

Hudson Tunnel for Vehicles Needed at Once

Winter Congestion of Freight Proves Necessity Even to Lay Mind, and Engineers Approve

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LONG lines of trucks, champing, fretful horses, shouting and impatient drivers—confusion at its worst! Any one seeing West street on an ordinary business day this winter would have been forcibly impressed by the utter impotence of the Hudson River ferries and barges in accommodating the vast commercial traffic that flows both ways between Manhattan and New Jersey.

The lines of waiting trucks at the ferry entrances and at the railroad piers tell the story of unprecedented traffic congestion and point to the imperative and immediate need of some other means of communication between the island and the mainland. The weather conditions of the present winter, and particularly those which existed last month, accentuated this need, which has been so long apparent.

A National Question.

The matter of facilitating the movement of freight across the Hudson River indeed has become a question of national importance, affecting as it does the despatch of ships with supplies for the forces of the United States and our allies in France. It is the old story of the horse-shoe nail, the loss of which was attended with disastrous consequences. A delay in the shipment of supplies abroad might so handicap our armies that a battle would be lost, and it is conceivable that the loss of a battle might turn the tide of the war. The isolation of New York when the fuel crisis arose also called sharply for remedial action.

Is it any wonder then that the proposal to proceed at the earliest possible date with the construction of vehicular tunnels under the Hudson River should strike a popular chord and inspire a desire for immediate cooperation on the part of the Legislatures of New York and New Jersey in enacting such measures as will insure the consummation of this project before the conditions that now exist become unendurable or involve the nation in disaster?

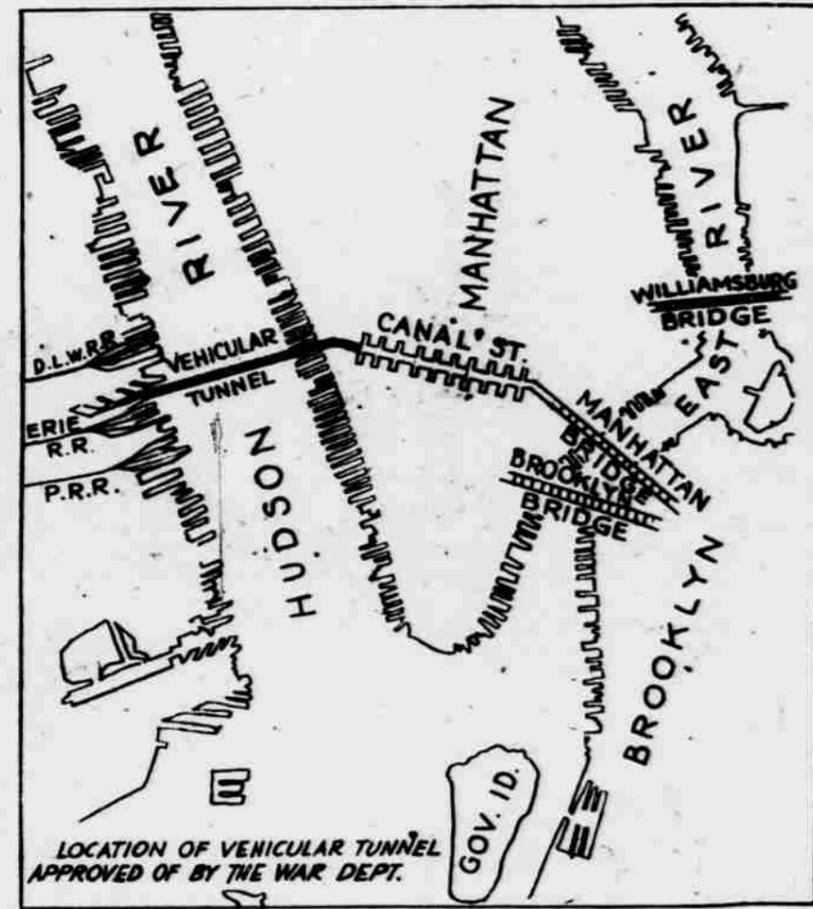
Would Save Greatly.

As an economic proposition alone the plan appeals strongly. By no other means, except through the erection of a bridge at enormous cost, could the congestion and delay of traffic between the railroad terminals on the Jersey side and the city of New York be relieved. There is no question but that these conditions are due entirely to the antiquated and inadequate methods of handling freight that now prevail.

Consider the number of men employed as truck drivers whose time and energy is wasted by the delays occasioned at the congested ferries and freight warehouses. Truckmen of New York are now forced to charge more than double the usual cartage rates because of the time consumed in crossing the river. There is also a fixed charge or an agreed price per hour for waiting time. All of these conditions place an enormous burden on the business men of Manhattan and one, of course, reflected in the prices to the ultimate consumer. The amount paid by New York manufacturers and merchants for waiting time can safely be estimated at more than double the amount that would be required to meet the interest charges and upkeep of two vehicular tunnels.

But now, unless the question becomes obscured by politics, it seems that relief is at hand. The New Jersey Legislature has enacted, and Gov. Edge has signed, a bill which commits that State to the enterprise and invites the cooperation of the State of New York.

Apparently the New Jersey bill does not contemplate the immediate construction of the vehicular tunnel, for the measure provides that the taxes for the cost of the work shall not be assessed until 1922, when the State's taxes for its new roads will no longer be levied. This clause in the enabling measure was viewed with some dismay by those who have been interested in promoting the early inauguration of the tunnel enterprise. Actually,



however, the outlook is fraught with brighter possibilities.

The tunnel bill was passed by the unanimous vote of the New Jersey Assemblymen, all of whom are fully cognizant of the necessity of the early completion of the project. It is known that should the New York authorities display a desire for speed in the inauguration of the project, the Jersey lawmakers are willing to meet them more than half way, even to the extent of calling upon Gov. Edge to convene the Legislature in special session to enact a concurrent measure.

Could Be Built for \$12,000,000.

Those timid souls who believe that the construction of the proposed vehicular tunnels would be attended by excessive cost or insurmountable engineering and physical difficulties should take heart from the statement of Gen. George W. Goethals, builder of the Panama Canal, that the tubes could be constructed at a cost of \$12,000,000 and that they could be finished within two or three years. The bugaboo of inadequate ventilation is also dispelled by Gen. Goethals, who has stated positively that the danger from carbon monoxide arising from motor driven vehicles can be obviated by the installation of a proper system of air ducts.

It would seem that New York, having initiated the plan to connect the two States by a sub-aqueous route, would feel itself impelled to remain at the forefront in the movement. The history of the project shows that in April, 1906, the Legislature of this State passed an act creating a commission to consider the conditions which then existed in the port of New York. New Jersey's Legislature one month later passed a similar act providing for such a commission. These two commissions met and gave consideration to the problem.

Work for Commissions.

Then, in 1912, the New Jersey Legislature made provisions for the appointment of a commission of five members to prepare plans and cooperate with the State of New York in the solution of the problem. Jacob & Davies, a well known firm of contracting tunnel engineers, employed by the commission, recommended as a solution of the problem the construction of a tunnel from Canal street, Manhattan, to Twelfth street, Jersey City. It is estimated by this firm that the cost of the work would be \$12,000,000, one-half of which might be borne by the State of New York and one-half by the State of New Jersey, or by both the counties or municipalities of the two States.

An investigation of the subject at a later date by the Public Service Corporation of New Jersey resulted also in the conclusion that the solution of the harbor problem was feasible by the same means.

Last year Gov. Edge appointed the present New Jersey commission, which is known as the Hudson River Bridge and Tunnel Commission. The services of Gen. Goethals were engaged by the commission and he also has recommended the construction of the tunnel on the site approved by Jacobs & Davies and by the Public Service Corporation.

It was recommended by Gen. Goethals that a single tube be built. He proposed that this be large enough to accommodate slow trucking below and faster and lighter motor cars above. Concrete was recommended for use in the construction of the tube, Gen. Goethals favoring this material rather than iron or steel, which had been previously suggested.

The Goethals plan contemplates also the use of the shield method in construction, because he considers the trench method impracticable. The trench method, Gen. Goethals pointed out in his report to the commission, is not feasible owing to the conditions that obtain in the bed of the Hudson River.

The tunnel proposed by Gen. Goethals has a capacity of 3,000,000 vehicles per year. Assuming that the vehicular traffic is made up of five ton trucks, the tube would have a daily capacity of 50,000 tons, sufficient to accommodate—and leave a safe margin—all of the 30,000 tons of freight which now arrives daily for New York at the freight terminals on the Jersey side.

A Real War Measure.

The construction of the Hudson tunnel should be regarded as a war measure of pressing importance, and the inauguration of the project should not be delayed one day longer than is necessary.

A very large part of the North River water front on Manhattan Island is now used for freight car terminals and for car floats, to the exclusion of ocean going ships. In other words, the water front is used as a freight yard. This should not be. By using the Jersey side as a freight yard and leaving the freight cars there, the North River water front would be left free for the purposes for which it is naturally suited, namely, for steamship piers.

If such a tunnel as is proposed by Gen. Goethals is built, there is no doubt there will be an immediate demand for other tunnels. The result of the construction of one tunnel will be a gradual and progressive solution of the problem, which has become acute. The Pennsylvania tubes were built in eighteen months, so that it seems feasible to build the proposed vehicular tunnels within two years.

Motor Gas Not Menace.

The amount of labor which would be diverted to the construction of the tubes is not large. One thousand men would probably be a sufficient number. Large public improvements are being completed in New York and the organized forces now employed in the subway construction could be utilized with fine results in the tunnel work.

Regarding the theory that the operation of the vehicular tunnels would be affected by the presence of gases from motor vehicles, I have had a conversation recently with one of the members of the British War Commission, a prominent merchant in London, who asserts that the tunnel would not be subject to such an objection. He said that he is in the habit when at home of driving through the Blackwall tunnel under the Thames and from his business daily and that he suffers no discomfort from gases or smoke.

Much Progress Already Made Toward Building Port Relief, and Politics Only Now Feared

Gen. Goethals in his report also pointed out that although the London under the river tunnels have no artificial ventilation, they are operated "without disastrous results." That the London tunnels have not the length of the proposed Hudson tubes is scarcely a valid objection, Gen. Goethals said, since by ventilation the sections of the former can be duplicated in the latter, and it would be fair to assume the results would be the same.

Objection has been made that the vehicular tunnels under the Hudson River would benefit New Jersey and might result in establishing a permanent terminal on the Jersey side. This objection is met by the argument that as New York has no space for railroad terminals there seems no reason why New York should not avail itself of the space in New Jersey for that purpose.

Benefit for Both States.

Regarding the question of freight differentials, it may be pointed out that it is perfectly plain that the same rates cannot continue indefinitely for New York and New Jersey unless Jersey City, Hoboken and other communities fronting the harbor are recognized as parts of the port of New York. Geographically they are parts of the port and they should be treated as such. The more intimately they are connected together the more readily will there be access from one to the other and more likely is it that the same freight rate for Jersey City and Hoboken and New York will be continued.

At the present time the lighterage piers on the New Jersey side, because of the congestion of freight, are being used for storage and thousands of cars are lying idle because the means of unloading them and disposing of their contents are lacking. With a vehicular tunnel between New York and New Jersey having a capacity of 50,000 tons per day, it would be possible for this freight to be hauled direct from the cars to the storage or business houses in New York, and thus at least 2,000 freight cars per day would be released for further service upon the date of their arrival on the Jersey side.

Another feature that must necessarily be considered of advantage in viewing the question of the vehicular tunnels is that they will be an important link in the line of communication between Long Island and the Western trunk lines. The Canal street portal of the Hudson tunnels, as planned, will be in close touch with the Williamsburg Bridge.

It being unanimously agreed that the Hudson vehicular tunnels are a necessity, that they would be of value in the development of the port of New York, that they would be an economic factor of the utmost importance and that their absence constitutes a handicap in the successful conduct of the war, it would seem to be difficult to present any reasons why, as has been proposed, the Legislatures of New York and New Jersey should not take action immediately on such legislation as will hurry the day when New York will be no longer dependent for her very life blood on the precarious communication that now exists between Jersey and Manhattan.

Will Study German.

"EITHER we shall dominate the Germans or they will dominate us," was the point made by an educator at a recent meeting here of trustees of a school when the subject of teaching German was brought up. He emphasized the fact also that President Wilson has gone on record in opposition to an economic boycott against the Germans, such as has been advocated in England.

To prove that despite the hatred of Germany the same view is taken of the matter by British advocates of higher learning, the educator told of the decision of Edinburgh University, which recently adopted the following resolution after setting the salary for the place at £700 a year:

"In the opinion of the University Court the time has arrived when it is desirable to establish a professorship of German language and literature."