

ORIGINAL

Decision No. 74289

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

APPLICATION OF THE COUNTY OF
LOS ANGELES FOR A PUBLIC GRADE
CROSSING AT HINDRY AVENUE OVER
THE HARBOR BRANCH LINE (2H) OF
THE ATCHISON, TOPEKA AND SANTA
FE RAILWAY IN THE CITY OF
HAWTHORNE.

Application No. 49699
(Filed September 28, 1967)
(Amended February 20, 1968)

Ronald L. Schneider, for applicant.
Donald L. Stone, for The Atchison,
Topeka and Santa Fe Railway
Company; and Robert L. Chambers,
protestants.
G. R. Mitchell, for Brotherhood of
Locomotive Engineers; and
James K. Frodsham, for South Bay
Lumber Company; interested parties.
John P. Ukleja, 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 February 28 and April 15 and 16, 1968, and the matter was submitted. On the latter date, The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company (Santa Fe) filed a request for an Examiner's Proposed Report. No good reason appears for the issuance of a proposed report as no unusual circumstances are involved. The petition will be denied.

By the application, the County of Los Angeles (County) seeks authority to make two new grade crossings. One of the crossings will be over a spur track (Mattel Spur) which extends east from the Santa Fe's Harbor Branch Line (branch line) and the other will be

over the branch line. These crossings will result from the construction by the County and the City of Hawthorne of an extension of Hindry Avenue approximately 0.4 miles from its present terminus south of Rosecrans Avenue at approximately 145th Street, at which location there are on-off ramps for the San Diego Freeway (freeway), south to a junction with Freeman Boulevard at Compton Boulevard. The branch line continues southeast across Compton Boulevard, which it crosses at grade (Crossing No. 2H-16.1). The freeway continues southeast over Compton Boulevard. Both the freeway and the branch line extend approximately parallel southeast across Inglewood Avenue. There are freeway on and off ramps for traffic in both directions at Inglewood Avenue. It is approximately one mile between 145th Street and the Inglewood Avenue ramps.

The existing Hindry Avenue is in the city of Hawthorne, which is in the southwesterly section of the County 0.6 miles west of Inglewood Avenue, 0.4 miles east of Aviation Boulevard, and immediately west of the freeway. It is a portion of a County master plan route which will extend from Rosecrans Avenue on the north, to Pacific Coast Highway on the south, a distance of approximately 6.7 miles. The route will be along Hindry Avenue in Hawthorne; Freeman Boulevard, Phelan Lane and Lilienthal Lane in the city of Redondo Beach; and Anza Avenue in the city of Torrance. In Hawthorne, the portion of Hindry Avenue which crosses the branch line will be 100 feet in width with 84 feet of roadway. Over the spur the roadway will be 64 feet between curbs. The only portion of the proposed route not presently in existence is Hindry Avenue between 145th Street and Compton Boulevard, and short sections in Redondo Beach and Torrance.

The southbound freeway on-off ramps terminate at Hindry Avenue near 145th Street. The County proposes to extend Hindry Avenue southeast from 145th Street across the spur and due south across the branch line to Compton Boulevard, which it will intersect at a point in a direct line with the north end of Freeman Boulevard. Hindry Avenue will cross both the branch line and the spur at approximately 50-degree angles. There is one track on the spur which crosses the freeway by a tunnel. The site where Hindry Avenue will cross the spur is approximately 1070 feet north of Compton Boulevard, and the east curb of Hindry Avenue will be approximately 48 feet west of the west entrance to the spur tunnel under the freeway. At the point where the spur leaves the branch line, an auxiliary track begins which extends parallel to the branch line, and on the north side thereof, south past the proposed crossing of the branch line by Hindry Avenue. This latter crossing will be approximately 320 feet north of Compton Boulevard. It will be approximately 750 feet between the spur crossing and the branch line crossing (Appendix "A").

The County

The County alleges that due to the relatively low number of train movements and estimated vehicles per day at these proposed crossings it is not economically feasible to construct a grade separation at either crossing.

The evidence on behalf of the applicant was presented by a County Road Department engineer who was responsible for Exhibit 1. The evidence set forth in said exhibit and enlarged on by the engineer is briefly set out below.

There have been recent industrial developments in the area substantially increasing the demands on the capacity of the existing street network. Hindry Avenue would provide necessary supplemental access to the freeway and at the same time alleviate the increasing congestion at nearby intersections generated by large industries located between Compton Boulevard and Rosecrans Avenue and west of Aviation Boulevard. Upon completion of Hindry Avenue, it will be used by approximately 7,000 vehicles per day. This traffic will increase to 14,000 vehicles per day in 1987. There will be reductions in traffic over the Compton Boulevard grade crossing (Crossing No. 2H-16.1) and over the Inglewood Avenue grade crossing (Crossing No. 2H-16.7).

The physical features of the proposed crossings are as set out below:

	<u>Main Line</u>	<u>Spur</u>
<u>Sight Distance</u> <u>(100' from Xing)</u>		
Northwest Quadrant	Unrestricted	Unrestricted
Northeast Quadrant	Unrestricted	100'
Southeast Quadrant	150'	120'
Southwest Quadrant	300'	Unrestricted
<u>Grade of Approach</u>		
Northbound	∴ 1.930%	∴ 0.139%
Southbound	∴ 0.139%	∴ 0.307%
<u>Proposed Width</u>		
With Median	84' on 100'	
Without Median		64' on 80'
<u>Number of Tracks</u>	2	1
<u>Track Alignment</u>	Tangent	Tangent
<u>Grade of Track</u>	0.393%*	0.070%*
<u>Angle of Crossing</u>	50°	50°

*Grade of track descends toward the east.

At the spur crossing, with the exception of the sight distances in the east quadrants, all other features, such as angle of crossing, grades of approach, speed of trains and number of train movements, equal or are better than conditions that exist at many spur crossings throughout the county. Were it not for the restricted sight distances in the east quadrants, the proposed crossing could be adequately protected for the reasonably prudent driver by installing Standard No. 8 flashing lights.

Within approximately 48 feet of the proposed east curb line of Hindry Avenue, the spur enters the freeway tunnel which restricts the sight distance of approaching motorists. Automatic protection (gates) superior to the Standard No. 8 flashing lights or the requirement that trains stop after emerging from the tunnel and before crossing Hindry Avenue would increase the effectiveness of Standard No. 8 flashing lights.

There are several features at the branch line crossing which contribute to the future safety at the proposed crossing for the reasonable and prudent motorist. The close proximity of the freeway, an Edison Company power line and right of way, a drainage ditch parallel to the freeway and on the west side thereof, the tangent alignment of the tracks, and the small size of remaining private property indicate the sight distances at the proposed crossing will remain good in all quadrants. The grades of approach, angle of crossing, speed of train and anticipated highway speeds are all within reasonable limits. Comparison of this proposed crossing with adjacent existing crossings indicates that conditions will be superior to those existing at Compton Boulevard, Inglewood Avenue and Manhattan Beach Boulevard. These latter crossings have higher traffic volumes and sight restrictions but have reasonably good accident records.

The County kept a record of the train movements across the site of the proposed branch line crossing for the period from February 2 to 16, inclusive, 1968. The number of movements varied from two on Friday, February 9, to 16 on Wednesday, February 14. The times of the movements varied between 1:00 A. M. and midnight. During the test period the average move required 2.80 minutes, including some which required 10 minutes or longer. Twelve and 36/100 percent of the moves occurred during the peak traffic hours.

The County counted the number of cars standing on the auxiliary track between the spur and Compton Boulevard in two separate periods of time. Between November 6 and November 17, 1967, inclusive, the occupancy varied from no cars on November 8, 9, 10, 16 and 17 to 9 cars on November 6 and 7. For the period of February 5 to 8, 1968, inclusive, there were no cars parked thereon. On February 9, 1968 there were 30 cars parked thereon.

The County proposed (1) that the auxiliary track be extended approximately 750 feet north beyond the spur switch point; (2) that, in addition to such extension, a third track be added which would extend from approximately the north switch point of the first proposal, a distance along the spur; and (3) that the auxiliary track be left as it is and another auxiliary track be built on the west side of the branch line from proposed Hindry Avenue north, a distance of about 1550 feet (Exhibit 1, pp. 39, 40 and 41). The County would pay the cost of extending the sidings under the first two proposals. It contends that the third proposal would benefit the Santa Fe and it should bear the cost thereof.

Although the applicant presented evidence of the costs of various methods of separating the grades at the crossing, its counsel made it clear that the County desires only authority to make crossings at grade and that it is not interested in any separations of grade. It thus appears that evidence relative to costs of grade separations is immaterial.

The County requests that each crossing be protected by Standard No. 8 flashing light signals supplemented with automatic gates.

On cross-examination, the County engineer testified that at present Hindry Avenue is not proposed north of Rosecrans Avenue; that Hindry Avenue will provide additional needed access to the freeway; that the proposal will provide a continuity of the Hindry Avenue route; and that it will provide additional access to the industrial area.

The Santa Fe

The Regional Engineer for the Santa Fe's Coast Line, which includes the line under consideration, testified that the Santa Fe opposes the application for the reasons (1) the branch line crossing would be a two-track crossing which always causes a dangerous situation, (2) the spur crossing would have very restricted visibility due to the tunnel under the freeway, (3) other routings for traffic could be chosen which would be safer, (4) the crossing angles (50°) are bad, and (5) the branch line is used by many long trains. In regard to the latter point, he testified that the average daily train traffic is 10 to 12 trains; that the timetable speed is 30 miles per hour; that some of the trains are 75 to 110 cars; and

the trains weigh from 5,000 to 11,000 tons and average 8,000 tons. The witness further testified that the trains have one trainman who is on the righthand side of the engine; that if Hindry Avenue is opened across the spur there will be a hazard for northbound motorists due to trains coming from the tunnel as the engineer is on the right side and cannot see them; that there are one to six trains per day on the spur; that if the crossing of the spur is allowed, the minimum protection thereat should be No. 8 flashing lights with gates.

The witness further testified that the grade crossing on the branch line would be bad as there would be a two-track situation in which, even with gates, a motorist could get caught on the tracks; that the engineer of a northbound train would be concentrating on Compton Boulevard which is 320 feet south of the proposed branch line crossing; that the engineer of a southbound train would concentrate on the branch crossing rather than Compton Boulevard; that north of the branch line crossing there is a descending grade toward Wilmington of 1.02 percent for 3100 feet, then 0.3 percent for 45 feet; that the first time the engineer of a southbound train can see the proposed branch line crossing site is at a point 3684 feet north thereof; that at least three times per week there are 110-car trains weighing 11,000 tons going south on this line; that an 11,000-ton train going 30 miles per hour on the stated descending grade would require 3,758 feet to stop with a service application of brakes; that it would be impossible for the 11,000-ton southbound train to stop short of the branch line crossing site except with an emergency application of brakes; and that an emergency application of brakes is dangerous to the train crew. The witness further testified

that between February 5 and 16, inclusive, 1968, there were from 2 to 18 cars on the auxiliary track; and that Hindry Avenue can be constructed under the branch line without disturbing Compton Boulevard.

On cross-examination, the witness testified that in general the speed of the trains at the branch line is 15 miles per hour; that there is no maximum set speed; that the speed is the personal judgment of the engineer; that there are 4 to 6 trains per day on the spur track; that the 10 to 12 trains per day on the branch line might include some of such trains; that the 11,000-ton train referred to above, going south, could stop in 276¹/₂ feet with an emergency application of brakes; that Standard No. 8's with gates would be the minimum protection required at the branch line crossing; and that he could not say that the proposed crossing would be a death trap. He recommended that the application be denied but that if it is granted, the branch line crossing be at separated grades and the spur protection be Standard No. 8 flashing lights with gates.

On further examination the witness testified that grade crossings are inherently dangerous; that since 1960 there have been two accidents at the Compton Boulevard crossing in which accidents two persons were injured but no one was killed; that in said period there were six occasions at the crossing when gates were broken; and that one of the accidents causing injuries was in 1960 and the other was in 1963. It was stipulated that the gates were installed on January 28, 1965. There have been no vehicle-train accidents since the gates were installed.

The Santa Fe trainmaster for the area testified that there are 10 to 12 movements over the crossing site each day; that this includes 6 scheduled trains and 4 to 6 switch trains; that the regular trains vary from 75 to 115 cars; that the majority are 75 to 80 cars; that 2 to 3 times per week there are trains of over 100 cars; that there is no timetable; that usually there are two between 3:00 and 5:00 P. M. to Long Beach; one between 5:00 and 7:00 P. M. to Los Angeles; one between 9:00 and 11:00 A. M. to Los Angeles; one between 2:00 and 4:00 A. M. to Wilmington; and one between 5:00 and 7:00 A. M. to Los Angeles. The witness further testified that there are two movements per day between 9:00 A. M. and 1:00 P. M. over the spur.

On cross-examination, the witness testified that it is possible some of the trains could be rescheduled.

A Santa Fe engineer testified that part of his duties is to break in new trainmen; that he operates or supervises one trip per week; that in his opinion the proposal creates the hazard of an additional grade crossing which would be hazardous due to the close proximity to the existing Compton Boulevard crossing; and that an engineer concentrates on the closest crossing.

On cross-examination, the witness testified that recently gates had been installed at the Manhattan Beach Boulevard and Inglewood Avenue crossings and that the angles of these crossings are the same as at the Hindry Avenue crossings. The witness testified that these are dangerous crossings.

The Santa Fe's Supervisor of Air Brakes for the area testified that he agrees with the engineer that the engineers concentrate on the closest crossing until the engine is thereat and then they concentrate on the next crossing. He further testified that on long trains there is a lot of slack; that with a 75-car train there are possibly 50 feet of slack; that there have been injuries to train crewmen when emergency stops are required due to this slack; and that for this reason the crews are reluctant to go into emergency.

The representative of the person who owns 2.97 acres of land between the freeway and the spur, and which would be bisected by the extension of Hindry Avenue, protested the extension for the reason that splitting of the property would greatly reduce the value thereof.

A representative of the lumber company (interested party) located on each side of the spur testified that a lumber shed on the proposed route of Hindry Avenue is to be torn down and that the company would like a speedy decision.

Findings

The Commission finds that:

1. The Santa Fe's Harbor District Branch Line extends from the City of Los Angeles to the Port of Los Angeles. A portion of this line is in the city of Hawthorne, extending in a northwest to southeast direction between the intersection of Rosecrans Avenue and Aviation Boulevard, on the north, and approximately the intersection of Freeman Boulevard and Compton Boulevard on the south.

2. The San Diego Freeway runs north and south between Rosecrans Avenue, on the north, and Compton Boulevard, on the south. Approximately 1100 feet north of Compton Boulevard, the freeway veers east and crosses Inglewood Avenue, a north-south street, approximately midway between Compton Boulevard and Manhattan Beach Boulevard. Manhattan Beach Boulevard is the first major east-west street south of Compton Boulevard. Southbound traffic can enter or leave the freeway at approximately 145th Street. This entrance-exit terminates at the southern end of Hindry Avenue, which presently extends from Rosecrans Avenue on the north to approximately 147th Street on the south. Hindry Avenue is the first street west of the freeway. There are freeway on-off ramps at Inglewood Avenue. It is approximately one mile between the Hindry Avenue freeway ramps and the Inglewood Avenue ramps.

3. The Santa Fe's branch line continues in a southeast direction parallel to the freeway and on the west side thereof past Manhattan Beach Boulevard. There is a separated grade crossing at the intersection of Rosecrans Avenue and Aviation Boulevard. There is a spur track which extends east from the branch line commencing approximately midway between Rosecrans Avenue and Compton Boulevard, under the freeway to industries located east thereof. This spur crosses the freeway by a tunnel. South of the spur, the Santa Fe has the branch line and a storage or auxiliary track which extends parallel to the branch line on the east side thereof and about 15 feet therefrom.

4. The County and the City of Hawthorne propose to extend Hindry Avenue south from its present end at the freeway ramps across the spur which it will cross approximately 48 feet west of the west end of the freeway tunnel and across the branch line and auxiliary track to Compton Boulevard. South of Compton Boulevard the street is in existence as Freeman Boulevard. As planned, Hindry Avenue will cross the spur and the branch line at approximately 50° angles. The proposed Hindry Avenue will cross the branch line approximately 320 feet north of Compton Boulevard. The spur will cross Hindry Avenue approximately 750 feet north of the branch crossing. The existing crossings at Compton Boulevard, Inglewood Avenue and Manhattan Beach Boulevard are protected by Standard No. 8 flashing light signals supplemented with gates.

5. If Hindry Avenue is constructed as proposed, between 147th Street and Compton Boulevard, average daily traffic thereover will be approximately 7,000 vehicles in 1968 and approximately 14,000 vehicles in 1987. There will be resulting reductions in traffic in 1968 over the Compton Boulevard, Inglewood Avenue and the Manhattan Beach Boulevard grade crossings. There is no way to forecast the 1987 traffic over these crossings but the area is industrial and the vehicle traffic will increase in the future.

6. The area in the vicinity of the branch line where it will cross Hindry Avenue near Compton Boulevard does not have any structures or buildings. Visibility at this crossing at points 100 feet from the crossing is unrestricted in the northwest and northeast quadrants. It is 150 feet in the southeast quadrant and 300 feet in the southwest quadrant.

7. The spur exits from a tunnel under the freeway approximately 48 feet from the proposed east edge of Hindry Avenue. At points 100 feet from the crossing, visibility is unrestricted in the southwest and southeast quadrants, but is only 100 feet in the northeast quadrant and is 120 feet in the southeast quadrant.

8. The usual train speed on the branch line at this point is 30 miles per hour but is sometimes 15 miles per hour. There is no set train speed. The engineer uses his discretion. The grade of the track is approximately 1 percent descending southeast for approximately 3100 feet prior to the site of the Hindry Avenue branch crossing except that for the last 45 feet it is 0.3 percent. There are 10 to 12 trains per day past the location of the branch line crossing by Hindry Avenue. These trains vary from 75 to 110 cars and vary in weight from 5,000 tons to 11,000 tons. The majority of the trains operate at non-peak traffic hours but three trains pass through the area between 3:00 and 7:00 P. M. daily. Because of the descending grade, an 11,000-ton train going south at 30 miles per hour cannot be stopped short of the branch line crossing site except with an emergency application of brakes if the engineer observes an obstacle on the track at the branch line crossing site at the time the crossing site is first visible. The train can be stopped short of the crossing site with an emergency application of brakes. The engineers of trains must concentrate on the crossing closest to him until the engine is on the crossing. In this instance, the engineers on northbound trains must concentrate on the Compton Boulevard crossing until the engine is thereon. At that time he would transfer his attention to the proposed Hindry Avenue branch line crossing. It will be approximately 320 feet from the existing crossing to the

proposed crossing. Even with an emergency application of brakes, the trains cannot be stopped in this distance.

9. There are approximately 4 to 6 train movements per day on the spur track. The track will cross the proposed Hindry Avenue at approximately 50 degrees with the train coming from the northbound motor vehicle driver's right. The engineer sits on the right side of the engine. His view of northbound vehicular traffic on the proposed Hindry Avenue will be very limited.

10. The auxiliary track is on the east side of the branch line and extends from the south side of the spur switch south past the proposed branch line crossing by Hindry Avenue. This auxiliary track is necessary for Santa Fe's operations and if it is shortened for a grade crossing, it will be necessary to add an auxiliary track at some other location in the area.

11. If the crossing of the branch line is not authorized, the vehicle traffic can continue to use the route presently used; that is, the freeway exit or entrance at 145th Street, Hindry Avenue north thereof, and Rosecrans Avenue east or west thereof.

12. The construction of Hindry Avenue at grade across the spur will not be adverse to the public interest provided the crossing is protected by Standard No. 8 flashing light signals supplemented with automatic gates.

13. The proposed at-grade crossing of the branch line would be hazardous due to its proximity to the existing crossing of Compton Boulevard approximately 320 feet south thereof; the fact that the usual train speed is 30 miles per hour; the fact that 11,000-ton trains pass the crossing site; the fact that southbound the trains are on a 1 percent descending grade; and the fact that from the point a southbound trainman can first see the crossing some of the 11,000-ton trains cannot be stopped short of the crossing except with an emergency application of brakes.

14. A separation of grades at the branch line crossing can be made and would enhance public safety and welfare.

15. Public safety and welfare require that if the proposed branch line crossing is constructed, it be at separated grades.

16. The petition for a proposed report should be denied.

Conclusion

We conclude that the request for authority to open Hindry Avenue at grade across the spur should be granted provided it is protected by two Standard No. 8 flashing light signals supplemented with automatic gates. We also conclude that the request for authority to open Hindry Avenue at grade across the branch line as proposed should be denied and the petition for a proposed report should be denied. The applicant has stated it wants the entire application granted as requested, or denied. Inasmuch as we are denying authority for a grade crossing over the branch line, the entire application will be denied.

O R D E R

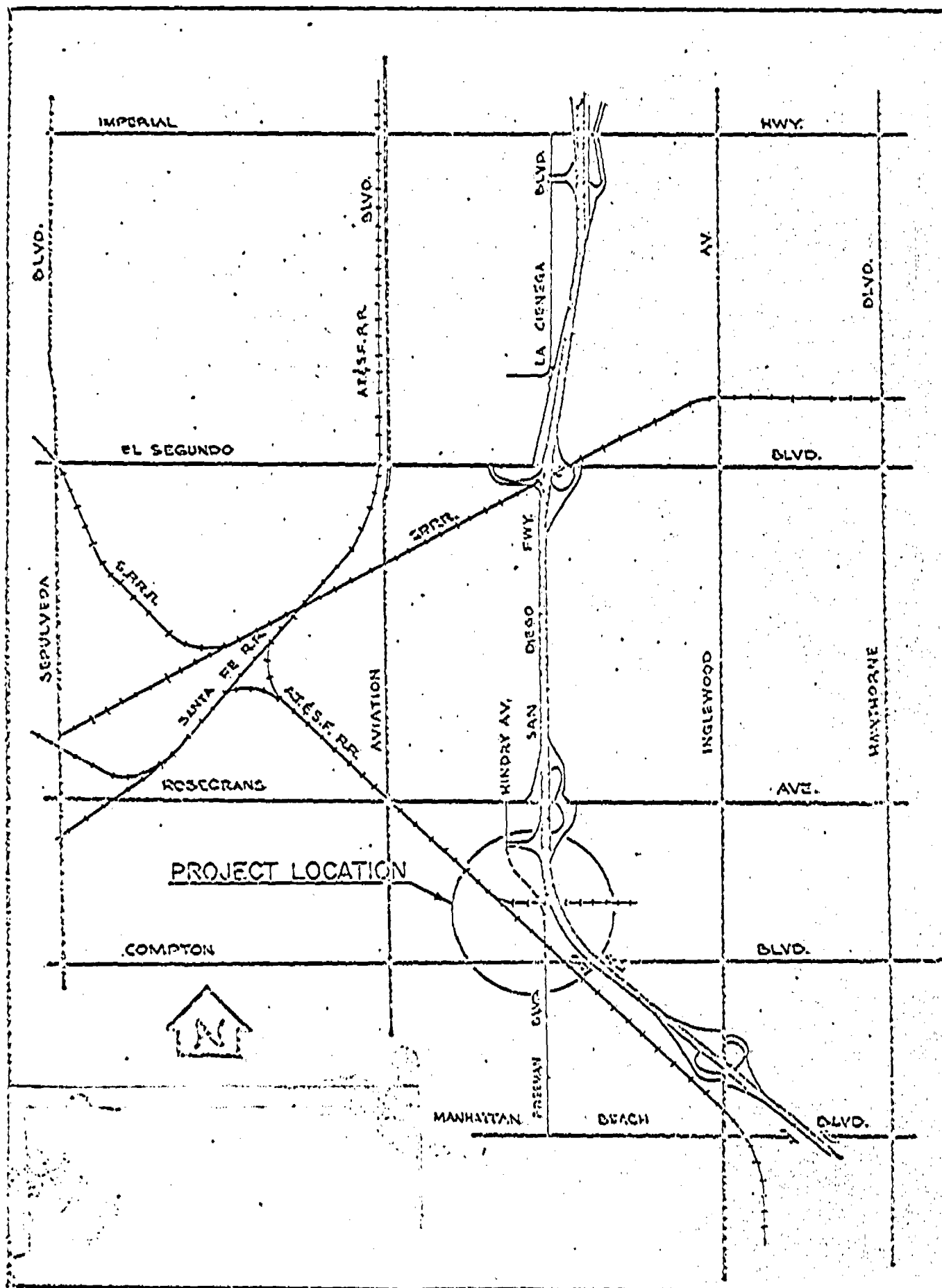
IT IS ORDERED that:

1. Authority to construct Hindry Avenue at grade over the spur (MP 2H-15.9-C) and the branch line (MP 2H-16.0) is denied.
2. The petition for a proposed report is denied.

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

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 25th
day of JUNE, 1968.

John E. Hatcher
President
William L. Ginn
Augustus
William J. Ginn
Paul P. Mossley
Commissioners



Appendix "A"