

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

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October 11, 2010

Maria L. Toles
Chief, Central Region Real Property Services &
District Railroad Coordinator
California Department of Transportation
855 M Street, Suite 200
Fresno, CA 93721

File No. G.10-09-007

Re: General Order 88-B Request for Authority to Alter East Merced Overhead Highway–Rail Crossing, CPUC Crossing No. 001B-151.40-A, DOT No. 765932K in the City of Merced, Merced County.

Dear Ms. Toles:

This refers to your letter dated September 7, 2010, and received by us on September 10, 2010, requesting authorization pursuant to Commission General Order (GO) 88-B, to alter a State Route (SR)-99 grade-separated highway-rail crossing of the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) track in the City of Merced (City), Merced County. The crossing is identified as East Merced Overhead Highway-Rail Crossing, CPUC Crossing No.001B-151.40-A, DOT No. 765932K.

The existing crossing is a grade-separation consisting of two bridges carrying SR-99 traffic over a single mainline track of the UPRR and 16th Street, running parallel to the tracks. This project proposes to replace the existing East Merced Overhead structures with a single new bridge in essentially the same “footprint” as the existing structures. The project also includes additional modifications to adjacent highway facilities such as the 15th Street Undercrossing Bridge west of the East Merced Overhead structure and the SR99 Northbound off-ramp to Route 140, east of the structure.

In its GO 88-B request, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) states “The improvements will benefit the public by replacing the East Merced Overhead and 15th Street Undercrossing with structurally sound bridges which could accommodate future lane additions in the median with standard outside shoulders. This will improve safety as well as mobility within the Route 99 corridor for the commuting public as well as Union Pacific Railroad.”

Caltrans further states “The proposed new East Merced Overhead will also increase the horizontal clearance for the Union Pacific Railroad tracks by eliminating the existing column which is close to the tracks”, allowing the installation of an additional track in the future.

The proposed alteration, as indicated in the request letter and/or shown on the plans, shall consist of:

- Replacing the existing East Merced Overhead structures with a single new bridge, Caltrans number, 39-0241 L/R on SR-99. The bridge plans include safety fences, installed on the new bridge barriers, which will help prevent items from falling on the track and the roadway

below. The new bridge shall meet the vertical and horizontal clearances of the Commission's GO 26-D.

Caltrans has submitted environmental documentation to Staff that indicates this project is categorically exempt from the requirements of the California Environment Quality Act of 1970, as amended.

Staff has investigated the request by Caltrans, and finds it adequately addresses compliance and safety. As Caltrans, the City, and UPRR are in agreement as to the design and apportionments of the cost under the provisions of GO 88-B, you may proceed with the improvements as described in your request letter and attachments, and summarized above.

All parties shall comply with all applicable rules, including other Commission General Orders (not noted here), and the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

This authorization shall expire if the above conditions are not complied with or if the work is not completed within three years of the date of this letter. Upon written request to this office, the time to complete the project may be extended. A written request for a time extension must include concurrence letters by interested parties in support of the time extension. If an extension is requested, staff from the Commission's Rail Crossings Engineering Section (RCES) may reevaluate the crossing prior to granting an extension.

Within 30 days after completion of this project, Caltrans shall notify RCES that the authorized work is completed by submitting a completed Commission Standard Form G titled *Report of Changes at Highway Grade Crossings and Separations*. Form G requirements and forms can be obtained at the CPUC web site Form G page at <http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/formg>. This report may be submitted electronically to rces@cpuc.ca.gov as outlined on the web page.

If you have any questions, please contact Marvin Kennix at (916) 928-3809 or email at mlk@cpuc.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



Daren Gilbert, Supervisor
Rail Crossings Engineering Section
Consumer Protection and Safety Division

Cc: Daryl R. Jordan, City Engineer, City of Merced
James H. Smith, Manager of Industry and Public Projects, Union Pacific Railroad