

sjg/JM

Decision No. 80504

ORIGINAL

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of the Application of  
Southern Pacific Transportation  
Company for authority to discontinue  
agency and to remove station building  
and appurtenances from public service  
at Ventura, County of Ventura, State  
of California.

Application No. 53171  
(Filed February 24, 1972)

Harold S. Lentz, Attorney at Law, for  
applicant.  
John deBrauwere, for Commission staff.

O P I N I O N

Southern Pacific Transportation Company seeks authority to discontinue its agency at Ventura, Ventura County, California, to remove the station building and appurtenances from public service and thereafter maintain said station as a nonagency station. Applicant alleges that under present conditions both the business handled and the type of business conducted at said station do not warrant continued maintenance of an agency at Ventura; that the general public can be adequately and conveniently served at the agency station of Oxnard, California; and that public convenience and necessity can best be served by discontinuing this agency at Ventura.

A public hearing was held at Ventura, California, on July 27, 1972, before Examiner DeWolf and the matter was submitted. There are no protests.

Notice of hearing was posted and published as required by the Commission rules and proof thereof filed herein.

Several letters were received prior to hearing which state that the county seat of Ventura County and a city of its size should have a railroad station; and other letters received prior to hearing stated that the building should be kept as an historical landmark at its present location.

No protestants made appearance at the hearing and there was no testimony in opposition to the application.

Five employees of the applicant familiar with the Ventura station testified generally that the station in question is located near the business section of Ventura; that under present conditions the business handled at the station does not warrant continued maintenance of the agency; that the general public can be adequately and conveniently served through the station of Oxnard and that substantial savings will be effected as a result thereof.

The witnesses for the applicant, who are in charge of conducting railroad operation in this district including Ventura and Oxnard, testified as to the proposed changes in operations and illustrated their testimony with exhibits. Exhibit 2 shows the proposed handling of service functions at Ventura, Exhibit 3 is a statement of past business handled at the agency of Ventura for 1970-1971 through March of 1972, Exhibit 4 is a summary of traffic originated and terminating at Ventura 1970-1972, Exhibit 5 is a statement of expenses associated with the operation of the Ventura agency, and Exhibit 6 is a list of the estimated annual savings made if Ventura is operated as a nonagency station. The survey outlined by the exhibits shows that the business handled has declined from \$967,000 in 1970, to \$854,000 in 1971, and \$174,000 for three months of 1972, while the cost went up from \$14,730 in 1970 to \$17,970 in 1971.

Applicant's Exhibits 3, 4 and 5 in evidence show the extent of present operations at Ventura. Exhibit 6 shows the annual savings to be gained by closing the station as a net of \$17,000.

The record shows that no service for passengers is presently provided at the Ventura station; except for occasionally signing a bill of lading brought to the office, the Ventura agent does not perform any of the functions in connection with carload freight service. Less-than-carload freight service functions are not now handled at the Ventura agency. Pacific Motor Trucking Co. handles all less-than-carload freight for Southern Pacific Transportation Company; drivers are equipped to assist customers with information and documentation. Such service will continue to be handled by the Oxnard or the District Freight Office by toll-free telephone calls, by clerk, or messenger service from Oxnard.

The witnesses for applicant also testified that the one agent at Ventura has only a fraction of a day's work to perform while it is still necessary to pay him for overtime to keep the station open when required. This agent will be employed elsewhere and no layoffs will result from this change because of a shortness of agency personnel.

The witnesses testified that the Oxnard station is open 24-hours per day; has 26 employees; and has computer service on operations. At present, calls to the Ventura agent have to be relayed to Oxnard for this service. Proposed direct toll-free telephones will be much more efficient.

A witness for applicant testified that the present station building is not the original building but was built in 1927 and consists of a freight house, baggage room, and living quarters upstairs. The freight house needs a new roof at a cost of \$4,000 and new paint at the cost of \$8,000 labor and materials. Termites have damaged the footings and the upstairs. The warehouse building is approximately 160 feet by 25 feet.

#### Findings

Upon consideration of the evidence the Commission finds that:

1. Adequate and convenient service is available for Ventura agency users of both passenger and freight service at the Oxnard agency.
2. Operation of the station functions at Ventura as a non-agency station will result in annual savings to applicant in the sum of \$17,000.
3. The agency closing will not affect U. S. mail delivery, passenger service, carload freight, less-than-carload freight, or telegram service. The present agent on duty will be employed elsewhere on applicant's system. The change will not cause a layoff of any employees as there is a shortage of agency personnel.
4. Public convenience and necessity no longer require the maintenance by the Southern Pacific Transportation Company of an agency and the maintenance of station buildings at Ventura is no longer required.

Conclusion

The Commission concludes that the application should be granted. Applicant will be required to maintain its Ventura station as a nonagency station.

O R D E R

IT IS ORDERED that:

Southern Pacific Transportation Company is authorized to discontinue its agency at Ventura, Ventura County, and remove the station building and appurtenances from public service, subject to the following conditions:

- (a) Applicant shall maintain said station in a nonagency status for the receipt or delivery of freight in any quantity and applicant shall make available toll-free telephone service between Ventura and Oxnard.
- (b) Within one hundred twenty days after the effective date hereof and not less than ten days prior to the discontinuance of the agency at Ventura, Ventura County, Southern Pacific Transportation Company shall post a notice of such discontinuance at the station and, within one hundred twenty days after the effective date hereof and on not less than ten days' notice to the Commission and to the public, Southern Pacific Transportation Company shall file in duplicate amendments to its tariffs showing the change authorized herein and shall make reference in such notice and tariffs to this decision as authority for the changes. In no event shall the agent be removed, pursuant to the authority hereinabove granted, earlier than the effective date of the tariff filings required hereunder.

A. 53171 - sjg

- (c) Within thirty days after discontinuance of service as herein authorized, applicant shall, in writing, notify this Commission thereof and of compliance with the above conditions.

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

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 19<sup>th</sup> day of SEPTEMBER, 1972.

Vernon L. Sturgeon  
President  
William J. Quinn  
Thomas Moran  
Commissioners

Commissioner Thomas Moran, being necessarily absent, did not participate in the disposition of this proceeding.