

ORIGINAL

Decision No. 73445

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 improve and widen the existing crossing at grade of DE SOTO AVENUE across the tracks of the Southern Pacific Company's Coast Line (Crossing No. E-446.8).

Application No. 49068
(Filed January 4, 1967)

Roger Arnebergh and Charles E. Mattson, 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.

INTERIM OPINION

By the above application, the City of Los Angeles requests an order:

(a) Permitting the widening and improving of the crossing of the Southern Pacific Company's Coast Line by DeSoto Avenue¹ (Crossing No. E-446.8) from one lane in each direction² to three lanes in each direction and a width of 80 feet from curb to curb.

(b) Allocating the costs of construction or designating the sum to be advanced by the City for work to be done by the Southern Pacific Company (Railroad) and reserving for further order the question of apportionment of costs.

¹ The location is shown in Exhibit A hereto.

² The paved portion of the street is 30 feet wide on the north side of the crossing and 50 feet wide on the south side.

(c) Apportioning the maintenance costs of automatic grade crossing protection pursuant to the provisions of Section 1202.2 of the Public Utilities Code.

A public hearing on the application was held before Examiner Rogers in Los Angeles on April 6, 1967 and the matter was submitted. At this hearing the actual costs of the crossing and crossing protection were not stated.

There was no controversy concerning the need for widening the crossing. The City and the Railroad disagreed over the division of the expenses of altering the crossing and protection.

After the matter was submitted, by a letter dated September 22, 1967 (hereby made a part of the record as Exhibit 6), the City advised the Commission that (1) the City is willing to advance the amount of money reasonably necessary to enable the Railroad to complete the work which must be done by it, pursuant to Section 1202.1 of the Public Utilities Code, and (2) the City represents and believes that the amount of money to be advanced by the City to the Railroad under Section 1202.1 is Twelve Thousand Dollars (\$12,000). The City requests that the Commission issue an interim decision. The City also states that it has furnished the Railroad with a copy of the letter which also requests the Railroad to advise the Commission if the \$12,000 figure is incorrect. The letter further states the City is prepared to stipulate to any reasonable figure. The letter further states that the City desires to proceed with the street improvement.

There is one line of rail at the crossing. The existing protection consists of two Standard No. 8 flashing light signals supplemented with automatic gates installed on February 18, 1963. Each of these protective devices is approximately 20 feet from the center of DeSoto Avenue (Sheet 5, Exhibit 1).

The City's engineer in charge of street design testified that DeSoto Avenue is a major highway on the City's Master Plan of Highways and Freeways; that the Avenue is dedicated one hundred feet wide across the tracks and the proposed roadway width is 80 feet; that this width will permit three moving lanes of traffic on each side of the Avenue which is to be marked for two lanes on each side when the crossing is first widened; that there will be a 10-foot island in the center of the Avenue on each side of the track; and that the proposed protection is to consist of two Standard No. 8 flashing light signals with gates on the islands and two Standard No. 8 flashing light signals with gates on the curbs. The witness further testified that full financing is available for the improvement and that the citywide priority for a grade separation at the crossing is too low to consider such in the near future so funds for a separation are not available. The witness further stated that the proposed protection is preferable to two gates because the four gates would each have a shorter span and that it would be possible to protect the crossing with two gates but that such protection would be a reduction in the existing level of protection. The witness further testified that the center islands could be increased to 14 feet in width with no material change in traffic movement.

A City of Los Angeles traffic engineer testified that DeSoto Avenue is an important traffic arterial; that it extends about 7½ miles from Ventura Boulevard south of the crossing to the city limits on the north; that DeSoto Avenue will accommodate only one moving lane in each direction at the crossing; that an

automatic traffic count taken on July 8, 1966, showed 15,700 vehicles used the crossing that day; that the volume could increase to 28,000 vehicles per day; and that as a major arterial street, DeSoto Avenue must provide four to six operating traffic lanes to function properly. The witness stated that the recommended four gates would be consistent with the protection at Corbin Avenue (Crossing No. E-448.3) to the east and at Devonshire Street (Crossing No. E-445.2) to the northwest; that four gates are not necessary; that two gates are adequate but do not appear consistent with the other crossings mentioned; that two gates cannot protect six lanes as well as they can protect two lanes; and that with six lanes of traffic there is a need for additional protection and this is the reason he favors the four gates. He further testified that if the protection is changed to Standard No. 8 flashing lights on the islands with two standard No. 8 flashing light signals supplemented with automatic gates on the curbs, the islands should be widened to 14 feet.

A representative of the Department of Public Utilities and Transportation of the City of Los Angeles testified that when the existing gates were installed in 1963 the City and the Railroad each paid fifty percent of the cost; that this apportionment was pursuant to an agreement between the parties; that the Coast Line is one of Southern Pacific's main lines through the San Fernando

Valley; that approximately 26 trains, some of which attain speeds of 60 miles per hour, traverse the crossing daily; and that the crossing should be protected by four automatic crossing gates. The witness recommended that the City bear fifty percent of the cost of the crossing protection signal work required and one hundred percent of the cost of planking the widened portion of the crossing; that the Southern Pacific bear fifty percent of the cost of the crossing protective signal work; and that the Southern Pacific bear the entire cost of preparing the track to receive planking and the cost of planking the existing traveled roadway portion of the crossing. His reasons for such apportionment were that the protection will benefit the Railroad as well as the public and that the Railroad will receive a direct benefit from reduced accident potential. The witness further testified that, in addition, the Railroad will indirectly benefit because of the increase in the street capacity necessary for the industrial and commercial development of the area. He said that acreage on the north and south side of the Coast Line east of this crossing has been designated and zoned as industrial property; that industries which ship goods by rail are constructing plants in the area; and that improved traffic circulation is very necessary for further development. The witness further testified that in this area the Southern Pacific is concerned with wind breakage of gate arms; that the bases for the gates would be three feet from the curbs which would make a distance of 38 feet from the pedestal to the edge of the ten-foot center divider; that if a 14-foot center divider is installed, 35-foot gate arms on the curbs could be used with no gate arms in the center divider; that if this is done it would not

be necessary to put any protection in the islands; that he does not recommend such type of protection; that at some other crossings on the Coast Line four gates have been installed; and that he believes this crossing needs maximum grade crossing protection, i.e., four gates. The witness further testified that he considers that four gates provide better protection than two gates and four sets of flashing lights and that he prefers the four gates for the reason that such construction would be consistent with other crossings in the area; that motorists in the center lanes need the same protection as those in the outer lanes; and that the lights on the center gates will provide added warning. The witness further testified that if the gates were relocated and extended in length he would recommend that the City pay one hundred percent of the cost of the crossing protection. The witness stated that the proposed changes will benefit the City; that with the narrower 10-foot island there will be greater traffic flow than with the 14-foot islands; and that there are no adequate traffic lanes at present.

The Southern Pacific's Public Projects Engineer testified that if the crossing is changed as recommended by the City the protection should be by four gates; that the crossing does not necessarily need gates in the center island but that if there are long gates there should be No. 8 flashing lights in the center island; that four gates do not cost much more than two gates with four sets of flashing lights and that there is less wind breakage with four short gates. The engineer further testified that, if the street is widened, some warning will be needed in the center to maintain adequate protection. He recommended that the entire cost

of the protection be charged to the City of Los Angeles for the reasons that there will only be a relocation of existing facilities due to the widening and there will be no upgrading of existing protection.

Findings of Fact

The Commission finds that:

1. DeSoto Avenue is a major highway in the City's Master Plan of Highways. The dedicated width is 100 feet. At the crossing herein considered the pavement is 30 feet wide north thereof and 50 feet wide south thereof. The City proposes to widen the pavement over the crossing to 80 feet to relieve poor traffic conditions created by the existing narrow roadway and to provide for future growth in the area. This width will permit three moving lanes of traffic in each direction. The City has the funds available to improve the street.

2. The crossing is now protected by two Standard No. 8 flashing light signals with gates, each of which is 20 feet from the center of the roadway. This protection was installed on February 18, 1963. The City proposes that the protection at the improved crossing consist of two Standard No. 8 flashing light signals with gates on the curbs, and two Standard No. 8 flashing light signals with gates in 10-foot wide islands in the center of the street. An alternative to such proposed protection is that the islands be widened to 14 feet; that flashing lights be installed therein; and that longer gate arms be installed only on the curbs. The difference in the costs of the methods of protection would be minor.

3. Approximately 15,700 vehicles traverse the crossing daily. The record does not show how long this volume of traffic has continued. The said volume of traffic could increase to 28,000 vehicles per day at some unspecified future time.

4. The rail line at the crossing consists of a single line of track, and train traffic thereover consists of approximately 26 trains per day, some of which attain speeds of 60 miles per hour.

5. The widening will require the moving of the existing protective devices. The protective devices now in place could be used under the proposed plan by moving them and extending the length of the gate arms.

6. The proposed construction and alteration of the street are reasonable and proper. The relocation of the existing protective devices and the installation of two additional gate arms in the center divider comprise a reasonable and proper method of protection of the crossing and such protection will not be adverse to public health, safety or welfare. Public health and safety require that the widened crossing be protected as specified in the order herein.

7. A separation of grades is not warranted.

8. The City will advance to the Railroad the sum of \$12,000 as the estimated cost of the work to be done by the Railroad. Said sum is a reasonable amount to be so advanced.

9. The costs of construction of the crossing and the costs of installation of the signal protection should be allocated between the parties by further order herein.

Conclusion

The Commission concludes that the application for authority to widen and improve the crossing herein referred to should be granted as set forth in the order herein and that the allocation of the costs of the improved crossing and the crossing protection should be determined by subsequent order herein.

INTERIM ORDER

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. The City of Los Angeles is authorized to widen DeSoto Avenue across the Coast Line of the Southern Pacific Company (Crossing No. E-446.8) in accordance with the plans set forth in Exhibit 1 in this proceeding.
2. The width of the crossing shall be as set forth in said Exhibit 1. Construction shall be equal or superior to Standard No. 2-A of General Order No. 72. Protection shall be by four Standard No. 8 flashing light signals, each supplemented with an automatic gate arm. Two of these signals shall be placed at the outside edge of the pavement and two shall be placed on medians.
3. The Southern Pacific Company shall provide the automatic protection, shall do the work of installing the automatic protection, and shall prepare the track to receive paving between lines two feet outside the rails over the widened portion of the crossing.
4. The City of Los Angeles shall advance to the Southern Pacific Company the sum of \$12,000, which sum shall be used by Southern Pacific Company to install the protection and improve the crossing as specified herein. The Commission will by further order herein determine the allocation of the costs between the City and

the Railroad and whether any portion of said sum shall be returned to the City of Los Angeles or the City of Los Angeles shall pay any additional sum to the Southern Pacific Company.

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

6. The changes herein provided for are to be completed within one year after the effective date of this interim order unless the time is extended by this Commission.

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

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 5th day of DECEMBER, 1967.

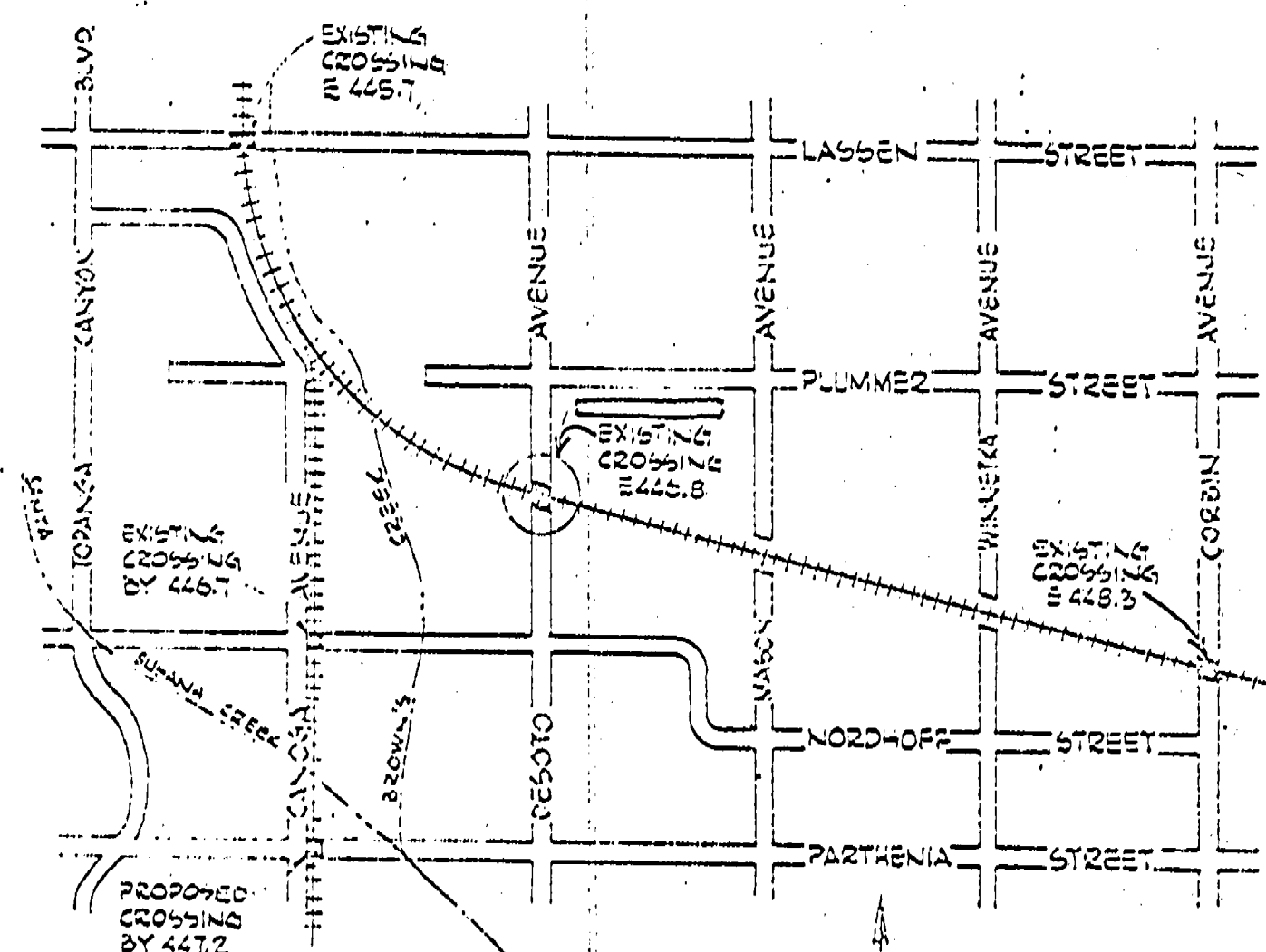
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Commissioners



VICINITY MAP

SCALE: 1" = 2000'



CITY OF LOS ANGELES
 WALL A. PARDEE - CITY ENGINEER
 BUREAU OF ENGINEERING - WEST VALLEY

DESOTO AVENUE CROSSING
 OF S.P.R.Z (COAST LINE)