

ORIGINAL

Decision No. 76014

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Investigation into the status, safety, maintenance, use and protection or closing of all main line crossings at grade of the tracks of The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company between South Avenue 61 and Avenue 33 through the Highland Park section of the City of Los Angeles.

Case No. 8373
(Filed March 22, 1966)

Robert A. Feldman, for Santa Fe Railway Company; and Roger Arnebergh, by Charles E. Mattson, for City of Los Angeles, respondents.
Ronald I. Hollis, for the Commission staff.

O P I N I O N

On April 4, 1967, the Commission issued Decision No. 72251 in Case No. 8373 which, among other things, ordered:

"7. Crossing No. 2-135.55, North Figueroa Street shall be protected by Standard No. 8 flashing light signals supplemented with automatic crossing gates, utilizing median islands in North Figueroa Street, if necessary, and providing gated protection to vehicular traffic making right-hand turns from North Figueroa Street onto South Avenue 61. Installation of said automatic grade-crossing protection shall be accomplished by December 31, 1968.

"8. Crossing No. 2-135.5, South Avenue 61 shall be protected by a Standard No. 8 flashing light signal supplemented with automatic crossing gates in place of the existing grade-crossing protection. Installation of said automatic grade-crossing protection shall be accomplished by December 31, 1968."

The City of Los Angeles (City) and the Santa Fe Railway Company (Santa Fe) were unable to agree on the proper method of construction of crossing protection ordered by Ordering Paragraphs 7 and 8 of Decision No. 72251. Therefore, upon request of the City, the Commission reopened Case No. 8373 in regard to the two crossings for the purpose of further hearing on the issue of the proper method of constructing and installing automatic grade crossing protection. Appendix A attached hereto is a diagram showing details of the crossings and the proposed grade crossing protection. (For convenience, the top of the diagram is considered north. Median island A is directly north of the crossing; median island B is directly north of median island A.) Public hearing was held before Examiner Robert Barnett in Los Angeles on June 5, 1969.

The primary issue in this case concerns Crossing No. 2-135.55 and is limited to protecting the southbound left turn lane on Figueroa Street for vehicles turning onto South Avenue 61. Five alternate methods of protection were proposed:

1. To protect the north-south traffic, install Standard No. 8 flashing light signals supplemented with automatic crossing gates, utilizing median islands in North Figueroa Street. To protect the left-hand turning traffic, construct median island B with a Standard No. 8 flashing light signal supplemented with an automatic gate.

2. Eliminate median island B and place a train-activated no left turn signal on median island A for southbound left-hand turning traffic.

3. Same as paragraph 2, except that instead of a train-activated no left turn signal, install a sign which would prohibit left turns at that intersection at all times.

4. Eliminate median island B and move median island A farther north to a position just behind the north curb line of South Avenue 61. This eliminates the left turn pocket.

5. Eliminate median island B and protect left turn traffic by adding a 44-foot gate arm just north of South Avenue 61, to be installed on the west sidewalk of Figueroa Street.

None of the parties supported Alternate No. 1. Alternate No. 4 was proposed by the staff at a time when southbound traffic on Figueroa Street was not provided with a left-hand turning lane. Now that the City has provided a left-hand turning lane, the staff has abandoned its support for Alternate No. 4. The staff now supports Alternate No. 5 with the provision that if Alternate No. 5 is rejected, Alternate No. 3 should be installed. The Santa Fe supports Alternate No. 3 and Los Angeles supports Alternate No. 2.

For the reasons stated below, we find that the proper method of constructing and installing automatic grade crossing protection at Crossing No. 2-135.55 is Alternate No. 2, proposed by the City of Los Angeles.

No party supported Alternate No. 1 because the island proposed to protect left turning traffic does not meet basic criteria for the construction of an island in any city street. It would be a hazard to southbound traffic. The change in street configuration eliminated support for Alternate No. 4. Alternate No. 5 is deficient because the 44-foot gate arm which would be required to make the additional gate north of South Avenue 61 feasible would create many problems. The Santa Fe does not have any gate arms on its entire system 44 feet in length; its maximum length is 35 feet. A 44-foot gate arm would be liable to breakage from wind damage when winds exceed 25 miles an hour. The gate arm has too much flexibility for accurate control; its great size prevents operation in a normal manner; and the tip of the gate arm would be very small with no light at its end, and would provide inadequate warning to automobiles, especially at night.

The remaining two alternatives differ only in that one would prohibit all left turns at any time at this intersection while the other would prohibit left turns only when trains are crossing the intersection. In our opinion left turn traffic should be prohibited only when trains occupy the crossing.

Findings of Fact

1. Santa Fe operates nine trains daily over Crossing No. 2-135.55. The usual consist is from nine to 14 cars traveling at 25 miles an hour. There have been no accidents at this crossing for over 15 years. A recent traffic count

shows that approximately 200 cars a day utilize the left turn lane from Figueroa onto South Avenue 61. South Avenue 61 serves approximately 100 residences plus three or four businesses. If the left turn lane were closed, traffic desiring to make a left turn onto South Avenue 61 would have to make their turn one block farther south onto South Avenue 60. South Avenue 60 is in the middle of a business district and has an inadequate left turn lane. Additional cars and trucks turning left at South Avenue 60 could overflow the left turn lane pocket and interfere with the through southbound traffic on Figueroa Street. A train-activated no left turn signal will prohibit left turn traffic while trains are utilizing the crossing, but will not interrupt traffic patterns at other times of the day.

2. At present there are no gates at this crossing. Yet, for at least 15 years, and perhaps longer, there have been no train-vehicle accidents at this crossing. To place a permanent no left turn here is too drastic a remedy in order to reduce the possibility of an accident, as compared to the disruption of normal traffic patterns in the area and the inconvenience it will cause motorists. A person who would disregard the train-activated no left turn signal would in all probability disregard a sign banning all left turn traffic. The City's evidence relating to preserving normal traffic patterns in the area, plus preventing left turn problems at South Avenue 60 is persuasive.

3. No change is required for the protection ordered by Decision No. 72251 for Crossing No. 2-135.5.

4. Crossing No. 2-135.55 should be protected as set forth in the order which follows.

The Commission concludes that except as modified by the following order, Decision No. 72251 is affirmed.

O R D E R

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. Crossing No. 2-135.55, North Figueroa Street, shall be protected by Standard No. 8 flashing light signals supplemented with automatic crossing gates, utilizing median islands in North Figueroa Street, as shown on Exhibit No. 6 in this proceeding. A train-activated no left turn signal shall be installed on the median island just north of the crossing. Installation of said automatic grade-crossing protection shall be accomplished by December 31, 1970.

2. Crossing No. 2-135.5, South Avenue 61, shall be protected by a Standard No. 8 flashing light signal supplemented with an automatic crossing gate. Installation of said automatic grade-crossing protection shall be accomplished by December 31, 1970.

3. In all other respects, Decision No. 72251 is affirmed.

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

Dated at San Francisco, California,
this 12th day of AUGUST, 1969,

William J. Vukasin, Jr.
President
Alfred H. Monahan
[Signature]
Commissioners

Commissioner J. P. Vukasin, Jr., being necessarily absent, did not participate in the disposition of this proceeding.

App. Case C-8373

Exhibit No.

Witness: [Signature]

Date: 6/5/67

Com. of TN, B...

TOLIA STREET
AT RR

50. AVE. 61
Xing 2-135.5

XING 2-135.55

FER

TH

TH

FR 560

CR 12'
CR 15'

Appendix A

67

CR 12'

CR 12'

CR 20'

40'

20'

11'

10'

20'

20'

10'

10'

20'

10'

20'

20'

CR 15'

CR 10'

