

Hunt Favors Free Road on Banks

Chairman Joe Hunt of the State Highway Commission has raised the possibility that a free highway — rather than a toll road—will be built along the Outer Banks.

Hunt said Thursday he has "an idea" for building a free road, "but I'm doing some research on it before I get into it."

The chairman didn't wish to give any details at this time.

"We're thinking in terms of something else (other than a toll road) but I don't want to say what it is until I find out how practical it is," he commented.

Hunt tossed out the first hint that a free road may be in the offing when he was in Hertford earlier this week for a bridge dedication.

Hunt was pressed by newsmen for some statement on

what's being done about the proposed toll road planned by the N. C. Turnpike Authority.

Hunt said he informed the reporters that nothing is being done right now—and won't be until plans are finished for spending the \$300 million road bond issue approved by voters in 1965.

"I told them we may never put a toll road down there," Hunt stated.

Presumably, a free "coastal highway" would have to be built with regular State-federal funds or with bond money.

The turnpike authority has completed much of the preliminary work for its proposed toll road (approved by the Terry Sanford highway commission) and has promises from landowners to donate much of the needed right-of-way.

The turnpike is planned as a 29-mile highway tying in with US 158 on the south and running from near Duck in Dare County to the Virginia line.

The road would be laid 500 to 900 feet from the Atlantic Ocean to guard against hurricane damage and promote development of waterfront property.

The turnpike's work screeched to a halt with the change of State administrations and has been dormant pending plans on the road bond program.

Hunt has expressed careful doubts in the past about putting North Carolina in the toll road business—despite the fact that the 1965 General Assembly extended the turnpike authority's power so it can plan toll roads anywhere in the State.

The authority had previously been limited to planning one toll road no more than 100 miles long.

The bill to broaden the authority's power was introduced by State Sen. Carl Meares of Fair Bluff, who was later appointed to the highway commission by Governor Moore.

Hunt's proceed-with-caution policy on the toll road has earned him some criticism.

In January, Vernon James of

Weeksville, one of four authority members, said Hunt (who's also a member) should either get busy with plans for the toll road or delegate his authority in the matter to someone else.

Another authority member, T. Baxter Williams Jr., chimed in with complaints of his own, claiming Hunt had given him the "brushoff" when he asked about the status of toll plans.

Hunt said at the time he had no intention of working on a toll road until he mapped out spending plans for the bond issue, adding: "There's lots I don't understand about this turnpike business."



JOE HUNT

... studying free road

HUNT—No Toll Roads

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proposed with the stipulation that the license must be posted publicly.

If approved, such a requirement would go into effect on Oct. 1, 1967.

Two Tracts

Turner said two additional tracts of land for the Cape Lookout National Park had been acquired, making a total of around 85 per cent now owned by the State.

Turner said the remainder will be difficult to acquire and will likely have to resort to condemnation proceedings.

He said he hopes to complete acquisition within 12 months.

Chairman Woodrow Price said consideration is under study of legislation which would establish building lines and allow counties and local governments to set up such programs.

Price said these are vital for storm control projects, which would involve federal and State funds.

He said there was general agreement for such building lines at Morehead City and also expression for possible need for such requirements along the sounds as well.

Retain Rights

Col. George Pickett, director of the Department of Water Resources, said property owners would not lose their rights by the property lines and would not be required to give deeds.

Pickett pointed out that those counties which are ready to carry out those programs when funds are received will be given priority on a first come, first serve basis.

"It's for your protection against storms," Pickett told property owners at the meeting.

Chairman Price said such improvements at Carolina and Wrightsville beaches have increased property values there, in addition to providing storm protection.

Dr. Arthur Cooper of North Carolina State University at Raleigh reported two coastal studies are under way involving sand movement and erosion.

He said location of the proposed coastal studies laboratory has not been settled. However, he said there is an apparent willingness on the part of the National Park Service to locate such research facilities on their properties.

Roy Wilder Jr., who resigned as secretary and director of the commission, was praised for his work. His successor, Bill Johnson, was presented to the members.

A tour of beach erosion projects at Cape Hatteras National Park was held Friday afternoon. Saturday morning the commission will travel to Currituck County to visit various projects here. Next meeting of the Seashore Commission is slated for the Wilmington area. A date has not been announced.