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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 25

Offered January 10, 2018

Prefiled December 29, 2017

Directing the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission to study the feasibility of reducing or eliminating tolls on the Midtown and Downtown Tunnels in Hampton Roads. Report.

Patrons—Heretick, Adams, D.M., Convirs-Fowler, Delaney, James, Jones, J.C., Lindsey, Reid, Turpin and Ward; Senators: Locke, Lucas and Spruill

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the toll facilities at the Midtown and Downtown Tunnels in Hampton Roads are operated by Elizabeth River Crossings, a private corporation that holds a concession to operate and maintain the tunnels for a period of 58 years; and

WHEREAS, toll rates are highest during peak hours, which puts a strain on the workforce and negatively affects commuters and businesses; and

WHEREAS, according to a 2015 report by an economist and professor at Old Dominion University, traffic volume in the Midtown and Downtown Tunnels has decreased significantly since the imposition of the tolls and has led to a decrease in sales tax collections in the City of Portsmouth; and

WHEREAS, the tolls place a financial burden on the area, hinder economic development, and limit regional mobility; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission be directed to study the feasibility of reducing or eliminating tolls on the Midtown and Downtown Tunnels in Hampton Roads.

In conducting its study, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) shall investigate (i) alternatives to reduce or eliminate tolls, including whether the maintenance and toll enforcement on the Midtown and Downtown Tunnels may be assumed by the Commonwealth; (ii) whether the Commonwealth is able to reallocate existing funding to reduce or eliminate the tolls; (iii) whether the contract with Elizabeth River Crossings can be renegotiated; and (iv) any other financial or legal avenue that would allow for a reduction or elimination of tolls.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission for this study, upon request.

The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2018, and the director shall submit to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive summary of its findings and recommendations no later than the first day of the 2019 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The executive summary shall state whether JLARC intends to submit to the General Assembly and the Governor a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summary and report shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.