

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts.**FINAL REPORT OF THE DIVISION OF METROPOLITAN PLANNING
(UNDER CHAPTER 68 OF THE RESOLVES OF 1923) RELATIVE
TO A ROUTE FOR A PARKWAY AND TRAFFIC ROAD FROM BOS-
TON TO THE MIDDLESEX FELS PARKWAY VIA WELLINGTON
BRIDGE.**DIVISION OF METROPOLITAN PLANNING,
December 14, 1923.*To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives:*

The General Court of 1923 passed the following Resolve, Chapter 68, approved May 25, 1923.

Resolved, That the division of metropolitan planning is hereby directed to continue the investigation, initiated under chapter fifty-one of the resolves of nineteen hundred and twenty-two, for the purpose of selecting a route for a parkway and traffic road from Boston to the Middlesex Fells parkway via Wellington bridge and of preparing plans for, and determining methods for financing the construction of the same. Said division shall file its report of the results of such investigation, together with its recommendations, estimates of costs and drafts of proposed legislation, with the clerk of the house of representatives on or before October fifteenth in the current year and at the same time shall file a copy of the same with the budget commissioner as a part of the budget estimates required to be submitted under section four of chapter twenty-nine of the General Laws.

On October 12, 1923, this Division submitted a preliminary report stating that it was investigating the matter, was collecting data, and would submit its final report before the Legislature of 1924 convened.

Accordingly, we herewith beg leave to submit our complete report on the subject matter of Chapter 68 of the Resolves of 1923. This route is frequently referred to as the "Northern Gateway".

A thoroughfare in this location has been recommended in several reports. The earlier reports were submitted when traffic conditions were markedly different from to-day. These various reports favored routes varying in detail, the starting point of each being the same, that is the Fellsway in Somerville, with differing points of termination on Massachusetts Avenue north of Harvard bridge. In the Metropolitan Improvements Commission report of 1909 the route followed Edmands and Dana Streets, private land to Cross Street at the railroad, thence via Medford and Portland streets to Albany street and thence by a new street over the Grand Junction Branch of the Boston & Albany Railroad to Massachusetts avenue.

The report of the Joint Board on Metropolitan Improvements in 1911 favored a route similar to the above described as far as the Cross street bridge and Medford street, thence by a new street to the junction of Prospect street and Webster avenue from which point routes by way of Portland and Windsor streets, Columbia street and Norfolk street to Massachusetts avenue were all considered. The report of a Joint Committee consisting of the Massachusetts Highway Commission and the Metropolitan Park Commission in 1917 recommended a new highway from Broadway park to Columbia street near the Cambridge line, whence several good connections could be made with Columbia street and other streets leading to Harvard bridge, the Cambridge bridge and the Dam. The report of a special Commission consisting of the Commissioner of Public Works and the Commissioner of the Metropolitan District Commission was prepared and submitted in 1923 under

a resolve which was interpreted by these authorities to mean the providing of as nearly a direct route as possible from Wellington bridge to Harvard bridge. This route favored the widening of Cross street from Middlesex avenue to Medford street by a new street to and across Washington street and Somerville avenue and by a viaduct over the Fitchburg Division to Windsor street thence by widening of Windsor street to Massachusetts avenue, the layout being suggested at a width of 100 feet.

The Cambridge Board of Trade and other Cambridge organizations have favorably considered a route crossing Cambridge on the general line of Brookline street ending at the northerly terminus of the Cottage Farm bridge. This route has many advantages as a crosstown route connecting the Wellington bridge with the Cottage Farm bridge, but it does not offer direct and convenient connection to the heart of Boston. It is longer and for that reason more expensive than any of the other routes and it seems to have more of local than of metropolitan application. We think it an improvement which may well be undertaken by the City of Cambridge in the near future. If Cambridge constructs its portion of the route only a short link will be required in Somerville to connect the northerly terminus of this route with the Northern Gateway route which we recommend in this report.

The resolve under which we are acting directs us to report on a parkway and traffic road from Boston to the Middlesex Fells parkway via Wellington bridge and gives us the widest latitude as to the choice of a route. We believe the route to be selected should take into account the following considerations:

First. — The directness of the route from the Wellington bridge to the center of Boston;

Second. — The number of intersecting highways. Obviously a route with many intersections is slower and more dangerous than a route that is comparatively free of cross and entering streets;

Third. — Economy in cost;

Fourth. — Result upon real estate affected, including that taken for improvement and that receiving a direct or consequential betterment.

Taking into consideration all of these factors we have selected a route which starts at the end of the Fellsway at Broadway, Somerville and proceeds by a new street from 110 feet to 120 feet wide (located in part over private property in the vicinity of Melvin, Edmands, Dana and Aldrich streets and partially over existing streets) to the southerly division of the Boston & Maine Railroad at the westerly end of Auburn place, thence crossing the railroad on a new bridge 60 feet wide. Medford street is intersected near Chester avenue a short distance east of the fire station. Medford street is then widened on its northerly side to a width of 120 feet to Shawmut street. The triangular block between Medford street, Shawmut street and Washington street is taken in its entirety and the widening then proceeds at the width of at least 100 feet on the easterly side of Medford street to Somerville avenue. Somerville avenue in Somerville and Bridge street in Cambridge is then widened from the junction of Medford street through Somerville and Cambridge to the Charles River Dam, the widening being on the northerly side as far as Lechmere Square and on the southerly side of Lechmere Square to the Dam.

The County Commissioners of Middlesex County have recently decreed a widening of Bridge street to a width of 75 feet from the Somerville line to Third street. This widening is included as a part of the above-described layout.

The route then turns westerly as a parkway along the banks of the Charles River to the end of the Cambridge Esplanade at the Cambridge bridge. This last section along the Charles River follows the recommendations already made by the Metropolitan District Commission for the extension of the Cambridge Esplanade to the Dam. The Metropolitan District Commission advocates the taking of the entire strip 260 feet in width between the river and Commercial street creating not only a parkway but a park. On the other hand, the City of Cambridge is anxious that a part of all of this land be developed as sites for factories. We do not attempt to pass upon this matter, but we do say that a strip at least 100 feet wide should be taken along the banks of the Charles River over which a suitable parkway can be constructed. This parkway is necessary not only

as a link in the Northern Gateway but for the completion of the parkway system on the Cambridge side of the Charles River.

This route is essentially different from the routes suggested in former reports in that it leads directly to the heart of Boston rather than to the Cambridge end of the Massachusetts avenue bridge. We believe that the great bulk of the pleasure and business travel over this route desires to reach the center of Boston and the route suggested by us is by far the shortest and most direct route to any portion of Boston below Charles street. The Boston Planning Board is suggesting the widening and relocation of streets from the Boston end of the Dam to Scollay and Bowdoin squares. These widenings are most desirable and will greatly facilitate the entry of traffic into Boston over the Northern Gateway route suggested by us.

People desiring to reach the Harvard bridge, the Cottage Farm bridge or other points to the west can do so readily and quickly by turning at the Dam on to the new Cambridge Esplanade, which will act as a distributing thoroughfare to the various bridges crossing the basin into Boston. The widening and extension of Essex street proposed by the officials of Brookline will offer a direct connection between the Cottage Farm bridge and the Jamaica Plain parkway at the Longwood Avenue bridge and the Northern Gateway and this Brookline extension will give a connection between traffic routes on the north and the south of Boston without the necessity of passing through the congested area of the Metropolitan District. We also believe that the route selected by us will be of the greatest service to business traffic.

The Northern Gateway route suggested by us naturally divides itself into three sections:

(a) The section from the end of the Fellsway to Medford street.

We feel this should be constructed, maintained and controlled by the Metropolitan District Commission as a parkway. Cross street one block distant offers a good route for business traffic and makes it feasible to reserve this first section of the Northern Gateway as a parkway.

(b) The portion of the route along Medford street, Somerville avenue and Bridge street.

We believe this section should be constructed by the Public Works Department but when constructed should be turned over to the Cities of Somerville and Cambridge to be maintained by them as streets. As this portion of the route will have both business and pleasure traffic the layout provides, for the greater part of the distance, for separate roadways for these two classes of traffic. On Somerville avenue it is not considered necessary at present to widen the bridge over the Fitchburg Division or the inclined approaches on either side. A development of rapid transit in this location will possibly result in the discontinuance of the surface tracks of the Boston Elevated on Somerville avenue and Bridge street, and in any event we believe that no widening of this bridge should be made until actual experience with traffic shall show that it is necessary.

(c) The section along the Charles River from the Dam to the Cambridge bridge.

This we believe should be constructed and maintained by the Metropolitan District Commission as a parkway, as Commercial street offers a parallel route for business traffic.

Our estimate of the costs of this route are as follows:

	Land Damages.	Construction Cost.	Total.
Section (a): Parkway from the Fellsway to Medford street	\$300,300	\$284,400	\$584,700
Section (b): Widening of Medford street, Somerville avenue and Bridge street	\$738,700	\$453,700	\$1,192,400
Section (c): Parkway along the Charles River from the Dam to the Cambridge bridge	\$350,000	\$227,900	\$577,900
Totals	\$1,389,000	\$966,000	\$2,355,000

We believe this route will cost from approximately \$750,000 less than any other route.

There are grave questions of policy involved in the division of the costs of the Northern Gateway, but we are clear that Section (a) and Section (c) should be parkways paid for by the Metropolitan District Commission. Section (b) along Medford street, Somerville avenue and Bridge street is not only a through highway, but also a local street of great value. It is accordingly our feeling that the State through the Department of Public Works, the Cities of Cambridge and Somerville and possibly Middlesex County, should each bear a part of the cost. In the bill accompanying this report we have not specified a division of the cost of Section (b).

In summation we would say that the route selected appears to be the most direct and least expensive route to the heart of Boston and the route which has the smallest number of intersections and is therefore the quickest and safest for travel.

Respectfully submitted,

DIVISION OF METROPOLITAN PLANNING,

HENRY I. HARRIMAN, *Chairman.*

A. C. RATSHESKY.

RALPH S. BAUER.

RICHARD K. HALE.

EVERETT E. STONE.

FRANK G. HALL.

FRANCIS E. SLATTERY.

H. I. HARRIMAN, *Chairman.*

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A TRAFFIC WAY FROM BOSTON TO THE MIDDLESEX FELS PARKWAY.

Be it enacted, etc., as follows:

SECTION 1. For the purpose of providing a convenient and adequate route for vehicular traffic between Boston and the territory north and east thereof, there shall be laid out and constructed, to the width of not less than one hundred feet, parkways and traffic roads constituting a continuous roadway along the following course: — Beginning at the terminus of the Fellsway at Broadway park and Broadway in the city of Somerville, thence proceeding over private property and existing streets in the vicinity of Melvin, Edmands, Dana and Aldrich streets to Medford street, thence along the line of Medford street to Somerville avenue, thence along the line of Somerville avenue and Bridge street to the Cambridge terminus of the Charles River Dam and thence westerly along the banks of the Charles river to the terminus of the present Cambridge Esplanade parkway near Cambridge bridge. Those sections of the said roadway leading from Broadway to Medford street and from the Charles River Dam to the terminus of the Cambridge Esplanade parkway shall be laid out, constructed and maintained as metropolitan boulevards by the metropolitan district commission in the manner provided by chapter ninety-two of the General Laws. The remaining sections of said roadway, hereinafter called street sections, shall be laid out and constructed by the division of highways of the department of public works, and shall thereafter be maintained and kept in repair by the city in which the same are located. For the aforesaid purpose, said division may exercise all the powers conferred upon it by chapter eighty-one of the General Laws relative to the construction of state highways.

SECTION 2. The entire cost of constructing said parkways and street sections, including land takings, shall, in the first instance, be paid by the commonwealth, and for the purpose of constructing said street sections there may be expended from the motor vehicles fees fund a sum not exceeding _____ dollars. In order to provide for the balance of said cost the state treasurer may issue and sell

at public or private sale bonds of the commonwealth, registered or with interest coupons attached, as he may deem best, to an amount not exceeding two million three hundred and fifty-five thousand dollars, and for such terms as may be recommended by the governor to the general court in accordance with section three of article LXII of the amendments to the constitution, and bearing such rates of interest as the said treasurer may fix, with the approval of the governor and council. Separate accounts shall be kept by the treasurer of the costs incurred hereunder by the metropolitan district commission and by the division of highways.

SECTION 3. Upon the completion of the work hereinbefore authorized and the ascertainment of the cost thereof, so much thereof as was incurred by the metropolitan district commission in constructing said parkways shall be assessed on the metropolitan district in accordance with the provisions of chapter ninety-two of the General Laws, and so much thereof as was incurred by the division of highways in constructing said street sections shall be assessed as follows:— Upon the county of Middlesex, per cent; upon the city of Cambridge, per cent; and upon the city of Somerville, per cent. "Cost" as herein used, shall include interest on bonds issued as aforesaid.

