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OPEN MEETING ITEM

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ORIGINAL

MEMORANDUM

RECEIVED

TO: THE COMMISSION
FROM: Donald Thompson
Railroad Safety Supervisor

2002 DEC -5 A 11: 29

AZ CORP COMMISSION
DOCUMENT CONTROL

DATE: November 14, 2002

RE: APPLICATION OF THE BURLINGTON NORTHERN SANTA FE RAILWAY (BNSF) FOR AN EXEMPTION FROM THE REQUIREMENTS OF A.A.C. R14-5-110(B)(7)(a). (DOCKET NO. RR-02635B-02-0817)

On October 30, 2002, the BNSF filed an application with the Commission for an exemption from the requirements of the Rule cited above. The rule provides that no structure shall be built trackside at a distance of less than eight (8) feet six (6) inches from the centerline of the track.

Burlington Northern Santa Fe proposes to install a piece of equipment called a Trackside Acoustic Detection system (TADS) at a distance of six (6) feet three point four two (3.42) inches from the centerline of their main track located at railroad milepost 516.2, Kingman, AZ.

TADS is a highly sophisticated, computerized system which examines each wheel bearing in a train as it rolls past the equipment. TADS has the purpose of exposing defective wheel bearings well in advance of complete failure.

The equipment is to be installed at a location where Staff believes there will be little or no interference with any trackside duties that railroad personnel might be required to perform. Signs will be installed at the site so as to provide proper warning of impaired clearances. Because TADS operates by analyzing sounds emitted from each passing bearing, the distance of the bearing from the microphones in the equipment is very critical. It is because this critical distance is less than 8 feet 6 inches that BNSF is requesting exemption from the Clearance requirements.

Staff views the installation of this equipment as a major proactive step by the railroad to prevent derailments caused by burned wheel bearings. There have been two major derailments caused by such bearings on the BNSF line in Arizona within the last two years, and so Staff is convinced that the benefits TADS will provide far outweigh any potential hazard. Staff therefore recommends that the Commission grant the exemption.

Staff has attached a proposed order granting the exemption.

Donald Thompson
Railroad Safety Supervisor
DRT:drt
ORIGINATOR: Don Thompson on behalf of Staff

Arizona Corporation Commission
DOCKETED

DEC 05 2002

DOCKETED BY 

1 **BEFORE THE ARIZONA CORPORATION COMMISSION**

2 WILLIAM A. MUNDELL

Chairman

3 JIM IRVIN

Commissioner

4 MARC SPITZER

Commissioner

5
6 IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION
7 OF BURLINGTON NORTHERN AND
8 SANTA FE RAILWAY COMPANY, A
9 DELAWARE CORPORATION, FOR AN
10 ORDER GRANTING AN EXEMPTION
FROM THE REQUIREMENTS OF A.A.C.
R14-5-110(B)(7)(a).

Docket No. RR-02635B-02-0817

DECISION NO. _____

ORDER

11 Open Meeting
12 December 17 and 18, 2002
Phoenix, Arizona

13 **BY THE COMMISSION:**

14 **FINDINGS OF FACT**

15 1. On October 30, 2002, the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company, a
16 Delaware Corporation ("BNSF") filed with the Commission an application granting the BNSF an
17 exemption from the requirements of A.A.C. R14-5-110(B)(7)(a). ("Rules").

18 2. These rules provide that "No merchandise, materials, equipment, or other articles shall
19 be placed either on the ground or on a platform adjacent to any track at a distance less than 8 feet
20 6 inches from the centerline of track. A suitable line or other marker shall be maintained on all
21 platforms at a distance of 8 feet 6 inches from the centerline of track to indicate minimum
22 clearance for the articles." A.A.C. R14-5-110(B)(7)(a).

23 3. The BNSF proposes to install a Trackside Acoustic Detection System ("TADS") at
24 railroad milepost 516.2, Kingman, Arizona.

25 4. TADS is a highly sophisticated, computerized system which through the use of
26 acoustics examines each wheel bearing in a train as it rolls past the equipment. The purpose of
27 TADS is to expose defective wheel bearings well in advance of complete failure.
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1 5. TADS effectiveness is dependent on installation of the system at a distance of six (6)
2 feet three point four two (3.42) inches from the centerline of their main track, a distance less than
3 that required under A.A.C. R14-5-110(B)(7)(a).

4 6. There have been two major derailments caused by burned bearings on the BNSF line
5 in Arizona within the last two years.

6 7. Staff has determined the installation of this equipment is a major proactive step by the
7 railroad to prevent derailments caused by burned wheel bearings.

8 8. Staff has determined potential hazards resulting from placing TADS inside the distance
9 required by the Rules would be mitigated by requiring the installation of signs at the site so as to
10 provide proper warning of impaired clearances.

11 9. Staff finds the waiver of the Rule to allow BNSF to place TADS a distance of six (6)
12 feet three point four two (3.42) inches from the centerline of their main track will increase
13 railroad safety and is therefore in the public interest.

14 10. Staff recommends approval of BNSF's request for a waiver of A.A.C. R14-5-
15 110(B)(7)(a) for installation of TADS at railroad milepost 516.2, Kingman, Arizona.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

16
17 1. BNSF is a public service corporation within the meaning of Article XV, Section 2 of
18 the Arizona Constitution.

19 2. The Commission has jurisdiction over BNSF and over the subject matter of the
20 application.

21 3. The Commission having reviewed the application and Staff's Memorandum of
22 November 14, 2002, concludes that it is in the public interest to grant BNSF's request subject to
23 the signage requirements recommended by Staff.

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ORDER

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IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED that the application be and hereby is granted but with modifications as recommended by Staff.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that this Decision shall become effective immediately.

BY ORDER OF THE ARIZONA CORPORATION COMMISSION

CHAIRMAN

COMMISSIONER

COMMISSIONER

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I, _____,
Executive Secretary of the Arizona Corporation
Commission, have hereunto, set my hand and caused the
official seal of this Commission to be affixed at the Capitol,
in the City of Phoenix, this ____ day of December 2002.

BRIAN C. McNEIL
Executive Secretary

DISSENT _____