

12/4 CA-16

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

SAFETY DIVISION

RESOLUTION SX-5
December 4, 1991

R E S O L U T I O N

RESOLUTION SX-5, AUTHORIZING THE CITY OF PALO ALTO AN EXEMPTION FROM THE REQUIREMENTS OF GENERAL ORDER 75-C TO INSTALL SPECIAL GATE-TYPE SIGNALS FOR PEDESTRIANS ON WEST MEADOW DRIVE AND ON CHARLESTON AVENUE AT GRADE ACROSS SOUTHERN PACIFIC TRANSPORTATION COMPANY'S TRACKS IN PALO ALTO, SANTA CLARA COUNTY.

SUMMARY

The City of Palo Alto (City), by letter dated November 8, 1991, requests authority for installation of gate-type signals for pedestrians on West Meadow Drive and Charleston Avenue at grade across Southern Pacific Transportation Company's (SPT) tracks. This resolution authorizes installation of the proposed warning devices.

DISCUSSION

W. Meadow Drive and Charleston Avenue currently cross SPT's tracks at grade at designated Crossings E-33.0 and E-33.4, respectively. Both crossings accommodate motorists, with pedestrians on adjacent sidewalks. The tracks are used by Caltrain commute trains in addition to SPT freight trains.

Warning devices at each crossing are two Standard No. 9 automatic gate-type signals with flashing lights and bells. Additional pedestrian gates are not included in the standard installation. Very few crossings, statewide, have additional gate-type signals for pedestrians. It is usually adequate warning to pedestrians to see the vehicular gates descend, with the accompanying flashing lights and bell ringing. Extra pedestrian gates are not normally installed because of the ease with which pedestrians can go around, over or under the gates. Also, at locations where pedestrian gates were installed in the past, there were problems with vandalism (causing the gates to be out of service often); there were also maintenance problems caused by the fact that standby mechanisms were not readily available.

School children frequently use these two crossings on the way to and from school. A recent tragic accident resulted in the death of a student riding a bicycle on the sidewalk. Parents, students, school and City administrators have all expressed desire to have gate-type signals installed for pedestrians at the W. Meadow Drive and

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Charleston Avenue crossings. Although pedestrian crossings controlled by gate-type signals are rare, pedestrian gates have existed for many years at Churchill Avenue in Palo Alto, located approximately two miles to the north, at a crossing used by high school students.

By letter dated November 8, 1991, City submitted plans of a proposal to provide pedestrian gates to supplement the existing warning devices at the SPT crossings of W. Meadow Drive and Charleston Avenue. City also requested an exemption from Commission requirements to install the pedestrian gates. The proposed plans call for short pedestrian gate arms to be mounted to the backside of the existing gate-type signals for motorists. An exemption from General Order 75-C is needed to authorize installation of this non-standard warning device. New pedestrian gate-type signals are also proposed to be installed in the northwest and southeast quadrants of the crossings where no gates exist for motorists. The total installation would therefore include four additional pedestrian gates at each crossing. City has indicated that it is prepared to assume the cost of the proposed installation.

We conclude that the installation of pedestrian gates to supplement the existing gate-type signals with flashing lights and bells at the SPT crossings of W. Meadow Drive and Charleston Avenue would be acceptable.

PROTESTS

By letter dated September 12, 1991 SPT indicated that it considers installation of gate-type signals for pedestrians to be inappropriate, but that it would comply with any order of the Commission, provided the cost is borne by City.

FINDINGS

1. By letter dated November 8, 1991, City requests authority for an exemption to GO 75-C to install special gate-type signals for pedestrians at W. Meadow Drive and Charleston Avenue in Palo Alto.
2. City has agreed to assume the cost of adding gate-type signals at the W. Meadow Drive and Charleston Avenue crossings.
3. Our review indicates that the request is an acceptable and reasonable supplement to providing warning to pedestrians and bicyclists on the sidewalks of the street crossings involved.

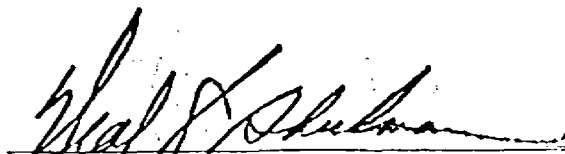
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THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED THAT:

The City of Palo Alto (City) be granted authority for an exemption from the requirements of General Order 75-C to install special gate-type signals for pedestrians on West Meadow Drive (Crossing E-33.0) and Charleston Avenue (Crossing E-33.4) across Southern Pacific Transportation Company's tracks in Palo Alto, Santa Clara County. The equipment may be installed as shown on plans attached to City's letter of November 8, 1991. City shall pay costs of installation and maintenance. This authority shall expire if not exercised within two years unless time is extended. Authorization may be modified if public convenience, necessity, or safety so require.

This resolution is effective today.

I hereby certify that this resolution was adopted by the Public Utilities Commission at its regular conference on December 4, 1991. The following Commissioners approved it.


NEAL J. SHULMAN
Executive Director

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