

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

SAN DIEGO COAST AREA
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SAN DIEGO, CA 92108-1725
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Staff: WNP-SD
Staff Report: 1/16/96
Hearing Date: 2/6-9/96



PERMIT AMENDMENT
STAFF REPORT AND PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATION

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Application No.: 6-94-86-A

Applicant: North San Diego County Transit Development Board (NCTD)

Agent: Bill Farquhar

Original Description: Construction and operation of a commuter rail maintenance facility and freight switching yard on a 17 acre site.

Amendment Description: Addition of approximately 12,000 feet of railroad track located 15 feet east of existing main track within the railroad right-of-way with associated signaling structures; export of approximately 10,000 cubic yards of material off-site, and drainage improvements including extension of existing culverts to accommodate the new track upstream of existing discharge points.

Site: Railroad right-of-way, east of I-5, east of railroad main line, milepost 221-222.5, in Camp Pendleton, San Diego County. APN 101-541-0304

STAFF NOTES:

Summary of Staff's Preliminary Recommendation:

Staff is recommending approval of the amendment with special conditions which require final plans for the proposed project, the location of the exported soil materials and an advisory condition that specifies that all special conditions and provisions of the previously-issued coastal development permit are binding and remain in force.

PRELIMINARY STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

The staff recommends the Commission adopt the following resolution:

I. Approval with Conditions.

The Commission hereby grants a permit for the proposed amendment, subject to the conditions below, on the grounds that the development will be in conformity with the provisions of Chapter 3 of the California Coastal Act of 1976, will not prejudice the ability of the local government having jurisdiction over the area to prepare a Local Coastal Program conforming to the provisions of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act, and will not have any significant adverse impacts on the environment within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act.

II. Special Conditions.

1. Final Plans. Prior to the issuance of the coastal development permit, the applicant shall submit final plans for the proposed second main track. Any proposed change to the length of track outside of the right-of-way that has been reviewed under this permit amendment shall require an amendment to this coastal development permit or a new coastal development permit.

2. Disposal of Graded Spoils. Prior to the issuance of the coastal development permit, the applicant shall identify the location for the disposal of graded spoils. If the site is located within the coastal zone, a separate coastal development permit or permit amendment shall first be obtained from the California Coastal Commission or its successors in interest.

3. Prior Permit. All special conditions and provisions of the previously-issued coastal development permit are binding and remain in force, unless specifically modified herein.

III. Findings and Declarations.

The Commission finds and declares as follows:

1. Detailed Amendment Description/History. In August 1994, the Commission approved the construction and operation by the North San Diego County Transit Development Board (NCTD) of a commuter rail maintenance facility and freight switching yard on a 17 acre site. The commuter rail maintenance facility is located between the existing San Diego Northern Railway mainline and I-5, north of the Santa Margarita River, in southern United States Marine Corp (USMC) Camp Pendleton. To the east of the railroad is a line of trees, a dirt access road, and agricultural lands. To the west is I-5 and more agricultural lands. The vacant crescent-shaped parcel contains a 1.02 acre disturbed riparian wetland which is being restored as required by the Commission. There are some agricultural buildings located off-site to the east which may be modified by the adjacent land owner during the project. It is the responsibility of the adjacent land owner to bring any modifications to these buildings to the Coastal Commission for its review and approval.

The approved facility consists of ten rail car storage tracks, along with associated connections to the existing main track on the east side of the site. These tracks are proposed for storage and assembly of both freight and passenger trains. In addition, an equipment inspection track with pit for accessing the underside of the trains and a 45' high, two-track equipment maintenance building for routine caretaking of the commuter rail equipment is currently under construction. The maintenance building includes offices for the train and mechanical crews.

The construction of the switching yard and maintenance facility is now underway and is approximately 40% complete. All phases of the project, trackwork, environmental remediation, paving and building construction are still underway. The project is estimated to be completed in late 1996.

The amendment proposes to add approximately 12,000 feet of railroad track located 15 feet east of the existing main track within the railroad right-of-way and associated signaling structures, export of approximately 10,000 cubic yards of material off-site, and drainage improvements including extension of existing culverts to accommodate the new track upstream of existing discharge points. The existing discharge points will not be moved. The applicant indicates there may be a change to the length of track affected due to funding. Special Condition #1 requires final project plans to document any proposed change to the length of track which may occur outside of the right-of-way that has been reviewed under this permit amendment to ensure any habitat impacts associated with additional track are reviewed. Special Condition #2 requires the applicant to identify the deposition site for the proposed export. If the site is located within the coastal zone, a separate coastal development permit or permit amendment shall first be obtained from the California Coastal Commission or its successors in interest.

The new track is located adjacent to the switching yard and maintenance facility. The applicant indicates the track will provide for enhanced operational reliability for passenger services, both intercity and regional. Additionally, the track will serve as a bypass for passenger trains when freight trains are setting out or picking up cars from the nearby Stuart Mesa freight switching yard. The applicant indicates the additional track, in itself, will not affect the growth of the passenger services, which are controlled by market demand and funding availability.

2. Wetlands/Environmentally Sensitive Habitats. In this amendment, excavation will be required for construction of the main line track. Some native but highly disturbed grassland and introduced shrubs would be removed near the freeway overpass. Notwithstanding a small clump of cattails located south of this bridge, grading associated with the remainder of the project length would not impact sensitive vegetation within the eastern right-of-way. The environmental documents submitted with the original action corroborate this assessment.

The new track and accompanying drainage ditch would eliminate one wet area containing highly disturbed and minimal cattail stands. The cattails are surrounded by fill; no other sensitive vegetation is present. This area is so small, less than 20 sq.ft., and isolated such that no significant habitat values exist. In its previous permit action, the Commission identified impacts to sensitive habitats in the project area on the west side of the tracks and required those impacts to be reduced and mitigated to the maximum extent feasible. In this particular case, the impacts are unavoidable and are for an incidental public service, consistent with Section 30233 of the Coastal Act. However, due to the nature of the cattail stand, removal can be approved in this case without mitigation and without affecting the habitat values of the adjacent future riparian mitigation area.

The eastern edge of the project site is bordered by a line of eucalyptus trees. These trees serve as a windbreak for the adjoining agricultural use. The applicant indicates that to maintain required California Public Utilities

Commission clearances, some trees will be selectively thinned as part of construction, but no removal is expected. Thus, no adverse impacts are expected. Based on the above considerations, there are no significant impacts to sensitive habitats; therefore, the Commission finds the proposed amendment is consistent with Sections 30233 and 30240 of the Coastal Act as well as with the resource protection provisions of the County LCP.

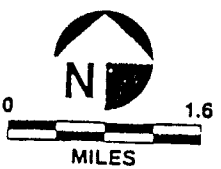
3. Growth Inducement. Section 30250 of the Coastal Act provides that new development be placed in areas able to accommodate it so as to not promote haphazard development or to be growth inducing in a way that would overburden existing public services and facilities. As noted, the applicant indicates the additional track, in itself, will not affect the growth of the passenger services, which are controlled by market demand and funding availability. Additionally, the enhanced railroad service this project will provide will relieve congestion on the public transportation system in San Diego County by providing travelers and commuters an alternative to automobile use. In this way the project can be considered as a measure to accommodate growth in the region without overburdening existing public services and facilities, and as such, can be found consistent with Section 30250 of the Coastal Act.

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Project location

STUART MESA SITE

BUENA VISTA CREEK SITE



SOURCE: USGS 30' X 60' Oceanside Quadrangle

EXHIBIT NO. 1

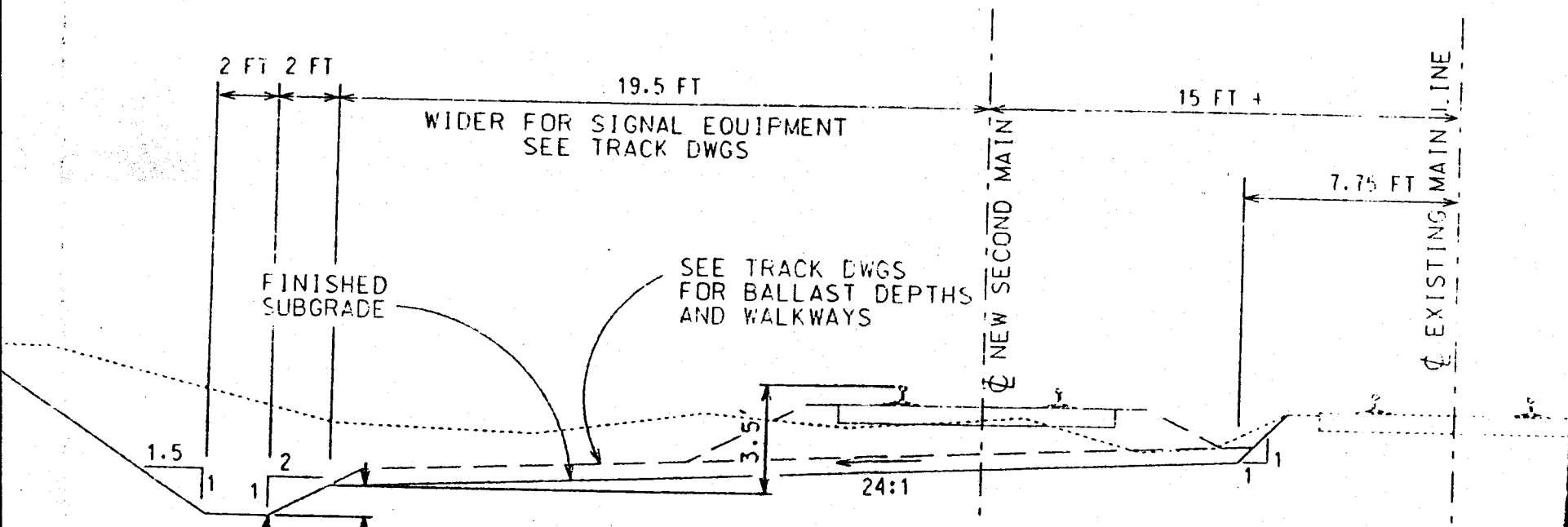
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Location

California Coastal Commission

EXHIBIT NO. 2
APPLICATION NO. C-94-86-A
Typical Section
California Coastal Commission

CROSS SECTION 1 - CUT WITH ROAD



STATION 31+50 TO STATION 33+75
 STATION 78+20 TO STATION 100+00

FL PER PLAN
 SUBDRAIN
 SHOWN PER PLAN

EXHIBIT NO. 3

APPLICATION NO.

6-94-86-A

Typical Site Plan

California Coastal Commission

MCB CAMP JOSEPH H. PENDLETON

DIRT

REMOVE EXISTING OVERHEAD
SIGNAL WIRES AND POLES

127.2 (TREE)

6" SUBDRAIN PER
SECTION 1-1/CE-114

115.5 (TREE)

80.1 (TOP)

SDNR R/W

1.5:1

60

4.2%

TYP

CAUTION: FOUR EXISTING MCI
FIBER OPTIC CONDUITS

10' min

SDNR R/W