

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

180 Promenade Circle, Suite 115
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November 30, 2010

File Number: G.10-10-010

Benjamin H. Scharf
Senior Assistant Council
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
3331 North First Street
San Jose, CA 95134-1927

Re: General Order 88-B Request for Authority to Alter the Great Mall Parkway/Thompson Street and Highway 880 Northbound On/Off ramps At-Grade Highway-Rail Crossing, CPUC Crossing No. 82C-6.40, in the City of Milpitas, County of Santa Clara

Dear Mr. Scharf:

This refers to your letter dated October 28, 2010 and received by us on October 29, 2010 requesting authorization pursuant to Commission General Order (GO) 88-B to alter an at-grade highway-rail crossing of the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) light rail track in the city of Milpitas (City), County of Santa Clara (County). The crossing is located at the Great Mall Parkway/Thompson Street and Highway 880 Northbound On/Off Ramps and is identified as CPUC Crossing No. 82C-6.40.

The VTA alignment is median running along Great Mall Parkway. The crossing is currently a double track at-grade crossing traveling east and west on Great Mall Parkway. Eastbound Great Mall Parkway has three through lanes, one right turn lane to the northbound Highway 880 on ramp, one left turn lane towards Thompson Street, and one bicycle lane. Of these lanes, only the left turn lane travels through the crossing. Westbound Great Mall Parkway has three through lanes, one bicycle lane, and one left turn lane to the northbound Highway 880 on ramp. Of these lanes, only the left turn lane travels through the crossing. The northbound Highway 880 off ramp has one left turn lane to westbound Great Mall Parkway, one combined left turn/through lane, and one right turn lane. Of these lanes, only the left turn and combination left turn/through lanes travel through the crossing. Thompson Street has one left turn lane to eastbound Great Mall Parkway, one combined left turn/through lane, and one right turn lane. Of these lanes, only the left turn and combination left turn/through lanes travel through the crossing.

VTA states in its GO 88-B request letter that "The crossing modification proposed in this Request will assist in controlling driver behavior and enhance overall safety at this crossing. Additional signage and traffic control markers will alert motorists on an LRT median alignment and enhance warning for left-turning motorists."

The modification of this crossing is part of VTA's Light Rail Left Hand Turn and Track Intrusion Project Phase 2. Phase 1 of the project was completed in 2009. This project's goal is to reduce the number of left turn and track intrusion incidents along this corridor through the implementation of several measures specifically designed to mitigate these types of events. These measures include installation of pavement markings, retro-reflective markers, lane striping, a combination W10-7 "Trolley Approaching" sign and R3-2 "No Left Turn" active warning sign, and relocation of left turn lane stop lines away from the intersection on parallel roadways to tracks. This crossing is one of the sixteen VTA crossings involved in this project.

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

- Replacement of the two existing W10-7 "Trolley Approaching" active warning signs on Great Mall Parkway for eastbound and westbound traffic with two combination active warning signs alternating between the W10-7 trolley icon and an R3-2 "No Left Turn" flashing image.
- Installation of lane guidance striping through the intersection and across the tracks for the left turn lanes from the northbound Highway 880 off ramp to westbound Great Mall Parkway to direct vehicles to the appropriate lanes.
- Installation of lane guidance striping through the intersection and across the tracks for the left turn lanes from southbound Thompson Street to eastbound Great Mall Parkway to direct vehicles to the appropriate lanes.
- Installation of a semi-circular island of pavement markings and reflective markers on both the east and west ends of the crossing, adjacent to the light rail median on Great Mall Parkway to deter vehicles from entering the light rail right of way.
- Installation of nine Type Q markers on the east median of the crossing and ten Type Q markers on the west median of the crossing to delineate the light rail alignment.
- Installation of a Type K marker between the two tracks on the east and west legs of the crossing.
- Installation of one R15-6 ("Do Not Drive on Tracks" icon) sign combined with an R-15-6a ("Do Not Drive on Tracks" text) sign on both the east and west sides of the intersection facing westbound and eastbound Great Mall Parkway traffic.
- Installation of one R10-6 "Stop Here on Red" sign in the left turn lane on eastbound Great Mall Parkway.

Staff has investigated the request by VTA, and finds it adequately addresses compliance and safety. As VTA, the City, and Caltrans 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.

Temporary traffic controls shall be provided in compliance with Section 10A.05, Temporary Traffic Control Zones, of the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CA MUTCD), published by the California Department of Transportation.

All parties shall comply with all applicable rules, including Commission General Orders and CA MUTCD.

This project is categorically exempt from the requirements of the California Environment Quality Act of 1970, as amended [California Public Resources Code 21084].

This authorization shall expire if the above conditions are not complied with or if the work is not completed within two years of the date of this letter. Upon written request to this office, the time to complete the project may be extended. Any written request for a time extension must include concurrence letters by involved parties in support of the time extension. If an extension is requested, 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, VTA 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 Felix Ko at (415) 703-3722 or fko@cpuc.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



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

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