

**PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

Consumer Protection and Safety Division  
Rail Safety and Crossings Branch  
Rail Operations and Safety Section

RESOLUTION SX-60  
September 18, 2003

**RESOLUTION**

RESOLUTION SX-60 AUTHORIZES SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA  
REGIONAL RAIL AUTHORITY TO INSTALL LIGHTS AT  
IMPAIRED SIDE CLEARANCE IN TUNNEL NO. 26 NEAR  
CHATSWORTH IN LOS ANGELES AND VENTURA COUNTIES

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**Summary**

By letter dated July 23, 2003, Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA) requests authority for the installation of tunnel lights inside existing Tunnel 26 located on the railroad's Valley Subdivision between mileposts 441.20 and 442.60 in the County of Los Angeles and the County of Ventura. The proposed tunnel lights will be installed on the tunnel's north wall at a height of between 10'-0" and 14'-0" with a side clearance from the centerline of 7'-7 ½" when construction is complete.

**Background**

Tunnel 26 was built in 1905, then enlarged and lined with concrete in 1921 by the former Southern Pacific Transportation Company (SP)—subsequently merged into Union Pacific Railroad. The tunnel is 7,369 feet in length. It was built prior to the Commission's clearance standards, adopted in 1948 by General Order 26-D (GO 26-D). Overhead clearances in the structure are 22'0", and side clearances are 8'0". The side clearance meets current minimum requirements of GO 26-D in Section 3.10. However, nothing may be added to the structure without resulting in noncompliance. GO 26-D currently requires 8'6" side clearance for all structures below 14'0".

SCRRA, a five-county joint powers authority, was created in 1990 pursuant to State of California Public Utilities Code Section 130255 and California Government Code Section 6500 et seq., to build and operate the Metrolink commuter train system. SCRRA currently operates and maintains the commuter rail system in the five-county area on rail rights-of-way owned by the member agencies. SCRRA started Metrolink train service through Tunnel 26 in 1992 and took over operation and maintenance of the tunnel in 1994.

## **Discussion**

The lighting system proposed for the tunnel will be mounted on the north wall only at a height of between 10'-0" and 14'-0" above top of rail. The side clearance from the centerline of the track to the lighting system will be 7'-7 1/2" minimum.

The improvements in the tunnel have been designed in consultation with local fire safety officials, who recommend improved lighting to enhance safety. SCRRA plans to retrofit Tunnel 26 to provide seismic retrofit, safety, and maintenance improvements in the tunnel through a three-phase process. The lighting—part of the second phase-- will allow passengers in emergency situations and maintenance crews in regular periodic maintenance to better see the walkway surface inside the tunnel. The lighting will also provide better vision for firefighters in case of emergency.

The lights will not be on during normal operations of the trains, but will be activated by local switches mounted within the tunnel and at its portals. To discourage vandalism, the switches will be encased in locked boxes accessible only to SCRRA maintenance forces, emergency response personnel, and train crews. The lights will also be controlled remotely from SCRRA's Operations Center, accessible by radio contact from train crews.

Staff inquired why the lights would not be mounted from tunnel top instead of to the side, seemingly a greater risk to employees. SCRRA responded that such a location would subject the lighting fixtures almost immediately to obfuscation from engine smoke. Side locations would not only better resist such smoke blackening, but also would be more accessible for maintenance. Lighting of the tunnel only for emergencies would keep the tunnel from becoming an attractive nuisance for play by youngsters or habitation by transients.

Copies of the proposal were furnished to National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak), Union Pacific Railroad, and United Transportation Union (UTU). None of these interested parties object to the proposal. The State Legislative Director of UTU, however, emphasizes that UTU supports GO 26-D in its minimal standards even though it will not object to this proposal.

Staff recommends minimizing risk in the tunnel by requiring affected railroads to prohibit operating employees from riding on the sides of equipment while in Tunnel 26 due to diminished side clearance. Each affected carrier will issue written notice to operating employees advising of this requirement.

This is an uncontested matter in which the resolution 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.

### **Findings**

1. SCRRA, a five-county joint powers authority, currently operates the commuter rail system in a five-county area of Southern California and has current maintenance responsibility for Tunnel 26 between mileposts 441.20 and 442.60 in the County of Los Angeles and the County of Ventura.
2. Tunnel 26 currently complies with clearance requirements of GO 26-D because it predates the order of 1948, as provided in Section 15. However, new appurtenances to the sidewall would bring it into noncompliance.
3. By letter dated July 23, 2003, SCRRA requests authority pursuant to Section 15 of GO 26-D to install lighting fixtures at side clearance of 7'-7 1/2" at a height of between 10'-0" and 14'-0" above top of rail.
4. There are no objections to this proposal.
5. Staff recommends that this resolution be adopted with the condition that instructions are issued to operating employees prohibiting riding on the sides of freight cars in Tunnel 26.
6. Staff concludes that the installation will be safe.

**Therefore, IT IS ORDERED that:**

Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA) be granted authority to construct and maintain lighting in Tunnel 26 between mileposts 441.20 and 442.60 in the County of Los Angeles and the County of Ventura at side clearance of 7'-7 ½" at a height of between 10'-0" and 14'-0" above top of rail. The lighting shall be installed, operated and maintained subject to the following conditions:

1. Operating employees shall not ride the sides of freight cars inside Tunnel 26.
2. Affected railroads shall issue written instructions to operating employees advising of the above prohibition.

This resolution is effective today.

I certify that the foregoing resolution was duly introduced, passed, and adopted by the Commission at its regularly scheduled meeting on September 18, 2003. The following Commissioners voted favorably thereon:

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WILLIAM AHERN  
Executive Director

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