

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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STATE OF MAINE
ONE HUNDRED AND FOURTH LEGISLATURE
HIGHWAY STUDY COMMITTEE

REPORT

on

S T A T E H I G H W A Y C O M M I S S I O N

TO THE 105TH LEGISLATURE

JANUARY 27, 1971

SENATE

SEN. EDWIN H. GREELEY, CHAIRMAN
SEN. CARL E. CIANCHETTE
SEN. WAKINE G. TANDUS



HOUSE

REP. ROOSEVELT SUSI, VICE-CHAIRMAN
REP. PARIS J. SNOW
REP. HAROLD E. BARNES, SR.
REP. CHESTER L. BURNHAM

STATE OF MAINE

ONE HUNDRED AND FOURTH LEGISLATURE

HIGHWAY STUDY COMMITTEE

January 27, 1971

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE 105TH LEGISLATURE:

This Committee was established by Joint Senate Order No. 545 of the 104th Legislature. It was directed by the Legislature to inquire into questions of improvement and economy concerning revenues, expenditures, policies, functions and the general operation of the State Highway Commission and its several divisions. The Committee has inquired at great length into those matters referred to it and has the honor to submit herewith its report to the 105th Legislature as charged.

The Committee wishes to acknowledge its appreciation of the cooperation and service rendered by the State Highway Commission in connection with the study. The Committee sincerely hopes that the findings and recommendations herein contained will be of benefit to Members of the Legislature and the public at large.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Edwin H. Greeley'.

Edwin H. Greeley, Chairman
Highway Study Committee

OPERATION OF THE STATE HIGHWAY COMMISSION

ORDERED, the House concurring, that there is created a special committee to consist of 3 Senators to be appointed by the President of the Senate and 4 Representatives to be appointed by the Speaker of the House, to study, under the supervision of the Legislative Research Committee, revenues, expenditures, policies, functions and general operation of the State Highway Commission and its several divisions for the purpose of determining necessary and possible improvements or economies in its operations; and be it further

ORDERED, that the special committee, with the advice and consent of the Legislative Research Committee, shall report the results of its study at the regular session of the 105th Legislature; and be it further

ORDERED, that the members of the special committee shall serve without compensation, but shall be reimbursed for their actual expenses incurred in the performance of their duties under this Order; such sums to be paid out of the Legislative Appropriation; and be it further

ORDERED, that the special committee shall have the authority to employ professional and clerical assistance within the limits of funds provided; and be it further

ORDERED, that there is appropriated to this special committee from the Legislative Appropriation the sum of \$25,000 to carry out the purposes of this Order.

SP 545	In Senate Chamber	House of Representatives
Beliveau	Read and Passed	Read and Passed
Oxford	Sent down for concurrence	July 1, 1969
	June 26, 1969	In concurrence

The Highway Study Committee was created by the foregoing order of the 104th Legislature and charged with the responsibility of studying the revenues, expenditures, policies, functions and general operation of the State Highway Commission and its several divisions for the purpose of determining necessary and possible improvements or economies in its operations.

The Committee held a series of sixteen meetings following the initial organizational meeting held August 13, 1969.

Most of the members of the Committee had some familiarity with the individual aspects of the operations of the Highway Commission. Because of this, the Committee voted unanimously not to employ outside consultants to aid in the study.

In order to gain an in-depth understanding of the functions and programs of the State Highway Commission, the Committee met with many organizations and extensively reviewed the commission's operations in the field. Committee members visited all of the division offices within the State and also inspected a wide range of projects under construction throughout the State.

Assistance and suggestions were obtained from various individuals of the Highway Department and groups such as Maine Municipal Association, Maine Good Roads Association, Maine Equipment Dealers Association and the Bureau of Public Administration, University of Maine. The Maine Municipal Association prepared a questionnaire for distribution to all municipalities and the results were tabulated by the Committee. Overall, the majority of complaints against the Highway Commission, as reported by the municipalities, are as follows:

- (1) Department should improve efficiency of its labor.
- (2) Excessive amount of supervision.
- (3) Improper utilization of equipment.

- (4) Return to the old "patrolman" system where possible.
- (5) Department has a tendency to be "autocratic".
- (6) Overemphasis on interstate expenditure.
- (7) Revaluation effect on allocation of state funds to smaller communities.

As a result of all this activity, the Committee makes the following recommendations pursuant to its legislative directive.

A. REVENUES

The Committee reviewed existing revenues available to the Department and feels that if additional revenues are needed in future bienniums, the major source would have to be an increase in the Motor Fuel Tax. Each 1¢ of tax produces about \$10 million during a biennium. Motor vehicles licenses and registrations might also be increased, the amount of additional revenue depending on the increase. The allocation request for debt retirement and interest for the 1972-73 biennium is slightly over 14 million dollars. The Committee feels that the total bonded debt of the Highway Commission should not be increased beyond the present amount and that bonding requirements in the future should be limited to a maximum allowable bonded debt and at no time should bonds be issued in a biennium for more than the amount of bonds being retired during the biennium.

B. EXPENDITURES

A review of expenditures of the Highway Department by the Committee disclosed no areas in which any major savings could be realized without curtailment of construction projects or reducing present services. Programs are established by statute with the major expenditures in the maintenance, construction and snow removal accounts. However, the Committee recommends that an authorized employee count be established within all areas of the department,

similar to the system in use by General Fund accounts. This would give more control over the number of permanent employees with the possibility of reducing the count from time to time as vacancies exist or new and more efficient methods of operation are realized.

C. POLICIES, FUNCTIONS AND GENERAL OPERATIONS

The Committee feels that overall, the State Highway Commission programs are adequately performed. The following committee recommendations should not be construed as providing large cost savings to the department but are designed to (1) get more results for the dollars invested through more efficient programs and (2) to provide a more effective program of public education and understanding of the State Highway Commission operations.

The Committee recognizes that, in the maze of such a vast department with a great number of employees, projects, programs and expenditures, efficiency and production suffers and waste creeps in unless the Department adopts certain objectives and carries them through. The Committee therefore offers the following recommendations:

1. The Committee feels that one of the biggest problems in the maintenance program is "supervision". There should be better communication from the supervisors down to the foremen and more authority given to foremen to enable them to take care of small emergencies in the absence of the supervisors. Regular meetings should be held to talk over problems and explain duties.
2. More effort should be made to provide training for foremen and equipment operators. This would improve the morale of the employees and be a benefit to the department. There should be a uniform system of seniority throughout the State to insure that all jobs are open to all qualified personnel.
3. Provide in-service management training for supervisors, engineers and foremen. The purpose of such training should be to develop more effective manage-

ment of employees by teaching management methods to technicians and specialists within the department who are presently technically oriented thus preparing them for future management positions.

4. More effort should be made in the area of public relations:

- (a) Division engineers should have area meetings each year with municipal and public works officials to discuss plans and priorities.
- (b) Municipal and public works officials should be involved in the Highway Commission's long-range planning.
- (c) The department should make a special public relations effort to use a personal approach on all operating programs that have any impact on adjacent private property owners.
- (d) The department should place more thought into the scheduling of work, notifying the public of possible delays, to provide minimum inconveniences to the traveler.

5. Services and construction performed by private industry should be expanded. Major bridge repairs, corrections to drainage problems, crushing operations, hot top operations and small sections of highways now being constructed by highway crews should be let out to private contractors. This would help to develop and encourage small Maine contractors to enter into the field thus insuring the State of a continued supply of native contractors to accomplish future highway construction in Maine. It is the Committees opinion that the Highway Commission is presently placing such a high demand on contractors for administrative and technical detail on State financed projects that this further

discourages new contractors entering the field.

6. Revision of specifications for construction and materials wherever possible to reduce the cost of construction and not substantially effect the quality of the project.
7. There is a high degree of performance in the snow removal program under the highway department. The cost is high and possibly could be let out to private contractors in some areas at a lesser cost with no appreciable loss in efficiency. This situation should be investigated by the department.
8. Apparently the new program of resurfacing with cold and hot mix is an excellent one and if results affirm present indications, the program should be expanded.
9. More flexibility should be allowed in State Aid and Town Road Improvement Funds. The Committee feels that in State Aid and Town Road Improvements, there are standards set up for the design of certain roads and in many cases, these are "over designed" for the area and the road.
10. There is a question whether the maintenance of highways by the department with state-owned equipment and employees is any improvement over the old system of patrolmen with their own trucks. Now that this system is in operation however, and in view of the fact that maintenance garages have been constructed throughout the State, the committee feels that the system should be continued. Improved supervision and management plus more planning for efficient use of equipment and personnel should be implemented by the department.

The Committee would like to thank the many individuals and groups who cooperated wholeheartedly during this study. The department is fortunate to have dedicated, knowledgeable employees within the ranks and changes are being made to improve public relations, supervision and general program improvements. Construction and maintenance of the many miles of highways within the State is a large operation re-

quiring special skills, adequate funding and public understanding in order to accomplish the goals of the department.

In order to determine the effectiveness of the Committee's recommendations, it is recommended that a Joint Order be considered by the 105th Legislature, directing the Commission to report to the next regular session of the legislature in regard to the progress made on the above mentioned items.