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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:
Route 86/111 Separation & Overhead,
State Br. No. 56-758 R/L, over the
tracks and right of way of the
Southern Pacific Transportation Company
in Riverside County, State of California.)

ORIGINAL
Application 91-04-026
(Filed April 23, 1991)

O P I N I O N

As part of the project to construct 22 miles of four-lane freeway between Imperial County and Indio to replace segments of existing two-lane conventional State Routes (SR) 86 and 111, the State of California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) requests authority to construct SR-86/111 Separation and Overhead at separated grades over the tracks of Southern Pacific Transportation Company's (SPT) Main Line near the Community of Mecca, Riverside County. The segments with which this Application and Caltrans' contract deal with will be between the limits of Avenue 66 (SR-195) and 0.1 mile south of Avenue 58.

Caltrans proposes to construct a grade separation Overhead consisting of two five-span, cast-in-place, post-tensioned bridges. Each bridge will be 880 feet long and will provide a traveled way width of 39 feet in each direction between curbs. Upon completion of the grade separation Overhead, vehicular traffic will be rerouted from the existing SR-86 to the grade separation Overhead on the new alignment. Vehicular traffic will continue to use the existing SR-111 which parallels SPT's tracks at the location of the proposed grade separation Overhead. It is anticipated that, upon completion of the realignment of SR-86, SR-111 will be relinquished to Riverside County.

Caltrans is the lead agency for this project under California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (CEQA), as amended, Public Resources (PR) Code Sections 21000, et seq. A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for State Highway Route 86 in Riverside County was made available to the public at a hearing on March 30, 1972, in Oasis, California. Caltrans solicited comments from California Agencies - Department of Conservation, Department of Parks and Recreation, Department of Water Resources, and 15 other State Agencies - and United States Agencies - Department of Transportation, Bureau of Land Management, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, and 12 other Federal Agencies.

The Final Environmental Statement (FEIS) was approved as an Official United States Department of Transportation Document on September 10, 1973. The project has been developed so as to give detailed consideration to the potential impact upon the quality of the environment. Comments by the public and government officials, where feasible, were incorporated into the FEIS and were generally determined to be as follows:

IMPACT

a) Land Use

Project will require removal of productive potential agriculture lands.

FINDINGS

Unavoidable Impact-

Flood control project near Oasis would render many acres of land useable for future development and protect producing areas now subject to periodic floods.

b) Wildlife Habitat

Proposed alignment will cross undeveloped areas, and watercourses that serve as a habitat for several forms of wildlife.

Significant-

Preserve native vegetation where possible and replant disturbed areas, confine construction related vehicular travel to within the right of way, and retain excess land in revegetation and existing wildlife habitat preservation programs.

c) Waterfowl Feeding Areas

Possible interference with waterfowl feeding areas and hunting clubs along the Coachella Valley Stormwater Channel east of Buchanan Street.

Significant-

Alignment revised so that the right of way will be approximately 1200 feet from the feeding ponds.

On January 29, 1990, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), after conducting a second review of the environmental reevaluation for the proposed SR-86 Project, granted an updated supplemental approval.

The Commission is a responsible agency for this project under CEQA, and has reviewed and considered the lead agency's FEIS and Environmental Reevaluation - State Route 86 in Riverside County.

By motion filed May 16, 1991, SPT requested additional time in which to investigate and determine the railroad's position with respect to the construction of the Overhead. The motion was granted by Examiner's Ruling dated August 19, 1991.

On November 6, 1991, SPT advised the Commission Staff that the railroad and Caltrans were now in agreement as to the terms and

conditions relative to the grade separation. There are no other unresolved matters.

The Commission's Safety Division Traffic Engineering Staff inspected the site of the proposed project. After reviewing the need for and safety of the proposed SR-86 construction, Staff recommends that Caltrans request be granted.

The Application was found to be in compliance under the Commission's filing requirements, including Rule 38 of Rules of Practice and Procedure which relates to the construction of public highway crossings and separations over a railroad. A site map and detailed drawings of the grade separation Overhead are included in Appendix A of this Order.

Findings of Fact

1. By motion filed May 16, 1991, SPT requested an extension of time in which to investigate and determine its position concerning the proposed SR-86/111 grade separation Overhead. The motion was granted by Examiner Ruling dated August 19, 1991.

2. SPT advised the Commission Staff by letter dated November 6, 1991, that the railroad and Caltrans were now in agreement on terms and conditions with respect to the grade separation. There are no other unresolved matters. A public hearing is not necessary.

3. Caltrans requests authority under Public Utilities Code Sections 1201-1205 to construct SR-86/111 Separation and Overhead at separated grades over SPT's Main Line near the Community of Mecca, Riverside County.

4. The upgrading, realignment, improvement of SR-86 and construction of SR-86/111 grade separation Overhead is required to reduce through truck traffic from local streets, reduce problems with noise and congestion in business districts and residential areas, as well as to improve vehicular traffic circulation in the Mecca, Thermal and Coachella areas of Riverside County.

5. Public convenience, necessity and safety require construction of the grade separation Overhead.

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

7. The Commission is a responsible agency for this project, and has reviewed and considered the lead agency's Final Environmental Statement and Environmental Reevaluation - State Route 86 in Riverside County.

8. The SR-86/111 grade separation Overhead project will have a significant effect on the environment; however, mitigation measures taken by Caltrans will reduce the adverse impact to acceptable levels.

9. U.S. Department of Transportation, by letter dated January 29, 1990, informed Caltrans, that after a review of the environmental reevaluation for the project of SR-86, approval had been given by FHWA.

Conclusions of Law

1. The application is uncontested, and a public hearing is not necessary.

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

ORDER

IT IS ORDERED THAT:

1. The State of California, Department of Transportation (Caltrans), is authorized to construct Route 86/111 Separation and Overhead at separated grades over the tracks of Southern Pacific Transportation Company's (SPT) Main Line near the Community of Mecca, Riverside County, at the location and substantially as shown by plans attached to the Application and Appendix A of this order, identified as Crossing B-622.3-A.

2. Clearances shall be in accordance with General Order (GO) 26-D, except that during the period of construction a temporary vertical construction clearance of not less than 21 feet 9 inches above top of rail and temporary horizontal construction clearance of 14 feet 0 inches during construction of the Overhead will be authorized. SPT shall be authorized to operate with such reduced overhead clearance provided that the railroad issues instructions and files them with the Commission's Safety Division, forbidding employees to ride on tops of cars beneath the structure.

3. Caltrans shall notify the Commission's Safety Division and SPT at least 15, but not more than 30, days in advance of the date when the temporary impaired clearances will be created.

4. 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.

5. 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 approved by SPT, shall be filed with the Commission's Safety Division prior to commencing construction. Should the parties fail to agree, the Commission will apportion the costs of construction and maintenance by further order.

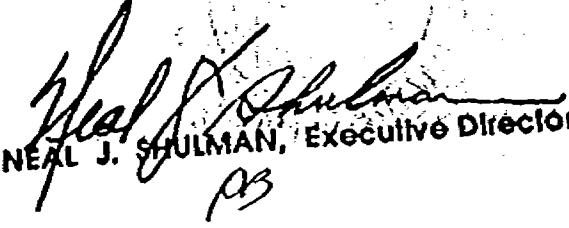
6. Within 30 days after completion of the work under this order, Caltrans shall notify the Commission in writing that the authorized work has been completed.

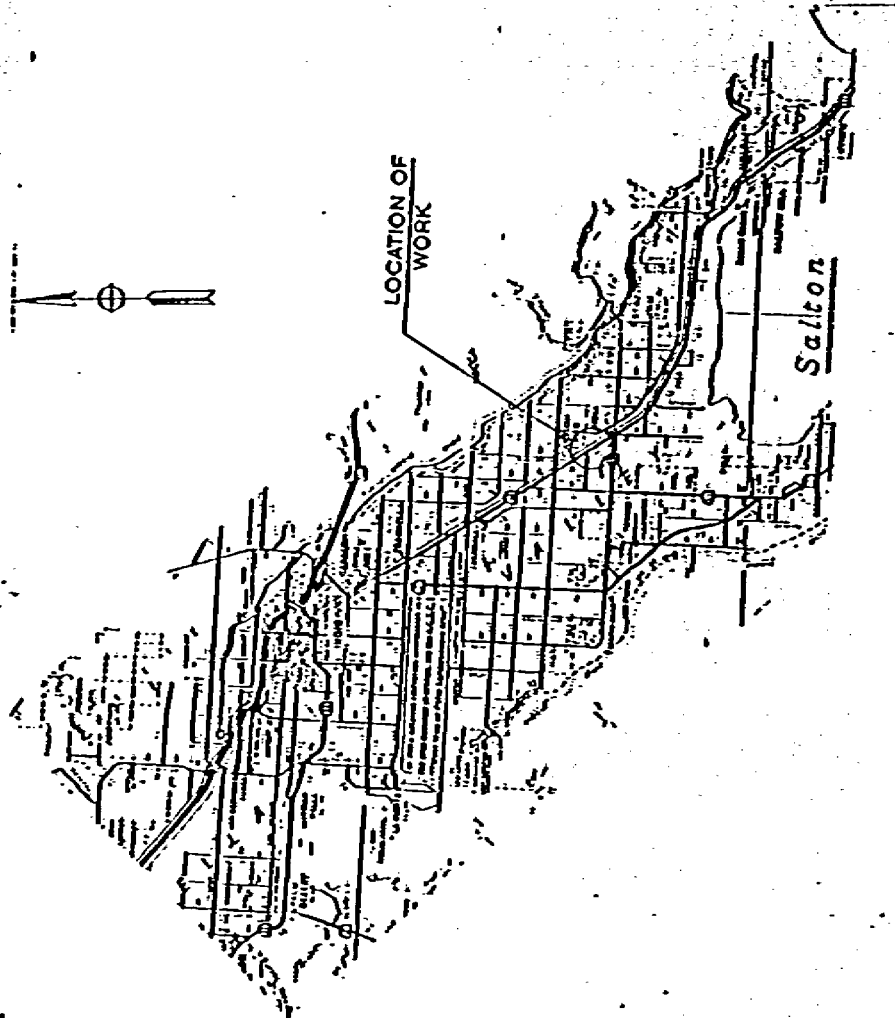
7. This authorization shall expire if not exercised within three years unless time is extended or if the above conditions are not complied with. Authorization may be revoked or modified if public convenience, necessity or safety so require.

8. The application is granted as set forth above.
This order becomes effective 30 days from today.
Dated JUL 01 1992 at San Francisco, California.

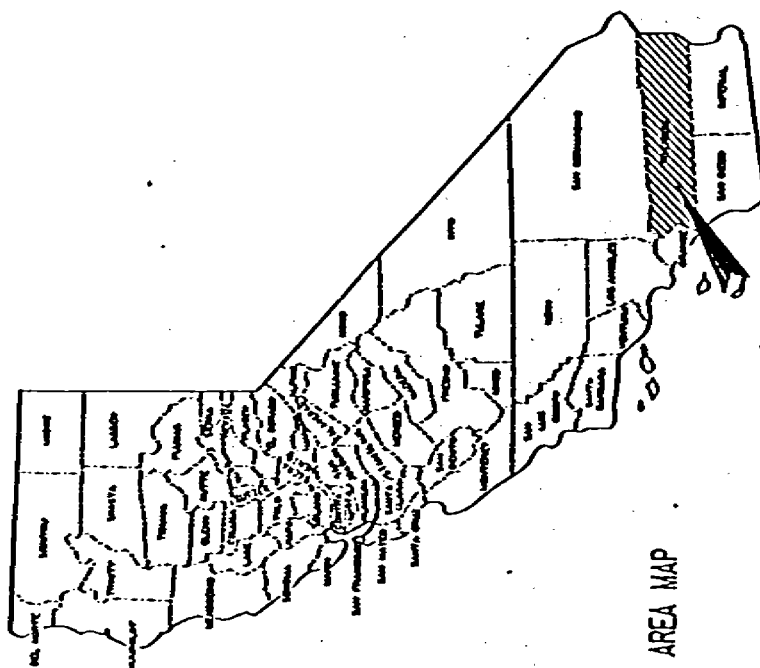
DANIEL Wm. FESSLER
President
JOHN B. OHANIAN
PATRICIA M. ECKERT
NORMAN D. SHUMWAY
Commissioners

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


NEAL J. SHULMAN, Executive Director
PB

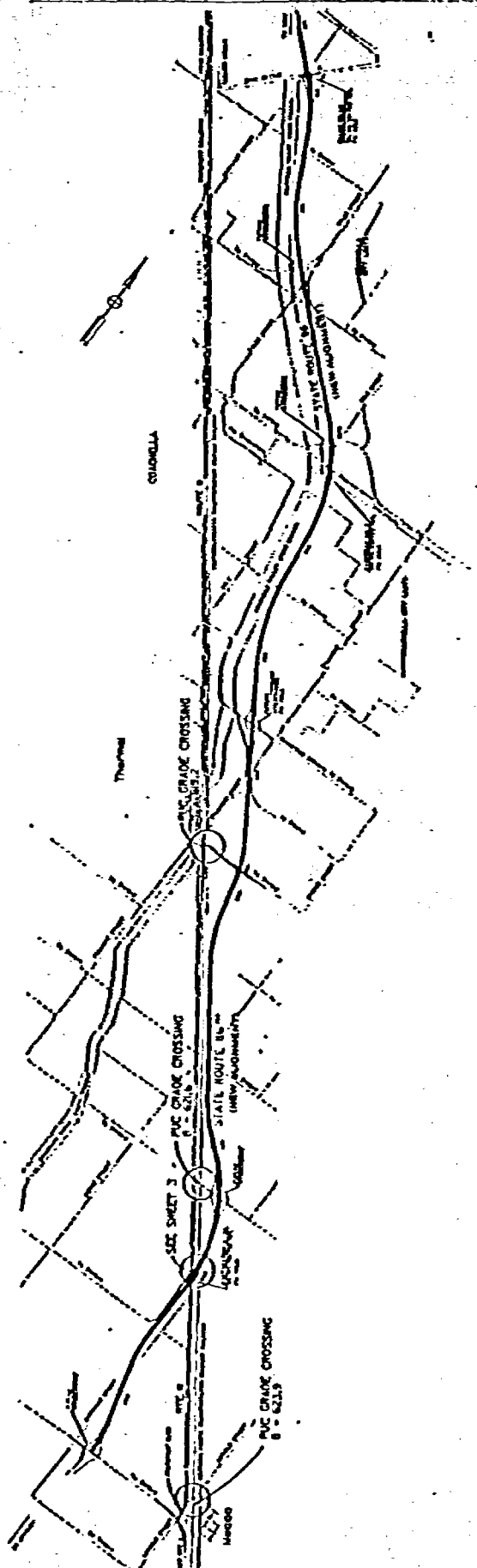


LOCATION MAP



AREA MAP

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| ROUTE 86/III SEPARATION & OH |
| PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION SHEET - EXHIBIT 'B' |



VICINITY MAP

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| ROUTE 86/III SEPARATION & OH |
| PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION SHEET - EXHIBIT 'B' |

