

ORIGINAL

STAFF MEMORANDUM



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To: THE COMMISSION

From: John Mazza
Director
Safety Division

Date: May 10, 2017

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AZ CORP COMMISSION
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Arizona Corporation Commission

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RE: IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION OF THE ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO INSTALL A NEW GRADE SEPARATED CROSSING UNDER SOUTH MOUNTAIN FREEWAY (SR202) AND FOR THE UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD TO REMOVE AN EXISTING AT-GRADE CROSSING AT THE 59TH AVENUE IN THE CITY OF PHOENIX, MARICOPA COUNTY, ARIZONA, USDOT NO. 441-073C (NEW) AND 741-811U (OLD).

DOCKET NO. RR-03639A-17-0065

Background

On March 6, 2017, the Arizona Department of Transportation ("ADOT") filed with the Arizona Corporation Commission ("Commission") a request for approval for ADOT to construct a new grade separated crossing over the railroad tracks along the new South Mountain Freeway alignment and for the Union Pacific Railroad ("UPRR") to remove an existing at-grade crossing at 59th Avenue in the City of Phoenix ("City"), Maricopa County, Arizona. The existing at-grade crossing USDOT No. is 741-811U and the new grade separated crossing USDOT No. is 441-073C.

The Safety Division's Railroad Safety Section, ("Staff"), ADOT and the Railroad participated in a diagnostic review meeting of the proposed improvements to this crossing. All parties present were in agreement to the proposed improvements at the crossings. The following is a breakdown of the crossing in this application, including information about the crossing that was provided to Staff by ADOT and the Railroad.

South Mountain Freeway (SR202)/59th Avenue

59th Avenue is currently an at-grade crossing that intersects the UPRR tracks. The crossing is currently protected with flashing lights, gates, and cantilevers. The proposed South Mountain Freeway project would allow ADOT to construct a grade-separated structure that would span the UPRR tracks and once in service the existing crossing will be removed. ADOT's application calls for the at-grade crossing to remain open during construction. First for public traffic, then for construction traffic upon completion of the western half of the overpass.

The project is estimated to take 24 months to construct, and is tentatively scheduled to start in winter of 2017.

The project is being funded by a combination of funds from MCDOT, ADOT and FHWA with a portion of the bridge being funded by UPRR. The total cost of the project is estimated to be \$916 million with the Railroad contribution to this bridge estimated at \$1.3 million.

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.

Traffic data for 59th Avenue was provided by City of Phoenix. In 2014, there were 4,444 vehicles per day ("VPD") at this crossing. No Level of Service ("LOS") was given for this crossing.

The posted speed limit on 59th Avenue is 45MPH. Staff records show 1 accident with no other details. The Federal Railroad Administration's ("FRA") accident/incident records indicate 0 accidents at this crossing.

ADOT has provided ongoing project information through its website
[http://azdot.gov/projects/central-district-projects/loop-202-\(south-mountain-freeway\)](http://azdot.gov/projects/central-district-projects/loop-202-(south-mountain-freeway))

Alternative Routes

During the diagnostic visit, ADOT and UPRR indicated that the road would remain open during railroad work. However, traffic on 59th Avenue will experience delays and restrictions related to various other construction activities.

Train Data

Data provided by the FRA website, regarding train movements through this crossing are as follows:

Train Count: 1 thru train per day with no passenger service

Maximum Train Speed: 40 mph

Thru Freight/Switching Moves: there are 4 switching movements through this crossing

Schools and Bus Routes

The following are schools near this crossing:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| • <i>Riverside Elementary School</i> | <i>1414 S 51st Ave, Phoenix, AZ</i> |
| • <i>South Ridge High School</i> | <i>1122 S 67th Ave, Phoenix, AZ</i> |
| • <i>Western Valley Middle School</i> | <i>6250 W Durango St, Phoenix, AZ</i> |
| • <i>Fowler Elementary School</i> | <i>6707 W Van Buren St, Phoenix, AZ</i> |
| • <i>Sunridge Elementary School</i> | <i>6244 W Roosevelt St, Phoenix, AZ</i> |

Per Fowler School District, Riverside Elementary School and the Phoenix Union High School District there are 42 school bus crossings per day.

Hospitals

Hospitals near the crossing and emergency services vehicles:

- Dignity Health Arizona General Hospital 7171 S 51st Ave, Laveen Village, AZ
- Veterans Administration Hospital Indian School Rd, Phoenix, AZ
- Banner Estrella Medical Center 9201 W. Thomas Rd, Phoenix, AZ

59th Avenue is not a major emergency service route.

Hazardous Materials

ADOT gave the following response when asked about vehicles transporting hazardous materials through this crossing:

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

Zoning

Per the City of Phoenix General Plan Land Use Map the areas adjacent to this crossing are zoned as Commerce/Business Park.

Spur Lines

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

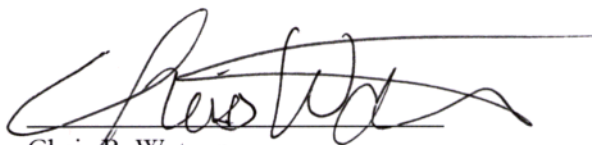
Unknown if railroad spurs have been removed within a 10 mile radius

Grade Separation

This proposed project is for the construction of a new grade-separated crossing over the UPRR tracks and the new South Mountain Freeway alignment. Once the new grade separation is constructed and put into service, the existing at-grade crossing will be removed.

Staff Conclusions

Having reviewed all applicable data, Staff supports ADOT's application. Staff believes that constructing a 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.



Chris B. Watson
Railroad Safety Supervisor
Safety Division

Originator: CBW

On this 10th day of May, 2017, the foregoing document was filed with Docket Control as a Staff Report, and copies of the foregoing were mailed on behalf of the Safety Division to the following who have not consented to email service. On this date or as soon as possible thereafter, the Commission's eDocket program will automatically email a link to the foregoing to the following who have consented to email service.

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Vicinity Map
Grade Separation Project
State Route 202 (South Mountain Freeway)
@ Union Pacific RR Tracks DOT#441-073C (NEW) AND 741-811U (OLD)
City of Phoenix, Maricopa County, AZ

