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Decision 88 07 016 JUL 8 1988

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Application of the State of California,)
Department of Transportation, for an)
order authorizing the Department to:)
Widen, by reconstruction, an existing)
grade separation over the Southern)
Pacific Transportation Company's tracks)
and to close an existing grade crossing,)
in the city of Richmond, Contra Costa)
County, California.)

Application 88-03-049
(Filed March 23, 1988)

O P I N I O N

As part of the project to improve the seven-mile Interstate Route (I) 580 (State Route 17) transportation corridor to six-lane freeway standards between I-80 in Albany and Richmond - San Rafael Bridge, the State of California, Department of Transportation (Caltrans), requests authority to reconstruct and widen Central Avenue Overcrossing over Southern Pacific Transportation Company's (SPT) tracks in Richmond, Contra Costa County.

The existing structure provides inadequate width to accommodate a storage lane for eastbound traffic turning left onto the freeway on-ramp, heading north. The proposed structure will include two travel lanes in each direction, a northbound left turn lane, shoulders, and sidewalks on each side. A freeway on-ramp and off-ramp connection to the proposed structure will permit re-routing of the Central Avenue traffic and closure of existing Central Avenue grade crossing upon completion of the overcrossing structure.

Major impacts of the project include a cost expenditure of \$190 million, dislocation of 450 people, a 2.5 acre taking from the East Yard Historical District, and a 1.3 acre taking from the Hoffman Marsh and mud flat. Mitigation measures include relocation assistance for involved residents and businesses, addition of landscape screening, and enhancement of remaining marsh areas.

Caltrans is the lead agency for this project under the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (CEQA), as amended, Public Resources Code Sections 21000, et seq. After preparation and review of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR), Caltrans approved the project. On August 28, 1981, a Notice of Determination was filed with the Secretary for Resources, which found that "The project will have a significant effect on the environment."

The Commission is a responsible agency for this project under CEQA and has reviewed and considered the lead agency's EIR. The site of the proposed project has been inspected by the Commission's Traffic Engineering staff. The staff examined the need for and safety of the crossing. The staff recommends that the sought authority be granted.

Application 88-03-049 meets the filing requirements of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure, including Rule 38, which relates to the construction of a public highway across a railroad. A sketch of the crossing is set forth as Appendix A.

Notice of the application was published in the Commission's Daily Calender on March 25, 1988. No protests have been received. A public hearing is not necessary.

Findings of Fact

1. Caltrans requests authority under Public Utilities Code Sections 1201-1205 to reconstruct and widen Central Avenue Overcrossing over SPT's tracks in Richmond, Contra Costa County.

2. Widening of the overcrossing is required to improve roadway capacity and to convert an expressway into a freeway.

3. Upon completion of the widened structure and its opening to vehicular traffic, the existing Central Avenue grade crossing, Crossing A-11.6, is to be closed and physically removed.

4. Public convenience, necessity, and safety require widening of the overcrossing and closure of the at-grade crossing.

5. Caltrans is the lead agency for this project under CEQA, as amended.

6. The Commission is a responsible agency for this project and has reviewed and considered the lead agency's EIR.

7. The I-580 transportation corridor improvement project will have a significant effect on the environment; however, the adopted mitigation measures will reduce the severity of the adverse impacts to acceptable levels.

8. The EIR identifies no significant environmental impact which will be caused by reconstruction and widening of the grade separation structure and closing of the existing crossing.

Conclusion of Law

The application should be granted as set forth in the following order.

O R D E R

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. The State of California, Department of Transportation (Caltrans), is authorized to reconstruct and widen Central Avenue Overcrossing over Southern Pacific Transportation Company's (SPT) tracks in Richmond, Contra Costa County, at the location and substantially as shown by plans attached to the application, to be identified as Crossing A-11.5-A.

2. Upon completion of the widened structure and its opening to vehicular traffic, the existing grade crossing of Central Avenue (Crossing A-11.6) shall be closed and physically removed.

3. Clearances shall be in accordance with General Order (GO) 26-D; except that during the period of construction a clearance of not less than 21 feet 0 inches above top of rail shall be authorized and SPT shall be authorized to operate with such reduced overhead clearance provided that instructions are issued by the railroad and filed with the Commission forbidding employees to ride on top of cars beneath the structure.

4. Caltrans shall notify the Commission and SPT at least 15, but not more than 30, days in advance of the date when the temporary impaired clearance will be created.

5. Walkways shall conform to GO 118. Walkways adjacent to any trackage subject to rail operations shall be maintained free of obstructions and shall be promptly restored to their original condition in the event of damage during construction.

6. Construction and maintenance costs shall be borne in accordance with an agreement to be entered into between the parties. A copy of the agreement, together with plans of the crossing approved by SPT, shall be filed with the Commission prior to commencing construction. Should the parties fail to agree, the Commission will apportion the costs of construction and maintenance by further order.

7. Within 30 days after completion of the work under this order, Caltrans shall notify the Commission in writing that the authorized work has been completed.

8. This authorization shall expire if not exercised within three years unless time is extended or if the above conditions are not complied with. Authorization may be revoked or modified if public convenience, necessity, or safety so require.

9. The application is granted as set forth above.


This order becomes effective 30 days from today.

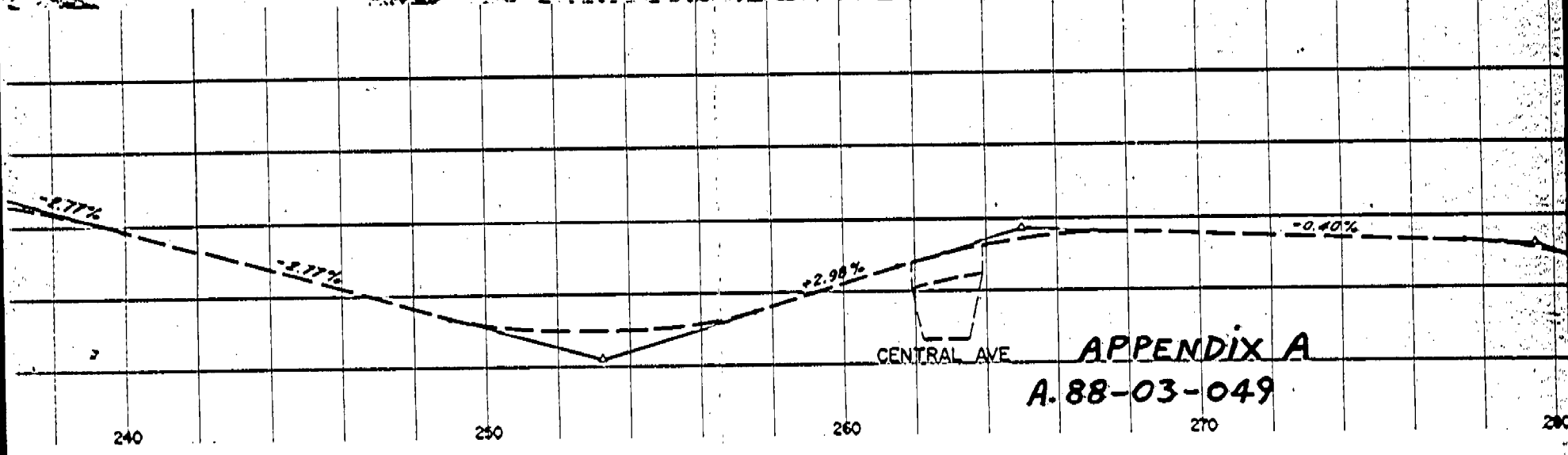
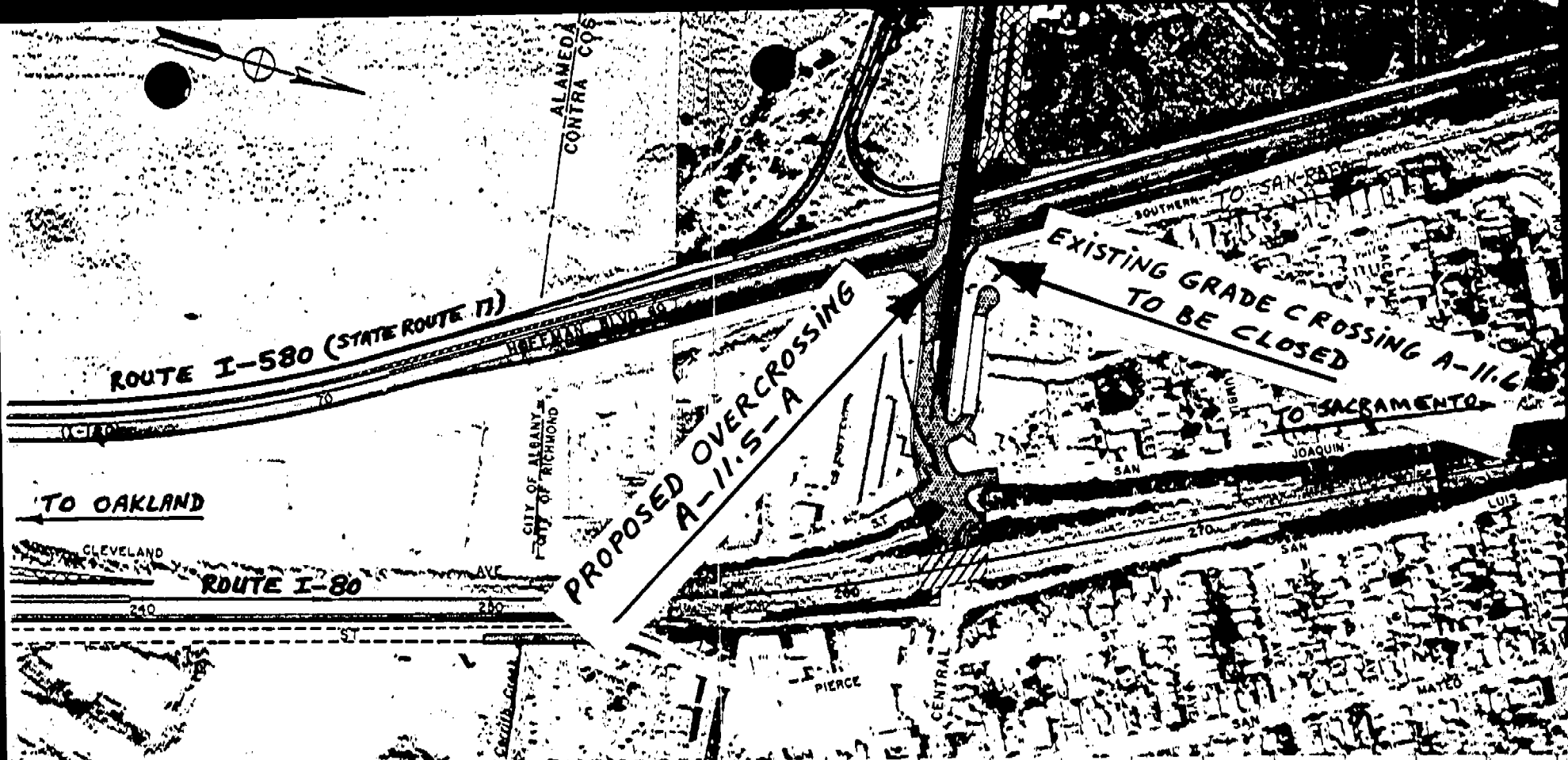
Dated JUL 8 1988, at San Francisco, California.

STANLEY W. HULETT
President
DONALD VIAL
G. MITCHELL WILK
JOHN B. OHANIAN
Commissioners

Commissioner Frederick R. Duda
being necessarily absent, did not
participate.

I CERTIFY THAT THIS DECISION
WAS APPROVED BY THE ABOVE
COMMISSIONERS TODAY.


Victor Weisser, Executive Director



APPENDIX A
A.88-03-049