

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

320 W. 4th Street, Suite 500
Los Angeles, CA 90013



September 25, 2017

File Number: XREQ 2017080001
State Highway 59
City of Merced, Merced County

Ashely McComb-Thanadabouth
Associate Engineer
City of Merced
678 West 18th Street
Merced, CA 95340

SENT VIA E-MAIL

Re: General Order 88-B Request for Authority to Alter the State Highway 59 At-Grade Highway-Rail Crossing, CPUC Crossing No. 002-1057.70 and DOT No. 028682T in the City of Merced, Merced County.

Dear Ms. McComb-Thanadabouth:

This refers to your letter received by us via email on August 7, 2017, requesting authorization, pursuant to California Public Utilities Commission (Commission) General Order (GO) 88-B, to alter the State Highway (SH) 59 at-grade highway-rail crossing (crossing) of the BNSF Railway Company (BNSF) Stockton Subdivision track in the City of Merced (City), Merced County. The crossing is identified as CPUC Crossing No. 002-1057.70 and DOT Crossing No. 028682T.

The crossing has one northbound and one southbound lane across a single track and is equipped with two Commission Standard 9-A (flashing light signal assembly with automatic gate arm with additional lights on a cantilevered arm) warning devices. BNSF operates 27 freight trains and Amtrak operates 14 passenger trains per day over the crossing. SH 59 is a rural minor arterial roadway with an average daily vehicle traffic volume of 22,700 across the crossing. The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has jurisdiction over the roadway; however, Caltrans has concurred for the project to proceed.

This project's primary purpose is to install a multi-use pathway on the east side of the roadway. The multi-use pathway will allow pedestrian and bicycle traffic to cross the railroad track in a safe manner and comply with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. Another major part of the project will involve improving the roadway lanes alignment to provide safer crossing for the vehicles.

The alterations, as indicated in the City's request letter and/or shown on the plans, consist of:

- Installing an ADA compliant multi-use pathway for pedestrian and bicycle traffic, adjacent to the east pavement edge of State Highway 59, which will cross the BNSF track;
- Installing additional concrete panels along the track to accommodate the installation of the multi-use pathway.
- Installing ADA compliant detectable warning strips on both multi-use path approaches;

- Installing a Commission Standard No. 8 (flashing light signal assembly) warning device in the northeast quadrant adjacent to the pathway to provide additional warning for pedestrians;
- Installing a raised concrete median on each roadway approach;
- Reconstructing the roadway to improve the alignment of the roadway lanes across the track;
- Installing curb and gutter in the northeast and southeast quadrants;
- Replacing the gate arms on the Commission Standard 9-A warning devices;
- ; and
- Applying California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CA MUTCD) compliant signage and pavement markings, including R8-8 “DO NOT STOP ON TRACKS” signs.

Initially, the Commission’s Rail Crossings and Engineering Branch (RCEB) requested that the City install railroad preemption as part of the City’s GO 88-B request. The City stated that Caltrans has initiated a separate project to install railroad preemption along SH 59 from Cooper Avenue/Willowbrook Drive to Santa Fe Drive/West Olive Avenue. The Caltrans project is currently in the conceptual stage and scheduled for delivery in Fiscal Year 2018-2019. The City requested RCEB defer the railroad preemption installation for three years to await the completion of the Caltrans project. Should the Caltrans project be delayed beyond the City’s railroad preemption deferral request period, the City shall install preemption at the crossing as requested by RCEB. RCEB agreed to the City’s proposal and has made it a condition of approval for this project’s GO 88-B request.

RCEB requested the City perform a vehicle queuing analysis of traffic at the crossing to determine if vehicles are queuing back to the track. RCEB informed the City prior to its submittal of the GO 88-B request that RCEB would accept the submittal prior to completion of the vehicle queuing analysis. The City shall perform the vehicle queuing analysis and report the results to RCEB by October 31, 2017. The traffic queuing analysis may be electronically to rceb@cpuc.ca.gov.

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

BNSF must ensure that Emergency Notification Signs are installed to comply with Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Section 234.309.

All Parties shall comply with all applicable rules, including other Commission General Orders and the latest version of the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CAMUTCD). Temporary traffic controls shall be in compliance with the latest version of the CAMUTCD.

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 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

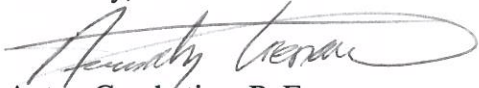
concurrence letters by interested Parties in support of the time extension. If an extension is requested, RCEB may reevaluate the crossing prior to granting an extension.

Within 30 days after completion of this project, the City shall notify RCEB that the authorized work is completed by submitting a completed Commission Standard Form G. Form G requirements and forms can be obtained at the CPUC web site at <http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/crossings/>. This report may be submitted electronically to rceb@cpuc.ca.gov.

At the conclusion of the project, BNSF should submit an updated electronic inventory form (Form F6180.71) to the Federal Railroad Administration, reflecting the changes. 49 CFR 234 Section 234.409 requires railroads to submit periodic crossing inventory updates, a minimum of once every three years. The Commission requests a concurrent copy of the updated inventory form be submitted to rceb@cpuc.ca.gov.

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

Sincerely,



Anton Garabetian, P. E.
Program and Project Supervisor
Rail Crossings and Engineering Branch
Safety and Enforcement Division

SENT VIA E-MAIL

Cc: Taylor Smith, BNSF
Nelson Magsayo, Caltrans
Steven C. Son, City

