Rock Island Petitions Removal of Train Control

THE Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific has petitioned the Interstate Commerce Commission for authority to discontinue the maintenance and operation of automatic train control in service on 166.4 miles of double-track main line on the Chicago and the Rock Island divisions between Blue Island, Ill., and Rock Island, which has been in service since November 1, 1923, having been installed in compliance with the commission's order of June 1, 1922. The equipment in service includes 291 roadside ramps and train control apparatus on 87 locomotives.

In the petition the railroad sets forth several reasons for desiring to discard the train control, which are abstracted as follows:

(1) The equipment is obsolete; (2) New high-speed diesel propelled streamline trains are to be introduced on this territory and it is questionable whether the intermittent contact type train control will operate satisfactorily for these new trains; (3) The present automatic block signals were installed in 1907 and 1908 and are reaching a state where they are expensive to maintain, and should be modernized.

4. To increase efficiency of operation it is necessary to modernize handling of traffic by signaling each of the present double-track mains for operation in either direction. Centralized traffic control should be initiated on certain sections and extended over the entire zone, Blue Island to Rock Island, as business conditions warrant. These improvements will require a very considerable capital expenditure, estimated at $500,000. The application of automatic train control devices to the said modernized automatic block signal system will introduce serious complications and very heavy expenses. Such additional expenditures might better be used for the extension of signaling facilities, chiefly automatic block signals, on the other sections of the railroad where such do not now exist.

5. In addition to expenditures for signaling as outlined above on the Chicago and Rock Island divisions, the petitioners are entering on an important expansion program on other parts of the railroad, as outlined in attached statement, identified as Exhibit "A."

6. Operation of the automatic train control devices on the Des Moines division between Davenport, Iowa, and Des Moines, was suspended February 27, 1933. Since that time there have been no accidents or other conditions encountered which would have been prevented if the automatic train control devices had been in service.

7. The Rock Island's record for safety indicates that automatic train control devices are not reasonably necessary on said Chicago and Rock Island divisions. During the five-year period, January 1, 1932 to December 31, 1936, there was not an accident resulting from failure to observe indications of automatic block signals.

8. Maintenance and operation cost of said automatic train control devices on the Chicago and Rock Island divisions, during the year 1935, when every reasonable economy was exercised, amounted to $42,537.00, direct out-of-pocket expense. This expense does not represent the total cost as it does not include the expense incurred on other sections of the railroad where automatic train control devices do not exist, which expenses are occasioned by existence of such automatic train control devices on the Chicago and Rock Island divisions. The Rock Island is confronted with increasing average annual maintenance costs of these control devices by reason of age, obsolescence, and the manufacturer thereof having discontinued business.

9. A summary of accidents investigated and reported on by the Interstate Commerce Commission during the period January 1, 1930 to November 30, 1936, which might reasonably have been prevented by automatic block signals, appears to indicate automatic block signals should have preference for capital expenditures.

10. Annual reports of the Director of the Bureau of Safety to the Interstate Commerce Commission, disclose a gradual elimination of the automatic train control on the railroads of the United States.

The petition closes with a plea that if the commission does not grant the petition to remove the train control or does not take action by April 1, that the Rock Island be permitted to operate the new diesel propelled trains without train control equipment.

EXHIBIT A—PROGRAM FOR MODERNIZING AND EXPANDING SIGNALING

Approved for 1937:

1. Install automatic block signals, Herington, Kan., to Pratt, 126 miles—work in progress	$ 320,000
2. Install automatic block signals, Bureau, Ill., to Peoria, 46 miles—work in progress	127,000
3. Install signals with centralized traffic control, Glenville, Minn., to Albert Lea	28,500
4. Interlock yard switches, Silvis, Ill	15,000
5. Install signals with centralized traffic control, Hulbert, Ark., to Briark (near Memphis, Tenn.)	15,500
6. Install improved railroad crossing protection, mostly automatic interlocking plants at 13 crossings	73,067
7. Miscellaneous relatively small projects distributed over the entire line, 26 projects	34,210
8. Install highway grade crossing protection—25 locations	57,098
Total approved for 1937	$ 670,375

Program for 1938 and subsequent years:

1. Modernize present signals and add reverse running signals between Blue Island, Ill., and Rock Island	$ 500,000
2. Install automatic block signals, Pratt, Kan., to Tucumcari, N.M., (Complete present non-signaled gap of Golden State Route, Chicago to California)	865,000
3. Install automatic block signals, Des Moines to Inver-Grove (St. Paul) Minn.	642,000
4. Install automatic block signals, Des Moines, Iowa to Allerton	188,000
5. Install automatic block signals, Little Rock to Memphis	350,000
6. Install automatic block signals, Belleville to McFarland	260,500
7. Install automatic block signals, Herington to El Reno	587,000
8. Install automatic block signals,, El Reno to Ft. Worth	540,000
9. Install automatic block signals, Belleville to Denver	855,000
10. Install automatic block signals, Omaha to Belleville	380,000
11. Install interlocking joint with U. P. at Topeka where Rock Island leaves and enters joint track, Rock Island proportion	20,000
12. Install remote control operation Rock Island yard connection to U. P. joint track, MP 5, west of Kansas City	20,000
13. Install spring switches, automatic interlockings for various crossings and remote control train order signals, El Reno yards	30,000
14. Add centralized traffic control to present automatic block signals, Allerton, Iowa, to Trenton, Mo.	90,000
15. Add centralized traffic control to present automatic block signals, Lock Springs, to Polo, Mo.	60,000
16. Install 200 spring switches at miscellaneous passing track and yard switches in automatic signal zones, at $500 each	100,000
17. Install 50 spring switches in non-automatic signal territory at $1,500 each	75,000
18. Install automatic or semi-automatic interlocking plants at 25 railroad crossings, average $6,000 each	150,000
	$5,712,500