

Decision No. C14-0544

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF COLORADO

PROCEEDING NO. 14A-0304R

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION OF THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT AND THE CITY OF LAKEWOOD FOR AUTHORITY TO ALTER THE TRAFFIC SIGNAL PREEMPTION ASSOCIATED WITH THE AT-GRADE CROSSING AT RTD'S WEST CORRIDOR AND NORTH AVENUE NEAR UNION BOULEVARD AT THE FEDERAL CENTER IN THE CITY OF LAKEWOOD, STATE OF COLORADO.

**COMMISSION DECISION DEEMING APPLICATION
COMPLETE AND GRANTING APPLICATION**

Mailed Date: May 23, 2014

Adopted Date: May 21, 2014

I. BY THE COMMISSION

A. Statement

1. This matter comes before the Commission for consideration of an application (Application) filed jointly by the Regional Transportation District (RTD) and the City of Lakewood (Lakewood) (collectively, Joint Applicants) on April 4, 2014, requesting authority to alter the traffic signal preemption and add new vehicle loop detectors at the crossing of the RTD West Corridor with North Avenue (west location), no current National Inventory Number, in Lakewood, County of Jefferson, State of Colorado.

2. The Commission gave notice of this Application (Notice) to all interested parties, including adjacent property owners pursuant to § 40-6-108(2), C.R.S. The Notice was mailed April 8, 2014.

3. On April 11, 2014, Staff of the Commission (Staff) sent the Joint Applicants a letter requesting additional information regarding the Application.

4. On April 22, 2014, the Joint Applicants provided a response to Staff's request for additional information and Amended its Application to add an exhibit.

5. No interventions were filed in this matter.

6. The Commission has reviewed the record in this matter and deems that the Application is complete pursuant to § 40-6-109.5, C.R.S.

7. The Commission has jurisdiction in this matter under §§ 40-4-106(2)(a) and (3)(a), C.R.S.

8. Now being fully advised in the matter, we grant the Amended Application.

B. Findings of Fact

9. The Commission gave notice to all interested parties, including the adjacent property owners. No interventions were received in this matter.

10. The Joint Applicants seek authority to alter the traffic signal preemption and add new vehicle loop detectors at the western North Avenue crossing with the traffic signal of North Avenue/4th Avenue/Union Boulevard. The railroad crossing signal of the western North Avenue crossing was approved by the Commission by Commission Decision No. C11-1099 mailed October 13, 2011 in Proceeding No. 11A-718R and the traffic signal interconnection, and preemption was approved by the Commission by Commission Decision No. C13-0481 mailed April 29, 2013 in Proceeding No. 13A-0168R.

11. The Joint Applicants state that there are currently 2,040 vehicles per day (VPD) using North Avenue at the western crossing at a posted speed limit of 30 miles per hour (MPH). This is substantially less than the 12,980 VPD that were originally projected to use the subject crossing when West Rail Line revenue service began. The Joint Applicants do not project an increase in vehicle traffic in the near future. There are currently approximately 168 train

movements through the crossing at an operating speed of 30 MPH with train movements not expected to change significantly in the future.

12. Since the operations of the RTD West Rail Line began, Lakewood's Traffic Engineering staff observed that the frequency of preemption (2 preemption calls to the traffic signal controller every 15 minutes during peak traffic hours) of the 4th Street and Union Boulevard intersection caused this traffic signal to be out of coordination with other traffic signals on the Union Boulevard corridor over 40 percent of the time during the morning and evening peak traffic periods, which has significantly increased congestion along the Union Boulevard corridor near the U.S. Highway 6 interchange. Monitoring of the west leg of the intersection has shown that the queue of vehicles rarely extends as far back as the crossing, and those that extend near the crossing are typically approximately 50 feet from the tracks, which occurs during the evening peak traffic period. The tracks are located approximately 335 feet east of the RTD West Rail Line crossing.

13. The Joint Applicants propose to change the traffic signal preemption operations such that preemption of the traffic signal would only occur upon detection of a traffic queue by vehicle loop detectors being installed at a distance of 250 feet from the intersection. With this proposed operation, the traffic signal would only be preempted when both a preemption call is provided by the RTD railroad crossing signal to the traffic signal and a queue of vehicles is detected by the new vehicle loops. If both conditions do not exist, the traffic signal would not enter into its preemption routine.

14. The initial identification of the need for preemption was the result of traffic volumes estimated at approximately six times what the actual traffic volumes are now. The Joint Applicants have provided evidence that queuing of vehicles towards the North Avenue (west)

crossing is not occurring as originally projected, and is currently only occurring during the evening peak traffic hour. The Joint Applicants' proposed solution takes into account not only public safety at the crossing, but also public safety at the intersection and the Union Boulevard corridor. The proposed solution also creates a flexible, and self-adjusting solution to this issue as growth in the area along North Avenue continues. For now, queues are potentially reaching the crossing during one period of time during the day. With the vehicle loop detection as a factor in the preemption of the traffic signal, as growth in the area continues and longer vehicle queues start to form, the vehicle loop detectors, in combination with the RTD crossing signal preemption call to the traffic signal controller, will activate the preemption of the traffic signal as needed. The need to clear a queue of vehicles that is at the crossing still occurs while allowing the traffic signals on Union Boulevard to remain in coordination as much as possible.

15. The Joint Applicants estimate the cost of the proposed interconnection at \$4,341.90 with Lakewood responsible for all construction costs. The Joint Applicants propose to start construction immediately upon Commission approval with construction complete within one month after Commission approval. The Joint Applicants will be required to inform the Commission in writing that all work for the interconnection is complete and the preemption is operational within ten days of completion. The Commission will expect this letter no later than June 30, 2014. However, the Commission does understand this letter may be provided earlier or later than this date depending on changes or delays to the construction schedule.

C. Conclusions

16. The Commission has jurisdiction in this matter under §§ 40-4-106(2)(a) and (3)(a), C.R.S.

17. No interventions were filed in this matter.

18. Because the Application is unopposed, the Commission will determine this matter upon the record, without a formal hearing under § 40-6-109(5), C.R.S., and Rule 1403, Commission Rules of Practice and Procedure, 4 *Code of Colorado Regulations* 723-1.

19. Based on the Findings of Fact, we find good cause exists and that the requirements of public safety and necessity are met by granting the Application consistent with the above discussion.

II. ORDER

A. The Commission Orders That:

1. The application (Application) filed jointly by the Regional Transportation District and the City of Lakewood (collectively, Joint Applicants) on April 4, 2014, requesting authority to alter the traffic signal preemption and add new vehicle loop detectors at the crossing of the RTD West Corridor with North Avenue (west location), no current National Inventory Number, in Lakewood, County of Jefferson, State of Colorado is deemed complete within the meaning of § 40-6-109.5, C.R.S.

2. The Application is granted.

3. The Joint Applicants are authorized and ordered to proceed with the traffic signal preemption changes consisting of installation of vehicle detector loops approximately 250 feet from the intersection of North Avenue/4th Street/Union Boulevard and traffic signal changes to activate preemption timings in the traffic signal controller based on receiving both a preemption call from the crossing signal and a vehicle queue being detected by the vehicle detection loops in Lakewood, Colorado.

4. The Joint Applicants are required to inform the Commission in writing that the crossing changes are complete and operational within ten days after completion.

We shall expect this letter by June 30, 2014. However, we understand this letter may be provided earlier or later than this date depending on changes or delays to the construction schedule.

5. The 20-day period provided for in § 40-6-114, C.R.S., within which to file applications for rehearing, reargument, or reconsideration, begins on the first day following the effective date of this Decision.

6. The Commission retains jurisdiction to enter further decisions as necessary.

7. This Decision is effective on its Mailed Date.

**B. ADOPTED IN COMMISSIONERS' WEEKLY MEETING
May 21, 2014.**

(S E A L)



ATTEST: A TRUE COPY

Doug Dean,
Director

THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF COLORADO

JOSHUA B. EPEL

GLENN A. VAAD

Commissioners

COMMISSIONER PAMELA J. PATTON
ABSENT.