

Decision 03-06-015 June 5, 2003

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Application of the State of California,
Department of Transportation, for an order
authorizing the Department to: Add HOV lanes
in the median gap of the West Sylmar Overhead
Bridge Over Tracks owned by SCRRA
(Metrolink) P.U.C. No. 101-VY-25.78-A in the
County of Los Angeles.

Application 02-10-006
(Filed October 8, 2002)

O P I N I O N

Summary

California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) requests authority to widen a grade-separated highway-rail crossing at West Sylmar (CPUC Crossing No. 101VY-25.78A, DOT No. 916110T) over the Southern California Regional Rail Authority's (SCRRA) tracks in the City of Los Angeles, Los Angeles County.

Discussion

Caltrans is the authorized department of the State of California created by the act of the Legislature of the State, with jurisdiction over the West Sylmar grade-separated highway-rail crossing for the purposes of providing preliminary and final engineering studies and designs, environmental documentation, right of way acquisition and construction for widening the grade-separated highway-rail crossing.

The West Sylmar grade-separated highway-rail crossing crosses the track of the SCRRA. SCRRA, herein sometimes referred as Metrolink, is a corporation

doing business as a common carrier operating a standard gauge railroad system in State of California. SCRRA owns and operates railroad tracks at the location of the project herein proposed to be constructed. Caltrans and SCRRA are in agreement on the work to be performed and apportionment of costs.

The purpose of this project is to widen the State Route 5 in Los Angeles County and accommodate the addition of a high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane in each direction. The proposed project involves widening of the existing northbound (right) and southbound (left) West Sylmar grade-separated highway-rail crossing by approximately 4.5 meters. The tracks of the railroad will be left in place throughout construction. A site map is as shown on plans attached to the application and Appendix A.

Horizontal and vertical clearances will not be affected. The completed structure will meet the minimum clearances in accordance with the provisions of the General Order 26-D. There will be no temporary or permanent impaired clearances for railroad traffic. The widening will occur entirely within Caltrans's right of way and will benefit the public by improving the operation and safety characteristics at the location. The general plan with layout for the widening of West Sylmar grade separated highway rail crossing is shown in Appendix B.

Caltrans is the lead agency for this project under the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (CEQA), as amended, Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq. On February 28, 2002, Caltrans prepared a Notice of Exemption finding that the project was categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to Section Title 14, Division 6, Section 15061 (b) (3) of the California Code of Regulations. The Exemption determination is attached as Appendix C.

The Commission is a responsible agency for this project under CEQA. CEQA requires that the Commission consider the environmental consequences

of a project is subject to its discretionary approval. The specific activities that must be conducted by a responsible agency are contained in CEQA Guideline Section 15096. The Commission has reviewed Caltrans' exemption determination and we find that Caltrans reasonably found that the project is exempt from CEQA.

The Commission's Consumer Protection and Safety Division — Rail Crossings Engineering Section (RCES) staff has reviewed the application. RCES examined the need for and the safety of the proposed overhead grade crossing and related railroad construction and recommends that the requested authority sought by Caltrans be granted for a period of 3 years.

The application is in compliance with the Commission's filing requirements, including Rule 38 of the Rules of Practice and Procedure, which relates to the construction of a public road, highway, or street across a railroad.

In Resolution ALJ 176-3098, dated October 24, 2002, the Commission preliminarily categorized this application as ratesetting, and preliminarily determined that hearings were not necessary. Since no hearings were held, this preliminary determination remains accurate. It is not necessary to disturb the preliminary determinations made in Resolution ALJ 176 -3098.

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

Assignment of Proceeding

Richard Clark is the assigned Examiner in this proceeding.

Findings of Fact

1. Notice of the application was published in the Commission Daily Calendar on October 10, 2002. No protests were received. A public hearing is not necessary.

2. Caltrans requests authority, under Public Utilities Code Sections 1201-1205, to widen West Sylmar grade-separated highway-rail crossing bridge structure over SCRRA's main line track in the City of Los Angeles, Los Angeles County.

3. The widening of the West Sylmar grade-separated highway-rail crossing will benefit the public by improving the operation and safety characteristics at the location.

4. Public convenience, necessity and safety require the widening of West Sylmar grade-separated highway-rail crossing.

5. Caltrans is the lead agency for this project under CEQA, as amended.

6. On February 28, 2002, Caltrans prepared a CEQA exemption determination finding that the project was categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to Section Title 14, Division 6, Section 15061 (b) (3) of the California Code of Regulations.

7. The Commission is a responsible agency for this project and has reviewed Caltrans' exemption determination.

Conclusions of Law

1. The application is uncontested and a public hearing is not necessary.

2. The Commission finds that Caltrans reasonably found that the project is exempt from CEQA.

3. The application should be granted as set forth in the following order.

O R D E R

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is authorized to widen the West Sylmar grade-separated highway-rail crossing, identified as Crossing No. 101VY-25.78A, over the track of Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA) in order to accommodate the high occupancy vehicle lanes in both directions.

2. Clearances shall be in accordance with General Order (G.O.) 26-D.

3. Walkways shall conform to G.O. 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.

4. Construction and maintenance costs shall be borne in accordance with an agreement to be entered into between Caltrans and SCRRA (parties). Caltrans shall file a copy of the agreement, together with plans of the project approved by SCRRA, with the Commission's Rail Crossings Engineering Section (RCES) prior to construction. Should the parties fail to agree, the Commission will apportion the costs of construction and maintenance by further order.

5. Within 30 days after completion of the work under this order, SCRRA shall notify the Commission's RCES in writing, by submitting a completed standard Commission Form G (Report of Changes at Highway Grade Crossings and Separations) that the authorized work was completed.

6. This authorization shall expire if not exercised within three 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.

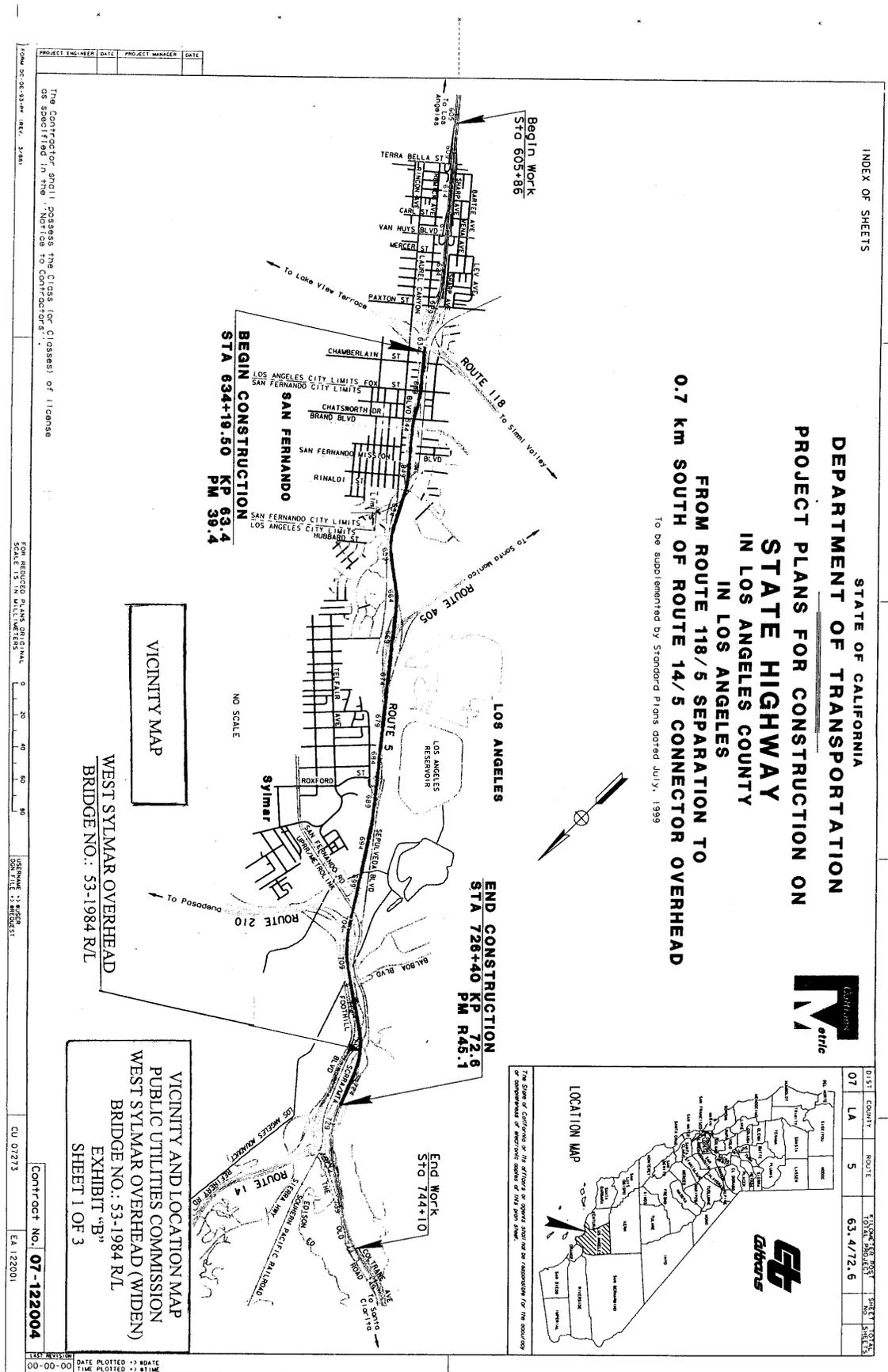
7. The application is granted as set forth above.

8. Application 02-10-006 is closed.

This order is effective today.

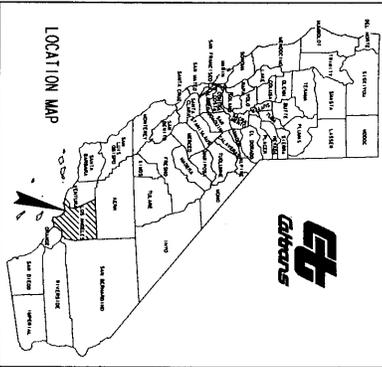
Dated June 5, 2003, at San Francisco, California.

MICHAEL R. PEEVEY
President
CARL W. WOOD
LORETTA M. LYNCH
GEOFFREY F. BROWN
SUSAN P. KENNEDY
Commissioners



INDEX OF SHEETS

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
 DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
**PROJECT PLANS FOR CONSTRUCTION ON
 STATE HIGHWAY
 IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY
 IN LOS ANGELES**
**FROM ROUTE 118/5 SEPARATION TO
 0.7 km SOUTH OF ROUTE 14/5 CONNECTOR OVERHEAD**
 To be supplemented by Standard Plans dated July, 1999



VICINITY MAP
 WEST SYLMAR OVERHEAD
 BRIDGE NO.: 53-1984 R/L

VICINITY AND LOCATION MAP
 PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
 WEST SYLMAR OVERHEAD (WIDEN)
 BRIDGE NO.: 53-1984 R/L
 EXHIBIT "B"
 SHEET 1 OF 3

PROJECT ENGINEER	DATE	PROJECT MANAGER	DATE

The Contractor shall possess the Class (or Classes) of License as specified in the Notice to Contractors.

FOR REDUCED PLANS ONLY
 SCALE 1/8" = 10' HORIZONTAL
 SCALE 1/4" = 10' VERTICAL

DATE PLOTTED: 07/27/99
 TIME PLOTTED: 11:58 AM

CONTRACT NO. 07-122004
 CU 07273 EA 122001

LIST SHEETS: 00-00-00 DATE PLOTTED: 07/27/99 TIME PLOTTED: 11:58 AM

CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION
CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION/PROGRAMMATIC CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION
DETERMINATION FORM

07-LA-5 KP 63.4 / 73.4 (PM 39.4 / R45.5) 122001 & 23550 200202025
Dist.-Co.-Rte. (or Local Agency) K.P./K.P.(P.M.P.M.) E.A. (State project) Proj. No. (Local project)
(Fed.Prog. Prefix Proj. No., Agr. No.)

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: (Briefly describe project, purpose, location, limits, right-of-way requirements, and activities involved.)

This project involves: It is proposed to add a two plus (2+) High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane in each direction in the median on Route 5 from Route 118 (KP 63.4) to Route 14 (KP 73.4). This will be accomplished by utilizing the existing median and restriping the mixed flow lanes. Project will involve median shoulder widening and reconstruction, construction of retaining walls, sound walls, bridge approach slabs, median barriers, ramp realignment and gore reconstruction, and bridge widening at Rinaldi Street.
Required stipulations for issuance of this environmental clearance are summarized on attached Continuation Sheet.

CEQA COMPLIANCE (for State Projects only)

- Based on an examination of this proposal, supporting information, and the following statements (See 14 CCR 15300 et seq.):
- If this project falls within exempt class 3, 4, 5, 6 or 11, it does not impact an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped and officially adopted pursuant to law.
- There will not be a significant cumulative effect by this project and successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time.
- There is not a reasonable possibility that the project will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.
- This project does not damage a scenic resource within an officially designated state scenic highway.
- This project is not located on a site included on any list compiled pursuant to Govt. Code § 65962.5 ("Cortese List").
- This project does not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.

CALTRANS CEQA DETERMINATION
[] Exempt by Statute (PRC 21080)
Based on an examination of this proposal, supporting information, and the above statements, the project is:
[X] Categorically Exempt. Class _____, or [X] General Rule exemption (This project does not fall within an exempt class, but it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity may have a significant effect on the environment [CCR 15061(b)(3)])
Signature: Environmental Office Chief Date Signature: Project Manager Date

NEPA COMPLIANCE (23 CFR 771.117)

- Based on an examination of this proposal, supporting information, and the following statements.
- This project does not have a significant impact on the environment as defined by the NEPA.
- This project does not involve substantial controversy on environmental grounds.
- This project does not involve significant impacts on properties protected by Section 4(f) of the DOT Act or Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.
- In non-attainment or maintenance areas for Federal air quality standards: this project comes from a currently conforming plan and Transportation Improvement Program or is exempt from regional conformity.
- This project is consistent with all Federal, State, & local laws, requirements or administrative determinations relating to the environmental aspects of this action.

CALTRANS NEPA DETERMINATION
Based on an examination of this proposal, supporting information, and the statements above under "NEPA Compliance", it is determined that the project is a:
[] PROGRAMMATIC CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION (PCE): Based on the evaluation of this project and supporting documentation in the project files, all the conditions of the September 7, 1990 Programmatic Categorical Exclusion have been met.
[X] CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION (CE): For actions that do not individually or cumulatively have a significant environmental effect and are excluded from the requirement to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). (Requires FHWA determination.
Signature: Environmental Office Chief Date Signature: Project Manager/DLA Engineer Date

FHWA DETERMINATION

Based on the evaluation of this project and the statements above, it is determined that the project meets the criteria of and is properly classified as a Categorical Exclusion (CE).

Signature: FHWA Transportation Engineer Date

Additional information attached or referenced, as appropriate (e.g. Mitigation commitments for NEPA only ; Air Quality studies or documentation of exemption from regional conformity or use of CO Protocol; § 106 commitments; §4(f) or Programmatic §4(f); date of COE nationwide permit; § 7 species survey results; Wetlands Finding; Floodplain Finding; additional studies; design conditions. Rev. 4/2001

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
EXHIBIT "C"