approximately 30,000 persons by 1985; that the center of the largest single area available for additional commercial and industrial development within said area is one mile southwesterly from the proposed crossing; that the inadequacy of the existing street system with regard to the absence of the Mason Avenue crossing has contributed to severe congestion at three very critical locations along Victory Boulevard where an exceedingly high number of left turns must be made; that these intersections are at Winnetka Avenue, at the Mason Avenue entrance to Pierce College, and at DeSoto Avenue. The witness presented an automatic count of traffic volumes at the said intersections (Exhibit 9). The exhibit shows the following traffic volumes at said intersection:

<u>Intersection</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Total Traffic</u>
On Winnetka at Victory	10-27-66	25,967
On Victory at Winnetka	10-25-66	8,956
DeSoto at Victory	10-25-66	5,252
Victory at DeSoto	11--1-66	13,202
On entrance to Pierce College south of Victory	10-25-66	10,458
On Victory at entrance to Pierce College	10-25-66	12,932

The witness further testified that left-turning volumes in excess of 45 in a 15-minute period at signalized intersections cause traffic congestion; that according to traffic counts made during the same period the following excessive left-turn volumes for peak 15-minute periods at critical locations were found:

1. Victory Boulevard at DeSoto Avenue: a. Eastbound 94  
B. Southbound 137
2. Victory Boulevard at  
Pierce College entrance: a. Westbound 185  
b. Northbound 136
3. Victory Boulevard at Winnetka Avenue - 88.

The witness further testified that during the peak periods traffic can be found backing up on Victory Boulevard westbound for three-fourths of a mile extending from the college entrance, eastbound for one-fourth mile westerly from Winnetka Avenue and on DeSoto Avenue southbound for almost one-half mile northerly from Victory Boulevard. The witness further testified that when DeSoto Avenue is opened to traffic between Sylvan Street (which is on the west side of the campus) and Burbank Boulevard (south of Victory Boulevard) in 1967, the Victory Boulevard crossing of the Burbank Branch east of Winnetka Avenue is constructed and the DeSoto Avenue interchange with the Ventura Freeway is completed, large volumes of traffic will be attracted to each of the surface streets and this will make it more difficult for the distribution and circulation of traffic between Winnetka and DeSoto Avenues unless the vital Mason Avenue crossing is provided.

The superintendent in charge of the Traffic Safety Education Unit of the Safety and Driver Instruction Section of the Los Angeles City Schools testified among other things that Pierce College has a complete academic curriculum; that the present enrollment is approximately 8,000 day students and 7,000 night students; that projected enrollment figures indicate 22,000 students by 1970; that there is no public transportation to or from the college; that traffic backs up at the Calvert and Winnetka entrance to the college during peak hours; that the entrance opposite Mason Avenue was designed and constructed to eliminate this hazard; that the present use of this entrance is limited due to the unimproved aspect of Victory Boulevard; that the completion of the Mason Avenue crossing will provide a direct access to the college; that the present major traffic flow comes from the Ventura Freeway (south of the college); and that on completion of the Whitnall Freeway north of the college the need for access to the college from the north will be greater. The witness further testified that the college has made no studies to determine where its students originate; that those from north of the college could use the proposed crossing; and that all students could get to and from the college without using Mason Avenue.

The assistant superintendent of the Los Angeles Division of the Southern Pacific Company testified among other things that its Coast Line extends between the San Francisco Bay area and Los Angeles; that there are 19 through movements and 13 local movements on this line (Exhibit 3 shows that the Burbank Branch connects with the Coast Line near Chatsworth northwest of the college; both lines join in Los Angeles east of the college); that there have been

occasions (between January, 1965 and December, 1966) when the Coast Line was blocked and trains were routed over the Burbank Branch; that the most recent occasion was on December 15, 1966 when 15 of the total movements were routed over the Burbank Branch; that recent checks show that traffic from Los Angeles to the western portion of the San Fernando Valley north and west of the college increased 20 percent in 1966 over 1965; that the same growth is anticipated in 1967; that new industries are locating along the Coast Line; that rail movements on the Coast Line have reached the saturation point; that it will be absolutely imperative for the railroad to take some of the locals off the Coast Line and route them via the Burbank Branch; that in 1967 there will be four locals (8 movements) per day via the Burbank Branch; then within five years the 13 local movements referred to above could be transferred to the Burbank Branch; that these local movements consist of 25 to 65 cars each and that the maximum train speed on the Burbank Branch is 25 miles per hour. The witness further testified that at present there are only two movements (one round trip) approximately three times per week on the Burbank Branch; that he had no specific knowledge of any movements across Mason Avenue since early 1966 except for the emergencies above referred to and that within six months the railroad expects to be operating four locals (eight movements) per day via the Burbank Branch over Mason Avenue. The witness further testified that the stretch of track north of the college is the only point in the area the railroad could use for holding or switching tracks, and that the crossing if opened may be blocked by standing trains.



Southern Pacific's Public Projects Engineer testified that there is a poor traffic situation in the area; that this is caused primarily by the narrowness of the existing streets and by Pierce College which blocks several through streets; that there is no indication that the bulk of the north-south traffic would drive around the college and use Mason Avenue instead of DeSoto or Winnetka Avenues; that there is no saving in overall pattern that would result from the opening of Mason Avenue between Sherman Way and the college; that Mason Avenue is not the main entrance to the college; that the widening of Victory Boulevard and the proposed improved crossing over the Burbank Branch (east of Winnetka Avenue) should do much to alleviate the present and existing bottlenecks and confusion; and that until the new Victory Boulevard crossing has been tried and experience obtained additional crossings cannot be justified. The witness further testified that he agrees that if Mason Avenue is open it will relieve traffic congestion at the intersections of Victory Boulevard with Winnetka Avenue and DeSoto Avenue and that it is not necessary at present to provide storage of railroad cars in the vicinity of Mason Avenue.

Findings

1. The Southern Pacific Company's Burbank Branch extends from a junction with its Coast Line east of Mason Avenue to a junction with the Coast Line north and west of the proposed Mason Avenue crossing. Intermediate to the junctions the Burbank Branch is parallel to and immediately north of the north side of existing Topham Street, an east-west street. Included in the streets crossed at grade by this portion of the Burbank Branch are Winnetka Avenue (Crossing No. BY 451.3) and DeSoto Avenue (Crossing No. BY 450.3). These crossings are one mile apart.

2. Mason Avenue is a north-south street midway between DeSoto Avenue and Winnetka Avenue. It terminates on the south at the northern side of the Burbank Branch right-of-way and on the north at the Coast Line right-of-way.

3. Pierce College grounds include the area bounded by DeSoto Avenue, Victory Boulevard and Winnetka Avenue. There is a roadway in the college grounds, the northern end of which intersects Victory Boulevard directly opposite the extension of Mason Avenue. This road extends southeast to an intersection with Winnetka Avenue directly opposite Calvert Street, an east-west street terminating on the east side of Winnetka Avenue. For all practical purposes the Winnetka Avenue and Victory Boulevard entrances are the two entrances and exits to the college now available for vehicular traffic but the entrance from DeSoto Avenue could be used by students if it was more readily available to the Ventura Freeway.

4. The present enrollment at the college is 8,000 day students and 7,000 night students. The enrollment is expected to reach 22,000 students by 1970. Students come from all portions of the City of Los Angeles and 95 percent arrive by motor vehicle as there is no public transportation to and from the college. There are three parking lots in the campus. Two lots are in the vicinity of the Winnetka Avenue entrance. One holds approximately 800 cars. The other is smaller. The third lot is near the Victory Boulevard entrance and holds 1,560 cars. The largest parking lot was established on the north end of the campus for the reason that the major area served by the college is in the north. The use of the Victory Boulevard entrance to the college is limited because of the unimproved aspects of Victory Boulevard and of the intersections of Victory Boulevard and Winnetka Avenue and Victory Boulevard and DeSoto Avenue. The majority of the college students use the Winnetka Avenue entrance because of its proximity to the Ventura Freeway. This causes congestion thereat.

5. The City of Los Angeles proposes to widen and improve Victory Boulevard between Winnetka Avenue and DeSoto Avenue in the near future. It also plans to construct Mason Avenue across the Burbank Branch as soon as authority is received from this Commission. We find that the construction plans for the intersection of Victory Boulevard and Mason Avenue and for the crossing of Mason Avenue by the Burbank Branch and the proposed protection at said crossing are reasonable.

6. The college and the proposed crossing are in an area which has experienced and will continue to experience rapid commercial and industrial development. The absence of a crossing of the Burbank Branch at Mason Avenue has contributed to serious congestion at the intersections of Victory Boulevard with DeSoto Avenue, the entrance to Pierce College, and Winnetka Avenue. The opening of Mason Avenue across the Burbank Branch would help relieve this congestion.

7. At the present time the traffic on the Burbank Branch consists of one round trip three times per week. This traffic will increase to four trains or eight movements per day in the next six months. Eventually this traffic could increase to thirteen round trips per day. In addition to the regular movements referred to, in emergencies some or all of the Coast Line traffic could be routed over the Burbank Branch. Such emergencies occur infrequently.

8. Public convenience and necessity require that the City of Los Angeles be authorized to construct a crossing at grade over the Burbank Branch of the Southern Pacific Company at Mason Avenue as specified in the order herein. Due to the fact that the track of the Burbank Branch is 60 feet north of the intersection of Victory Boulevard and Mason Avenue, a separation of grades is not practicable.

9. Public safety requires that the crossing be protected by three Standard No. 8 flashing light signals supplemented with automatic crossing gates coordinated with the traffic signals at the intersection of Victory Boulevard and Mason Avenue.

10. The cost of installing the protection at the crossing and coordinating the traffic signals with the crossing protection should be borne by the City of Los Angeles.

11. Maintenance costs of the railroad signal protection should be apportioned pursuant to Section 1202.2 of the Public Utilities Code.

Conclusion

We conclude that the application should be granted and the costs allocated as set forth in the following order.

O R D E R

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. The City of Los Angeles is hereby authorized to construct Mason Avenue at grade across the Burbank Branch of the Southern Pacific Company at the location described in the application, to be identified as Crossing No. BY 450.8, in the city of Los Angeles.

2. Applicant shall bear the entire construction expense, also maintenance cost, of the crossing outside of lines two feet outside the rails. Southern Pacific Company shall bear the maintenance cost of the crossing between such lines. The width of the crossing and the grades of approach shall be as set forth in Exhibit 1 herein or as modified by agreement between the City of Los Angeles and the Southern Pacific Company. If the plans are substantially modified, a copy of such modified plans shall be filed with this Commission prior to commencement of construction. Construction shall be equal or superior to Standard No. 2-A of General

Order No. 72. Protection shall be by three Standard No. 8 flashing light signals supplemented with automatic gates coordinated with the traffic signals at the intersection of Mason Avenue and Victory Boulevard. The Southern Pacific Company shall provide the automatic protection, shall do the work of installing the automatic protection and shall be reimbursed by the City of Los Angeles for the expense thereof.

3. Maintenance cost of the automatic protection shall be borne in the manner provided by Section 1202.2 of the Public Utilities Code.

4. Within thirty days after completion pursuant to this order the City of Los Angeles shall so advise this Commission in writing. This authorization shall expire if not exercised within one year unless the time be extended or if the 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.

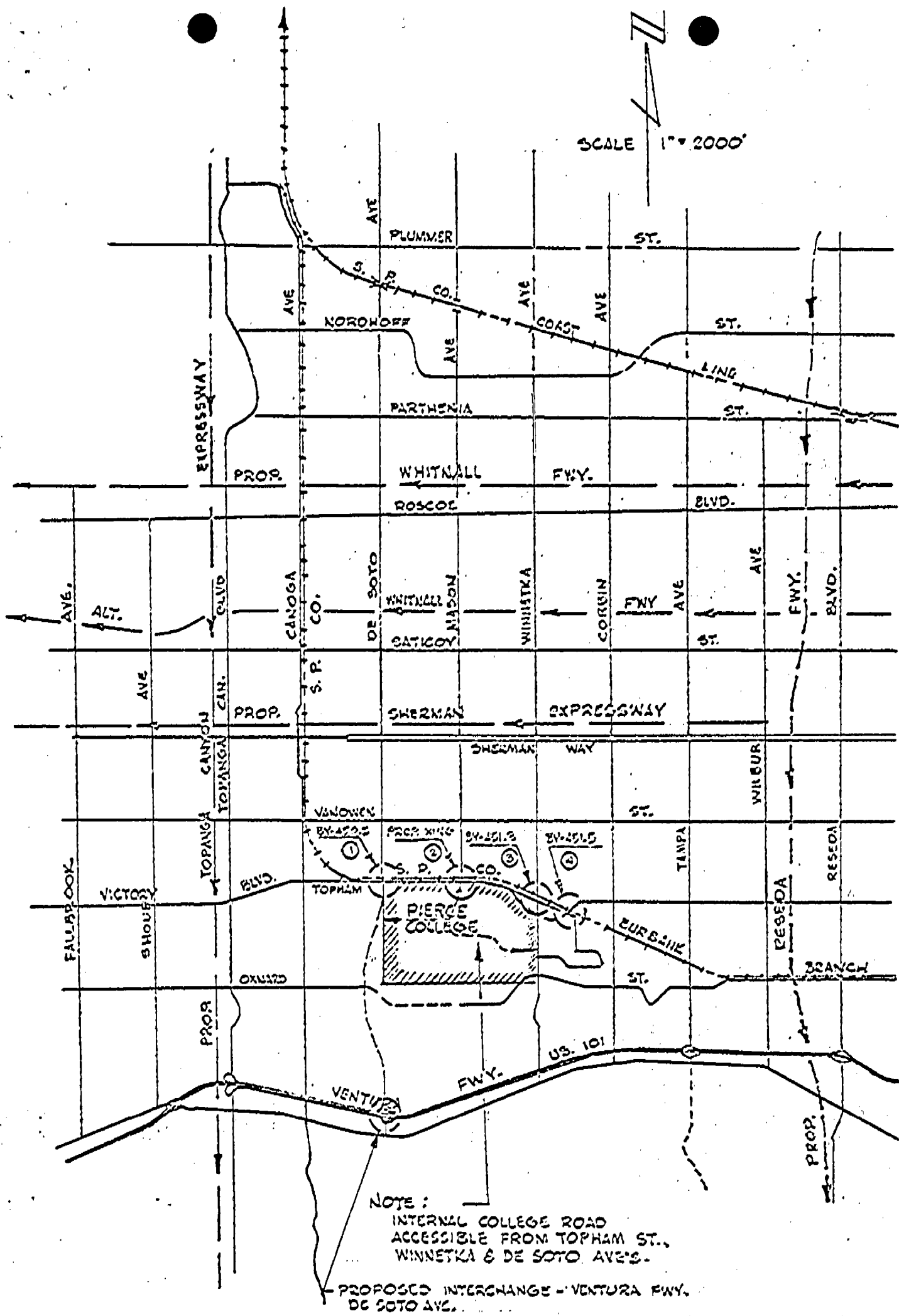
Dated at San Francisco, California, this 10<sup>th</sup> day of AUGUST, 1967.

*Ed E. Mahill*  
 President

*William L. Brown*  
 Attorney

*William S. Adams, Jr.*  
*Joe P. Houssey*  
 Commissioners

SCALE 1" = 2000'



NOTE:  
INTERNAL COLLEGE ROAD  
ACCESSIBLE FROM TOPHAM ST.,  
WINNETKA & DE SOTO AVE'S.

PROPOSED INTERCHANGE - VENTURA FWY.  
DE SOTO AVE.

- DE SOTO AVE. CROSSING NO. BY-450.3 ①
- MASON AVE. PROP. CROSSING ②
- WINNETKA AVE. CROSSING NO. BY-451.3 ③
- VICTORY BLVD. AUTH. BY D.6946E ④
- CROSSING NO. BY-451.5

STREET MASTER PLAN  
IN  
VICINITY OF MASON STREET  
APPLICATION NO. 46751