§ 353. Purposes of the authority and benefits therefrom. The authority is created to and shall have power to finance, construct, reconstruct, improve, develop, maintain or operate a thruway system as provided by and subject to the provisions of this title together with facilities for the public incidental thereto. It is hereby found and declared that such purposes are in all respects for the benefit of the people of the state of New York for the increase of their pleasure, convenience and welfare, for the improvement of their health, to facilitate transportation for their recreation and commerce and for the common defense; and the authority shall be regarded as performing a governmental function in carrying out its corporate purpose and in exercising the powers granted by this title.