

**REPORT OF THE
NORFOLK-VIRGINIA BEACH EXPRESSWAY STUDY
COMMISSION**

To

THE GOVERNOR

And

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA



Senate Document No. 10

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
Department of Purchases and Supply**

Richmond

1977

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**NORFOLK-VIRGINIA BEACH EXPRESSWAY STUDY
COMMISSION**

Report of the

Commission on the Expressway

to

The Governor and The General Assembly of Virginia

Richmond, Virginia

November, 1976

TO: Honorable Mills E. Godwin, Jr., Governor of Virginia

and

The General Assembly of Virginia

INTRODUCTION

The 1976 Virginia General Assembly, responding to the needs of the citizens of Norfolk and Virginia Beach and to the transportation needs of the Commonwealth as a whole, passed the following resolution establishing a commission to study all aspects of the Norfolk-Virginia Beach Expressway:

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 58

Creating a Commission to Study the Norfolk-Virginia Beach Expressway.

WHEREAS, Interstate Highway 64, as proposed, extends primarily without tolls from St. Louis, Missouri to the boundary line of the city of Virginia Beach, Virginia, only 12.1 miles from the Atlantic Ocean; and

WHEREAS, the Norfolk-Virginia Beach Expressway connects Interstate 64 with the Atlantic Ocean and is unfortunately a toll road; and

WHEREAS, the Highway and Transportation Commission as the custodian of this facility receives more than \$4.5 million per year in revenue, but after eight years of operation, has reduced the initial bonded indebtedness of \$34 million by only \$3,385,000, with the bonds presently scheduled to not be retired until the year 2005; and

WHEREAS, it is highly desirable that a way be found whereby the financial obligations of the Norfolk-Virginia Beach Toll Road be retired as quickly as possible so that this road may become toll free and may be incorporated into the Interstate Highway System; and

WHEREAS, the existence of the Norfolk-Virginia Beach Expressway as a toll facility works a special financial hardship upon persons who use that highway in commuting daily to and from their places of work, and other frequent users of the toll road, because the Norfolk-Virginia Beach Expressway does not make available any form of reduced-rate commuter privileges for those making regular and extensive use of the highway; and

WHEREAS, the Richmond-Petersburg Turnpike and other toll facilities in Virginia offer books of commuter tickets at a lesser cost than individual fares; and

WHEREAS, it is desirable that some means be found whereby the existing burden upon users of the Expressway may be reduced or eliminated; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That there is hereby created the Norfolk-Virginia Beach Expressway Commission. The Commission shall study all aspects of the Norfolk-Virginia Beach Expressway which studies shall include, but not be confined to, the investigation of (i) the facility's current debt service plan, its management and investment of its funds, and how the financial obligations of the Expressway may be most expeditiously retired, (ii) the planned improvement program of the facility and how it may be improved without lengthening the period during which tolls will need to be imposed on users of the Expressway, (iii) the current operations and the operating expenses of the facility and (iv) means by which special commuter tickets can be provided without jeopardizing the Expressway's revenues.

The Commission shall have the right to call public hearings and shall have the right to prepare for consideration such legislation as it may deem appropriate, on the basis of its study. The Commission shall also have the right to make such other recommendation as it may deem appropriate.

The Commission shall consist of seven members, four to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates from the membership therein, three to be appointed by the Committee on Privileges and Elections of the Senate from the membership of the Senate. If a vacancy occurs for any reason, the appropriate above named person or persons shall appoint a successor. The Division of Legislative Services shall serve as staff to the Commission.

The members of the Commission shall receive such compensation as authorized by law for members of the General Assembly and be reimbursed for their expenses incurred during the conduct of the study.

The Commission may call upon the State Department of Highways and Transportation and other State departments and

agencies, and all governing bodies and agencies of all political subdivisions of the State, for such technical assistance and information as may be needed by the Commission, all of whom shall assist the Commission upon request in the performance of its duties.

The Commission may also obtain the services of private persons or any organizations having knowledge, expertise and interest in the matters to be considered by the Commission.

The Commission shall complete its study and report to the Governor and the General Assembly not later than December one, nineteen hundred seventy-six.

Pursuant to the directive of this resolution, the following persons were appointed from the membership of the two houses of the General Assembly to serve on the Commission: Senator Joseph T. Fitzpatrick of Norfolk, Senator Peter K. Babalas of Norfolk, Senator A. Joe Canada, Jr. of Virginia Beach, Delegate Glenn B. McClanan of Virginia Beach, Delegate George N. McMath of Accomac, Delegate William T. Parker of Chesapeake and Delegate Robert E. Washington of Norfolk. The Commission's membership selected Delegate Glenn B. McClanan to serve as Commission Chairman, and Senator Joseph T. Fitzpatrick to serve as Commission Vice Chairman.

The Commission met four times during the course of its study. Two of the meetings included public hearings, one of which was held in Virginia Beach, the other in Norfolk. The Commission received testimony from individual citizens and representatives of interested citizen groups in the Norfolk-Virginia Beach region. The cities of Norfolk and Virginia Beach, as well as the Southeastern Virginia Planning District Commission also assisted the Study Commission with testimonial contributions. The Commission also enjoyed close cooperation offered by the Department of Highways and Transportation, the Office of the Attorney General, and Virginia National Bank. The materials and statistics provided by the State agency, often on short notice, benefited the study greatly.

The testimony received led the Commission to three major areas of concern (1) a reduction in the Expressway tolls now; (2) a complete elimination of the tolls as soon as possible; and (3) that necessary improvements be made immediately.

The Commission finds that the imposition of the toll on the users of the Expressway, a major conductor of traffic between the cities of Norfolk and Virginia Beach, is an unfair burden on commuters, especially low income groups. The Commission also finds that the presence of the toll represents, in essence, a second tax on the users of the Expressway who must already pay gasoline taxes in order to finance State highway construction and maintenance. In recognition of this double burden on Expressway users and of the fact that revenue received by the facility greatly exceeds the original projections (Appendix A) and current expenses, the Commission finds it both just and reasonable to apply this surplus to the prompt redemption of bonded indebtedness, and that

the tolls be lifted from the facility at the earliest possible time. In the absence of means to immediately eliminate the Expressway tolls, the Commission finds that, within the constraints imposed by the trust indenture of the bond issue which financed the Expressway, a reduced commuter rate is warranted for the facility's frequent users.

The Commission also finds that improvements to the Norfolk-Virginia Beach Expressway are necessary to serve the transportation needs of Virginia's fastest growing city, tourists and the region's business and other residents. The enormous expansion in the use of the Expressway has greatly surpassed the original projections for the facility. A contributing factor to this expanded use has been the explosive growth of population experienced by Virginia Beach (from 88,000 to 240,000 during a thirteen year period) and surrounding areas. The Department of Highways and Transportation, responding to the heavy traffic and congestion experienced by users of the Expressway, has planned and has recently begun to contract for Expressway expansion and improvements, which, when complete, promise to alleviate some of the Expressway's most pressing problems. However, it is recognized that the most serious problem is the congested and dangerous existing situation at the intersection of Interstate 264, Interstate 64 and Route 44 through the Newtown Road interchange, and the Commission exhorts the Department of Highways and Transportation to immediately proceed to provide necessary improvements at this location.

The Commission commends the Department of Highways and Transportation for its interest in seeking measures to remedy these highway needs; however, the Commission shares in the concern voiced by many citizens during the Commission's public hearings that the Department's method of financing these improvements through toll revenues will perpetuate the toll problem experienced by the facility's users. The continued use of toll revenues for Expressway improvement rather than the prompt retirement of bonded indebtedness will result in the continuation of the current inequitable situation in which Expressway users pay tolls in addition to contributing, through the payment of gasoline taxes, to the general highway funds which finance highway projects in other parts of the State. Therefore, the Commission finds that an equitable highway policy within the Commonwealth requires that the Department of Highways and Transportation immediately undertake the necessary improvements to the Norfolk-Virginia Beach Expressway and the I-64, I-264, Route 44 Intersection through Newtown Road, financing such improvements from sources other than the Expressway's toll revenues, thereby dedicating the toll revenues to the elimination of the Expressway's tolls through the prompt retirement of the facility's bonded indebtedness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the testimony received, other information obtained by members of the Commission and recommendations made by

them, and upon considerable deliberation, the Commission makes the following recommendations:

(1) That, rather than extending the making of the following improvements to the Expressway through 1983, that they be completed immediately and before the end of 1977:

(a) Adding an additional lane to both the east and westbound sides of the Expressway from Plaza Trail west to the I-64 interchange.

(b) Adding an additional lane to both sides of the Central Toll Plaza.

(c) Finishing the ramp improvements and the other planned improvements at the Rosemont Road and Independence Boulevard interchanges.

(2) That, thereafter, Norfolk-Virginia Beach Expressway toll revenue should be applied only to bond redemption, less essential costs, and, that the Expressway be made toll free by December 1983, or the earliest possible date before or thereafter, thereby eliminating the tolls more than 20 years ahead of the scheduled year of 2005.

(3) That the proposed improvements at the intersection of I-264 and I-64 and the Expressway east through Newtown Road be completed as soon as possible, with federal Interstate Highway funds, or Federal Aid Urban System Funds and that the planning for and implementation of such improvements should proceed immediately and the Department of Highways and Transportation is hereby directed to proceed accordingly.

(4) That a 15¢ commuter rate be provided for use at the Central Toll Plaza, with books of tickets at a cost not to exceed \$7.50 for a book of fifty (50) tickets and \$3.75 for a book of twenty-five (25) tickets, for use during a period of no less than six months from the date of issue. The book price should be kept low so as to be affordable by persons with lower incomes, as suggested by Delegate Bernard Barrow and others. These books of tickets should be available for purchase at all offices of the City Treasurer of Virginia Beach, at all banking locations of Virginia National Bank in Virginia Beach and Norfolk and at such other banks in the two cities as are willing to provide the service, at little or no cost, and by mail from an office of the Virginia Department of Highways and Transportation. As requested by Delegate George H. Heilig, this commuter rate should be made effective no later than February 1, 1977, to coincide with the reduction of the tolls on the Elizabeth River Tunnels.

(5) That the Expressway, which was designed for inclusion in the Interstate Highway System, be so included at the earliest possible date, and that efforts to accomplish this goal should be diligently pursued by the State Department of Highways and Transportation until accomplished.

(6) That preliminary planning proceed for a full interchange at First Colonial Road and for an eastbound off ramp and a westbound on ramp at Great Neck Road.

(7) That vehicles bearing valid Virginia "Public Use" license plates be permitted to pass the Central Toll Plaza without charge, if legally possible.

(8) That the Department of State Police shall patrol the Expressway as upon the Interstate Highways in the Commonwealth, without "special" or "extra" compensation from toll funds.

(9) That the Department of Highways and Transportation continue to repair and maintain the Expressway without the use of toll funds, utilizing procedures and practices designed to minimize inconvenience to the users of the facility.

(10) That, whereas, the Expressway leads to the area receiving perhaps more tourists and guests to the Commonwealth than any other location in Virginia, and whereas, the people of Virginia Beach and Norfolk have a strong desire that our primary pathway to the sea be very attractively maintained; therefore, the grass and shrubbery on all the Expressway right of way, including ramp and toll collection approaches, the sides of the inclines, beside the highway itself, and the median shall be kept trimmed and well maintained at all times; that litter shall be kept picked up; and that the ornamental horticulture and landscaping generally in medians and at the ramps shall be substantially improved.

(11) That Virginia National Bank, as Trustee of the toll funds, is respectfully urged to maximize in every feasible way the revenue earned from the investment of toll funds, and that the Department of Highways and Transportation and the Office of the Attorney General shall provide full cooperation and a regular review to help assure that this is accomplished.

(12) That the Department of Highways and Transportation should annually compute the amount of revenue received by it during the preceding year from the motor fuel tax as the result of vehicles using the toll road, subtracting from the said sum the amount spent on maintenance of the road during the said preceding year, and apply the balance to the redemption of the Expressway bonds, as requested by Delegate Owen B. Pickett.

(13) That should a disaster threaten or strike the City of Virginia Beach, which, in the determination of the City of Virginia Beach Emergency Services Director or his designated alternate, in the interest of public safety requires mass evacuation utilizing the Norfolk-Virginia Beach Expressway, all westbound vehicles should be allowed to pass through the toll plaza free of charge for such period as the said Director shall determine to be necessary, not to exceed twenty-four (24) hours, if legally possible.

(14) That a minimum speed limit be established and posted and that signs be erected advising slower traffic to keep right.

(15) That all future contracts for construction on the Expressway or locations immediately affecting the flow of traffic thereon shall include a provision that all reasonable efforts shall be exercised so as not to perform work during peak traffic periods in the morning and evening that will impede the flow of traffic on the Expressway or the western approach thereto.

(16) That the users of the Expressway should be encouraged to utilize mass transit and car pooling; and to these ends, that a mass transit lane, westbound during the peak traffic in the morning and eastbound during the peak traffic in the evening, be established for the use of buses, cars or trucks carrying more than three persons and other vehicles designated for the purpose of carrying multiple persons, at such time as same is found to be in the public interest.

(17) That a reversible lane system be used during morning and evening peak traffic periods to add an additional lane for use by westbound traffic in the morning and by eastbound traffic in the evening, as soon as the system is feasible and determined to be reasonably safe in the public interest, as suggested by the Chief Transportation Planner of the Southeastern Virginia Planning District Commission.

(18) That an annual report be prepared each year by the Department of Highways and Transportation until both the following shall have occurred, to-wit: (i) the Expressway is made toll free, and (ii) the Expressway has been included in the Interstate System, such report to include:

(a) An itemized list by category of the income and expenses of the facility for the preceding calendar or fiscal year.

(b) A listing of the investment revenue from the facility and the income derived therefrom.

(c) The principal amount of the bonds retired during the period.

(d) The principal amount of the bonds still to be retired.

(e) Activities and the results thereof directed toward the inclusion of the Expressway in the Interstate System.

This report shall be mailed each year to the City Managers of Virginia Beach and Norfolk, the members of the City Councils of Virginia Beach and Norfolk, and to the persons presently constituting the Norfolk-Virginia Beach Expressway Study Commission.

Respectfully submitted,

Glenn B. McClanan, Chairman

Joseph T. Fitzpatrick, Vice Chairman

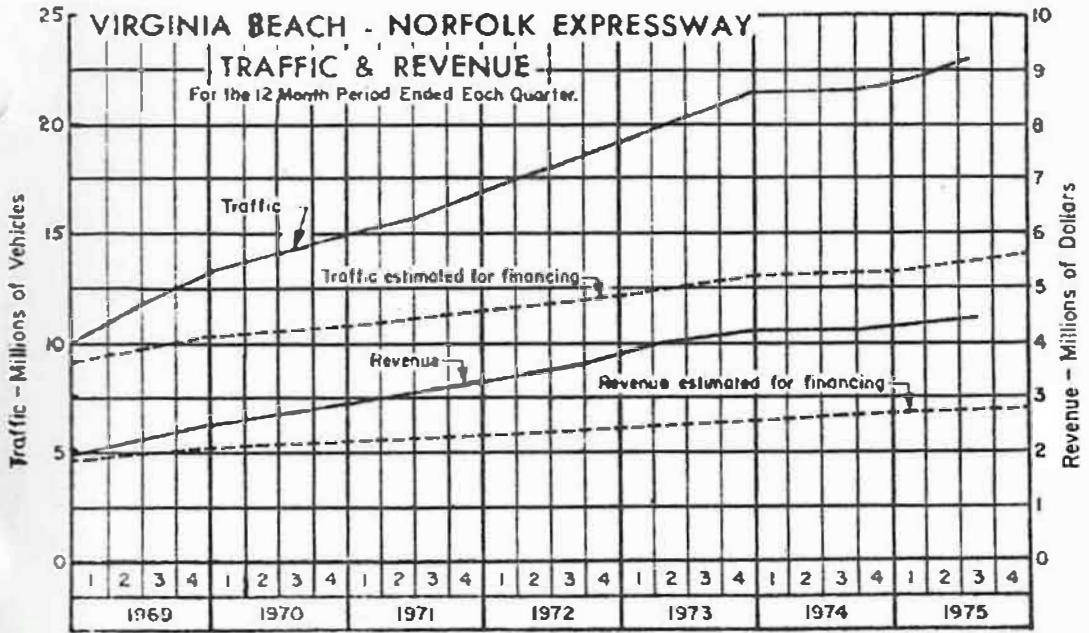
Peter K. Babalas

A. Joe Canada, Jr.

George N. McMath

William T. Parker

Robert E. Washington



Howard, Needles, Tammen & Bergendorf, "Eighth Annual Report to the Virginia Department of Highways and Transportation on the Condition and Operation of the Virginia Beach-Norfolk Expressway", October, 1975, p. 3.

