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SIX LANES, FIVE MILES, A DECADE OF CONTROVERSY:
THE CONSTRUCTION OF
THE MASSACHUSETTS TURNPIKE EXTENSION
THROUGH THE CITY OF NEWTON

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The construction of the Massachusetts Turnpike Extension was a divisive issue that caused fear and anger among the citizens of Newton for more than a decade. The conflict, which began in 1952 and did not end until 1964, was heated and bitter throughout. From the moment it was first proposed Newton citizens and politicians opposed the turnpike extension vehemently. In addition, the organization responsible for the construction of the turnpike, the Turnpike Authority, alienated Newton through a policy of secrecy. The Chairman of the Authority, William F. Callahan, treated Newton citizens with arrogance and disdain, heightening their anger. For these reasons, Newton grew to a state of near-paranoia as the conflict reached its climax.

Newton residents saw the turnpike as more than just a strip of concrete that would displace numerous houses and businesses. They saw it as the end of a way of life—a divisive force that would destroy neighborhoods, separate Newton into two sections, and

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turn their city of parks and gardens a dull gray. Conversely, the Turnpike Authority, as well as many Boston politicians, viewed the turnpike as a necessary change. They observed the flight of many businesses to the suburbs, were afraid of losing the new Prudential development in the Back Bay, and concluded that only the extension of the turnpike could save Boston.

In this way, the turnpike extension represented a conflict of interests between Boston and Newton. Newton wanted to remain a quiet, peaceful suburb while Boston sought a convenient commute for suburbanites as a way to revitalize its economy. Because of Boston's larger population, prominent businesses, and political dominance, its interests prevailed while those of Newton were largely ignored. In addition, the political skill of Chairman Callahan helped to push the turnpike through the State Legislature. This paper will explore the reasons behind the construction of the turnpike extension, the history of Newton's battle against the Turnpike Authority, the explanation for Newton's eventual defeat, and the underlying issues at the heart of the conflict.

A History of the Conflict

Before discussing the turnpike extension on a more philosophical level it is necessary to understand historically how its construction came about. The following is a mostly chronological account of the conflict from 1952 to the present.

Creation of the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority

News of a possible toll road through Newton arrived in 1952 when the Massachusetts State Legislature passed a bill creating the Turnpike Authority. The bill gave the Turnpike Authority an unusual, semi-autonomous legal status that was relatively new in Boston and around the country. While its members were each appointed by the Governor, the Authority used private funding

and was free from government control.¹ All four Newton representatives voted against the proposal.² Specifically, the bill authorized “the construction, maintenance, repair and operation of a self-liquidating express highway from a point in the vicinity of the City of Boston to a point at or near the New York state line.”³ The Turnpike Authority was also given the power to take by eminent domain any lands necessary for construction of the highway. Funding for the project would come through the sale of bonds to private investors. No public money would be used. The Authority would be run by three board members, each appointed by the Governor. The Chairman would have final authority and would be the only full-time board member.⁴

This bill created an organization with broad, far-reaching powers. The Authority could build its road anywhere it pleased as long as it ran between Boston and New York. It could take as much land as it deemed necessary. The head of this organization, who would have the final say in all decisions, would be especially powerful. William F. Callahan, a shrewd individual with enormous political influence, was appointed to this position. Callahan was known as much for his political savvy as he was for his skill at road planning. He was a very influential figure in the Massachusetts General Court. Much of his power stemmed from control over jobs in the Department of Public Works. As a local writer said, Callahan was “alternately considered an asphalt-crazed autocrat and a visionary architect of progress.”⁵ With the adroit and determined Callahan at its helm, the power of the Turnpike Authority knew few bounds.

As the turnpike bill passed through the State Legislature, fears began to grow in Newton. By April, 1953, Newton officials had already begun to warn residents about future property loss.⁶ As news spread that a possible route for the road would go through the property of an elementary school, residents began to hold protest meetings. Three public meetings were held in the month of April. In the second meeting residents demanded that the road not be built, and in the third meeting a petition was sent to Governor Christian Herter demanding that the route be changed.

Numerous organizations wrote to the Authority to protest the road, including the Board of Aldermen, the Newton Public Schools, the Newton Chamber of Commerce, a PTA chapter, and the Newton Local Council of the Girl Scouts.⁷ State Representative Rawson of Newton spoke out passionately against the toll road. Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania all had turnpikes, Rawson argued, but none went through major cities. Rawson filed a protest asking that the road end at Route 128, outside Newton.⁸

Perhaps to postpone what it knew would be a difficult situation, the Turnpike Authority announced in August, 1953, that the road would stop at the Weston/Newton line for the time being. A connection from the terminus would go onto Commonwealth Avenue, increasing Newton's traffic.⁹ Many people, including Newton Mayor Theodore R. Lockwood, felt that this move was designed to put pressure on Newton and force it to agree to a route into Boston. Lockwood proposed that the terminus be moved just 3/4 miles north to the Waltham/Newton line and eventually continue along the Newton boundary. His proposal was ignored. The turnpike was scheduled to open in 1957.¹⁰

After the location of the terminus was decided, opposition in Newton virtually disappeared for a number of years. People saw three possible routes for the extension to Boston: along the Charles River and the Waltham/Newton line, along Route 16, or along the Boston and Albany Railroad tracks through the heart of Newton.¹¹ The Authority provided Newton with little or no factual information and kept the city out of all discussions regarding the route of the extension. The issue was largely forgotten.¹²

New Fears

In 1956 the toll road issue flared anew when *The Newton Graphic* reported on July 19 that the extension would most likely follow the Boston and Albany railroad tracks, directly through Newton. The news was leaked after Turnpike Authority members

met with Alfred E. Perlman, the president of the New York Central Railroad, which owned the Boston and Albany Railroad land. Representatives Rawson and Irene K. Thresher of Newton both spoke against the proposed extension. Rawson, in particular, was afraid of losing the commuter train service to Boston that the B and A railroad provided. On July 26, *The Newton Graphic* reported that Perlman and the Authority had agreed on the sale of the B and A roadbed. The Authority denied all of these reports, and insisted that no decisions had been made.¹³

Newton citizens were understandably alarmed by this sudden news. On August 27, Mayor Whitmore contacted respected citizens and community leaders to create the Newton Citizens' Committee. The Committee would conduct studies on possible effects of the turnpike, advise the Mayor, and provide information to Newton residents.¹⁴ It was divided into five sub-committees: the Legal Committee, the Commuter Service Committee, the Public Relations Committee, the Finance Committee, and the Type of Road and Location Committee.¹⁵

In the meantime, community meetings and protests began almost immediately after news of the extension was leaked. The public response was enormous. On September 13, 1600 people attended one mass meeting at Newton High School. Extra seats needed to be found and a bleacher nearly collapsed from the weight of the crowd.¹⁶ The attitude at these meetings was one of confusion and anger. People had very little idea of how the extension was to affect them. As Mayor Howard Whitmore said at the September 13 meeting, "There are just two things certain, uncertainty and confusion."¹⁷

An editorial in the *Graphic* on August 2 entitled "It's A Serious Matter" accurately reflected the feelings of most Newton citizens. "To the average layman," the editorial said, "it is difficult to understand why the approaches to and from Boston weren't planned first and the toll road built later. It is like putting the cart before the horse and to the laymen, at least, it just doesn't make sense. The whole complex of this community, both business and residential, is bound to change." The editorial stressed that the

extension of the toll road was not necessary and would cause congestion in both Newton and Boston. According to the editorial, the Authority was bent on building to Boston only because it needed the toll revenue the extension would produce.¹⁸

On September 19, the Board of Trustees of the First Unitarian Society of Newton sent a letter of protest to Chairman Callahan, which also reflected citizens' frustrations. "It is common knowledge," the letter read, "that the proposed extension, including the construction of 19 bridges, will split the city of Newton, destroy homes and businesses, cost the city millions in property values, and will probably deprive commuters in Newton, Wellesley, Framingham, and Natick of the service on which they depend. It is also well known that the proposed extension will be extremely expensive, a cost which the users must pay, and apparently violates all good practice in toll road construction."¹⁹ Particularly telling in this letter are phrases such as "common knowledge," and "well known." Many of the assumptions that the letter made would turn out to be false. However, because they were given so little factual information by the Authority, Newton citizens made false suppositions and became more panic-stricken as the conflict continued.

Callahan's Attitude

The Turnpike Authority and Chairman Callahan did little to ease the anxiety of Newton citizens. Callahan believed that Newton residents were overreacting. He denied news reports and pushed aside citizens' questions by saying that studies were under way, or that no definite decisions had been made. The Authority held numerous planning sessions, but Newton was never invited to participate. Mayor Whitmore was allowed to attend an August 2 meeting only after sending a personal telegram requesting permission.²⁰

Callahan's reaction to the aforementioned letter of protest from the First Unitarian Society provides an example of his haughty attitude. Instead of reassuring the authors of the letter,

Callahan antagonized them. "You are anticipating our decisions before any have been made," he said. "There are no facts to sustain (your complaints)." Callahan also added that the Authority was conducting an engineering study on the extension. When the study was completed the Authority would hold hearings in Newton and Boston before a final decision was made.²¹ No such hearings ever took place.

The attitude of Callahan frustrated many Newton citizens, including Mayor Whitmore. At an open meeting at the Underwood Elementary School in Newton in December, 1956, Whitmore expressed his anger. "Constant, urgent requests for information, intentions, and plans from the Authority," Whitmore said, "have brought only the frustrating replies that studies are incomplete, no factual information is available, no decisions have been reached, and that the Mayor will be advised and consulted in time. Time and time again it has been stated that the many studies being made by several consulting firms would be completed by such and such a date. The reporting dates have been extended and extended until they are now months behind schedule."²² Whitmore also described the strange logic that the Authority seemed to be employing. The Authority said that they would not make a final decision on road placement until certain studies had been completed, but at the same time they repeated on numerous occasions that the B and A Railroad was the only route under consideration.²³

From these examples, it is apparent that Callahan believed he could easily manipulate Newton citizens. Ironically, although Callahan was himself a resident of Newton, he had enormous trouble judging the strength of residents' emotions and their determination to fight. Callahan succeeded in antagonizing nearly the entire population of Newton. He provided them with very little factual information to calm their fears. He assumed condescending airs, which heightened frustration and polarized viewpoints. Even if a Newton citizen had no strong opinion on the toll road, he might argue against it just to spite Callahan. In the first few months of the conflict, when community opinion was molded almost irreversibly, the Turnpike Authority would best have been

served by a frank, peaceful leader. The iron fist of Callahan transformed Newton into a city of panic, hardened opposition, and lengthened the duration of the conflict.

A War in the Legislature

In addition to protests and public meetings, Newton also fought a legislative battle against the Turnpike Authority. Representative Rawson and Mayor Whitmore were two of the primary leaders in this fight. In late July, 1956, only days after the first report in the *Graphic*, Rawson filed protests with one individual and two groups capable of stopping the Turnpike Extension: the Commissioner of Public Works, the Department of Public Utilities, and the Interstate Commerce Commission.²⁴ “The efficient and reliable commuter service furnished by the Boston and Albany Railroad is the lifeblood of Newton as a fine residential city,” Rawson said. The loss of this service, which the toll road extension would likely entail, “would be a death blow.”²⁵ At about the same time, a bill was filed on behalf of Mayor Whitmore to delay construction of the extension. It was defeated in the legislature October 5.²⁶

As these early measures by local politicians were defeated with relative ease, it became apparent that a different approach was necessary. Callahan appeared bent on pushing the turnpike through Newton. State legislators also appeared determined to build a road connecting the turnpike terminus to Boston. Therefore, swallowing their pride, Newton officials agreed that some sort of road must be built, but proposed that it be a freeway as opposed to a turnpike.

Freeway vs. Toll Road

The only true difference between a freeway and a turnpike was in the way they would be financed. A turnpike would be

privately controlled, and paid for by those who used it through tolls. A freeway would be financed by the government and would not require motorists to pay. However, Newton hoped that the route of a freeway would be more flexible than that of a toll road. With Callahan out of the way, Newton hoped to have the freeway built along the Charles River, on the outskirts of the city. This route was similar to that which was proposed in the Master Highway Plan of 1948.²⁷

In favoring a freeway, Newton leaders also wished to take advantage of the new Federal Highway Financing Law, signed by President Eisenhower in 1956. This law promised 90% federal aid for the construction of any free expressway. Newton received support for its proposal from the Massachusetts Division of the American Automobile Association.²⁸

While Newton politicians truly favored a freeway because they hoped to have it built around their city, they tried to appeal to the self-interest of other communities in their arguments. They realized that no representative outside Newton would vote against the toll road simply to aid a neighboring community. The other communities needed a more direct, self-serving reason to fight. Therefore, Newton politicians' arguments for a freeway did not focus on the fact that it would displace fewer families and would have less impact on neighborhoods, but on the money that it would save taxpayers throughout Massachusetts.

Newton politicians realized that few people cared about the interests of Newton alone. The needs of Boston superseded the needs of a small suburban city. Newton, although a mostly white, affluent suburb, found itself in the position of a minority. The only hope for success lay in linking Newton's interests to those of the majority. The arguments in favor of a freeway reflect an attempt to create this link. Thus, Robert S. Kretschmar, executive of the Massachusetts Division of the AAA and a freeway proponent, expressed Newton's standard argument when he said, "The Bay State's greatest highway need is for a limited access expressway to serve all the people who live in the suburban towns west of Boston and must commute between their homes and the city. A free

public artery will serve the needs of Greater Boston residents far better than a toll road.”²⁹ Not once in this argument did Kretschmar mention the needs of the citizens of Newton.

More specifically, the focus of Newton’s argument lay in the supposed “triple charge” that a turnpike would create. If a turnpike were built commuters would pay for roads in three different ways: federal taxes, state taxes, and turnpike tolls.³⁰ With a turnpike, the money that Massachusetts citizens paid in federal taxes would go to build freeways in other states. It made no sense to force commuters to pay tolls while federal funds were available for freeway construction.

Newton politicians soon began to fight for a freeway in the State Legislature. On December 1, 1956, two bills were filed. The first bill was filed by the Newton Citizens Committee, Mayor Whitmore, Senator Donald Gibbs, and Representatives Arthur Heaney, Irene Thresher, George Rawson, and John Whittmore. It would revoke the Turnpike Authority’s power to extend the turnpike past Route 128.³¹ The second bill was filed by the Newton legislative delegation, Senator Gibbs, and the same four representatives. It would authorize the Department of Public Works to make plans for a free limited access highway from Route 128 into Boston.³² Shortly thereafter, Robert Kretschmar of the AAA filed a bill that would have the freeway constructed along the Charles River.

Bitter Words, Early Defeat

Predictably, Callahan reacted with great anger to these bills. He argued emphatically that a privately financed toll road extension was the only way to carry traffic quickly in and out of Boston. He denounced the freeway possibility, arguing that it could not be built for 10-15 years. In addition, all the federal funds given to Massachusetts in the next three years would be used up by projects already going on.³³ “The proposal for a 90-10 Federal Aid Western Expressway is, in actuality, a dream which would deprive

Boston of the basic solution to its traffic problem for the next ten years," Callahan said. "If the Boston and Albany Railroad has not divided the cities and towns through which it has passed for over a hundred years, then the improvement of this roadbed, by building a modern express highway, will not cause any greater division than existed over a century."³⁴

Despite Callahan's arguments, opposition to the toll road was growing, especially in communities west of Boston. Weston soon joined in the fight when its Board of Selectmen requested that the State Public Works Commissioner, Carl A. Sheridan, halt the toll road (Sheridan refused).³⁵ Stephen E. McClosky, Secretary-Treasurer of the Boston Central Labor Union, was a typical opponent of the toll road outside Newton. His arguments focused on the financial benefits of a freeway. "Why should residents in the fringe communities to Boston have to pay to get into the city?" McClosky asked. "It's ridiculous."³⁶

On February 12, 1957 a hearing was held in front of the Legislative Committee on Highways and Motor Vehicles regarding the three bills designed to stop the toll road and substitute a freeway. Mayor Whitmore led the arguments against a toll road, saying that a toll road would hurt Boston by "erecting a cost barrier to get into Boston." It would thereby "speed up the trend of the people to shop in the suburbs." He also pointed out a similar situation in Chicago, where plans for a six-mile toll road were replaced by a freeway. In addition, Whitmore predicted that the Turnpike Authority would have trouble raising the estimated \$100 million that the road would cost. Because numerous toll roads had not earned as much money as had been predicted, the bond market for toll roads was tight.³⁷

Senator Donald L. Gibbs of Newton also presented arguments against the toll road. He argued that the 1956 Federal Highway Aid Bill had changed the financial situation since the Turnpike Authority was given power to build the extension in 1952.³⁸ Representative Rawson provided a similar argument. Massachusetts drivers paid taxes to the federal government that were being used to help build roads through the Federal Highway Aid

Bill. “We might as well get the use of our own money,” he said.³⁹

Callahan led the arguments in favor of the toll road. He argued that Boston was in poor condition and it needed a toll road to bring business back to the city. The new Prudential building would give Boston a lift, but it needed a toll road built immediately to continue the pace of progress. “Unless the connection is made,” Callahan said, “you had better give back the downtown area to the Indians, because in ten years it will all be moved back to the suburbs unless we do something to reverse the trend.”⁴⁰

Representative John F. Thompson of Ludlow also favored a toll road. “Let’s try not to be influenced by the voice of a minority,” Ludlow said. “(Opponents of the toll road) are emotionally worked up. They are completely partisan and narrow-minded in their thinking.”⁴¹

These angry, biting quotes represent the polarization of opinion and the growing bitterness of the conflict. Politicians on both sides had become so incensed and attached to their positions that they lost sight of reality. The conflict was becoming personal. Fears on both sides were exaggerated—either Newton was to be split in half and irreparably damaged or Boston would slowly lose businesses until it became a ghost town. Slowly, politicians were losing their ability to think rationally and to compromise.

On February 21, 1957 the Committee on Highways and Motor Vehicles voted 14-1 against the three freeway bills.⁴² Shortly thereafter, the bills were defeated with relative ease in the State Legislature. Despite this overwhelming defeat, Newton and other opponents of the toll road still had hope that they could win legislative battles through other bills, or block the turnpike in the courts or with help from the Interstate Commerce Commission. However, there was no reason to believe that the State Legislature, having voted down the three freeway bills by a large margin, would change its position when new bills were proposed. This marked the first major defeat for Newton. It was by no means the last.

The Toll Road Opens

In the Spring of 1957, the \$239 million toll road running from New York to route 128 opened for traffic.⁴³ The terminus at route 128 led onto Commonwealth Avenue in Newton. As a result of this, Newton citizens were afraid that there would be a great increase in Newton's traffic. This was not the case, as almost all Newton streets maintained the same level of traffic except for Commonwealth Avenue, which increased by 27%.⁴⁴ Discussing the impact of the toll road on Newton's traffic, Police Chief Phillip Purcell said, "We have been watching it like a hawk. So far it has made very little difference."⁴⁵

A Hopeless Cause

After the toll road opened, Newton continued to fight against the turnpike extension in the State Legislature. In the years from 1958 to 1960, Newton officials filed numerous bills designed to block the toll road. Representative Rawson was the force behind most of these bills, many of which were filed jointly with the AAA. Rawson tried every conceivable scenario. He attempted to revoke Callahan's power to build past Weston. He filed bills that would create a freeway, trying numerous routes. He even filed a bill that did not specify any route, allowing the freeway to go along the B and A tracks.⁴⁶ Every one of Rawson's attempts met with failure.

In place of the bills that Rawson proposed, the State Legislature passed numerous bills increasing the power of the Turnpike Authority. One such bill, passed in the Spring of 1958, gave the Authority power to take lands that would create dead-end streets, close access to homes and businesses, take private property to build garages, gas stations, or restaurants, and take land to sell or give to the railroad.⁴⁷ A similar bill passed around the same time gave the Authority power to take lands and construct the toll road

extension without a public hearing, a power not granted even to the State Department of Public Works.⁴⁸ While Newton politicians and citizens protested these bills, they were powerless to stop them. Mayor Whitmore complained bitterly that the toll road would destroy \$4,000,000 in taxable property, and over 300 buildings would be torn down.⁴⁹ Senator Gibbs called Callahan a “czar,” and called his bills “unconstitutional.” In a letter to *The Newton Graphic* February 11, 1960, a frustrated William H. Brackett spoke for most Newton citizens when he asked, “How is it that one individual can have so much power as to tell all the people west of Boston what they are going to have for highway facilities into Boston?” These protests were to no avail. Every bill brought to the legislature that would benefit the toll road passed, while every bill against the toll road failed.

The Influence of Callahan

This one-sided legislative battle is somewhat perplexing on the surface. The arguments in favor of a freeway had much merit, and it is strange that every attempt to build such a road would be rebuffed.

It is apparent that Callahan exerted enormous pressure, in one form or another, on the General Court. Even before he became Chairman of the Turnpike Authority, Callahan was known for his remarkable skill at manipulating the Legislature. As Chairman, Callahan was given even more leverage. Although no proof of such matters can be found, it is well known that Callahan employed numerous relatives of legislators in the Turnpike Authority before and after the toll road was built. These same legislators tended to have cast important swing votes in one turnpike bill or another. As more bills expanding the power of the Authority glided through the legislature, accusations of corruption became more frequent and more pointed. Representative Rawson, along with many other politicians, rarely hesitated to express his opinion of Callahan’s “methods.” “Experience has

shown that the Chairman of the Turnpike Authority gets what he wants out of the legislature,” Rawson said. “Is not that a bare-faced example of an invisible government which is dangerous to the constitutional framework set up with wisdom and foresight by our founding fathers?”⁵⁰

Despite the likelihood of such behind-the-scenes activities, the influence of Callahan alone cannot explain the victory of the toll road in the State Legislature. Although Newton’s arguments for a freeway made logical sense, the toll road remained the easiest, quickest, and most assured way to get an expressway built into Boston. The general opinion was that Boston needed such an expressway to remain an important, cosmopolitan city. At the same time, communities throughout the Commonwealth relied on Boston to provide their residents with work, and to attract new families and businesses. Boston, being larger and more prominent, was more important to Massachusetts than Newton. As a result of this, the interests of Newton were put aside while the interests of Boston were protected with steadfast determination.

A Different Strategy

By the fall of 1960 it was clear that Newton was absolutely powerless to stop the toll road in the legislature. In September, when the Boston and Albany Railroad filed a petition with the Interstate Commerce Commission for permission to relocate its tracks through Newton and to accept \$8 million from the Turnpike Authority for its right of way, most people saw it as the last legal hurdle to an inevitable goal.⁵¹ Many people assumed that Newton, having lost its battle in the legislature, would give up at last and permit the toll road to be built. However, the new Mayor of Newton, Donald L. Gibbs, had no intention of giving in so quietly. If Gibbs could not block the toll road outright, he would at least attempt to delay its construction. Therefore, when Gibbs heard of the B and A Railroad’s petition with the ICC, he immediately had City Solicitor Matt B. Jones file a protest. In the protest, Gibbs

requested that Newton be given power to intervene in the relocation of the B and A tracks, and that public hearings be held regarding any expressway route through Newton.⁵² Although defeat was likely inevitable, it would take months, maybe even years, for the ICC to hold hearings on the toll road and eventually decide the issue. Until the ICC decided one way or the other, Callahan could not begin construction of the toll road.⁵³ Gibbs had successfully trapped Callahan in a mess of legal red tape.

When Gibbs filed his protest with the ICC, Callahan finally began to take Newton's opposition seriously. Although Callahan had considerable control over the Massachusetts Legislature, the Interstate Commerce Commission extended well beyond his sphere of influence. As the ICC slowly digested Gibbs' protest, it could be years before toll road construction finally got underway. In addition, Gibbs threatened to fight a battle in the courts if his protest failed.⁵⁴ This situation prompted Callahan to change the manner of his dealings with Newton. In early October, 1960, Callahan made a surprise visit to Newton's city hall.⁵⁵ In this visit, after almost half a decade of secrecy, Callahan finally disclosed the specific plans of the turnpike route and its effect on the city.

According to the plans, the turnpike extension would be built over the two southerly tracks of the B and A Railroad. Additional land south of the tracks would need to be cleared. About \$4,400,000 worth of property would be destroyed, along with 330 to 340 homes. Some businesses would be razed, and some church land would be taken, although no churches would be demolished.⁵⁶

In revealing these plans Callahan hoped to convince Mayor Gibbs to give up his fight. Callahan finally realized that the proper way to deal with Newton was through a policy of openness. If Newton citizens knew the proposed route of the toll road in detail they would be less likely to exaggerate its effect on the city. However, Callahan's change in policy came far too late. Newton's opposition to the toll road was firmly ingrained. The city was too emotionally involved to give in so suddenly. While thanking Callahan for his openness, Gibbs maintained his position against the toll road extension.⁵⁷

New Support for a Freeway

Mayor Gibbs and the other opponents of the toll road gained a valuable ally when, after Gibbs filed his protest to the ICC, Massachusetts Governor Volpe declared himself in favor of a freeway. Volpe asked the ICC not to approve the relocation of the B and A tracks, and vowed to fight the toll road with other measures if the ICC were to sanction the move. Volpe, however, did not necessarily favor a freeway along the Charles River route.⁵⁸

With growing support throughout the state, Mayor Gibbs found himself in a position with great leverage. No matter what action Callahan took, Gibbs had the power to delay toll road construction.⁵⁹ In the meantime, Gibbs could push for the construction of a freeway. Perhaps by the time the ICC got around to dealing with the protest, plans for a freeway could already be in place, making the toll road obsolete. With luck, the freeway could even be built around Newton along the Charles River.

Despite Gibbs' and Volpe's push for a freeway, the State Legislature would not give in. The toll road battle appeared to have reached a stalemate. In early February, 1961, it looked like the issue would never be resolved.

Prudential Ends the Stalemate

Pressure from an outside, seemingly unrelated, force resolved the toll road deadlock with surprising speed.

Before the toll road conflict began, the Prudential Life Insurance Company had agreed to build in the Back Bay area of Boston on the condition that a road be built connecting it with communities outside the city. Initially, the Prudential Company did not care which type of road was built, a freeway or a toll road, exerting pressure on both sides to get the issue resolved.⁶⁰ However, for unknown reasons, the Prudential Company switched

positions without warning in February, 1961. Many people smelled the influence of Callahan when Prudential abruptly altered its stance. The company announced that it would no longer accept just any road, but only a toll road. If a freeway were built, Prudential would abandon its development project. In addition, Prudential said the issue must be resolved by summer.⁶¹

Immediately after this announcement proponents of the freeway virtually disappeared outside Newton. The Prudential development was seen as one of the key ingredients in Boston's ongoing urban renewal project. It would help to revitalize the Back Bay area, bringing important business back into the city. After Prudential's announcement, Governor Volpe and many other prominent politicians immediately backed down from their position against the toll road.⁶² Newton soon found itself completely alone in its battle against the Turnpike Authority.

The public and political response to Prudential's threat was enormous. Gibbs was pictured as an obstructionist, and Newton citizens were accused of being selfish.⁶³ Senate President John E. Powers threatened Newton with "retaliatory legislation" if it did not give in. Powers also said he would ask President Kennedy to help speed up the ICC decision if it became necessary.⁶⁴ Some legislators even suggested that Boston annex Newton.⁶⁵ Gibbs found himself amidst a bitter storm of accusations and threats. Although Newton citizens supported him almost universally, Gibbs was isolated among state politicians. He was fighting a one-man battle, a battle that could not be won. It was only a matter of time before he would be forced to give in to political pressure.

Compromise

It was under these circumstances that Gibbs agreed to meet with Callahan at a "summit" conference to work out a compromise. The first meeting was held February 15, 1961. Gibbs, Callahan, Prudential Insurance Company Vice-President Fred Smith, Governor Volpe, and Senate President John Powers all

attended.⁶⁶ No progress was made during this first meeting, and both Gibbs and Callahan left feeling angry and frustrated. However, another conference was scheduled for February 20.⁶⁷

In this second conference, a compromise was finally worked out. The toll road was to run through Newton along the B and A roadbed, but Gibbs earned a number of major concessions, listed below:

- The interchange in Newton Corner was modified to let the \$134,000 Elks building stand.
- The Turnpike Authority was to pay Newton \$250,000 for a Washington St. Fire Station in the path of the toll road.
- Commuter buses would be permitted to run on the toll road extension, serving as a replacement for the lost B and A railway service.
- 32 houses in the Hicks St. area in West Newton were to be moved to a new location by the Turnpike Authority at a price of \$7,000 per house, \$224,000 total.
- 22 bridges over the turnpike were to be built and maintained by the Turnpike Authority.
- The Commonwealth Ave. bridge above Auburndale Square was to be widened by the Turnpike Authority.
- The Lowell Avenue bridge in Newtonville was altered to give it a better approach.
- The route of the toll road was changed slightly at the Newton/Brighton line, saving about 12 homes.
- The Turnpike Authority was to give Newton land near the Newton Corner library to use for parking.
- Newton residents would get preference for jobs on the turnpike where it was to run through Newton.
- Newton police officers would be employed by the Turnpike Authority during construction.
- The Turnpike Authority would deposit large sums of money in Newton banks.⁶⁸

Mayor Gibbs was by no means satisfied with the concessions he received. He felt he was manipulated by Callahan, and forced to give up more in the bargaining. "I have been confronted

by a planned crisis—a planned crisis which placed me in the position of causing the loss of the Prudential Center if I were to finish the fight I have waged for the past five months. Yes, even five years!” Gibbs said. “That crisis, in my opinion, has been planned and created by Mr. Callahan”⁶⁹

At the summit conference Callahan drove a hard bargain. Gibbs was especially incensed over the Newton Corner interchange. At first he had wanted the interchange completely removed, but Callahan insisted that the toll road could not be profitable without it. Callahan offered to produce figures from a traffic study to prove his argument. Next Gibbs proposed that the interchange be moved a half-mile to the east. Callahan refused once again. At long last Gibbs gave in, accepting a mild alteration of the interchange to save the Newton Elks building.⁷⁰

For every alteration or concession that Gibbs asked of Callahan, Gibbs was told “that a crisis existed.” Every proposal that Gibbs made would jeopardize the success of the toll road, and therefore could mean the end of the Prudential development. Gibbs soon realized that he had very little bargaining power. “If a freeway were built instead of a toll road, we would lose Prudential,” Gibbs said. “If the route was shifted, we would lose Prudential. If the route was transferred, there would be no road, and we would lose Prudential. These were planned crises designed to force the construction of a toll road.”⁷¹

After some minor details of the agreement were ironed out, Gibbs withdrew his ICC protest March 2.⁷² Despite Gibbs’ frustration at not having achieved more, the concessions he earned saved Newton much money, and rescued almost 50 houses and businesses from demolition. In Newton, he was seen as a hero. “Few public leaders would have had the courage to make the fight Mayor Donald L. Gibbs has waged to soften the impact the construction of the proposed toll road extension will have upon the City of Newton” read a February 23 editorial in *The Newton Graphic* entitled “The Fight For Newton.” “Mayor Gibbs has earned the gratitude of the people of Newton for the battle he waged on their behalf.”

New Hope for Newton

Although this shaky, reluctant agreement between Gibbs and Callahan appeared to be the end of the toll road controversy, the issue came back to life in early April, 1961. *The Boston Globe* reported on April 11 that Callahan had been unable to float the bonds necessary to fund the toll road extension. In fact, Callahan had sold less than one-third of the \$175-million bond issue. The bond market was thoroughly flooded, and showed no sign of improving.⁷³ Newton citizens rejoiced as the *Globe* reported the toll road project dead. Ex-Mayor Howard Whitmore Jr. called it, "The greatest victory since the end of World War II when other dictators were liquidated."⁷⁴ However, the project was not completely dead. Callahan would likely try to push bills through the State Legislature making toll road bonds more attractive to investors. He was sure to make further attempts to float the bond issue.

In an interesting sidelight, the Prudential Company stated that Callahan's bond troubles would not affect their decision to build in the Back Bay. They would build the Prudential Center, toll road or not.⁷⁵ Apparently Prudential's threats to abandon the project, only a few months old, were completely hollow. The "crisis," which Mayor Gibbs said had forced him to withdraw his ICC protest, had been a mirage.

While Callahan prepared himself for a second attempt to sell his bonds, Mayor Gibbs and ex-Mayor Howard Whitmore Jr. decided to take advantage of his troubles. Gibbs asked Governor Volpe to prepare plans to build a freeway at once. Gibbs also asked him to repeal the law giving Callahan power to build through Newton. Volpe, still under pressure from Prudential, did not respond to Gibbs' demands.⁷⁶

The Push for a Referendum

Callahan failed in his second attempt to sell the bonds. The State Legislature would neither vote to get rid of Callahan's

power to build the extension, or pass the laws necessary to help Callahan float his bonds.⁷⁷ In an effort to resolve the issue, many legislators favored putting a referendum on the ballot in the 1962 State election in which voters could decide between a toll road and a freeway.

In addition, Gibbs began a petition that would take away the Turnpike Authority's power to build through Newton, and would have the State Department of Public Works build a free expressway. If Gibbs could get 72,514 signatures the petition would go before the State Legislature. If, as was expected, the State Legislature did not approve the petition, the issue would appear as a referendum on the ballot in the State election of 1962.⁷⁸

Throughout the month of November 1961, Gibbs worked diligently in an attempt to secure the necessary signatures. His effort was in vain. There was simply not enough interest in the issue outside Newton. Gibbs did get over 75,000 signatures, but many were not certified. To be certified, a signature must appear exactly the same on the petition as it did on the voter list.⁷⁹ The petition did relatively well in Newton, where it received 9,000 signatures (6,246 certified), but it fell well short of expectations in the rest of the state.⁸⁰ Disheartened, Gibbs found that he had run out of legal maneuvers to block the toll road. There was nothing he could do but wait and hope.

Defeat

Gibbs' wait came to an end January 22, 1962, when Callahan announced that he had sold his bond issue on the third try. Callahan was aided by a vastly improved bond market. In addition, the Massachusetts Supreme Court had cleared all legal steps blocking the construction of the Prudential Center, making toll road bonds more attractive. Allen & Co., Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner, and Smith, and Trippe, Inc. purchased the bonds at a price of \$180 million.⁸¹ Callahan immediately employed three major contractors to begin construction of the toll road: The

Perini Corporation of Framingham, Morrison-Knudsen Co., Inc. of Idaho, and Kaiser Co. of California.⁸²

At this time, final statistics on the damage that the toll road would cause became available. Approximately 350 homes and businesses would be demolished. \$4.5 million in property would be destroyed. One-third of the businesses in Newton Corner would be wiped out. The loss of property would cause an automatic \$1 tax increase in Newton.⁸³

As news reached Newton about Callahan's success, the attitude was one of disappointment. Newton realized that there was nothing more it could do to fight the toll road. The new task at hand was to try to minimize its damage. Mayor Gibbs summarized the prevailing sentiment in Newton when he said, "They handed us a lemon, but let's try to make some lemonade out of it."⁸⁴

The Landtaking Procedure

Before the toll road construction could actually begin, the Turnpike Authority had to deal with all the families and businesses in its path. The land-taking procedure was relatively straightforward, but it left many evicted families frustrated and bitter. In mid-April, 1962, the Turnpike Authority sent a list of landtakings to the Board of Alderman. The land parcels were described both by size and by the name of the owners. To make the process more convenient, the Authority would take the land first and settle with the families later. For legal and symbolic purposes the Authority gave each owner \$1 in exchange for his land until a final price could be worked out.⁸⁵ While quick and simple, this procedure worked to the advantage of the Turnpike Authority. Because many families had already been dispossessed by the time the Authority got around to making them an offer, homeowners were often forced to accept whatever price the Authority would give them. By giving up their land at the beginning, families lost their bargaining power. In late April, 1962, the Turnpike Authority sent a letter to

every evictee explaining the landtaking procedure. The following is a copy of the letter:

To the property owner concerned:

A representative of the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority will call upon you at an early date to discuss the actual damages which you have sustained by reason of the taking of your property by eminent domain.

These negotiations will neither be based upon nor influenced by the amount of the award made in accordance with statutory requirements and mentioned in the accompanying notice of taking. [That is, \$1]

It is the earnest desire of this Authority to reach a settlement with you which will fairly and adequately compensate you for the taking of your property.

Massachusetts Turnpike Authority

by John H. McCue

Director of Real Estate and Right of Way Agent⁸⁶

This letter, blunt and impersonal, set the tone for the Turnpike Authority's treatment of displaced persons. The Authority seemed to view these people as legal obstacles, not as human beings with vastly different situations and fears.

Once the homeowner received this letter, the Authority sent two professional appraisers to inspect his property. Both appraisers would write a report on the value of the property, which would be reviewed by a board of real estate experts. After this, an offer would be made to the owner. Once a price was agreed on, the land-sale papers would be sent to the full board of the Turnpike Authority and to the First National Bank of Boston (the trustee for the bondholders). Once everything was approved and signed the mortgage would be paid off and the rest of the money would be sent to the owner.⁸⁷ In the meantime, homeowners were given four months to evacuate, while businesses were given two months. Homeowners could apply for a 90-day extension.⁸⁸

The Family Relocation Service

Naturally, the displacement of approximately 350 homes and businesses caused many problems in Newton. Many people did not know where to look to find new housing. In response to this public need, Mayor Gibbs established the Family Relocation Service. This service was established under the Public Welfare Department, and allocated \$10,000 by the Board of Aldermen in March to employ a director and an assistant. Lester G. Houston was named the director, and Norah Teeter became his assistant. The service began operation in June 1962 and ended May 31, 1963.⁸⁹

The written purpose of the service was “to assist in whatever ways possible, those families and individuals being displaced by the Boston Extension of the Massachusetts Toll Road.”⁹⁰ The Family Relocation Service had to deal with two basic problems: the shortage of available housing in and outside of Newton, and the shortage of available time before homeowners were forced to evacuate. Much of what the service did was to answer basic legal questions. A dislocated person might wonder if he should continue to pay the mortgage on his old house, if he should hire a lawyer, or if he could bring shrubs from his old house to his new one. In other instances, the service actually helped evictees search for a new home. Often the service would refer someone to another agency better fit to his specific relocation needs. Using a network of agencies such as the Relocation Committee of the local real estate board, the Newton Fair Housing Practices Committee, and the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, the Family Relocation Agency helped to smooth the relocation process for a good number of families.⁹¹

The Turnpike Authority’s Treatment of Landtaking Victims

There were many problems with the landtaking procedure that even the Family Relocation Service could not help with. The

Turnpike Authority habitually offered prices well below the market value for houses. According to Burton White in a letter to *The Boston Globe*, the Authority would initially offer a price approximately \$4,000 below the actual value of the home. If the homeowner complained, the Authority would raise the offer \$1,500 to \$2,000. The second offer would be take-it or leave-it.

In addition, the Turnpike Authority was very slow in making offers to homeowners. Without knowledge of the price they would receive for their old home, displaced families had trouble looking for new homes. Many people who had already bought a house complained that they still had to pay insurance and interest on their old houses.⁹² In order to avoid dealings with the Turnpike Authority, several families chose to move their houses instead of selling them.⁹³ The sight of a large house traveling down the street, blocking traffic on both sides, was not uncommon in Newton in 1962.

In May, 1963, the Family Relocation Service sent out a survey which, among other things, compared dislocated families' new housing to their old housing in value and price. 108 families responded to the survey. Of these, 62% said that they were paying more for their new housing, while only 19% said they were paying less than before. 51% indicated that they were getting less for their money, while 42% said they were getting more.⁹⁴

While some displaced persons were satisfied with their treatment by the Turnpike Authority, most left the landtaking process bitter and angry. A section of the Family Relocation Service *Final Report* in which displaced persons were permitted to express their personal views on the landtaking process helps illustrate the psychological cost of the toll road. The following are excerpts from the anonymous statements, some positive, some negative:

Mr. C: "Having been born on _____ Street and residing there in an old family homestead and with the expectation of dying there, it was quite a wrench to have to move. As it turned out, we got what we thought was a very fair price for our old home and are quite content from that standpoint."

Mr. E: "I am now located all on one floor so there is an advantage on that side. I am paying a fair price for rent. I am in a very good location and in time I presume I will feel happy about the whole thing."

Mrs. F: "...I do not feel that I should have been subjected to the terror, nastiness, and inconvenience and insults caused by the Turnpike Authority."

Mr. H: "We felt a complete disregard for the problems of those displaced by the toll road. The Massachusetts Turnpike Authority employs the tactics of a police state. We have been greatly disturbed by this demonstration of eminent domain."

Mr. N: "There was no relationship whatsoever between the offers made and the prevailing cost of similar housing in Newton or in surrounding towns."

Mrs. M: "What can I say at this point? You are well aware of the injustices perpetrated, the extreme inconveniences, and financial burden imposed on the displaced families without assistance from state or city agencies. I sincerely hope that future eminent domain proceedings give more consideration to the rights of the displaced families. It almost broke my heart to leave Newton. I had a two-family home which I depended on for income, plus a single home to live in, with almost an acre of land and it was all landscaped by my late husband who was a 'war casualty' and believe me, it was very hard to give up for a highway for automobiles."⁹⁵

The Hicks Street Neighborhood

The turnpike extension was to have an especially great effect on the Hicks Street neighborhood of West Newton. This tightly-knit black community was centered around the Myrtle Baptist Church. Many families had lived in the area for more than 100 years. The turnpike was to run directly through the heart of the neighborhood, dislocating 32 homes. To add to the problem, it was very difficult for blacks to find new housing in other Newton neighborhoods, because whites were afraid that having a black neighbor would decrease the value of their property (although numerous studies proved this not to be the case).⁹⁶

Although the Turnpike Authority was supposed to aid the families of the Hicks Street neighborhood by moving their houses

(as part of Chairman Callahan's agreement with Mayor Gibbs), the Authority never followed through on its promise. The displaced families of the Hicks Street neighborhood were left to find new housing on their own.⁹⁷

This experience seriously tested the strength and cohesiveness of the Hicks Street neighborhood. While greatly angered, families took on the challenge of rebuilding their community and maintaining contact with displaced families. In the end, the neighborhood survived through sheer will. The church acted as a binding force, bringing the entire community together every week. Most displaced families continued to attend church, no matter how far away they lived. According to Reverend Haywood of the Myrtle Baptist Church, the experience actually strengthened the community by giving it a feeling of courage. By overcoming hardship, the community came to believe it could withstand anything.⁹⁸

Construction Begins, Resistance Continues

In March, 1962, construction of the toll road began in Newton. The first bridge was taken down October 3 in Auburndale.⁹⁹ Slowly, loud machines crept their way across the city, excavating a strip of land five miles long. Although most families left their homes peacefully, a few refused to leave and caused trouble for the Turnpike Authority.

Three families on Austin Street in West Newton remained in their houses until the bitter end: the Blacklers, the Hathaways, and the Kerrs. These families complained that the Turnpike Authority had not treated them fairly. Robert Blackler explained that he had been offered \$14,500 from the Authority for his 12-room house. "When I went to real estate offices about similar size houses in Newton for \$14,500, they laughed in my face," Blackler said. Not wanting to slow construction, the Authority dug around the houses, leaving 45 to 100 foot cliffs on all sides.¹⁰⁰

On February 23 the Sheriff came and battered down the doors of the three remaining homes. The families were forcibly removed. Mrs. Hathaway expressed sadness that the situation had come to such a tragic end. "If Callahan had been there at the time (we were forced to leave), we wouldn't have felt so bad," Hathaway said. "He would have seen what he had done to a family."¹⁰¹

The actions of these three families inspired another homeowner on Austin Street, Anna Galvin, to return to her home and protest the toll road. Galvin was forced to leave her home on May 4.¹⁰²

Air Rights and Other Controversies

The toll road opened Thursday, September 3, 1964, but this did not mean the end of the controversies it created.¹⁰³ The air rights debate was the most prominent of the conflicts that the toll road generated once construction was completed.

The idea behind air rights was to make up for property lost as a result of the turnpike by building over the road. Callahan sought to build a motel, a super-market, a department store, a theater, 11 small stores, and four apartment building all over the Newton Corner section of the toll road. This would amount to five times the property destroyed by the toll road in Newton Corner, and bring in much tax revenue. Mayor Gibbs supported Callahan's proposal.¹⁰⁴

A bill went before the State Legislature to give the Turnpike Authority power to grant 99-year air rights leases to private companies. However, according to the original turnpike bill, the Authority was only to be around for another 40 years. The bill never passed the State Legislature, and Callahan's grand visions of development never became a reality. A supermarket and a hotel complex were eventually built over the toll road through unrelated deals.¹⁰⁵

In a more minor conflict, Newton sought payment from the Turnpike Authority for a Newton Corner firehouse that was

destroyed to make way for the toll road. After much debate, the city received \$255,000 for the firehouse in 1967, and agreed not to construct a footbridge over the toll road in Newton Corner in exchange.¹⁰⁶

In 1969, the city bought back a parcel of land near the Myrtle Baptist Church in West Newton from the Turnpike Authority for \$65,000. The Authority had originally planned to use the land for a service station, but later found that the station was not necessary.¹⁰⁷

These transactions were achieved with a much more compromising, friendly attitude on both sides. Callahan died in April, 1964, and his successor, John T. Driscoll, was much more open and congenial when dealing with Newton. In addition, time had helped to clear away the scars from the toll road controversy. Newton citizens accepted the toll road, whether they liked it or not.

Mayor Gibbs spoke of this new attitude in his Inaugural Address of 1964. "Speaking of the Turnpike Extension, once enveloped in a cloud of secrecy and uncertainty for this city, as well as a mooted topic in the debate over a freeway, it is only fair to say that at the present time things are going very smoothly," Gibbs said. "We are agreeably surprised."

New Newton Mayor Monte Basbas also expressed satisfaction with the Turnpike Authority after the city acquired the Myrtle Baptist Church land parcel. "This is another example of the fine relationship that has developed between the Turnpike Authority through its Chairman John T. Driscoll and the City of Newton," Basbas said.¹⁰⁸

The Toll Road at Present

Today, regarding Newton's relationship with the Turnpike Authority, very few battle scars from the bitter decade-long conflict remain. Most current residents never experienced Newton before the turnpike.

There can be no denying the large effect the turnpike had on Newton. A number of old neighborhood businesses were destroyed forever. Newton Corner was transformed into an ugly sprawl of busy concrete streets. Newtonville, Auburndale, and Newton Corner were divided into north and south sections.

However, the turnpike did not completely destroy Newton's way of life. Communities have been able to rebuild. Newton as a whole remains a single entity, not two divided sections. Parks and gardens still dominate much of the landscape. While the turnpike is ugly, noisy, and divisive, most people realize that it also provides an extremely convenient commute to Boston. It takes barely ten minutes to travel into downtown Boston, and this has attracted many new families to Newton. Despite the wide strip of asphalt through its center, Newton has thrived in the decades since the toll road was built. The turnpike, while turning the city more urban and gray, has not had nearly the negative impact that many people feared.

A Broader Look at the Toll Road Issues

Having examined the history of the construction of the toll road, this paper shall now enter upon a broader discussion of the underlying issues.

Fears

The turnpike truly did not have a devastating, irreversible effect on Newton. The turnpike caused many serious problems, but the city was able to recover. However, during the conflict most people were certain that the damage would be irreparable. It is important to examine the reasons behind this fear.

An obvious source of the fear and paranoia that surrounded the toll road conflict lay in the attitude of the Turnpike Authority towards the citizens of Newton. Because highway build-

ing was a relatively new trend throughout the United States, the Turnpike Authority had very few examples to learn from. The Authority soon proved itself very naive in its dealings with citizens' protests. Instead of seeking to calm people's fears by carefully explaining the true nature of the toll road, the Turnpike Authority kept its plans veiled in secrecy until the very end. Because of this, exaggerated rumors ran rampant throughout Newton, causing fear and hysteria. The Authority seemed shocked when citizens began to protest. They responded not by rationally refuting such protests, but by criticizing the protesters. This attitude transformed Newton into the Authority's greatest enemy. If the Turnpike Authority had been open and friendly towards Newton, it is quite possible that the city would have slowly become its ally. By antagonizing Newton, the Authority assured that the conflict would become long and bitter.

In her book *The Impact of the Massachusetts Turnpike Extension on the Citizens of Newton*, Stacey A. Bancroft Neustadt brings up another possible cause of citizens' anxiety. Neustadt discusses how the history of both Newton and Boston helps to explain citizens' fears regarding the construction of the toll road.

Historical Context: Newton

From the time it was first settled, Newton was a city built around the railroad. In 1833 the Boston and Worcester Railroad reached West Newton, and the population of the area immediately started to grow.¹⁰⁹ As further branches of the railroad were added, different villages started to spring up in the Newton area. By 1946, the population of Newton had reached 80,000.¹¹⁰ People would use the railroad to commute to Boston for work in the mornings, and would return in the afternoons.

Throughout its history, Newton never developed one town center. The city was divided into small, separate villages. As a result of this, Newton was able to retain its rural atmosphere even as it expanded in population. The city managed to keep much of its

natural beauty, and prided itself on its parks and gardens. Mayor Gibbs expressed this pride in his Inaugural Address of 1962. "It is interesting to note that we are now the ninth largest city within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts," Gibbs said. "One would not realize this, however, for we have no major centralized business section, no tangible evidence of such a large population. We have retained the unique character of our many villages, a character in no small part responsible for the charm, the beauty that has earned us the title 'The Garden City of Newton.'"

It was precisely because of this pride, this attachment to a more rural lifestyle, that Newton grew so afraid of the toll road. The toll road threatened Newton's train service, which the city had grown around and relied on for commuter service. The toll road threatened Newton's greenery and its natural beauty. In addition, because Newton did not have one downtown area, the toll road would destroy a number of important business centers and closely-knit communities. In short, the toll road represented a significant threat to Newton's history.

To add to this, many people in Newton had lived in their houses for their entire lives. They had invested money, love, and memories in their own personal space. Their property and their neighborhoods represented everything they had lived for. Homes were not simply wooden structures designed to provide shelter; they represented a significant part of every person who lived in them.

For these reasons, the toll road did not simply represent the loss of money and property, it represented the end of a way of life. If the toll road were built, people reasoned, Newton would lose its personal charm, its natural beauty. In addition, if a person's property were to be taken, the part of him invested in that property would be forever lost. Seen under this light, it is easy to understand why Newton fought so hard to stop the toll road.

Historical Context: Boston

Boston had few of the historical attachments to nature that Newton had. Its history was one of business, commerce, and manufacturing.

Boston saw its economic future at stake in the toll road issue. In the years leading up to the proposal of the toll road, Boston had witnessed a steady flight of businesses away from the city. In his book *Building A New Boston: Politics and Urban Renewal 1950-1970*, Thomas H. O'Connor describes a Boston before 1950 vastly different from the cosmopolitan, urban metropolis people know today. "There was a time...when Boston was on its way to becoming a ghost town—a run-down, worn-out relic of the past, rapidly discouraging any further investment or any significant interest. It was generally viewed as a city with a historic past, and no discernible future. Boston was a city, declared one issue of the *U.S. News and World Report*, that was 'dying on the vine.' Gone were its textile mills, and its once-busy harbor was 'virtually stagnant.' New building of any importance was a rarity, observed the writer, and the nation's highest property tax rate 'threatened the city with bankruptcy.'"¹¹

Boston politicians began the road to urban renewal in the 1950s. They joined with citizens in an all-out effort to revitalize Boston's economy, and bring businesses back into the city.¹² The toll road was an extension of this effort. By providing an easy commute, the toll road would bring more people into Boston, aiding the economy.

Under these circumstances, it is easy to see why Boston was so determined to push the toll road through. The toll road represented its future, the beginning of a better life. It is also easy to see why Boston politicians became so afraid when the Prudential company threatened to abandon its development in the Back Bay. Quotes from Callahan, such as "Unless the connection is made you had better give back the downtown area to the Indians, because in ten years it will all be moved back to the suburbs," make much more sense when viewed in this context.

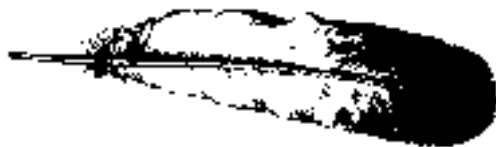
The Underlying Conflict

From this brief study of the history of Newton and Boston, it is apparent that a strong, underlying conflict existed. While the history of Boston favored the construction of a toll road, the history of Newton favored a system based on the railroad. For this reason, the conflict became extremely important for both sides.

In the end, Boston won because of its larger size and its larger political influence. Boston represented the entire state of Massachusetts, while Newton was viewed as a troublesome minority voice. Callahan helped to push the toll road through, but his political dealings cannot explain the toll road's success alone. Simple chance also played a large part, as it seemed that luck was on the turnpike's side in every step of the process. However, at some point one has to look at the men and women who actually cast the votes, the state legislators. When forced to pick between the interests of one city or the other, state legislators invariably chose Boston. In highway building at this time in U.S. history, the majority ruled.

The controversy over the toll road can teach legislators important lessons about road building. First and foremost, it is important to listen to the voice of the protesters, and to respect their anger and fear. Politicians, who are often far removed from the battlefield, should include in their negotiations those whom the road affects the most, the citizens. It is important for both sides of the conflict to be open with each other, and willing to compromise from the beginning. In the toll road conflict, secrecy created only anger and frustration, and it took the two sides almost ten years to finally sit down and bargain with each other. Most of all, the road builders must realize that they are dealing with human beings, not with unfeeling machines. Homes are not mere buildings, they represent and reflect the lives of those who live within them. These people must be taken into consideration when planning any road. The true impact of a highway cannot be measured through dollars and cents. The impact lies in the hearts

of the dispossessed families and their neighbors who are left behind to rebuild. In this way, the construction of the turnpike extension through Newton was a great injustice. While succeeding in its mission to build a toll road, the Turnpike Authority failed in its obligation to the people.



¹ Thomas H. O'Connor, Building a New Boston: Politics and Urban Renewal 1950 to 1970 (Boston: Northeastern University Press) p. 81

² The Newton Graphic, 8/9/56, "AAA Urges Free Expressway," p. 1

³ Stacey A. Bancroft Neustadt, The Impact of the Massachusetts Toll Road Extension on the Citizens of Newton, p. 11 (no publisher, no date)

⁴ Ibid., pp. 11-12

⁵ O'Connor, pp. 81-82

⁶ Neustadt, p. 12

⁷ Ibid., p. 12

⁸ Ibid., pp. 12-13

⁹ Ibid., p. 13

¹⁰ The Newton Graphic, 12/13/56, "The Toll Road To Date," p. 4

¹¹ Neustadt, p. 14

¹² Ibid., p. 14

¹³ The Newton Graphic, 7/19/56, "Disclosure Leaves Officials Guessing, Is Toll Road Planned Here?" p. 1

¹⁴ "The Toll Road To Date"

¹⁵ The Newton Graphic, 9/13/56, "Newton To Become Boston's Driveway? City Holds Out For Freeway Along Charles River Route," p. 4

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 4

¹⁷ "The Toll Road To Date"

¹⁸ The Newton Graphic, 8/2/56, Editorial: "It's A Serious Matter," p. 4

¹⁹ The Newton Graphic, 10/4/56, "Too Soon To Protest E-W Toll Route, Turnpike Head States," p. 1

²⁰ "The Toll Road To Date"

²¹ "Too Soon To Protest E-W Toll Route, Turnpike Head States"

²² "The Toll Road To Date"

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ The Newton Graphic, 8/2/56, "Rawson Takes 3 Legal Steps To Prevent Taking of B & A Railroad, Says Loss Would Be A Death Blow," p. 1

²⁵ Ibid., p. 1

²⁶ The Newton Graphic, 10/11/56, "Legislature Fails To Act On Toll Road," p. 1

²⁷ The Newton Graphic, 9/29/60, "Toll Road Extension Faces Battle Royal Led By Mayor, See 350 Homes, Business Firms Facing Demolition," p. 1

²⁸ “AAA Urges Free Expressway”

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ The Newton Graphic, 10/11/56, “Freeway Into Boston Urged by Taxpayers, Better For City Than Toll Road,” p. 1

³¹ The Newton Graphic, 12/16/56, “Bill Would Revoke Authority’s Power To Extend Toll Road Into City, Second Bill Would Have Study Made of Freeway,” p. 1

³² Ibid., p. 1

³³ The Newton Graphic, 12/6/56, “Callahan Ired By Alternate Route,” p. 1

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ The Newton Graphic, 12/13/56, “Outside Opposition To Proposed Road Extension Is Developing, Freeway Is Advocated As Feasible,” p. 1

³⁶ Ibid., p. 1

³⁷ The Newton Graphic, 2/14/57, “Mayor Leads Protest Against Toll Road...Solons Clash During State House Hearing...Governor Neutral, Heated Arguments Develop as Pros and Cons are Presented At Largely Attended Meeting,” p. 1

³⁸ Ibid., p. 1

³⁹ Ibid., p. 1

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 1

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 1

⁴² The Newton Graphic, 2/21/57, “14-1 Vote Rebuffs Toll Road Foes But City Not Through Fighting, Vote Goes Against 3 Road-Block Bills,” p. 1

⁴³ The Newton Graphic, 5/16/57, “New Toll Road Poses Problem For This City,” p. 1

⁴⁴ Wilbur Smith and Associates, New Haven, Connecticut, A Traffic Study of Newton, Massachusetts, p. 23

⁴⁵ The Newton Graphic, 5/23/57, “Toll Road Traffic Not Hurting Newton,” p. 1

⁴⁶ Neustadt, p. 24

⁴⁷ The Newton Graphic, 5/8/58, “Toll Road Extension to Wreck Big Area on City’s North Side, More Than 300 Homes and Business Establishments Likely To Be Demolished,” p. 1

⁴⁸ The Newton Graphic, 5/22/58, “Charges Toll Road Bill is Filled With Booby Traps,” p. 16

⁴⁹ “Toll Road Extension to Wreck Big Area...”

⁵⁰ The Newton Graphic, 2/23/61, Letter from Representative Rawson, p. 4

⁵¹ “Toll Road Extension Faces Battle Royal Led By Mayor...”

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ The Newton Graphic, 1/19/61, "Uncertainties Loom In Toll Road Project," p. 1

⁵⁴ The Newton Graphic, 2/2/61, "Mayor Gibbs Stands Firm In Campaign To Block Toll Road, Newton Interests Paramount In Mayor's Long-Time Fight," p. 1

⁵⁵ The Newton Graphic, 10/6/60, "Mayor In Firm Stand Against Toll Road Bid, Callahan In Surprise Visit To City Hall Unfolds Plans," p. 1

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 1

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 1

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