

MEMORANDUM



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To: THE COMMISSION

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Arizona Corporation Commission

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From: Robert Marvin
Director
Safety Division

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Date: August 7, 2014

AZ CORP COMMISSION
DOCKET CONTROL

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RE: IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION OF THE ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO UPGRADE AN EXISTING GRADE-SEPERATED CROSSING OF THE BURLINGTON NORTHERN SANTA FE RAILROAD COMPANY AT THE INTERSECTION OF SR 303L AND US 60, IN THE CITY OF SURPRISE, MARICOPA COUNTY, ARIZONA, AT MP 167.77.

DOCKET NO. RR-02635B-14-0158

ORIGINAL

Background

On May 13, 2014, the Arizona Department of Transportation (“ADOT”) filed with the Arizona Corporation Commission (“Commission”) an application for approval for ADOT to widen an existing grade-separated crossing over the railroad tracks of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Company (“BNSF”) at State Route (“SR”) 303 Loop (“L”) and the US 60. The original grade separation was approved by the Commission in Decision No. 62699 on June 30, 2000.

The rail line in this area runs in a southeast to northwest direction, parallel to US 60. (See Appendix “A”)

SR 303L

The existing grade separation at SR 303L and the US 60 is a 3 lane roadway, consisting of two eastbound lanes and one westbound lane. The existing structure has insufficient capacity to accommodate existing and future traffic demands, resulting in heavy congestion in the area. The purpose of the project is to improve the existing SR 303L freeway and the traffic interchange (“TI”) with the US 60 to reduce traffic congestion and delays, and improve the overall operations between the US 60 and SR 303L. The proposed widening of the SR 303 L grade separation will widen the structure from 3 lanes, to 12 lanes, 6 lanes in each direction. The project is estimated to take 16 months to construct and is tentatively scheduled to start in late November, 2014 with completion anticipated in March, 2016. Work within the BNSF right-of-way will occur between January, 2015 and August, 2015. ADOT will be responsible for construction and maintenance of the US 60 and SR 303L over the BNSF tracks.

This project is being funded by the Federal Highway Administration (“FHWA”), the City of Surprise, and ADOT. The total cost of the entire project is estimated to be \$53 million.

According to ADOT, the Average Daily Traffic ("ADT") taken in 2010 was 12,510 vehicles per day ("vpd") on SR 303L at US 60. The current Level of Service ("LOS") for this roadway is LOS B/C.

Note: The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Geometric Design of Highways and Streets, 2004, states that the Level of Service characterizes the operating conditions on a facility in terms of traffic performance measures related to speed and travel time, freedom to maneuver, traffic interruptions, and comfort and convenience. This is a measure of roadway congestion ranging from LOS A--least congested--to LOS F--most congested. LOS is one of the most common terms used to describe how "good" or how "bad" traffic is projected to be.

The posted speed limit on SR 303L is 50 MPH. No train to vehicle accidents or incidents has occurred because this is a grade separated crossing of the railroad.

An alternative route from this grade separation is 163rd Avenue, an at-grade crossing 1.00 miles to the northeast.

Train Data

Data provided by the Railroad to ADOT regarding train movements are as follows:

Train Count: 12 average trains per day

Train Speed: 40 mph freight, no passenger trains

Thru Freight/Switching Moves: All moves are thru freight with no passenger trains

Schools and Bus Routes

The nearest school to this location is:

Desert Moon School, approximately 2 miles west of the grade separation.

Hospitals

The nearest hospital to the SR 303L is the Del E. Web Medical Center in Sun City, south of the grade separation.

Hazardous Materials

ADOT gave the following response when asked about hazardous materials vehicles on the roadway:

It is not known how much hazardous materials traffic uses the existing roadway each day.

Zoning

Staff requested that ADOT provide information regarding the type of zoning in adjacent areas from the SR 303L. The following was their response:

Surrounding area is zoned for residential.

Spur Lines

ADOT gave the following answer regarding spur lines located in the area:

Unknown if railroad spurs have been removed within a 10 mile radius.

Grade Separation

This is an existing grade-separated crossing. It was originally approved by the Commission in Decision No. 62699 on June 30, 2000.

Staff Conclusions

Having reviewed all applicable data, Staff supports ADOT's application. Staff believes the widening of the existing grade-separation is in the public's interest and is reasonable. Staff believes that the measures proposed by ADOT are consistent with other similar grade-separated crossings in the State and will provide for the public's safety. Therefore, Staff recommends approval of ADOT's application.



Brian H. Lehman
Railroad Safety Supervisor
Safety Division

Originator: BHL

Original and thirteen (13) copies
of the foregoing were filed this
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Docket Control
Arizona Corporation Commission
1200 West Washington Street
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Copy of the foregoing mailed
this 7th day of August, 2014 to:

Melvin Thomas
Manager of Public Projects
BNSF
740 E. Carnegie drive
San Bernardino, CA 92408-3571

Patrick Black
Fennemore Craig
2394 E. Camelback Road, Suite 600
Phoenix, AZ 85016-3429

Vicki Bever, Manager
Utility and Railroad Engineering
ADOT
205 S. 17th Avenue M/D 618E
Phoenix, Az. 85007-3212

City of Surprise Attorney's Office
16000 N. Civic Center Plaza
Surprise, AZ 85374



BNSF

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