

SENATE No. 517

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

SPECIAL REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS RELATIVE TO THE FEASIBILITY AND PRACTICABILITY OF REVENUE-PRODUCING HIGHWAYS AND BRIDGES.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
100 NASHUA STREET, BOSTON 14, December 2, 1952.

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The Department of Public Works herewith presents its final report in accordance with the provisions of chapter 61, Resolves of 1952, which reads as follows:

RESOLVE PROVIDING FOR AN INVESTIGATION AND STUDY BY THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS RELATIVE TO THE FEASIBILITY AND PRACTICABILITY OF REVENUE-PRODUCING HIGHWAYS AND BRIDGES.

Resolved, That the department of public works is hereby authorized and directed to make an investigation and study relative to the feasibility and practicability of revenue-producing highways and bridges throughout the commonwealth. Said department shall include in its investigation and study the subject matter of current house document numbered 2371, providing for the maintenance and operation of a toll bridge by the department of public works across the Merrimack river between the city of Newburyport and the town of Amesbury.

Said department shall from time to time report to the general court the results of its investigations and study, and its recommendations, if any, together with estimates of costs and drafts of legislation necessary to carry such recommendations into effect, and shall file a final report with the clerk of the senate not later than the first Wednesday in December, nineteen hundred and fifty-two.

The principle of revenue-producing highways and bridges is well established. For many years there have been toll bridges, but in recent years this method of financing has spread to roads. The principal toll highways in the United States are the Pennsylvania Turnpike, the New Jersey Turnpike, the Maine Turnpike, the New Hampshire Turnpike, the Merritt Parkway (Connecticut), the Boulder-Denver Turnpike (Colorado), the West Virginia Turnpike (authorized), the Ohio Turnpike (authorized), and the Garden State Parkway (New Jersey) (authorized), the New York Thruway (under construction), and the Massachusetts Turnpike (authorized). The revenue-producing bridge projects are too numerous to mention. Altogether, there are about 500 toll highway and bridge projects in the United States.

The common denominator of all these projects and the fact which makes them successful is that they offer a service sufficiently better than competing free facilities that the highway users are willing to pay tolls for the benefits received. No one is forced to use them, there are other roads and bridges which may be used for similar purposes without tolls, yet they are used by great volumes of traffic. The place of the toll road and bridge in our economy is established.

The situation in Massachusetts is perhaps unique. We have been constructing a great system of express highways which will be free from tolls. Route 128, from the Worcester Turnpike to the Newburyport Turnpike, is perhaps the outstanding example. Nevertheless, it is not feasible to collect tolls on this highway because it is necessary, in order to provide full utility in this congested area, to provide frequent ramps and connections. Collection of tolls at each such exit and entrance would build up the cost of toll collection to an uneconomical proportion of the revenues.

The same thing is true, although perhaps to a lesser extent, of the relocation of the Newburyport Turnpike, U. S. Route 1, which is now in progress.

The new Newburyport Turnpike is now completed to Route 62 in Danvers, it is virtually completed and open to travel to Route 97 in Boxford, and is all under construction from that point to and including the bridge over the Merrimack River. The short remaining section from the Merrimack River to the New Hampshire line, where it will connect with the New Hampshire Turnpike, will be placed under contract this winter.

Thus, as things stand, a traveler between the Boston Metropolitan area and Portland, Maine, and points beyond, will travel over a free express highway in Massachusetts, but then, if he wishes to continue on an express highway, will pay a toll on the New Hampshire Turnpike, a toll on the Portsmouth-Kittery Interstate bridge, and a toll on the Maine Turnpike. Plans are now being made to extend the latter to Augusta.

Much of this traffic consists of out of state vehicles, particularly the large trucks.

The estimated traffic volumes on this route in Massachusetts, near the New Hampshire line, are as follows:

YEAR.	Total Vehicles.	Passenger Cars.	Semi-Trailers.	Two-axle and three-axle Trucks.
1955	10,000	8,500	750	750
1965	15,000	12,750	1,125	1,125
1975	20,000	17,000	1,500	1,500

The entire cost of this road in Massachusetts, including the bridge over the Merrimack River, is and will be financed by appropriations from current revenue and from the bond issues of 1949, 1950 and 1952, which are to be repaid from the Highway Fund. However, we do not question that people would be willing to pay a reasonable toll for the use of the road and bridge, provided feasible means were devised.

There is a feasible means. We recommend that tolls be collected for the use of the new Merrimack River bridge in Amesbury and Newburyport and its immediate

approaches. It is true that those wishing to escape the tolls could do so by the use of the Storey Avenue, Newburyport, interchange and the Elm Street, Amesbury, interchange and the free roads and bridges between, but we feel that few would do so.

We further recommend that the gross amount of the tolls be paid to the State Treasurer to the credit of the Highway Fund, subject to appropriation, and that the cost of maintenance and operation of the bridge and approaches be paid from whatever appropriations may be made from the Highway Fund for this purpose.

This possible source of revenue for the Highway Fund should not be overlooked, and a draft of legislation to carry these recommendations into effect is attached.

The Department has considered other possible revenue-producing highways and bridges, but feels that no further recommendation should be made at this time.

Respectfully submitted,

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS.

WILLIAM F. CALLAHAN,
Commissioner.

BENJAMIN H. GROUT,

FRANCIS V. MATERA,

Associate Commissioners.

PROPOSED LEGISLATION.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year One Thousand Nine Hundred and Fifty-Three.

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE MAINTENANCE AND OPERATION OF A TOLL BRIDGE BY THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS ACROSS THE MERRIMACK RIVER BETWEEN THE CITY OF NEWBURYPORT AND THE TOWN OF AMESBURY.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 SECTION 1. The department of public works, here-
2 inafter called the department, is hereby authorized
3 and directed to maintain and operate the bridge now
4 being constructed across the Merrimack river between
5 the city of Newburyport and the town of Amesbury,
6 about two tenths of a mile upstream from the Essex-
7 Merrimack bridge, and its immediate approaches, as
8 a toll bridge, after it is completed. The department
9 shall complete the bridge and approaches with funds
10 heretofore or hereafter appropriated for the construc-
11 tion of state highways, said completion to include
12 any toll plazas, buildings, equipment, machinery and
13 appurtenances that may be necessary for the collec-
14 tion, handling and accounting for the tolls to be col-
15 lected. Expenditures for these purposes shall not be
16 subject to the provisions of chapter ninety-two A of
17 the General Laws.

1 SECTION 2. The department is hereby authorized
2 to fix, revise, charge and collect tolls for the use of
3 the bridge and to contract with any person, partner-
4 ship, association or corporation desiring the use of the
5 bridge, its approaches, and appurtenances or any part
6 thereof, for any purpose, and to fix the terms, condi-
7 tions, rents and rates of charges for such use. Such
8 tolls, rents and rates shall not be subject to supervi-
9 sion or regulation by any department, division, com-
10 mission, board, bureau or agency of the commonwealth
11 or any political subdivision thereof.

1 SECTION 3. The tolls and all other revenues de-
2 rived from the bridge shall be paid into the treasury
3 of the commonwealth and shall be credited to the
4 Highway Fund.

1 SECTION 4. The bridge and its approaches shall be
2 maintained and operated by the department from any
3 appropriation that may be made for the maintenance
4 of state highways.

1 SECTION 5. This act, being necessary for the wel-
2 fare of the commonwealth and its inhabitants, shall
3 be liberally construed to affect the purpose thereof.

1 SECTION 6. All other general or special laws, or
2 parts thereof, inconsistent herewith are hereby de-
3 clared inapplicable to the provisions of this act.

