SW /ec

91859

Decision No.

<u>MIN</u> 3 1320

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of the Application of the CITY OF SAN CLEMENIE to abolish an existing pedestrian underpass and, in place thereof, to construct a pedestrian at-grade crossing over the right-of-way of The Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway Company.

Application No. 55451 Petition for Modification (Filed November 8, 1977) Petition for Reopening of the Record (Filed December 16, 1977)

ORIGINAL

(See Decision No. 87757 for Appearances)

Additional Appearances

- Leland E. Butler and F. G. Pfrommer, Attorneys at Law, for The Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway Company, respondent.
- O. J. Solander, Attorney at Law, for California Department of Transportation; and <u>James P. Jones</u> and Don C. Richardson, for United Transportation Union; interested parties.

<u>O P I N I O N</u>

A.55451 was filed January 17, 1975 by the city of San Clemente (San Clemente). By D.87757 (August 23, 1977), as modified by D.88050 (October 25, 1977), San Clemente was authorized to construct a combination public pedestrian and limited access vehicular at-grade crossing (Crossing 2-204.7) of The Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway Company (Santa Fe) District 4 main line, which runs along the public beach in San Clemente. The purpose was to provide an oceanfront grade crossing near the center of the city, with train-activated warning and protection

-1-

A.55451 SW/bw

equipment, for use by pedestrians and authorized passenger, freight, and service vehicles going to and from the public beach, pier, lifeguard headquarters building, and other facilities.^{1/} San Clemente has not constructed the authorized grade crossing because of a redevelopment master plan adopted in 1977 which materially changed the City's crossing requirements in the area.

By D.90332 (May 22, 1979), the record in A.55451 was reopened for receipt of new evidence relative to matters set forth in the Petition for Modification of D.87757 and D.88050 filed November 8, 1977 by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), and the Petition for Reopening of the Record filed December 16, 1977 by San Clemente.

Further hearing was held before Administrative Law Judge Norman B. Haley at Los Angeles on November 7, 1979, $\frac{2}{}$ and the matter was resubmitted. Additional evidence was presented by San Clemente and Santa Fe. Ten additional exhibits were received (Exhibits 48 through 57). Caltrans and the staff assisted in developing the record through cross-examination. Summary of Decision

This decision authorizes San Clemente to add, change, and eliminate certain railroad crossing facilities and arrangements at four locations along an approximate 600-foot stretch

1/ A drawing showing the pier front area, streets, and the principal railroad crossing places now existing in the vicinity is attached to D.87757 as Appendix A.

2/ The record leading up to D.87757 and D.88050 was developed during 13 days of hearing in 1975 and 1976. A prehearing conference relative to the reopened record was held on June 11, 1979.

A.55451 SW/bw

of Santa Fe track on the beach of the Pacific Ocean about midway between the northwestern and southeastern city limits.^{3/} This stretch of track is in part of the City known as the bowl/ pier area. The bowl/pier area is a several square block area centering around the City pier. This area is in a state of general deterioration with a high incidence of crime. It was necessary for San Clemente to obtain authority from the Commission to make the crossing changes it seeks before proceeding to fully redevelop the bowl/pier area in accordance with a comprehensive master plan which the City has adopted.

Existing railroad crossing places in the bowl/pier area are inadequate to satisfy increasing usage^{4/} and are highly undesirable from a functional standpoint. For many years thousands of pedestrians in the area involved have walked across the track at grade to and from the beach and pier at two unauthorized places where there is no train-activated warning or protection equipment. These are the lifeguard crossing (a private vehicular crossing identified as Crossing 7 of record) and the hole-in-thefence at-grade crossing at the pier entrance. The latter is an easy shortcut access to the beach and pier through a hole cut in the fence by persons unknown in spite of repeated efforts by the City to keep the fence repaired.

3/ San Clemente has about six miles of ocean beach within its borders. This is a highly desirable sandy beach used by the public for swimming, surfing, and other recreational activities in the marine environment. The main line of the Santa Fe runs the entire length of City's beach. The record amply demonstrates that people walk across the track at will at immmerable places in the City. However, the application mainly focuses on crossing places along the approximate 600 feet of track near the center of the City.

4/ Beach usage is increasing due to increased City population and because Interstate 5, which has off-ramps in both directions in the City, brings increasing mmbers of visitors from the southern California population centers located relatively short driving distances away. People cross the track at unauthorized places in the bowl/pier area because the only authorized place is a small, 53-year-old tunnel at the pier entrance (Crossing 8 of record), with a number of undesirable features. Eliminating the old tunnel is a major goal of San Clemente in redeveloping the bowl/ pier area because it is a highly undesirable crossing from a functional standpoint and a blight and hazard in the City. Furthermore, the inland approach to the tunnel on Avenida Victoria is in the way of construction of a proposed multi-story redevelopment structure and the planned raising of Avenida Victoria ten feet.

This decision authorizes San Clemente to construct a combination public pedestrian and limited access vehicular atgrade crossing about 245 feet northwesterly of the pier. The new grade crossing will be equipped with train-activated warning and protection equipment. It will permit fencing off the two unauthorized pedestrian crossing places. This protected grade crossing also will replace the old tunnel. These crossing changes will improve safety for pedestrians and vehicles crossing the track in the bowl/pier area. The City plans to accomplish these changes relatively soon.

This decision also authorizes San Clemente to construct a pedestrian overcrossing of the railroad about 55 feet northwesterly of the pier entrance to connect a proposed multi-story redevelopment structure on the inland side of the track with a pier restaurant structure on the beach side. This overcrossing would not handle motor vehicles. All motor vehicles and most pedestrians would continue to use the newly authorized protected at-grade crossing. The City plans to build the overcrossing in about three years.

· -4-

Presentation of San Clemente

In its petition for reopening of the record San Clemente requests that certain new evidence provided in three affidavits attached to the petition be received. The City seeks authority to implement proposals contained in a master plan prepared by the San Clemente Redevelopment Agency^{\sum} as that plan relates to present and proposed separated and at-grade crossings of the Santa Fe main line in the bowl/pier area. One of the affidavits was prepared by James Keisker, consulting architect. His firm had been the one selected by the San Clemente Redevelopment Agency to develop an overall plan and a pattern of shops, stores, and other facilities, along with the proposed at-grade crossing relocation (Appendices A and B hereto), and the pedestrian overcrossing (Appendices B and C hereto). Studies were completed and the development work leading up to the plan is outlined in the affidavit. Mr. Keisker also was called to testify at the further hearing. He introduced and explained Exhibits 51 through 55 concerning the redevelopment plans as they relate to the proposed crossing changes.

The San Clemente Redevelopment Agency determined that the bowl/pier area is the one in need of immediate redevelopment action. The City finally approved the redevelopment master plan in October 1977, mine months after the record leading up to D.87757 in A.55451 was closed. San Clemente believes that redevelopment in the bowl/pier area has the prospect of producing substantial income for the City over the long range, and for the

5/ The San Clemente Redevelopment Agency was created by city ordinance in June 1975 for the purpose of acting as a responsive arm of city government in satisfying a general and emphatic public appeal that the San Clemente beach and its environs be resurrected from a slum area status to a redeveloped segment of the community attractive to both residents and visitors of the City and for their ongoing use and enjoyment.



short range of perfecting an attractive recreational area for residents and visitors. The adopted plans for the at-grade crossing and the overcrossing are reflected in Appendices A, B, and C attached hereto.

San Clemente originally had proposed that a grade crossing be constructed at the site of pier entrance pedestrian tunnel Crossing 8 (Crossing 2-204.8 BD). However, the combination public pedestrian and limited access vehicular at-grade crossing (Crossing 2-204.7) was authorized to be constructed at the site of existing private lifeguard Crossing $7^{6/}$ at the end of Avenida Del Mar. This location is about 600 feet^{-7/} northwesterly of Crossing 8 at the pier entrance. The redevelopment master plan proposed that the authorized combination at-grade crossing 8, which would be about 355 feet southeasterly of the previously authorized site at lifeguard Crossing 7.

The redevelopment master plan also provides for rerouting the foot of Avenida Del Mar and the creation of a public park in the area it now occupies. The existing location of the foot of Avenida Del Mar would have provided the only access to the previously authorized grade crossing location. Lifeguard Crossing 7 at the end of Avenida Del Mar has no trainactivated warning or protection. It is located on a curved

6/ Crossing 7 is a private vehicular crossing pursuant to agreement between the City and Santa Fe. The record shows, however, that it also is publicly used by many pedestrians.

7/ In D.87757 the distance between the proposed location and the authorized location was shown to be about 500 feet. The record now reflects a more accurate distance of about 600 feet. section of track and visibility to the northwest is very limited. San Clemente desires to take that grade crossing out of service. It is the position of San Clemente that the proposed grade crossing relocation and the overcrossing (about 200 feet apart) will have the benefit of blending together the entire redevelopment and will better meet the needs of pedestrians going to and from the beach and pier.

The proposed pedestrian overcrossing would be constructed about 55 feet northwest of the pier entrance. It would have an outside width of about 20 feet. It would connect the shopping concourse of a large multi-story redevelopment structure (with three levels of garages) on the inland side of the track with a beach restaurant structure to be constructed on pilings at the shoreline over the beach and ocean near the foot of the northwest side of the pier. The overcrossing would span Avenida Victoria (to be elevated about 10 feet), the railroad right-ofway, and the public beach. The overcrossing would provide a 23-foot clearance above the railroad. The design would accommodate a second main line track in the event one is needed through San Clemente.

The ceiling of the parking garage would be the basic foundation for the common level construction (45 feet above mean high tide line) of the shopping concourse, overhead crossing, and the top level of the pier restaurant structure. Coronado Lane, adjacent to the inland side of the concourse, now is at an elevation about 40 feet above mean high tide line. The shopping concourse could be entered by pedestrians from lower level garages, or by walking onto it either from Coronado Lane or from parking areas and passive open space to the north. Access from the surface to the concourse would be accomplished either at grade or through utilization of minimum ramp walking

-7-

grades. There would be no steps to climb or descend in arriving or departing the concourse. Therefore, the public, whether walking or in wheelchairs, would have level access via the overcrossing between the shopping concourse and the new pier restaurant area.

An elevator and stairs would be provided on the inland side between the shopping concourse, three levels of parking garage, Avenida Victoria, and the railroad right-of-way. There would be ramps from Avenida Victoria (raised 10 feet) to the beach grade from both ends of the shopping concourse. The ramp on the northwest end would descend near the Amtrak depot. On the beach side of the railroad an elevator and stairs would be provided between the restaurant level and the beach and pier levels.

The overcrossing would be a level route and a shorter distance for people to walk between the inland and beach side redevelopment structures than via the at-grade crossing. However, it is not intended to be a substitute for pedestrian at-grade crossing facilities which the City needs to accommodate large numbers of people going to and from the public beach.

Undesirable features of the old tunnel at the pier entrance are identified in the findings of fact set forth below. Those features cause many people to cross the track at the holein-the-fence at-grade crossing located only a few feet away. Suggestions of parties on the portion of the record leading up to D.87757 to overcome the undesirable features of the tunnel approaches were not shown to be either acceptable to the City or feasible. In any event, the tunnel would have to be taken out of service before construction of the shopping concourse could begin because the inland approach would be in the way of construction. Furthermore, Avenida Victoria, which provides the inland access to the tunnel, is 13 feet above the tunnel floor.

-8-

Elevating the street another 10 feet, as proposed, would place it 23 feet above the tunnel floor, which would be entirely impractical.

The overall plan is to replace tunnel Crossing 8 and lifeguard Crossing 7 with the protected combination at-grade crossing at the proposed new location. The hole-in-the-fence at-grade crossing also would disappear. The proposed overcrossing would be an additional crossing facility.

The consulting architect was one of the parties who, on March 3, 1978, inspected the site proposed by San Clemente for relocating the authorized combination at-grade crossing.^{8/} Thereafter, he met with Mr. Nichols of Santa Fe and others and reviewed changes suggested by the railroad. He prepared some additional drawings requested by the railroad, including drawings relative to installation of a permanent "non-destructive" fence. The fence would be decorative and would reflect the architectural motif of the area. It would be made of galvanized steel, six feet high,^{9/} and would extend 200 feet on both sides of the relocated at-grade crossing.

- ^{8/} Exhibit 51, consisting of two letters and a memorandum, shows the following parties were present at the on-site meeting on March 3, 1978: Edward Putz, assistant city engineer, San Clemente; James Keisker, consulting architect, San Clemente; DuWayne Lidke, consulting civil engineer, San Clemente; E. R. Nichols, public project engineer, Santa Fe; E. G. Gilmer, regional engineer, Santa Fe; and Frank Haymond, senior transportation engineer, the Commission staff.
- 9/ Exhibit 56 shows, among other things, that fence posts would be six feet on center and pickets would be six inches on center. Posts would be made of 2½-inch square 14 gauge steel tubing. Rails would be made of 1-1/16-inch square 16 gauge steel tubing. Pickets would be made of 1-1/8-inch square 16 gauge steel tubing.

The architect estimated that the current cost of rehabilitating the total area, as approved by the San Clemente Redevelopment Agency, would be about \$5 million. This would include the pedestrian overcrossing. He explained if the project is to be funded entirely with City money, the portion involving the principal structures probably is dormant because of Proposition 13 (1978) and Proposition 4 (1979). However, he said there is the possibility a private developer may come . in, with or without some funds from the City, and take on the entire project. This is considered to be a desirable objective. Authority from the Commission to construct the overcrossing first would have to be obtained. That would be followed by land acquisition. Thereafter, the two major redevelopment structures and overcrossing would be constructed. The entire project would take from three to five years to complete, once started.

Construction of the at-grade crossing, elimination of Crossings 7 and 8, relocation of the foot of Avenida Del Mar, and creation of passive open space (park) in that area, and related improvements, assertedly, can be accomplished at relatively low cost any time. These improvements would be made separately and ahead of construction of the two redevelopment structures and the overhead crossing. San Clemente is willing to pay the cost associated with these improvements, which it plans to make promptly.

According to the architect, a complete economic study was made in connection with plans for the multiple story development structure on the inland side of the railroad track. Anticipated changes in vehicular traffic flow patterns were considered. Changes would result principally from (1) raising Avenida Victoria 10 feet and providing parking underneath, (2) providing

-10-

multiple entrances and exits to the garage structure (200 parking spaces), and (3) converting Coronado Lane and South Alameda Lane to one-way streets. No pedestrian traffic flow study was included. The witness said the number of people who might arrive by automobile, and thereafter could be expected to walk across the overcrossing, could not be estimated. This is because large numbers of people cross the track at grade and would continue to do so under the proposals.

The record contains a great deal of evidence relating to the crime problem in the bowl/pier area, and particularly with respect to citizens and visitors fearing they will encounter undesirable persons loitering in and around tunnel Crossing 8. The consulting architect said one of the reasons the redevelopment project got started was awareness in the City that families who used to vacation in the bowl/pier area in the summer generally ceased doing so because of the crime problem and the run-down condition of the area. He was of the opinion that the increase in crime has been in direct relation to the increase in population.

The architect has lived in San Clemente for 14 years and has had personal experience with the tunnel. He said that as a parent of two teenagers who surf, the tunnel is a place to stay away from. He does not want his children down in the tunnel and prefers they cross the track at grade. The architect was of the opinion that when the redevelopment plan is implemented, the crime problem will be substantially reduced in the bowl/pier area. He said this also was the general opinion expressed at well-publicized and attended meetings of the citizens' committee and in study sessions with representatives of the fire, lifeguard, and police departments.

-11-

The architect furnished population statistics obtained from the Bureau of the Census (United States Department of Commerce) and from the State Department of Finance. In 1930 the population of San Clemente was 667. Estimated population as of January 1, 1979 was 25,900. These figures were furnished to help show that since the 8½-foot-wide tunnel was constructed in 1927, more pedestrian crossing facilities in the bowl/pier area are needed.

The architect said he conferred with people at the Coastal Commission concerning the proposed overcrossing, and thereafter received a letter (Exhibit 57) from Gordon Craig, Chief Planner/Permits, expressing general agreement with the overcrossing plan.^{10/} With respect to a permit for the at-grade

 $\frac{10}{10}$ The body of Mr. Craig's letter reads as follows:

"We have reviewed your plans for the proposed overpass pedestrian accessway at the San Clemente Pier and do not have any major concerns with the concept of such an accessway at this time. The Coastal Act of 1976 strongly encourages public access to the coast, particularly when consistent with public safety concerns. The creation of this overpass can only improve upon the safety of the at-grade crossing. The proposed development would require a coastal development permit and, although we cannot guarantee the outcome of such a permit application, staff sees no major issues raised by the project that would be in conflict with Coastal Act policies. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact myself or Gary Pierce of this office." crossing, the architect said he spoke recently with Gary Pierce of the Coastal Commission staff and was told that steps would be taken, as required, either to reinstate the old permit, $\frac{11}{}$ which has expired, or to furnish a letter (similar to Exhibit 57), whichever is appropriate.

Counsel for San Clemente introduced Exhibit 49 which consists of a 24-page environmental assessment accompanied by Negative Declaration 79-7, dated March 30, 1979, for construction of the proposed pedestrian overcrossing. $\frac{12}{}$ Exhibits 14 and 16 consist of Negative Declaration 6-1 and an 18-page

11/ The old coastal permit authorized construction of a grade crossing to be located at the site of tunnel Crossing 8, which would have been demolished (filled in). The findings on the first page of permit No. P-10-19-73-2123 issued by the South Coast Regional Zone Conservation Commission are reproduced in Footnote 14, page 21 (mimeo) of D.87757.

12/ The body of Negative Declaration 79-7, which was prepared by Michael Thiel, senior planner and environmental assessor for San Clemente, reads as follows:

"In accordance with Resolution No. 28-75 of the City of San Clemente implementing the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970, the Environmental Assessor for this Department has prepared an Initial Study on the abovedescribed project and hereby finds that the proposed project, with included mitigation measures, cannot or will not have a significant effect on the environment.

"Negative Declaration status is therefore granted for this project and the submittal of an environmental impact report is thereby not necessary.

"The granting of Negative Declaration status is based upon inclusion of the following mitigation measures:

> "The proposed project will have no adverse impacts on the environment, therefore, no mitigation measures are required."

A.55451 SW/bw

environmental assessment, dated June 16, 1975, relative to the City's original at-grade crossing proposals to replace the tunnel. $\frac{13}{}$

Counsel for San Clemente explained that although Proposition 13 came along in 1978, the City felt it incumbent to continue with the redevelopment plans, as depicted in witness Keisker's Exhibits 51 through 55, because a substantial amount of money and time already had been spent. He said the City does not want to be in a position of losing what has been spent and then have to start all over again with another grade crossing proceeding.

13/ The body of Negative Declaration 6-1, which was prepared by H. C. Dillman, environmental assessor for San Clemente, reads as follows:

"No impact on flora or fauma, archaeological sites, air quality, or schools. Grading will be minimal and no geological hazards exist. Noise will be of short term duration occurring during demolition and construction phase. Economics and circulation within the area will be improved. Security and access to the handicapped will be improved. With the installation of "swing" ' guard gates and sophisticated automatic signal devices, safety hazards will not be a consideration.

55

"The addition of the at-grade crossing will facilitate and complement the redevelopment plan, which is designed to upgrade the 'quality of life' within the area.

"There will be no significant effect on the environment."

Presentation of Santa Fe

Counsel for Santa Fe stated that the railroad agrees with San Clemente relative to relocation, construction, and maintenance of the proposed at-grade crossing to replace the existing publicly used pedestrian-private vehicular at-grade crossing (Crossing 7). He explained, however, that the agreement does not relate at all to the tunnel (Crossing 8). He pointed out that Santa Fe opposed eliminating the tunnel on the original record.

Counsel for Santa Fe said the railroad has no objection to the City being authorized to take the tunnel out of service and to construct an overcrossing in its place. Santa Fe objects to eliminating both the tunnel and the publicly used at-grade crossing (Crossing 7) and replacing them with a single at-grade crossing. Counsel was of the opinion that to take away two crossings and replace them with one might create a considerable liability problem for Santa Fe in the event of some incident between a train and a pedestrian.

Counsel for San Clemente disagreed with counsel for Santa Fe that replacing Crossings 7 and 8 with the proposed at-grade crossing would have an undesirable effect of trading two for one. He emphasized that elimination of the tunnel is a major goal in cleaning up the bowl/pier area for the reasons stated above. He said that because of its limitations and undesirable features, the tunnel has not met the needs of increasing population and beach usage in the area. Counsel for San Clemente said the City also considers lifeguard Crossing 7 to be a dangerous crossing under any circumstances because of the curve of the railroad right-of-way and lack of visibility. He pointed out that accidents have occurred at that location.

-15-

.

Counsel for San Clemente pointed out that under the proposed private vehicular crossing agreement (attached to Exhibit 48), Santa Fe would be insulated from financial responsibility for personal injury because the City would be willing to assume that responsibility. $\frac{14}{}$ He said the City has attempted to make the proposed at-grade crossing eminently safe by agreeing to put in rigid steel fencing required to protect the right-of-way and the public.

Exhibit 48 is a statement of counsel for Santa Fe. The exhibit includes the private at-grade vehicular crossing agreement attached as Exhibit A thereto. The statement reads as follows:

> "Since the last hearing, The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company (Santa Fe) has been negotiating with the City of San Clemente certain provisions of an agreement for a private crossing, to be constructed and maintained by Santa Fe, but at the City's entire expense. Santa Fe has negotiated on the expressed premise that such an agreement would be executed by the City before today's hearing and that Santa Fe would then advise the Commission that it does not object to the relocation of the private crossing on the basis of the signed agreement. A copy of the agreement is attached as Exhibit A to this statement. All points of difference have been resolved. However, counsel for the City, Mr. Wyman Knapp, recently advised that although the agreement is acceptable to the City, the City is not willing to execute it until it is ready to begin the work, and that date is indefinite.

'Mr. Knapp has offered to stipulate on behalf of the City that if Santa Fe will not object to the Commission to a private crossing described in Exhibit A, the Commission may issue its order herein authorizing construction and maintenance thereof only upon the expressed condition that

14/ The liability and indemnification provisions of the private crossing agreement cover only the at-grade vehicular crossing. The pedestrian crossing would be a public crossing not subject to the agreement.

before work may begin, the City must first execute the agreement in the form attached as Exhibit A, it being understood that any current estimates of costs may change; and that when the agreement is executed, the cost shall be reestimated at the level of costs then prevailing, for the purpose of Paragraph 1, Article II.

"On behalf of Santa Fe, I will join Mr. Knapp in that stipulation provided that it also be stipulated on behalf of the City that the Commission's order be conditioned on execution of the agreement within 18 months following its issuance and that in the event that it is not executed within that time, the order shall be of no further force and effect."

Exhibit 48 was stipulated to by counsel for San Clemente. He said that the City in accepting the stipulation had done so with knowledge of the cost estimates described below.

Earl L. Nichols, public project engineer employed by Santa Fe, testified concerning cost estimates associated with the combination public pedestrian and limited access vehicular at-grade crossing at the new location sought by San Clemente. The engineer explained that Exhibit A to Exhibit 48, which includes an engineering drawing prepared by Santa Fe (Appendix A hereto), totally incorporates a plan developed by Caltrans for Crossing 2-204.7 in Exhibit A to its Petition for Modification of D.87757 and D.88050 filed November 8, 1977.

15/ In its petition for modification, Caltrans recommended changes to the configuration of the authorized grade crossing, rearrangement of the protection equipment, and establishment of a vehicle access control on the inland side. Those proposals, which clearly are superior to plans heretofore presented, were adopted in their entirety by San Clemente and Santa Fe.

The cost estimates for the combination at-grade crossing are shown below:

To raise and relocate a portion of Santa Fe's communication and signal pole line in order to provide proper overhead and side \$ 1.300.55 clearances To install two Standard No. 9 automatic crossing gates and two Standard No. 10 pedestrian signals..... 62,550.00 To install sectional timber crossing 7,867.00 Total \$71.717.55

The engineer said that to his knowledge these three cost elements constitute all grade crossing construction costs which would be incurred by Santa Fe.

The engineer stated that in addition to the estimated grade crossing construction costs, the annual cost of 38 units of maintenance on the crossing protective devices would be \$1,900. He pointed out that if inflation continues and the agreement is not executed within a year to 18 months, costs for both construction of the crossing and maintenance of protective devices will have to be reestimated.

The engineer confirmed that he and others from Santa Fe, the Commission staff, and the City had visited the site proposed by San Clemente for relocating the combination at-grade crossing on March 3, 1978 (Footnote 8, above). He said it is a better location than the site authorized in D.87757. The witness said the site authorized in D.87757 (site of present lifeguard Crossing 7) is not an appropriate location for the grade crossing because it would cross a curved portion of track and there would be a major problem caused by limited visibility. He stated to the best of his knowledge there was no objection to the grade crossing relocation by anyone present at the site on March 3, 1978.

Position of Caltrans and Staff

Counsel for Caltrans and staff contended that San Clemente's environmental assessment and negative declaration for the proposed overcrossing (Exhibit 49) does not comply with Rule 17.1 of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure and environmental statutes. It is their position that Exhibit 49 is deficient because it does not specifically contain projections relative to changes in pedestrian traffic movements via present and proposed crossing places in the bowl/pier area. Assertedly, there are no findings of fact to support the certification of Mr. Thiel, the senior planner and environmental assessor who authored the environmental assessment in Exhibit 49, that the overcrossing cannot or will not have a significant effect on the environment. Staff counsel rejected an offer by counsel for San Clemente that Mr. Thiel be called to Los Angeles to testify to Exhibit 49. Staff counsel contended the exhibit should be amended instead. Counsel for Caltrans was of the opinion that an environmental impact report covering the two redevelopment structures is necessary prior to consideration of the environmental aspects of the overcrossing because they are all part of the same project.

Counsel for San Clemente agreed that the proposed overcrossing would create a new pedestrian traffic pattern to the extent people would use that crossing facility rather than some other (such as the nearby proposed at-grade crossing). He explained, however, that there is no way to tell how many people would choose to use the overcrossing, the proposed

A.55451 SW/bw

at-grade crossing, or any number of other crossing places in the City. Counsel for San Clemente contended that the various cities that prepare negative declarations do not require findings of fact and conclusions of law. He said Exhibit 49 was prepared by a city official (Mr. Thiel) charged with doing this particular type of work, and that it was submitted over his signature and under the affidavit of the city clerk (Mr. Berg), which makes the negative declaration valid. Discussion

Further hearing in this matter disclosed that the site selected by San Clemente for relocating the grade crossing authorized by D.87757, as modified by D.88050, is a better site than the previously authorized site where lifeguard Crossing 7 now exists. The main advantage is an improvement in safety resulting from better visibility for pedestrians and vehicles crossing the track. Crossing 7 is at the end of a curved section of track. The record contains a great deal of evidence showing that visibility at Crossing 7 is restricted, particularly along the track to the northwest (about 585 feet). The proposed site is on a straight section of track which would provide about 355 feet of additional visibility to the northwest.

Another substantial safety advantage would result from the authorized grade crossing being located only about 200 feet from the unauthorized hole-in-the-fence at-grade crossing where, for many years, pedestrians have crossed the track to reach the pier and nearby beach areas without the benefit of any trainactivated warning or protection equipment. With rigid steel fencing, as described in Exhibit 56, all persons desiring to cross the track at grade in the immediate vicinity of the pier can be diverted to the proposed at-grade crossing location where standard warning and protection equipment would be provided. No trains stop at Crossing 7. About half of the Amtrak trains would come to a stop at the proposed grade crossing location. This would be an additional advantage from a safety standpoint.

In other respects, the new grade crossing location would permit San Clemente to straighten out the foot of Avenida Del Mar, where it now makes an "S" curve down to Crossing 7. This would permit the City to create passive open space inland of Crossing 7, and to implement soon the other relatively inexpensive portions of the redevelopment plans for the part of the bowl/pier area northwest of the proposed overcrossing and shopping concourse. The new location would benefit a large number of pedestrians using Crossing 7 by shortening substantially the walking distance to and from the pier and immediately adjacent portions of the beach.

It can be seen that after the grade crossing is constructed at the location proposed by the City, and proper fencing is installed, there would be no further need for the inadequate and unsatisfactory tunnel. In any event, it would have to be taken out of service before construction of the shopping concourse could begin because the inland approach would be in the way.

It is obvious that unless authority is first obtained to take the tunnel out of service, the City will have little chance to attract outside capital or an outside developer to take on the part of the project which includes the shopping concourse and pier restaurant. Questions concerning when the tunnel should be taken out of service in relation to commencement of redevelopment construction (including the raising of Avenida Victoria) should not be allowed to become a "chicken-and-egg" situation to further thwart San Clemente in its efforts to resurrect the bowl/pier area and improve overall crossing safety in the area.

Construction of the inland shopping concourse structure and the beachside restaurant structure is a matter outside the jurisdiction of the Commission. Those buildings would be beyond the railroad right-of-way which extends 50 feet either side of the track. The two buildings could function separately without

-21-

A.55451 SW/ks *

being connected by an overcrossing. People could reach the beachside structure via the grade crossing and pier. However, it would be much better if the two structures were connected with an overcrossing which would be a level and shorter route than the route across the track at grade. Only the proposed overcrossing between the redevelopment structures (about 170 feet in length) requires Commission approval. An environmental impact report relative to the redevelopment structures is not a condition precedent to consideration of the environmental aspects of the overcrossing between the two structures. San Clemente, as lead agency, must consider an environmental impact report before it approves the redevelopment project as a whole. Not until that approval is granted and until the redevelopment structures are under construction will it be possible for our authorization of the pedestrian overcrossing to have any practical effect. It is, therefore, reasonable to make our order with respect to the pedestrian overcrossing subject to the condition that the lead agency first approve the redevelopment project as a whole. The following order will so provide.

The overcrossing would draw most of its pedestrian traffic from the grade crossing. Rigid steel fencing would have been installed earlier with construction of the grade crossing to prevent use of unauthorized crossing places. The grade crossing and the overcrossing would be located less than 200 feet apart. The choice of some pedestrians to use one or another of the two routes to reach the beach side of the track in this very limited geographic area would have no significant effect on the environment. A study of projected pedestrian flow is not necessary. We see nothing deficient or otherwise improper with proponent's environmental assessments and negative declarations relative to the proposed overcrossing and the proposed at-grade crossing.

Evidence received on the reopened record discloses changed proposals by San Clemente which reflect changed conditions and needs relative to railroad crossings in the

-22-

bowl/pier area. New and revised findings of fact, conclusion of law, and orders will be required to reflect the entire record in this proceeding. Accordingly, the following findings of fact, conclusion, and orders will be substituted for and will supersede entirely those contained in D.87757 and D.88050. <u>Findings of Fact</u>

1. San Clemente should be authorized to change, add, and delete railroad crossing facilities and arrangements at four locations along an approximate 600-foot stretch of Santa Fe main line on the beach of the Pacific Ocean in the bowl/pier area about midway between the northwestern and southeastern city limits, substantially as sought.

2. The bowl/pier area is a several square block area centering around the city pier. It is in a state of general deterioration with a high incidence of crime.

3. By D.87757 (August 23, 1977), as modified by D.88050 (October 25, 1977), San Clemente was authorized to construct a combination public pedestrian and limited access vehicular at-grade crossing (Crossing 2-204.7) of the Santa Fe track at the site of lifeguard Crossing 7, approximately 600 feet northwesterly of the pier.

4. The purpose of the authorization identified in Finding 3 was to provide an oceanfront grade crossing near the center of the city, with train-activated warning and protection equipment, for use by pedestrians and authorized passenger, freight, and private and municipal service vehicles going to and from the public beach, pier, lifeguard headquarters building, and other facilities.

5. The authorized grade crossing identified in Finding 3 was not constructed because of a redevelopment master plan

-23-

adopted by San Clemente in 1977, which materially changed the City's crossing requirements in the bowl/pier area.

6. The San Clemente Redevelopment Agency was created by city ordinance in June 1975 for the purpose of acting as a responsive arm of city government in satisfying a general and emphatic public appeal that the San Clemente beach and its environs be resurrected from a slum area status to a redeveloped segment of the community attractive to both residents and visitors of the City and for their ongoing use and enjoyment.

7. San Clemente approved a redevelopment master plan of the San Clemente Redevelopment Agency in October 1977, mine months after the record leading up to D.87757 was closed.

8. The San Clemente Redevelopment Agency determined that the bowl/pier area is the one in need of immediate redevelopment action.

9. The railroad crossing changes, additions, and deletions sought by San Clemente are basic elements of the redevelopment master plan.

10. It is a practical necessity for San Clemente to first obtain authority from the Commission to make the crossing changes it seeks before it can take subsequent steps to fully implement the redevelopment plan for the bowl/pier area.

11. Existing railroad crossing places in the bowl/pier area are inadequate to satisfy increasing usage and are highly undesirable from a functional standpoint.

12. Additional public pedestrian crossing capacity is needed in the bowl/pier area because of increased City population and increased numbers of visitors.

-24-

13. For many years thousands of pedestrians in the bowl/ pier area have walked across the track at grade to and from the beach and pier at two unauthorized places where there is no train-activated warning or protection equipment. These places are lifeguard Crossing 7 (a private vehicular crossing) and the hole-in-the-fence at-grade crossing at the pier entrance. The latter is an easy shortcut access to the beach and pier through a hole cut in the fence by persons unknown in spite of repeated efforts by the City to keep the fence repaired.

14. It has not been possible for the City, by the use of chain link fencing, to force all pedestrians to use the pedestrian tunnel, nor to prevent pedestrians from cutting holes in fencing or gates, digging around the fence, and otherwise gaining access to the railroad right-of-way, beach, and pier at unauthorized places in the vicinity of the pier entrance and the lifeguard headquarters building.

15. Lifeguard Crossing 7 at the end of Avenida Del Mar is a highly dangerous, private vehicular crossing which also is publicly used by large numbers of pedestrians to gain access to the recreation beach and pier. Visibility along the track is restricted, particularly to the northwest.

16. Lifeguard Crossing 7 now provides the only vehicular access to the pier, the lifeguard headquarters building, and adjacent beach areas. It is used by vehicles providing lifeguard, fire, police, ambulance, and maintenance services; vehicles transporting boats and equipment to and from the pier; vehicles transporting laundry and supplies for concessionaires and others; trucks transporting 55-foot-long pilings; front-end loading rubbish trucks; buses transporting handicapped children; buses transporting students and members of groups (with gear) attending scheduled classes and contests relative to activities

-25-

and safety in the marine environment, and by private automobiles of lifeguard station employees and volunteers. There are about 36,500 vehicle crossings a year.

17. Unless an at-grade vehicular crossing is constructed at another location in the bowl/pier area, all vehicles will continue to cross the track at lifeguard Crossing 7.

18. People cross the track at lifeguard Crossing 7 and at the hole-in-the-fence at-grade crossing at the pier entrance because the only authorized place is the small (8½-foot-wide), 53-year-old tunnel at the pier entrance (Crossing 8) with a number of undesirable features.

19. To reach the pier entrance from Avenida Victoria via tunnel Crossing 8 it is necessary to ascend five steps to a raised platform, descend 19 steps on one of two narrow stairways that curve down through an approximate 45 degrees to a landing, and turn 90 degrees and descend another 14 (wider) stairs to the bottom of an open cut leading to the tunnel. On the ocean side of the tunnel there are another 17 steps leading up from an open cut to the pier entrance.

20. The difference in elevation between the raised platform on Avenida Victoria and the bottom of the tunnel is approximately 18 feet. On the ocean side there is another elevation change of approximately 8 feet. A person making a round trip through the tunnel, therefore, is required to make a combined climb equivalent to approximately 26 vertical feet (52 feet of elevation changes).

21. Tunnel Crossing 8 and its approaches constitute an absolute physical barrier to persons in wheelchairs, and either an absolute barrier or a substantially imposing barrier and hazard to many others who are young, elderly, feeble, physically handicapped, or who desire to carry infants, baby strollers, beach umbrellas, fishing poles, barbecue equipment, surfboards, or other large or unwieldy items.

22. Because the tunnel floor is approximately at sea level, and without a workable drain, a heavy rainstorm can cause water to collect in the tunnel to a depth of several feet and remain there until portable pumping facilities are brought in.

23. The pedestrian tunnel is located near the center of a high crime area. Special police measures initiated by the City in the bowl/pier area, including the immediate vicinity of the tunnel, do not produce desired results. A protected at-grade crossing would be of assistance to police because it would permit a clear view from patrol cars to the pier.

24. Some people are afraid to go down in the tunnel, not only because of the stairs and elevation changes, but because of the crime problem and for the reasons that undesirable persons loiter around the facility. Oral abuse often accompanies a trip through the tunnel. When the tunnel is congested, it is difficult and dangerous to maneuver through with a surfboard or fishing pole which can bang against the sides. One witness injured another pedestrian with a surfboard entering the tunnel and had to pay for the accident. Conditions at the tunnel cause families to use unprotected at-grade crossing places in the bowl/pier area as well as at other San Clemente beach areas.

25. The tunnel approach modification suggestions made by parties relative to what they believed the City could do to alleviate problems in the vicinity of the tunnel did not constitute proposals or recommendations of those parties. In any event, those suggestions were not acceptable to the City, were not shown to be feasible, and would be in conflict with the redevelopment master plan.

-27-

26. Tunnel Crossing 8 is a highly undesirable crossing from a functional standpoint, is a blight and hazard in the City, and is a major deterrent to redevelopment and upgrading of the bowl/pier area.

27. The inland approach to the tunnel on Avenida Victoria is in the way of construction of the proposed multi-story inland redevelopment structure and the planned raising of Avenida Victoria ten feet.

28. Natural terrain conditions, elevation differences, geometric design problems, proximity of the railroad to the shoreline, hydraulic problems, building requirements calling for pedestrian ramps with maximum slope of 8.3 percent, and cost considerations demonstrate that there probably is no feasible way to construct a new underpass for pedestrians and/or vehicles in the vicinity of the pier entrance.

29. Tunnel Crossing 8 will not be needed if City is authorized to construct the combination public pedestrian and limited access vehicular at-grade crossing about 245 feet to the northwest.

30. There are a number of public at-grade crossings on this Santa Fe main line between Santa Ana and Oceanside. Five of these are in the city of San Juan Capistrano, and one is in San Clemente. All of these at-grade crossings are equipped with drop gates, flashing lights, and bells.

31. The proposed protected combination at-grade crossing in the bowl/pier area would permit closing lifeguard Crossing 7, the hole-in-fence at-grade crossing at the pier entrance, and tunnel Crossing 8.

32. There is about 355 feet more visibility to the northwest along the track at the proposed grade crossing location than at the location authorized by D.87750 and D.88050. 33. The proposed grade crossing location would benefit a large number of pedestrians using Crossing 7 by shortening substantially the walking distance to and from the pier and immediately adjacent portions of the beach.

34. Public convenience and necessity require that applicant be authorized to construct a protected public pedestrian and limited access vehicular at-grade crossing approximately 245 feet northwesterly of the City pier, in accordance with the Commission's general orders, substantially as proposed in the plan attached hereto as Appendix A.

35. All work in connection with construction between lines two feet outside of the rails should be performed under the supervision of the railroad.

36. Santa Fe should install the automatic protection equipment.

37. The cost of constructing the at-grade crossing, the cost of the automatic protection equipment, and the cost of installing and maintaining that equipment should be borne by applicant.

38. It should be the responsibility of Santa Fe to maintain the at-grade crossing area between lines two feet outside of the rails, and to maintain the automatic crossing protection.

39. It should be the responsibility of applicant to maintain the approaches and those portions of the at-grade crossing not included under Santa Fe's responsibility specified in Finding 3⁸.

40. San Clemente should be authorized to take tunnel Crossing 8 out of service a reasonable time after the grade crossing is constructed and permanent fencing is installed as a necessary step toward construction of the remainder of the redevelopment project.

41. Construction of a pedestrian overcrossing, about 55 feet northwesterly of the pier between a multi-story redevelopment structure on the inland side of the track and a restaurant structure on the beach side, would be in the public interest.

42. The proposed overcrossing would be a level and shorter route between the two redevelopment structures than the grade crossing which pedestrians would otherwise have to use between the same points.

43. The proposed overcrossing calls for a bridge about 170 feet in length to connect the two proposed redevelopment structures.

44. The Commission has jurisdiction over the overcrossing project, including indispensable connections with the other structures at both ends of the bridge.

45. The proposed overcrossing will draw pedestrian traffic principally from the authorized at-grade crossing, which will be constructed first about 190 feet to the northwest.

46. Public convenience and necessity require that applicant be authorized to construct a grade separation over the Santa Fe track approximately 55 feet northwesterly of the City pier, in accordance with the Commission's general orders, substantially as proposed in the plans attached hereto as Appendices B and C.

47. The cost of constructing the overcrossing, and the cost of maintenance thereof, should be borne by applicant.

48. The only firm proposals on this record to change crossing facilities at or near the pier entrance and to permanently close the lifeguard crossing and the hole-in-thefence at-grade crossing are the City's two alternative grade

-30-

A.55451 SW/bw

crossing proposals in Exhibits 3 and 4, as modified on the record, the overcrossing proposal in Exhibits 52, 53, 54, and 55, and the Santa Fe grade crossing proposal attached to Exhibit 48 (incorporating the Caltrans design), which was adopted by the City.

49. The proposed railroad crossing changes, additions, and deletions are in the interests of public safety and convenience to alleviate existing and potential pedestrian traffic problems, and will upgrade quality of life in the bowl/pier area.

50. From Exhibits 13, 14, 15, 16, 49, and 57, and testimony concerning them, it can be seen with certainty there is no possibility the railroad crossing changes, additions, and deletions proposed by San Clemente in the bowl/pier area will have a significant impact on the environment.

51. There are many unprotected open areas along the six miles of beach in San Clemente where people cross the Santa Fe track at-grade and walk on it at will. Many people reach and cross the track from adjacent or nearby city parking lots and streets from innumerable access paths and stairways leading from houses, apartments, and condominiums, and there are vast open areas affording pedestrians ready access to the beach over the railroad right-of-way.

52. The record discloses 14 crossing places in San Clemente where improvements have been constructed for furneling people down to the beach (see Appendix B of D.87737). Four of these crossing places have been authorized by the Commission.

53. Since 1960 there have been seven train accidents along the six miles of track in San Clemente resulting in five deaths. All but one of those accidents occurred at places where there is no train-activated warning or protection.

A.55451 SW/bw/ks

54. Approximately 16 trains pass through San Clemente each 24 hours. Approximately half of the Amtrak trains stop near the pier entrance.

55. Santa Fe timetables show that the maximum speed of all freight and passenger trains operating through the center of the City is 40 mph. The construction of a combination public pedestrian and limited access vehicular at-grade crossing, the fencing off of the two unauthorized pedestrian crossing places, the elimination of the old tunnel, and the construction of the pedestrian overcrossing will have no adverse effect upon the 40 mph speed of trains passing through central San Clemente. (Decision No. 91353, dated February 13, 1980, in Application No. 58023.) Accordingly, no degradation of transit time between San Diego and Los Angeles will occur as a consequence of the authority granted herein.

56. The railroad track is located between the population and the six-mile-long beach in San Clemente, and separates the beach from the population. The most important use of the beach is for recreation. This attraction cannot be relocated.

57. There are four authorized public crossing places in San Clemente. Along the remainder of the beach the railroad now constitutes mostly an inconvenient obstacle to most people who have to climb over the roadbed and track at unauthorized places.

58. The record shows that extremely serious safety problems exist along most of the six miles of beach in San Clemente.

59. To the extent that future upgrading of the right-of-way might restrict pedestrian access across it, the more the railroad would become a barrier between the population and the recreation beach.

60. Relocation of the Santa Fe track to an inland alignment, such as shown in Caltrans Exhibit 34, pages 25, 27, and 32, would resolve completely the railroad/recreation beach conflict along the six miles of beach in San Clemente. The parties should continue to explore relocation and funding possibilities. However, the record does not disclose that such a project could be

-32-

A.55451 SW/bw/ks *

expected to be completed in the near future. Authorization for immediate resolution of railroad crossing problems in the bowl/pier area is required.

Conclusion of Law

Applicant should be authorized to make the railroad crossing changes, additions, and deletions identified in the foregoing findings of fact in accordance with the ensuing order and the terms and conditions thereof.

<u>order</u>

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. The City of San Clemente (applicant) is authorized to construct a combination public pedestrian and limited access vehicular at-grade crossing over the Santa Fe right-of-way approximately 245 feet northwest of the City pier in accordance with the Commission's general orders, substantially as shown by the plan attached hereto as Appendix A, subject to the conditions specified below. The crossing is to be identified as 2-204.7.

2. Protection equipment for the authorized combination at-grade crossing shall be as specified in Appendix A.

3. The authorized combination at-grade crossing and the automatic crossing protection shall be constructed, installed, and maintained by Santa Fe at applicant's entire expense.

4. The authorized combination at-grade crossing shall not be completed until rigid steel fencing is installed substantially as proposed in Exhibit 56.

5. The authorized combination at-grade crossing shall not be completed until a vehicle access control gate is installed on the inland side of the track substantially as shown in Appendix A.

6. Existing lifeguard Crossing 7 shall be abandoned and physically closed upon completion of the authorized combination at-grade crossing and its opening to pedestrian traffic and authorized motor vehicles. 7. Within thirty days after completion of the authorized combination at-grade crossing, applicant shall notify this Commission in writing of that fact and of compliance with the conditions herein.

8. Six months after completion of the authorized combination at-grade crossing, San Clemente is authorized to take tunnel Crossing 8 (Crossing 2-204.8 BD) out of service for use by pedestrians.

9. Applicant is authorized to construct a pedestrian overcrossing over the Santa Fe right-of-way approximately 55 feet northwest of the City pier in accordance with the Commission's general orders, substantially as shown in the plans attached hereto as Appendices B and C. The overcrossing is to be identified as 2-204.8 AD. This ordering paragraph is subject to the condition that no construction of the pedestrian overcrossing shall occur before San Clemente approves the redevelopment project as a whole.

10. Construction and maintenance of the authorized overcrossing shall be at applicant's entire expense.

11. Within thirty days after completion of the overcrossing project, applicant shall notify this Commission in writing of that fact.

12. The findings, conclusions, and orders in D.87757 and D.88050 are rescinded.

13. The authorizations herein granted shall expire within three years after the date hereof if not exercised within that time, unless time be extended, or if the above conditions are

-34-

not complied with. Authorizations may be revoked or modified if public convenience, necessity, or safety so require.

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

Dated ______ NN 3 1980 , at San Francisco, California.

issioners

Commissioner Claire T. Dedrick. being necessarily absent. did not participate in the disposition of this proceeding.







