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Mailed: July 26, 1999

Decision 99-07-043 July 22, 1999

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Application of the State of California, Department)
of Transportation, for an order authorizing the)
Contra Costa Transportation Authority to:)
construct a temporary utility bridge overhead, and to)
construct a new bridge (I-80 westbound), on the)
western end of the Carquinez Straits Bridge, located)
in the City of Crockett, Contra Costa County,)
State of California.)
_____)

Application 99-03-051
(Filed March 22, 1999)

OPINION

The State of California, Department of Transportation (Caltrans), requests authority to construct a new westbound bridge and a temporary utility bridge on Interstate 80 (I-80) above the tracks of the Union Pacific Railroad Company (UPRR) in the County of Contra Costa (County), north of the City of Crockett. The proposed bridge will replace the existing westbound bridge on Interstate 80 at PUC Crossing Number 001A-29.60-A. The new bridge will be referred to as Westbound Carquinez Bridge, PUC Crossing Number 001A-28.80-A. The temporary utility bridge will be identified as 001A-28.70-A.

The existing bridge, built in 1927, does not meet current seismic design or traffic safety standards. The existing bridge has experienced corrosion damage from exposure to chemical fumes and salt air and at the same time, cannot meet the increasing traffic volumes crossing the Carquinez Strait.

Annual average daily traffic (AADT) on the Carquinez Bridge is expected to increase by over 9 percent by year 2025. Vallejo Transit Lines and Greyhound Bus Lines presently provide service over the Carquinez Bridges. I-80 is also a major local, regional and interstate truck route, carrying approximately 6 percent of the AADT.

The proposed bridge will contain three lanes of westbound traffic, one carpool (HOV) lane, a pedestrian and bicycle lane. The total bridge width will be 82 feet. Applicant has requested that necessary temporary falsework during construction be at 21 feet. Upon completion of the proposed bridge, all falsework will be removed and the permanent bridge structure will have clearances in accordance with PUC General Order 26-D.

A temporary utility overhead will be built to accommodate all existing utility lines in outer protective casing and a 4 feet pedestrian walkway. All pedestrian and utility access will be for construction purposes only. No public or vehicular access will be allowed. All piers and footings will be removed after the main suspension bridge project is complete.

The proposed bridge will cross over 2 main and 4 auxiliary UPRR tracks. The average daily train count for UPRR for these tracks is expected to be 12 trains per day. The existing Carquinez Bridge will remain open during construction. Temporary rerouting of vehicular and railroad traffic during construction will not be necessary. Upon completion of the proposed bridge, westbound traffic from I-80 will be relocated from the 1927 bridge onto the new bridge and the existing 1927 bridge will be demolished.

Caltrans, acting by and through the California Transportation Commission, is the lead agency for this project under the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (CEQA), as amended, Public Resource Code Sections 21000, et. seq. After preparation and review of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Caltrans approved the project. On July 2, 1997, Caltrans filed a CEQA Notice of Exemption with the State Clearinghouse. The project will not have a significant effect on the environment, though mitigation measures were adopted by the State of California.

The Commission is the responsible agency for this project under CEQA and has reviewed and considered the lead agency's EIR and Notice of Exemption.

The site of the proposed project has been inspected by the Commission's Rail Safety and Carriers Division (RSCD) Rail Crossings Engineering staff. The staff examined the need for and safety of the proposed crossing and recommends that the sought authority be granted.

Application 99-03-051 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.

In Resolution ALJ 176-3013 dated April 1, 1998, the Commission preliminarily categorized this application as ratesetting, and preliminarily determined that hearings were not necessary. No protests have been received. The Commission's RSCD recommends that this application be granted. Given these developments, a public hearing is not necessary, and it is not necessary to disturb the preliminary determinations made in Resolution ALJ 176-3013.

This is an uncontested matter in which the decision grants the relief requested. Accordingly, pursuant to PU code Section 311 (g)(2), the otherwise applicable 30-day period for public review and comment is being waived.

Findings of Fact

1. Notice of the application was published in the Commission's Daily Calendar on March 29, 1999. No protests have been filed.
2. Caltrans requests authority, under Public Utilities Code Section 1201-1205, to construct a new Westbound Carquinez Bridge at separated grades above the tracks of the UPRR identified as PUC Crossing Number 001A-28.80-A and a temporary utility bridge at PUC Crossing Number 001A-28.70-A.
3. Public convenience and necessity require the construction of the new Westbound Carquinez Bridge on I-80 in Contra Costa County.
4. Caltrans, acting by and through the California Transportation Commission, is the lead agency for this project under CEQA, as amended.
5. The Commission is a responsible agency for this project and has reviewed and considered the lead agency's EIR and Notice of Exemption.

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 a crossing at separated grades between westbound Interstate 80 and the tracks of the Union Pacific Railroad Company (UPRR) in Contra Costa County at the location as shown on the plans attached to the application, to be identified as the new Westbound Carquinez Bridge PUC Crossing Number 001A-28.80-A and a temporary utility bridge at PUC Crossing Number 001A-28.70-A.
2. Clearances shall be in accordance with General Order (GO) 26-D; except during period of construction, a vertical clearance of not less than 21 feet above top of rail shall be authorized and UPRR shall be authorized to operate with such reduced overhead clearance provided that instructions are issued by the railroad and filed with the Commission's Rail Safety and Carriers Division (RSCD) limiting the height of loads beneath the structure.
3. City shall notify the Commission's Rail Safety and Carriers Division and UPRR at least 15, but no more than 30, days in advance of the date when the temporary impaired clearance 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 shall be filed by Caltrans with the Commission's Rail Safety and Carriers 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. Final construction plans, approved by County and UPRR, shall be filed by Caltrans with RSCD prior to commencing construction.
7. Caltrans will inform the RSCD Rail Crossings Engineering Section in writing within 30 days of the date of the completion of this project.

8. This authorization shall expire if not exercised within four (4) 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. This application is granted as set forth above.

10. Application 99-03-051 is closed.

This order becomes effective thirty (30) days from today.

Dated July 22, 1999, at San Francisco, California.

RICHARD A. BILAS

President

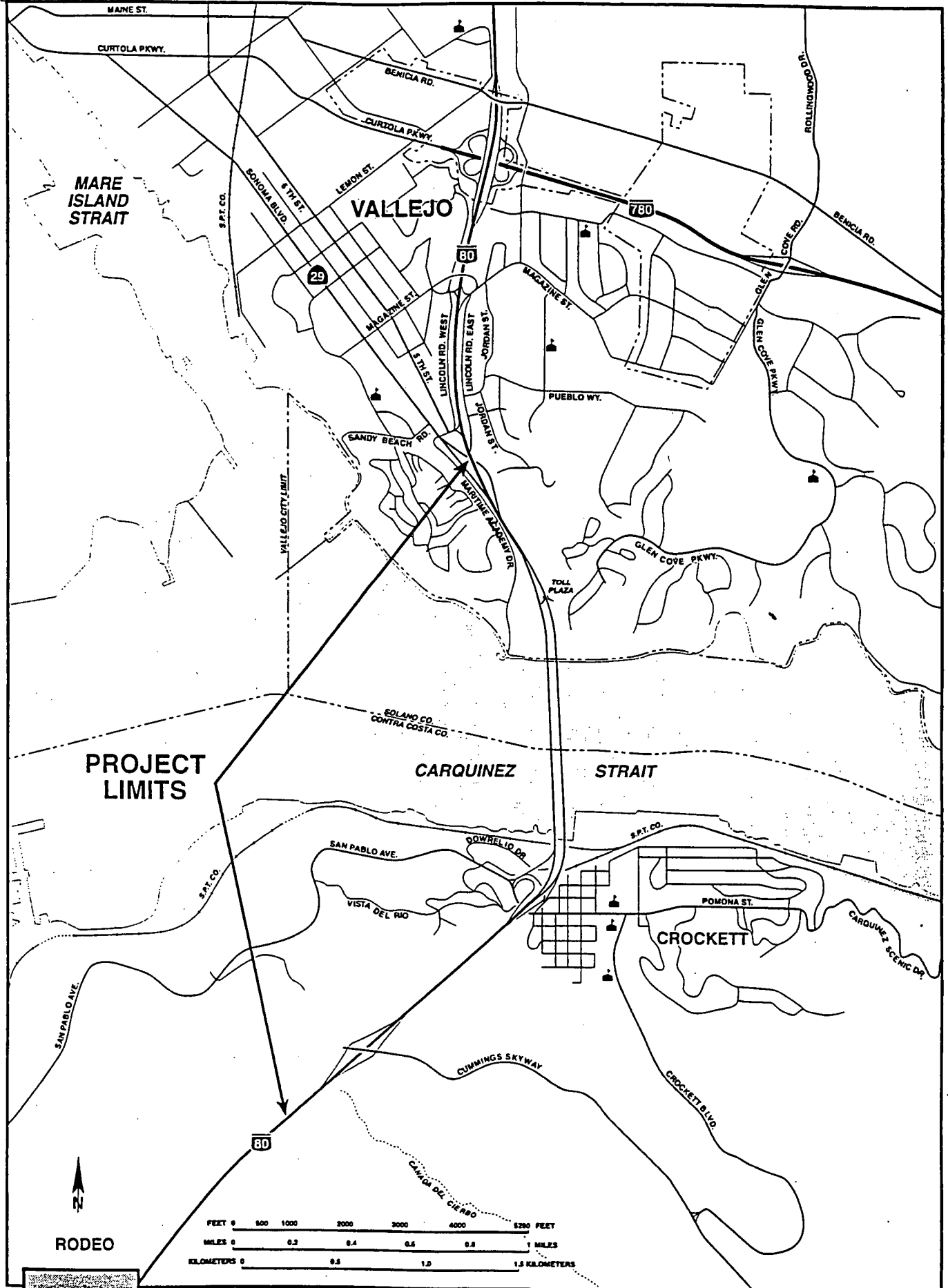
HENRY M. DUQUE

JOSIAH L. NEEPER

JOEL Z. HYATT

CARL W. WOOD

Commissioners



CALTRANS
 CARQUINEZ BRIDGES

Vicinity Map and Project Limits

