

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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REPORT

By the

CHEBEAGUE ISLAND BRIDGE INTERIM COMMITTEE

TO THE

103RD LEGISLATURE

JANUARY 1967

Report by the Chebeague Island Bridge Committee (Interim)

The Speaker of the House of the 102nd Legislature appointed a committee of five legislators, designated as the Chebeague Island Interim Committee.

The committee was instructed to study the need, the feasibility and the economics of a system of bridge, causeways and roads to connect Cousins Island to Littlejohns Island to Chebeague Island.

The legislators, members of the committee, are:

Senator Alfred Smith	Portland, Maine (Chairman)
Senator Margaret Sproul	Bristol, Maine (Vice Chairman)
Rep. Gerard P. Conley	Portland
Rep. Jane Callan Kilroy	Portland
Rep. Harrison Richardson	Cumberland

The members of the committee individually and in group have carefully investigated and studied the project.

In August 1965, Senator Smith, Senator Sproul and Rep. Conley made an inspection trip to the area.

The group cruised in Casco Bay adjacent to Cousins Island, Littlejohns Island, Little Chebeague Island and (Great) Chebeague Island and got a close-up view of the many fine shore and beach fronts, the shoal areas which (at low water) interconnects Cousins and Littlejohns Island; (Great) Chebeague Island and Little Chebeague Island; partially connect (Great) Chebeague Island to Littlejohns Island and the proximity of Long Island to (Great) Chebeague Island.

The group also toured (Great) Chebeague Island by car and inspected the various beaches, school areas, buildings, hotels, residences and facilities installed on the Island.

The group conferred with a representative group of Chebeague Island residents and reviewed the various engineering, traffic and

cost data which the proponents of the Project had compiled over the past ten years.

In August 1966 Rep. Jane Kilroy (Portland) who had been ill at the time of the 1965 trip, made an extensive inspection trip of the waters adjacent to and the installations on (Great) Chebeague Island.

Mrs. Kilroy made inspection trips by boat and by car similar to that made by some of the committee in 1965.

On August 11, 1966, Rep. Kilroy was Chairman of a meeting in the Island Hall on Chebeague Island at which about seventy taxpayers voiced their concern over the existing transportation problems and the needs for modernization and vast improvement in transportation facilities.

The residents are greatly concerned with the condition of the existing transportation link from Chebeague Island to the Mainland via Cousins Island.

The all-year round population, 250 to 300 persons, is expanded to 1400 to 1500 persons during vacation season.

The vast majority of these people travel to the mainland by water taxi from the stone pier on Chebeague Island (Town of Cumberland) to the wooden wharf on Cousins Island (Town of Yarmouth). People arriving on Cousins Island continue their trip on the mainland by private car parked on Cousins Island.

Throughout the school year about 24 students, Junior High and High School grades, travel to school by boat (chartered by the School Board) to Cousins Island and thence by bus to Town of Cumberland schools.

The question of ownership of the wharf on Cousins Island is now in litigation between the Town of Yarmouth and the Casco Bay Lines.

The wharf is in need of extensive repairs.

There is no written agreement between the Town of Yarmouth and the Town of Cumberland as to the use and maintenance of the wharf.

The existing water taxi has been using the Cousins Island Wharf for seven years, the school boat for five years.

The residents of the Island have had inspections and surveys made of the wharf and as a result are very fearful that the wharf will fail unless extensive repairs are made. The complications as to ownership, court decision, use and maintenance make a knotty problem.

At the meeting with Rep. Kilroy, the residents after airing their present problems discussed the need and desirability of the bridge and causeway installations to enhance the development of Chebeague Island and adjacent Islands. They pointed out the orderly and extensive development of Cousins Island since the installation of a bridge from the mainland to Cousins Island.

By a show of hands the residents attending the meeting voted 69 to one in favor of the Bridge Project.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

As a result of its investigation, the committee unanimously recommend legislative action which will lead to the installation of the Chebeague Island Bridge Project.

The committee asserts that Chebeague Island and the islands adjacent to it compose one of the great undeveloped assets of the State.

Chebeague Island is made up of six thousand acres of the finest residential land in the country. It has miles of sandy beaches and shore front, numerous coves that delight boating and picnicking enthusiasts.

Little Chebeague Island, uninhabited, and connected to (Great) Chebeague Island at low water offers a splendid area for a State Park with fine beach areas, picnicking, camping and sporting sites.

The islands adjacent to Chebeague, namely Littlejohns, Long and Cliff Islands, are made up of thousands of acres of land similar to that of chebeague Island.

Today as our highway system on the mainland expands and improves, the cities, towns and vacation areas served by these roads are developing rapidly, growing and prospering. Hundred of thousands of dollars are being spent for new all year round and summer residences, shopping centers, motels, service centers etc.

In contrast the population and the property values on the islands are decreasing. Today people will not live, shop or play in areas not accessible by car.

Because of inadequate, outmoded transportation the young people are leaving the islands. The reasons are inadequate educational facilities and lack of job opportunities.

Today the fishing and lobstering industries that for over two hundred years supported thousands of Island and Bay residents are fading into memory.

The 1966 fishing season in Casco Bay is the poorest in many years.

There are today strong sentiments to declare the island areas, disaster and depressed areas.

The members of the committee unanimously agree that the future of Chebeague Island and adjacent islands lies in the installation of an interconnected system of roads, causeways and a bridge that will make Littlejohns and Chebeague Islands part of the mainland. Little Chebeague Island will be readily accessible to the mainland by car by simply increasing the height of the natural causeway now connecting (Great) Chebeague Island to Little Chebeague Island at low water. Long and Cliff Islands can easily be reached by water taxi from Chebeague Island.

Today people live "on wheels", people travel to work, to shopping centers, for recreation, by car.

The committee believes that if these island areas are opened for modern living, by car to the public, that these developments will follow.

1. The work of constructing the roads, causeways and bridge will provide much needed jobs to many people in the bay area now idle because of the fading fishing and lobstering industry. These Island and Bay residents are a strong, proud, honest people willing and able, if there is opportunity, to earn the livelihoods they and their families need so desperately.

2. The residents of Greater Portland will seek the islands for all year round living.

3. The number of summer residents, vacationers and tourists will greatly increase.

4. Motels and marinas will be built. Stores, shopping and service centers will develop.

5. As the number of residents and transients increase job opportunities in the small business ventures that serve modern com-

munities will increase.

6. Having access to the mainland, the young people of the islands will have equal educational and job opportunities with their friends and neighbors on the mainland. The young people will stay in the area.

7. A fine state park and accessible recreation and vacation opportunities will make a good contribution to Maine's "Vacationland" industry.

Recommendations

The committee recommends.

1. That the legislature disregard previous reports by the Highway Commission as to the cost and economics of the project.

For example: On page 63 of the Wilbur Smith and Associates Report submitted to the legislature by the Highway Commission in March 1963, the cost of the causeway from Cousins Island to Littlejohns Island was set at six hundred and thirty thousand dollars (\$630,000.00).

On September 23, 1966 the voters of the Town of Yarmouth in a special town meeting voted to appropriate one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000.00) to build this causeway.

2. That legislature give serious consideration to the project and as other states do seek substantial financial assistance from various federal agencies.

The various facets of the project merit the assistance of Federal agencies for:

- (a) Area development
- (b) Depressed areas
- (c) Highway development
- (d) Recreation and state parks
- (e) Opportunity for education

Proper marshalling of financial assistance by appropriate Federal and State agencies, together with some contributions by the communities in which the islands are located should remove the road block which for years has stymied this needed and worthwhile project.

/s/ Alfred J. Smith, Chairman
Margaret Sproul, Vice Chairman
Gerard P. Conley
Jane C. Kilroy
Harrison Richardson