

**The Development of the Long Island Motor Parkway
as an Alternative to the Construction of a New
Northern Parkway on Long Island**

A REPORT

BY

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NASSAU COUNTY CITIZENS COMMITTEE

An Association of taxpayers owning property in Nassau County, organized
May 14, 1929:

"To co-operate with town, county and state authorities and
with all associations and agencies interested in the planning of
Nassau County for the development of the county in the best
interests of all its citizens; and to oppose any projects which would
unnecessarily damage or impair any section of the county."

As of October 14, 1929, there were 258 members of the association owning
over 17,000 acres in northern Nassau County, or more than 26 square miles.

CHARLES P. STEWART
Executive Secretary
471 Franklin Avenue
Mineola, L. I.

REPORT ON THE RELATIVE MERITS OF THE ACQUISITION AND
DEVELOPMENT OF THE EXISTING LONG ISLAND MOTOR PARK-
WAY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW NORTHERN
PARKWAY AS PROPOSED BY THE LONG ISLAND
STATE PARK COMMISSION.

By HENRY VINCENT HUBBARD

OCTOBER 14, 1929.

*Nassau County Citizens Committee,
471 Franklin Ave.,
Mineola, L. I.*

GENTLEMEN :

The following is a brief summary of my views regarding the merits of the plans proposed by the Long Island State Park Commission for a northern parkway on Long Island, in comparison with the merits of the proposed development of the present Long Island Motor Parkway route as a public parkway.

I think that, weighing all the features of the two plans, the development of the Long Island Motor Parkway would be a better proposition from a strictly public standpoint than the construction of a new parkway on the route proposed by the State Park Commission. The following considerations lead me to this conclusion :

(1) The existing Motor Parkway is on a right of way approximately 100' wide throughout its length, issuing from the Nassau Boulevard in the Borough of Queens nine miles from the Queensboro Bridge, and running for forty-five miles to Lake Ronkonkoma. It is hardly conceivable that an already existing right of way of this width and length and great public value should be left in private ownership. It seems to me logical and inevitable that it should be taken over by the public. This has been the history of many hundreds of such private rights of way in the past. Assuming the proper development of the Motor Parkway route I believe it can serve substantially the same purposes as the proposed new route which we are comparing with it. Therefore I think it would involve unnecessary duplication and extravagant use of public funds to construct a parkway on a wholly new right of way as proposed by the Park Commission.

(2) The announced plan of the Park Commission calls for starting a northern parkway at a point about sixteen miles by road from the Queensboro Bridge, whereas the present western terminus of the existing Motor Parkway is, as above stated, only nine miles by road from the Queensboro Bridge. This difference of seven miles in the approach to Manhattan Island seems to me of great public value and importance, because since the essence of the parkway scheme is to eliminate grade crossings it is obvious that the nearer to the center of population you can get a grade-eliminated thoroughfare the more conveniently can traffic move to and from the city. This is a substantial present advantage in favor of the existing Motor Parkway route. In saying this I am not unmindful that it has been proposed that the Park Commission's route may be con-

ected with the projected Grand Central Parkway. To accomplish this, however, would require the acquisition of considerably more new right of way, and in order to make the two routes comparable in respect to grade elimination large expense would be involved in making eliminations to a point as near New York as the Motor Parkway now runs.

(3) So far as efficiency of use goes, the Long Island Motor Parkway route, properly developed, would seem to me clearly more useful to the general public than that proposed by the Park Commission. This is so in the first place because the Motor Parkway route comes nearer to a number of large communities than the Park Commission's route, including Mineola, Garden City and Westbury. The Long Island Motor Parkway for a considerable part of its length runs through land which is developing as small homes and should develop in this way as a matter of balanced regional planning. It thus at once offers its advantages to the greatest number of people at the shortest range, and encourages a type of development desirable in this place. Increased land values, among other things, will reflect this benefit. Moreover the Motor Parkway route would directly serve the aviation field district including Roosevelt and Mitchel Fields and the area east of Roosevelt Field which promises to be a great aviation center. Looking to the future, first rate transportation to those fields will be of great public importance. The Motor Parkway route runs now to Lake Ronkonkoma, extending some nine miles beyond the most easterly point of the Park Commission's route, providing a route of attractive appearance from the city to this recreation area. Furthermore this extension to Lake Ronkonkoma lends itself to additional extension further down the Island to the east in Suffolk County. It may be also added that the Motor Parkway route intersects the proposed route of the Park Commission in Suffolk County and, therefore, fits in with the plan for a loop route joining the Southern State Parkway.

(4) The next question is as to the relative merits of the two proposals from the standpoint of beauty and attractiveness. The Motor Parkway route for its first eight miles on the westerly end runs through an open, rolling country still undeveloped and very attractive. Also on the east near the Nassau-Suffolk line it enters a farming district and then a wooded section, continuing through the hills of Suffolk and all the way to Lake Ronkonkoma through country of an attractive character. Formerly the Park Commission route was laid out along the north shore ridge and on high ground throughout Nassau County. However, the latest modification of that route loops it sharply to the south, west of Jericho, down into flat country, thus greatly reducing its original "scenic" features. Accordingly the chief difference is in a space of some six miles from about East Williston to a mile or so west of Jericho. Over this six mile distance the Park Commission route runs through the Old Westbury-Wheatley Hills section, while the Motor Parkway route is running on the flat country south of Roslyn and Westbury. Over this six mile distance it has been argued that the Park Commission route would be the more attractive. This assumes, however, that this country would remain the same after the construction of a great boulevard through it. I do not believe, however, that it would remain the same. In the long run the abutting property would mostly be broken up into small holdings so that on either route the ultimate beauty to be obtained from the abutting property would be much the same. By proper landscaping the Motor Parkway route could be made quite attractive over this "plains stretch". In any case any difference here only relates to a small proportion of the total route

and, comparing the two routes from start to finish, I do not regard the claim that the Park Commission's route would be more attractive of sufficient weight to counterbalance the various other advantages of the Motor Parkway route.

(5) In my opinion also it is a point in favor of the Motor Parkway route that it does *not* run through any part of the highly developed Wheatley Hills section. The proposed route of the Park Commission—running as it does through some of the most beautiful parts of Wheatley Hills section—would over a period of years tend to change the use of that section, making it less attractive for large open holdings. Even if the final result of the parkway in this Wheatley Hills district as proposed by the Park Commission would be to raise the total land values because of the change in the use of this land from large to small holdings, the community at large would lose by the disappearance of the large holdings, both because it would lose the possibility of going on public roads through beautiful scenery kept up by private expense, and because in the future this beautiful scenery might well be used by the community at large for public purposes. It could be changed with comparatively little expense at any time from its present open condition to use as public open space, whereas if it comes to be occupied in small private holdings it would be practically impossible to make such a change. In other words, it is, in my opinion, a short-sighted and fallacious policy from a strictly public standpoint to destroy or impair a fine open section of this character, unless this is absolutely necessary from the transportation standpoint. Since, as above pointed out, the Motor Parkway alternative would serve transportation needs equally well, or better, the impairment of the present character of Wheatley Hills district is not in any sense now necessary or in the public interest.

(6) The question may be raised as to the comparative costs of the two propositions. An essential point here is that the comparison should be of fairly comparable things. The Motor Parkway route is forty-five miles long and extends, with grades eliminated, to within nine miles of the Queensboro Bridge. To compare with this the cost of a route thirty miles long and starting seven miles further from the Queensboro Bridge would be manifestly unfair. To make a true comparison there would have to be added to the estimated costs of the Park Commission for a parkway starting sixteen miles from the Queensboro Bridge (at the F. W. Allen property) the cost of right of way, construction, grade elimination, etc. to a point seven miles nearer the Bridge; and even then there would be some discrepancy since the Motor Parkway route would be forty-five miles long as against about thirty-seven for such an extended Park Commission route. I am not aware of any estimates for making a seven mile extension westwards of the Park Commission's route, but obviously it would be expensive. On the basis of a true comparison of fairly comparable things—as to width and length of right of way, grade eliminations, pavement, etc.—I see no reason to suppose that the relative total cost to the taxpayers of these alternative propositions would substantially differ.

My judgment is, therefore, having in mind the various factors above referred to, that the adoption of the Motor Parkway route would be a sounder proposition and more in the interests of the public than the adoption of the Park Commission's route.

Very truly yours,

HENRY V. HUBBARD
(of Olmsted Brothers).