

Welcome to The Boston Informer

The goal is simple: Provide concise public information on construction projects, planning initiatives, and whatever else affects living and working in Boston. Welcome to The Boston Informer!

The Boston Informer is published electronically by ATC Information, Inc., five times yearly in Boston, Massachusetts. President: Anthony Casendino; vice-presidents, Anne McKinnon, Chris Fincham.

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Planning for the end of operating subsidies for the Hubway bike share program, the City and Hubway figure a few ads should make up the loss of subsidy.



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Peddling Pedaling



You Were Asking

- Q. The Mayor has finally decided to establish rates for the private use of City Hall Plaza. But I read rental fees will go into a new City revolving fund. But doesn't the Boston Redevelopment Authority own City Hall Plaza?**
- A.** Yes, according to the City's assessing department website. So it's actually the BRA who should be addressing where revenues should go.
- Q. The City is kidding, isn't it, when it says a "parklet" temporary curb extension will cost \$12,000? And the kicker: not only will the City take a parking space from a small business, but it will also charge the shop owner to install the "parklet"!**
- A.** The City is not kidding. The idea of converting "orphaned" space to a parklet is great, but if merchants must pay then they need a return. Restaurants that can expand to the street are about the only businesses who would benefit.
- Q. Over the past 25 years we have been told costs for the Big Dig started at \$4.5 billion and steadily increased to \$15 billion. Now suddenly we are told the true cost is over \$24 billion. Will there ever be a final cost figure?**
- A.** Probably not. The tunnels are still leaking and the sub-standard concrete is deteriorating, so the project costs go on for ever.
- Q. The City thinks it's great removing parking spaces for bike lanes and Hubway stations. But what about small businesses who rely on a few customer parking spaces to make their shops viable?**
- A.** The City seems to be oblivious and spouts meaningless statistics about 8,000 on-street parking spaces in the City. Well, 8,000 spaces in 23 neighborhoods doesn't help a shopkeeper with his/her parking needs. And the argument that Hubway riders generate economic activity to make up for the removal of parking spaces isn't supported by the City's own usage data which says only 29 percent of Hubway users spend some money. On the other hand, the City has made it clear (TBI Issue 101, Winter 2012) it will not enforce parking in bike lanes, it seems parking may be available there.

THE BOSTON INFORMER

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20 Years of The Boston Informer

Events and Projects That Changed Boston

In April 1992 the first issue of The Boston Informer appeared, transforming the reporting of no-nonsense news about planning, development, construction and transportation in Boston. That was the pre-Internet era, and people had little access to real information other than attending meetings. The Internet has given access to information, but we can't tell what's real. The Boston Informer is the real thing, and this is our 20th Anniversary Issue!

Projects having biggest impact

Central Artery/Third Harbor Tunnel Project (The Big Dig) Probably the project with the most impact on the City and region since the filling of the Back Bay in 1860s. In addition to making great improvements to traffic flow, north/south through the city and especially east/west to the airport, the project built the Seaport Access Road which provides access to a part of So. Boston that previously was accessible only by several bridges from the downtown. This improved access has helped unlock dozens of acres of land for development. Downtown, the CA/T removed the unsightly overhead roadway, a barrier between the city and the waterfront, and created many parks in the city including the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway.



Elevated Central Artery from the North End.

Negatively, the huge cost overrun (\$24 billion vs. \$4.5 billion) and the debt incurred crippled the MBTA and the MassPike and severely limited the State's future ability to maintain and improve the infrastructure (public transportation, roads and bridges).

Boston Harbor Cleanup Changed Boston Harbor from one of the most polluted harbors in the country to one of the cleanest, and with it the public perception of the harbor.

Waterfront development accelerated since the project. Remarkably for Massachusetts, it was completed on budget and on time.

Seaport District The conversion of the old Commonwealth Pier to the World Trade Center in 1986 and the Moakley Federal Courthouse in 1998 started the development of the Seaport District bringing the Seaport Hotel and office towers, the Convention Center, Fan Pier development, Liberty Wharf, the Silver Line and a multitude of projects now in progress or planned, guided by the Seaport District Master Plan.

1994



Logan Airport and the Port of Boston (Massport)

They are major economic engines for the City and the State, and Massport through continued investment and expansion has kept pace with the needs of the region. Begun in 1994 the \$1.2 billion Logan Airport Modernization Program was designed to allow for the airport to grow to 45 million annual passengers.

Prudential Center Master Plan The 5.3 million s.f. Prudential Center project in the 1960s began Boston's turnaround after decades of disinvestment. But the Prudential Project Advisory Committee (PrUPAC) established in 1987 helped usher in another transformative era for the complex, setting guidelines for another 2.8 million s.f. of mixed-use development in five phases.

Christian Science Master Plan Similarly, the I. M. Pei/Araldo Cossutta master plan (development completed in 1973) dealt with 30 acres and wiped out residential and commercial buildings. The 2010 master plan calls

20 years, cont. —

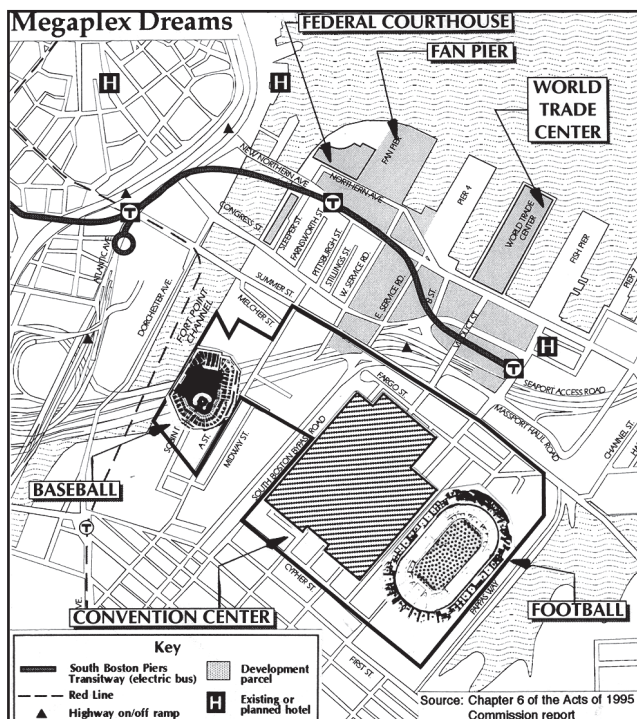
for 950,000 s.f. of office and residential/hotel in three buildings on Dalton/Belvidere streets and adjacent to Horticultural Hall.

Central Artery/North Area Planning to remove the elevated highway ramps over City Square in Charlestown was in full swing in 1977. The highway design and community development plan for the six acres of land that would be opened up would take 10 years to complete. Removing the ramps and putting the highway in tunnel was complete in 1993. The last CANA development parcel was just awarded.

Projects that could have changed Boston

South Boston Megaplex This proposal to build football and baseball stadiums, plus a Convention Center in South Boston was a dream to make Boston a convention and tourist heaven. The \$943 million plan would also have developed the Seaport District practically overnight in a radically different way. The Convention Center happened. (TBI Issue 19, 1995)

North/South Rail Link Proposed rail tunnel connection between North and South Stations under the Central Artery tunnel with an intermediate stop at Aquarium, connecting to the Blue Line. Would have facilitated direct commuter travel from the south of Boston to the north part of the city, and



vice versa. Also would have provided direct rail service from Maine to Washington D.C. Could still be done, but no funding in sight. Cost estimate in 2003 was \$8.7 billion. (TBI Issue 28, 1996)

Urban Ring In its most advanced form was a proposed rail system around the City (like Route 128), enabling commuters to travel along the periphery instead of the current spoke and hub system (into and

out of the center of Boston). (TBI Issue 56, 2002)

South Station Air Rights Proposal to build three mixed-use buildings, tallest 678 feet, over South Station and the bus terminal. May come back to life. (TBI Issue 58, 2002)



Proposed So. Station air rights development

So. Station Expansion/USPS Relocation

Moving the Post Office to So. Boston on land it owns would open up more space for rail tracks in So. Station, critical to expanding commuter rail service. Still possible and desirable. Who pays? (TBI Issue 43, 1999).

East Boston Waterfront

Development Clippership Wharf and Pier One Portside (Massport) redevelopment began planning 30 plus years ago. Hodge Boiler site and Piers Park Phase II have been in planning for 15 years. Pier One piles driven for first buildings and stopped in 2007.

Columbus Center Air Rights Proposed mixed-use development near Back Bay MBTA station at Columbus Avenue and Arlington Street. Billed as the way to re-knit the Back Bay and So. End neighborhoods with 1.3 million s.f., the project collapsed under legal and financial scrutiny.

Central Artery Ramp Parcels Proposals were made for buildings over the Central Artery ramps on Parcels 6, 12 and 18. None proved financially viable because of the additional cost of building over ramps. Similarly, proposals for building over the Turnpike have failed. The recent Mass. Avenue proposal, mostly on adjacent land may make it. (TBI Issue 100, 2011)

City Hall Plaza Makeover

Numerous proposals have been made over the years for fixing the Plaza including extending Hanover Street to Cambridge Street and including a hotel on the north side of the plaza.

1992



234 Berkeley St./former Louis Boston building

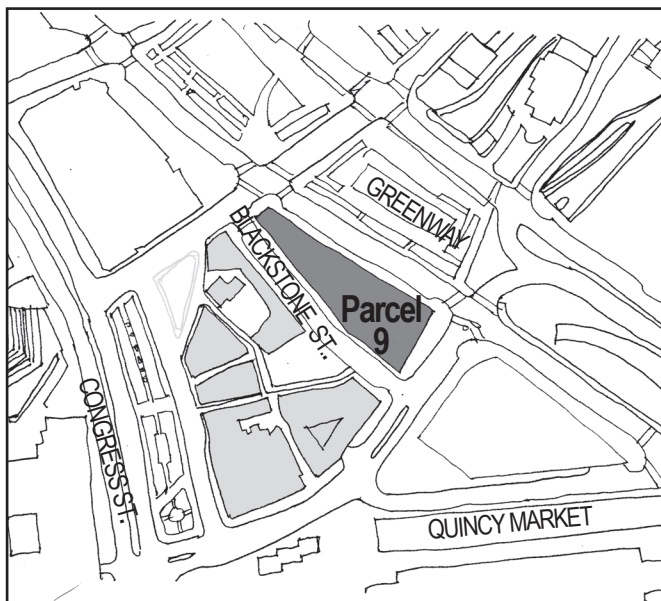
— Extensive renovation of the former Louis Boston building at the corner of Newbury, Berkeley and Boylston streets for the return of Renovation Hardware to the Back Bay is expected to be complete in 2013. The 44,000 s.f. building, formerly the Museum of Natural History (1863), Bonwit Teller and Louis Boston, will include a restaurant below sidewalk level on the Boylston Street side.



Parcel 9 development proposals

MassDOT, owner of the parcel located adjacent to the Greenway and Blackstone Street, received four proposals in response to its RFP. The RFP stated the zoning height is 55 feet but increased height might be allowed at the North Street end of the parcel, also a preference for first floor market use. The proposals:

- **Blackstone Market**, a seven-story building with a first-floor food market, three restaurants on the second floor, about 50



Parcel 9, Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway

- apartments and a 13,000 s.f. roof garden to supply produce to the restaurants. Developer: DeNormandie and Cresset.
- **Haymarket Square**, a seven-story building with a 180-

What's Up?

■ Plans to redevelop the **Boston Harbor Garage at the New England Aquarium** have finally been put on ice until key regulatory guidelines are updated. In 2009 Prudential Real Estate Investors (owner) and the Chiofaro Co. (developer) proposed to demolish the garage and build a mixed-use, 1.5 million s.f. project with two towers 690 feet and 560 feet. (TBI Issue 90, July 2009). The Boston Redevelopment Authority and the State's environmental review both rejected the proposal as too dense and too high. Existing zoning caps the height at the site at 150 feet. The subsequent Greenway District Planning Study, which is to be used as the basis for a new Municipal Harbor Plan and new zoning for the area, set a height of 200 feet for the site. The proponents recently withdrew their proposal and will wait for the new Municipal Harbor Plan (which will take 18-24 months) before proposing a new project for the site.

■ Boston's oldest neighborhood, the **Blackstone Block**, some of which dates to 1652, will soon have a new old building. At 7 Marshall St. the owner is adding two floors to the existing three-story building, completely gutting the lower floors and basement and reconfiguring the building's uses. The new building will have six residential units on the top two floors and offices on second and third floors. A convenience store and restaurant will occupy the ground floor.

PEOPLE MOVERS

Peter Gori, from Boston Redevelopment Authority, to Colliers Real Estate.

Kris Carter, "Advisor to the Mayor," is the interim Boston Bikes director.

Sarah Kelly, from executive director of the Boston Preservation Alliance to Fort Point Associates.

Gretchen von Grossman, from UMass-Lowell to MBTA Director of Facilities and Transit Oriented Development.

Josh Robin is the MBTA Director of Innovation and Special Projects

Sarah Walker, from Arcadis to HNTB.

Evelyn Friedman, from Boston Dept. of Neighborhood Development to Greater Lawrence Community Action Council.

Jim Hunt, from Chief of Environmental and Energy Services for Boston to private sector.

room hotel and a two-story winter garden, plus a food market on the first floor. Developer: Normandy Real Estate Partners.

- **Market Square**, seven stories with 119 apartments, a 22,000 s.f. food market and a rooftop patio. Developer: Upton + Partners.
- **Boston Museum**, five-story museum with exhibits ranging from sports to politics to immigration, plus a 15,000 s.f. community market. Developer: Boston History Center and Museum Inc. MassDOT is expected to announce the winner in about two months.

20 Unbelievable Years!

What's Next: Innovation or Stagnation?

by Chan Rogers, P.E.

The Boston Informer began as a watchdog and information provider relative to transportation issues in Boston as the Central Artery/Tunnel project ("Big Dig") was launched. In 1992, the third harbor tunnel to East Boston was well under way, but the other major elements while conceptually understood were far from final design.

But this is not a Big Dig critique except to acknowledge that regardless of how flawed its execution, the investment in highway and transit has been critical to strengthening Boston as an employment center and making it attractive for residential living.

Currently, we have a very serious and profound issue with the future of Massachusetts' transportation as we enter FY 2013. There is no leadership shown by the newly appointed Secretary Richard Davey. We find a complete lack of advocacy for future improvements, whether highway, rail, public transit or any other mode to keep Massachusetts

on the move. This is particularly true in the Boston metro area which must remain viable as a world commerce center. Furthermore, the Boston metro area population is increasing and Boston is currently experiencing a tremendous renaissance in its Seaport District (thanks to the Big Dig!), helping establish an entire new business section by providing access. What more could we ask for a major urban center in the United States than extensive new building construction and expansion of commercial activity now underway in the Seaport District in Boston. Many of our northern cities are not this fortunate.

But we cannot stand still. The Convention Center Authority says demand for convention facilities is so high Boston must expand its convention center, built less than 10 years ago. Wow! For our transportation needs, where is Fred Salvucci when we need him? It is critical that Governor Patrick appoint a secretary of transportation that will take the helm, develop a program of priority

projects and move ahead on those identified for immediate implementation. Salvucci (1983-1990) may be the last really effective transportation secretary we have had. A visionary leader and doer, Salvucci also worked on raising the gas tax to get much needed revenue before he was ousted as secretary by Gov. Weld in 1991.

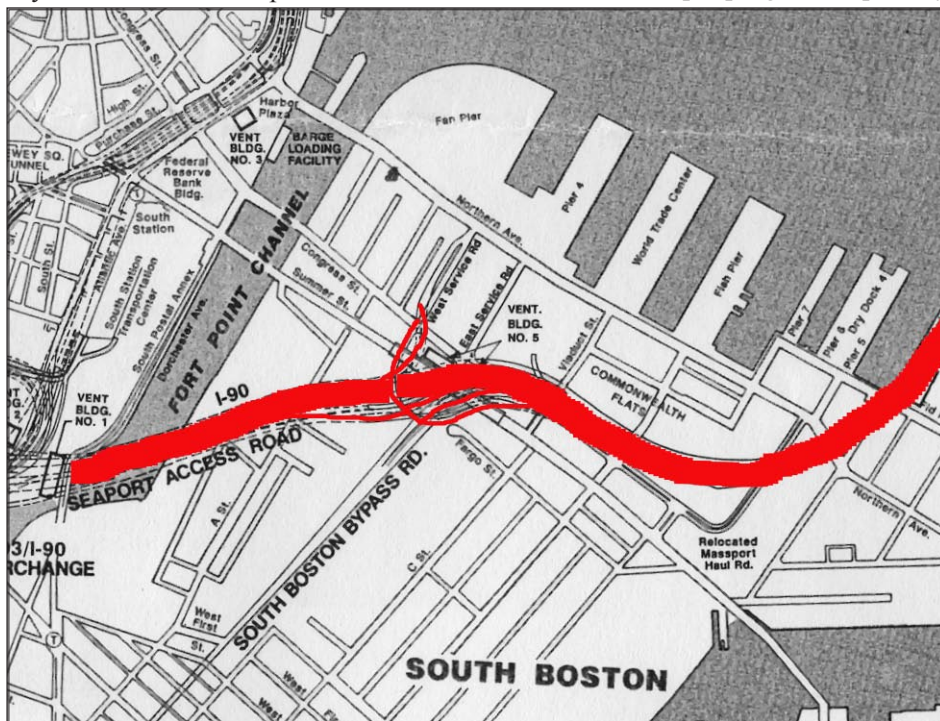
Currently, the Accelerated Bridge Program is a \$3 billion program that is supposed to be producing at a high-priority pace; however, it is only imperceptibly advancing eliminating structurally deficient bridges (19.2% of these bridges since 2008, halfway through the program). Little attention is paid to current or future require-

...where is Fred Salvucci [former Sec. of Transportation] when we need him?

ments to provide greater accessibility throughout the metro area to support the population increase. Note that new residential construction is a lot of the new construction.

Another action related to the completion of the Big Dig was the administrative streamlining of Massachusetts transportation agencies by eliminating the Mass. Turnpike Authority and folding all highway responsibilities under one agency within a new Department of Transportation. Still another action which seemed logical was the assignment of the debt resulting from public transit facilities built as mitigation for the Big Dig to the MBTA for direct financial responsibility. These two changes have had disastrous side effects relative to transportation effectiveness in metro Boston.

First, the secretary of transportation seems to have interpreted his DOT management duties to operate public transit with the only income at his



The Seaport Access Road (I-90 extension) and the Ted Williams Tunnel dramatically improved access to the South Boston Seaport District.

disposal: the fare box. This results in establishing fare increases that defeat the long-established purpose of public transit to provide mobility to support economic activities of urban centers, and transit in turn requires a public subsidy to be fully effective. Second, the demeanor of the secretary takes on that of a profit-oriented manager instead of a steward of the public interest providing mobility and adequate service by all

...aftereffects of the Big Dig have made our public officials reluctant to propose needed major transportation projects. Those that have been proposed languish in all sorts of excuses

modes to ensure the economic viability of our urban centers. A direct opposite perspective in management objectives is thereby displayed by the official responsible for the public good!

Unfortunately, the aftereffects of the Big Dig have made our public officials reluctant to propose needed major transportation projects. Projects that have been proposed languish in all sorts of excuses for lack of construction. A major project that is sorely needed when high-speed rail is considered nationally is the North-South Rail Link for Boston which also would significantly improve the efficiency of our commuter rail operations for metro Boston. Other projects in the planning and design



Advocates' vision to radically transform the Longfellow Bridge hasn't got a chance in this climate.

stage that should have been in operation already are: Commuter rail to Fall River and New Bedford and the Green Line extension to Somerville/Medford. Greater access to Logan is required, and the extension of the Blue Line to intersect the Red Line at Charles Street was a longstanding project to meet this requirement. Although the Silver Line to Logan provides Red Line rider access to Logan, the Silver Line must be expanded and improved.

The Boston metro area is growing and policies are in place to continue this growth. The recent decision to remove the Casey Overpass in Jamaica

Plain and the sentiment that Boston overbuilt its urban highways in the 20th century is an egregious misunderstanding of the basics of resolving urban highway conflicts. The fact that Boston is uniquely in "steady growth" mode means greater inefficiencies in the future if conflicts are not adequately resolved. With few

significant transit projects on the horizon, the state must maintain and improve the highway network in the growing region. The highway network must be made more efficient, including more grade separations to efficiently eliminate the traffic conflicts and "slow-downs" (added congestion) in the metropolitan area. The expanding economy needs the fuel of accessibility and Boston does not even have plans on the table to talk about solutions.

More importantly, we need a "visionary" transportation leader, not a manager, to lead the charge in solving this critical issue; however, what is much worse, is the lack of incentive to follow on the remarkable advantages the Big Dig provided downtown Boston with greater accessibility!

Cranston (Chan) R. Rogers served as a combat infantryman in WWII before coming to Boston for graduate school at MIT



in 1949. While at MIT, Chan worked on the original elevated Central Artery and was assigned to evaluate the potential for placing the six-lane Central Artery highway underground. The Dewey

Square tunnel section of the original Central Artery was the kernel which turned into the first part of Fred Salvucci's underground "Big Dig" of the 1990's!

Chan managed the design of many major highway and transit projects including a number of first-of-a-kind concepts. He was responsible for the largest and most complex section of the Big Dig, the jacked-tunnels under the South Station tracks. Chan is retired but serves on numerous town committees. He recently returned from a 10-day trip escorting college students to central Europe where he observed several excellent examples of modern urban transportation in former communist countries. Makes you wonder...



High-speed rail should be a national and local priority.

In the Neighborhood

Missed Opportunity at Charles River Basin bridges

The Charles River Conservancy has led a vigorous campaign to convince MassDOT to include pedestrian and bicycle underpasses in the design of several Charles River Basin bridges being reconstructed as part of the Accelerated Bridge Program. The simple argument is this is a one-in-a-lifetime opportunity to provide this transportation benefit similar to that enjoyed by automobiles—a grade-separated intersection. Bridges reconstructed under the Accelerated Bridge Program will be around for 75 years, guaranteeing that the opportunity to create these underpasses won't be seen again for more than two generations.

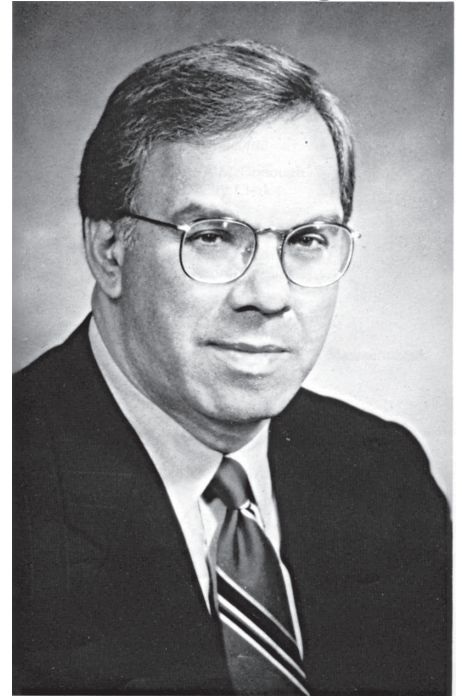
The Charles River Conservancy has the support of 28 elected officials and 36 groups and organizations, including the City of Boston and Con-

gressman Michael Capuano.

Arguments against including the underpasses include permitting constraints, design time and cost. The Conservancy has worked with engineering experts to attempt to address the objections of MassDOT, including suggesting MassDOT take advantage of the flexible Design-Build procurement process to have the contractor team figure it out. No movement by MassDOT.

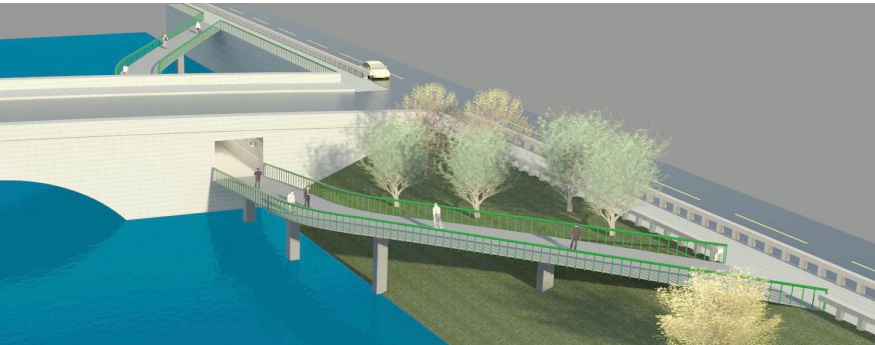
Interestingly, the ABP is all over the policy spectrum as regards ABP spending. While arguing that it should use \$6 million of ABP bridge-repair money in Jamaica Plain to eliminate a historic rotary, not a bridge, MassDOT declines to fund a critical bridge element that if not designed for now cannot be implemented later—for 75 years. See <http://www.charlesriverconservancy.org/UnderpassAdvocacy.htm> for details.

About
20 Years Ago



A little less than 20 years ago, as the nascent Boston Informer started its campaign for its first National Press Club award (no award yet), this man was beginning his appointment into an executive position in the City of Boston. Who is he?

Source: Charles River Conservancy.



River Street bridge suggested underpass on the Boston side.

ADA in Boston – The Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law in July 1990. Twenty years later, the City of Boston' Public Works multi-year capital budget includes \$15 million for ADA improvements.

The Public Works Department, the City's Commission for Persons with Disabilities and interested neighborhood groups in the Back Bay, Beacon Hill, South End, etc. have been meeting to determine how best to upgrade the City's sidewalks and curb ramps. The Public Works Dept. declared that when a street is repaved, the City must be compliant with ADA requirements. Some of these requirements can be problematic in the City's historic districts (Charlestown, Back Bay, Beacon Hill and South End). The City has responded to federal Justice Department citations.

Issues needing to be resolved include curb ramp materials and configuration; alternative treatments for the visually impaired; conflicts between the needs of persons in wheelchairs for smooth surfaces and some of the rough pavement treatments for the visually impaired; and visual incongruity of some colors, materials and locations for the ADA-compliant upgrades. A number of issues have been resolved: new brick sidewalk material must be wire-cut brick with minimal joints and curb ramps shall be located on the diagonal. Meetings and discussions are still underway with the City in the historic districts.

Of course, when traversing Back Bay intersections one sees a variety of curb ramps at the base of which is usually an inch or two of water. In winter this becomes ice that is even more dangerous for everyone.



Historic neighborhoods will have brick-red tactile paving at curb ramps.