

# **CIVIC LEADERSHIP AND THE BIG DIG**

**BY DAVID LUBEROFF**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....	iii
Civic Leadership and the Big Dig.....	1
Appendix One: Timeline of the Central Artery .....	55
Appendix Two: Highway to Heaven? Reprinted article by Sarah Abrams from the Spring 2003 John F. Kennedy School of Government Alumni Bulletin.....	56
About the Author.....	60
Listing of Rappaport Institute publications.....	back cover



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In late 1988, Norman Leventhal and Edwin Sidman, the chairman and president respectively of Beacon Companies, which owned major buildings near Boston's Central Artery, met with three colleagues to discuss their concerns about the effects that the Central Artery/Tunnel (CA/T) project, the largest public works project in U.S. history, would have on downtown Boston.

The meeting resulted in the formation of the Artery Business Committee, a business-backed group, that for over 15 years generally has protected downtown Boston from negative impacts while the project was being built and shaped project plans in ways that strengthened the downtown urban core. The group, moreover, has helped state officials secure public funds needed to build the project and aided efforts to ensure that the project construction was neither stopped nor significantly delayed by political or legal controversies.

This record is particularly striking because business-backed groups—including the Vault, which folded in 1997—have become less active in public affairs not only in Boston but also in most other major U.S. cities. A detailed account and analysis of ABC's history, therefore, offers important lessons—for both practitioners and scholars—about the potential sources of business leadership in local affairs, how such leaders go about achieving their aims, and whether the sources and tactics differ from those in the past.

ABC's successes seem to be based on five key elements:

- **Unique Project:** ABC focused on a project that was so large, so visible, and potentially so damaging—as well as beneficial—that the heads of major downtown firms immediately understood the need to band together to protect and advance their interests.
- **Significant Resources:** ABC hired talented staff and consultants and tapped a wide network of volunteer experts, including attorneys, builders, architects, planners, engineers, and employees of member firms.
- **Responsiveness and Staying Power:** ABC's knowledgeable staff, well-informed committees, and highly motivated leaders enabled it to respond quickly to unexpected challenges.
- **Multifaceted Focus:** ABC's staff and leaders understood the need to focus on a full spectrum of issues—from seemingly mundane questions about whether contractors are performing promised mitigation measures to highly technical questions about construction management to broad questions of political and public support. In fact, while ABC is best known for political lobbying, it devotes most of its resources to tracking the project's planning and implementation.
- **Flexible Tactics:** ABC's leaders devoted significant resources to analyzing key issues and brokering agreements on central disputes. ABC's leaders also recognized that environmental laws and the region's inclusive political culture required them to work with an unusually wide range of stakeholders.

Although other business and civic leaders can learn from ABC's approach, the CA/T project is unique in its scale and its potential to harm a major commercial district. Without a similarly clear focus, business leaders are unlikely to provide the money and time to continue ABC, or, in the case of other cities, launch an organization modeled on ABC. ABC's history, moreover, suggests that this is particularly true as traditional sources of local business leadership – property owners, banks, and utilities – increasingly are owned by national and international entities, rather than local firms.

Whether or not ABC is a harbinger of future business leadership, its history offers an important but easily overlooked lesson. Effective civic leadership requires a core group of people who have a reason to become actively involved, the ability to mobilize significant institutional resources, skills, and networks, and, ultimately, the willingness to tackle difficult and time-consuming work.





## CIVIC LEADERSHIP AND THE BIG DIG

*Detractors often complain that Boston is a city where deals do not get done because of a fractious political system and culture. But as drivers in the region begin to use the new Central Artery, Ted Williams Tunnel, and parks and other amenities, a question arises: How did the most expensive and complex public works project in America happen in the first place? At least part of the answer lies with the Artery Business Committee, a group of influential property owners and businesses that has driven the Big Dig from the very beginning of the project.*

**BY DAVID LUBEROFF**

In Boston, as in other major U.S. cities and metropolitan areas, business leaders have long been active in civic affairs. As in many other U.S. cities, moreover, business involvement in Boston's civic affairs began waning in the late 1980s as consolidations and mergers reduced the ranks of the locally owned businesses that had been the traditional sources of business leaders in civic affairs.<sup>1</sup>

In sharp contrast to many other urban areas, a new and influential business group – the Artery Business Committee (ABC) – emerged in Boston in the late 1980s and early 1990s as a response to the state's multibillion-dollar Central Artery/Tunnel (CA/T) project. For more information on the Central Artery project, please see appendix. Since its founding, ABC has played four extremely important roles:

- Protecting downtown Boston from negative impacts while the project was being built,
- Shaping project plans in ways that strengthened the downtown urban core,
- Helping state officials secure public funds needed to build the project, and
- Aiding efforts to ensure that the project construction was neither stopped nor significantly delayed by political or legal controversies.

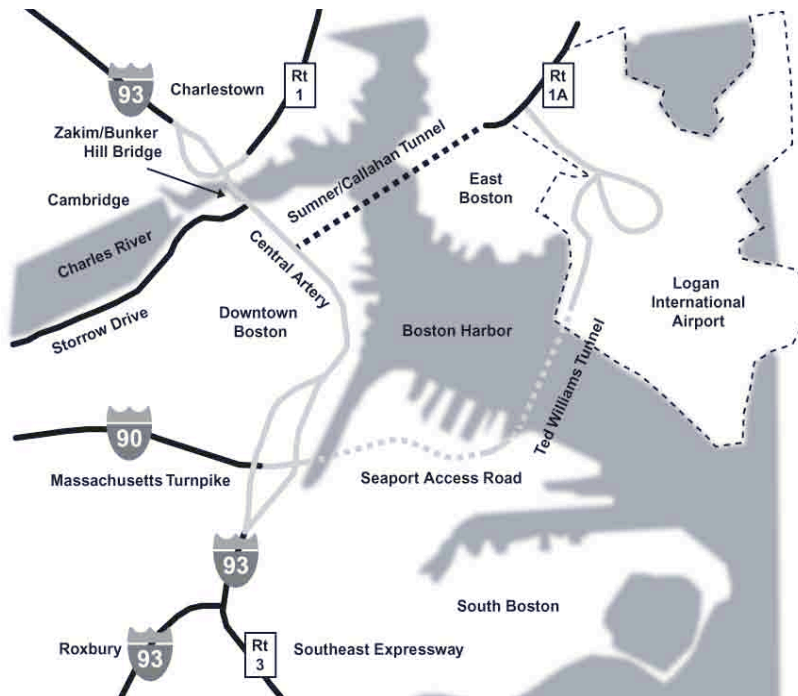


A detailed account and analysis of ABC's history, therefore, can offer important lessons – for both practitioners and scholars – about the potential sources of business leadership in local affairs, how such leaders go about achieving their aims, and whether the sources and tactics differ from those in the past.

## DOWNTOWN BUSINESSES AND THE BIG DIG

The CA/T project – which called for building a new depressed highway in downtown Boston and a new tunnel connecting downtown with the region's major airport – was first proposed in 1983, though several elements in the plan go back at least a decade earlier.<sup>2</sup> (See Figure 1 for a map of the project.) In April 1987, after intense lobbying by project supporters, who included many of Boston's business leaders, Congress made most the project eligible for funding from the Interstate highway program. After the vote, state officials turned to developing more detailed project plans and to completing environmental analyses required before state and federal regulators could issue permits the project needed before construction could proceed. Though they were aware of and had generally supported the state's plan for the artery, the shift to detailed planning concerned Norman Leventhal and his son-in-law Edwin Sidman, the chairman and president, respectively, of the Beacon Companies, which owned several major projects in downtown Boston, including Rowe's

**Figure 1: The Central Artery/Tunnel Project**



Graphic by Robert Levers from *Mega-Projects: The Changing Politics of Urban Public Investment*.

Wharf, a newly opened waterfront hotel and office building that faced the existing elevated artery.

In late 1988, Leventhal and Sidman met with three close friends and advisors—Robert Beal, who headed a firm that also owned property in the artery corridor; Lawrence DiCara a local attorney and former city councilor; and Catherine Donaher, a planner who had worked with Leventhal and Sidman in the past—to discuss their concerns. The group identified three significant concerns:

**Would Downtown Be Accessible During Construction?** Though State Transportation Secretary Frederick Salvucci, the project’s main proponent, had promised that the new project could be built ways that did not cut off access to downtown Boston, the group worried that the designers and contractors would not follow through on these promises.

**Would the Finished Project Adequately Serve Downtown Boston?** The group also worried that the new highway would be designed to primarily serve traffic passing through Boston and therefore lack entrances and exits needed to serve downtown Boston. In addition, though they did not have a plan for what to do with the approximately 27 acres of land that would be created when the existing elevated Central Artery was torn down, the group wanted assurances that they would help shape those guidelines.

**Would Political and Legal Controversies Threaten Project Plans?** Thanks to the 1987 Congressional vote, project funding seemed secure and though the project still needed several important permits, this did not loom as a significant obstacle because the project had virtually no visible local opponents. Leventhal, Sidman, and others were experienced enough, however, to recognize that the project would likely face some important political or permitting obstacles in the coming years.<sup>3</sup>

## ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM

While the small group knew that businesses in the region had a long history of coming together to pursue what they viewed as policies that advanced their vision of the public interest, they did not believe that any existing group could or would adequately focus on issues related to the CA/T project. Some groups, such as Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, had focused on capital budgeting generally but not on infrastructure planning and management. Other groups, such as the Massachusetts Business Roundtable had followed infrastructure issues more closely but did not have staff with expertise in planning and design and, given their focus on statewide issues, were unlikely to closely follow the CA/T project.

The Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce historically had focused on downtown development issues—co-sponsoring urban renewal plans for the city’s retail core in the mid-1960s and pushing for a third harbor tunnel in the 1970s. But the chamber’s interest and influence on urban development issues had been waning for many years.<sup>4</sup> The retailers that once made up its core membership drew an increasingly large share of sales from outside the center city and, in some cases, were now owned by out-of-state firms. The chamber’s

members moved in the early 1980s to revitalize the group by hiring James Sullivan, then the city manager of Cambridge, to be its first full-time president. Though Sullivan reversed a long-term decline in chamber membership and made the chamber more visible in public affairs, Leventhal, Sidman and their advisors feared that whatever influence the chamber had regained would be further diminished by the fact that Sullivan had criticized the CA/T plan when it was announced and was now openly questioning whether the state actually could afford to build the project.

.....  
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.....

The leadership of the Coordinating Committee – a group of about 30 top executives from the city's leading financial and commercial firms also known as The Vault – was on good terms with Salvucci because they had strongly supported the CA/T project.<sup>5</sup> The group had no professional staff to review CA/T plans, however and its ranks had been thinned by two changes in federal regulatory and tax laws. As a result of laws and court decisions allowing regional banking, many local banks were merging with both local and out-of-state banks. In addition, after the 1986 federal tax reform act eliminated most the benefits that local banks received for buying the tax-exempt bonds issued by state and local governments, most banks quickly sold those holdings. Because of these changes, says Leventhal:

The business community was diffused [by the late 1980s]. You didn't have the major players you had before. I once asked Dick Hill [who had earlier headed Bank of Boston and the Vault] "when you were around and you wanted something done, you could get it done. Why is it different today?" He said, "It's very simple. When the city or the state wanted to raise money they had to go to the Bank of Boston. Now they go to Wall Street."<sup>6</sup>

In contrast, the histories of two groups established in the 1980s showed that it might be possible to create a smaller group, comprised of those property owners and employers most likely to be affected by the project, whose sole purpose would be to address their pressing concerns.

The first was Friends of Post Office Square. Leventhal and Sidman created the group in the early 1980s, the to carry out their vision of replacing an aging parking garage located near Beacon's Meridian Hotel and One Post Office Square office building with an underground garage topped by a new park. They knew this plan required substantial financial and political resources but believed that the area's property owners and major employers would strongly support it. They therefore made the group expensive to join and required

that CEO's of member firms attend its quarterly board meetings. Most major nearby firms – notably Bank of Boston, the New England Telephone Company, Fidelity Investments, and Harvard Community Health Plan – joined. Though the effort took longer and cost more than Leventhal and Sidman anticipated, by 1988 it was ready to proceed. The key to this effort, Leventhal believed, was that it tapped into the business community's "enlightened self-interest." It created a valuable new amenity for the city, was "good for our employees and ... enhanced the long-term value of all the buildings in this area."<sup>7</sup>

The second model was an ad hoc group of property owners near South Station. This group came together in early 1988 when state transportation officials proposed moving the new artery's southern portion from a tunnel in Fort Point Channel to underneath the existing artery and Atlantic Avenue. State officials said the shift was necessary to comply with federal laws governing construction in waterways. The new plan concerned property owners, because it requiring eliminating part of the Red Line subway's station at nearby South Station and using portions of Atlantic Avenue as a staging area as well. Frank Morris, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, located on Atlantic Avenue next to South Station, convened an ad hoc group of property owners in the area to review the plan. The group hired its own expert consultants and worked with state and city officials (and their consultants). It soon concluded that the state was right to move the roadway out of Fort Point Channel but that its new plan was badly flawed. After further review and negotiation, state officials revised the plan so the road was on a deeper (but more expensive) alignment that had fewer impacts on both South Station and Atlantic Avenue.<sup>8</sup>

## STRUCTURING ABC

With these experiences in mind, Leventhal, Sidman, Beal, DiCara, and Donaher began to put together a new group, focused entirely on the artery design and construction issues. They estimated that the group needed an annual budget of about \$500,000 to pay a small professional staff and to hire expert consultants on an as needed basis. Funding was to come from relatively high membership dues (generally \$25,000 per firm). Like both the Vault and Friends of Post Office Square, CEO representation of member firms gave the group credibility and access to needed resources. Like Friends of Post Office Square, a smaller executive committee would actually govern the new group.<sup>9</sup>

Leventhal, who was never a member of the Vault but was widely respected by the city's businessmen, began meeting with the traditional leaders of the city's business community, to see if they would support the new group. He recalls:

The first one I went to was Bill Brown, then chairman of the Bank of Boston [and a member of the Vault]. I told him what I wanted to do. He said, "Norman I'll do it," just like that. ... And because I had the imprimatur from Bill Brown ... we were able to raise the money we needed.<sup>10</sup>

**Table 1: Members of The Vault and ABC by Industry**

(Common members are in bold-faced type)

<b>Vault Members by Business—1983</b> <i>29 total members</i>	<b>ABC Board by Business—1989</b> <i>29 total members</i>
<p>Banks (9 members)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Bank of Boston</b> (2 members)</li> <li>• <b>Bank of New England</b></li> <li>• Boston Five Cents Savings Bank</li> <li>• Boston Safe Deposit</li> <li>• <b>Federal Reserve Bank of Boston</b></li> <li>• Provident Institution for Savings</li> <li>• <b>Shawmut Bank Corp.</b></li> <li>• State Street Boston Corp.</li> </ul> <p>Insurance (6 members)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• John Hancock Mutual Life Ins. Co.</li> <li>• Liberty Mutual Ins. Co. (2 members)</li> <li>• New England Mutual Life Insurance Co.</li> <li>• <b>Blue Shield of Massachusetts</b></li> <li>• Prudential Insurance Co.</li> </ul> <p>Manufacturing (2 members)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gillette Company</li> <li>• Teradyne Inc.</li> </ul> <p>Other (1 member)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Houghton-Mifflin Co.</li> </ul> <p>Professional Services (1 member)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hale &amp; Dorr</li> </ul> <p>Real Estate Development and Management (6 members)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Beal Companies</b></li> <li>• <b>Cabot, Cabot, &amp; Forbes</b> (2 members)</li> <li>• Hunneman Investment Management Corp.</li> <li>• <b>Meredith &amp; Grew</b></li> <li>• Ryan Elliot and Co.</li> </ul> <p>Retail (2 members)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• William Filene Co.</li> <li>• Jordan Marsh Co.</li> </ul> <p>Utilities (2 members)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eastern Gas and Fuel Associates</li> <li>• <b>NE Telephone &amp; Telegraph</b></li> </ul>	<p>Banks (4 members)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Bank of Boston</b></li> <li>• <b>Bank of New England</b></li> <li>• <b>Federal Reserve Bank of Boston</b></li> <li>• <b>Shawmut Bank</b></li> </ul> <p>Construction (1 member)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• G. H. Macomber Construction</li> </ul> <p>Hospitals (1 member)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New England Medical Center</li> </ul> <p>Insurance (1 member)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Mass.</b></li> </ul> <p>Professional Services (2 members)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DiCara, Selig, Sawyer, &amp; Holt (law firm)</li> <li>• Jung/Brannen Associates (architects)</li> </ul> <p>Real Estate Development and Management (12 members)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beacon Companies (2 members)</li> <li>• <b>Beal Companies</b></li> <li>• Boston Properties</li> <li>• <b>Cabot, Cabot &amp; Forbes</b></li> <li>• Chiofaro Company</li> <li>• Equitable</li> <li>• Hexalon RE</li> <li>• Legatt &amp; McCall</li> <li>• <b>Meredith and Grew</b></li> <li>• Prudential Realty</li> <li>• Rose Associates</li> </ul> <p>Utilities (2 members)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boston Edison</li> <li>• <b>NE Telephone &amp; Telegraph</b></li> </ul> <p>Ex Officio (2 members)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Coordinating Committee (Harold Hestnes of Hale and Dorr)</b></li> <li>• Chamber of Commerce</li> </ul>
<p>Author's calculations from Margot Stage, ed. "Who Rules Boston?" and ABC, "Updated List, Board of Directors," April 22, 1989, in ABC, "Executive Committee Briefing Book," June 8, 1989,</p>	

He then met with John Larkin Thompson, the head of Massachusetts Blue Cross/Blue Shield who also had chaired the Vault and been president of the Chamber of Commerce,

who recalls:

Norman went to three or four people and asked them if they would join in this activity that he was contemplating. He had, as he always does, a pretty clear mission in mind and the rationale behind it was really quite compelling: if the project was done in an insensitive way, it would have been extraordinarily frustrating, expensive, counter-productive and potentially destructive to the economy of Boston.<sup>11</sup>

Harold Hestnes, a Boston attorney who had long been active in the chamber and the Vault, says he was less enthusiastic:

At first, I didn't like the idea of the ABC. My liturgical view was ... we have too many business-sponsored organizations already. ... I said "Why don't we run it in the chamber?"<sup>12</sup> .....

Hestnes was soon persuaded that the bad blood between Salvucci and Sullivan made that idea unworkable and agreed to support Leventhal's plan. Leventhal agreed, in turn, that the new group would not duplicate the Vault's or the Chamber's artery-related work on financing.

With such support, in December 1988 Leventhal, Sidman, and their advisors formally incorporated a new group, which they named the Artery Business Committee (ABC). By the following April, the group ABC had 20 paying members and a 29-member board. More than 40 percent of the board members were directly involved in real estate while about a quarter came from banks, insurance companies and utilities. The Vault, in contrast, had drawn about half its members from those three industries.<sup>13</sup> (See Table 1) In early 1989, ABC hired William Coughlin, who was then serving as Boston's commissioner of parks and recreation, to be its executive director. Though Coughlin had also served as the city's assessor and as the communications director of the MBTA (the region's transit agency), he had no training in planning or construction. Coughlin, however, had earned high marks for his communications and management skills and clearly knew how to function in the region's political landscape. ....

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## PART I: DEFINING ABC'S ROLE

At its first official meeting in December 1988, ABC's executive committee adopted both a mission statement and bylaws. The former noted that:

As major businesses, we have a strong commitment to the well-being of Boston. The future of the City – in which we have a large stake – depends on the successful implementation of this project.<sup>14</sup>

In order to ensure that this occurred, the bylaws stated that ABC would:

- "Participate in the ongoing public discussion of the planning, design, and construction of the new Central Artery;"
- "Represent its membership at all governmental hearings regarding issues affecting both [the] short- and long-term impact of this project on the Central Artery, the surrounding area and the Greater Boston region;"
- "Participate actively in the planning, design and construction processes with both public and private sector agencies;"
- "Create a 'community consciousness' for the business sector and its concerns regarding the Central Artery project, by generating constructive efforts by its membership; and"
- "Generate revenues to sponsor committee activities and efforts on behalf of its members."<sup>15</sup>

To further this work, in early 1989 ABC established three committees focused on design, operations, and marketing, with each committee chaired by an ABC member or affiliate with particular expertise in the field. ABC's organizers also reached out for volunteers from both members and professional service firms who worked for them. Within a year about 150 of the city's leading experts in construction, design, permitting and public relations were serving on an ABC committee. George Macomber, president of a well-known local construction company that bore his name chaired the operations committee, whose 45 members included the presidents of five of the region's leading construction firms, the heads of two well-known local engineering firms, two MIT professors, top officials involved with construction or facilities management for the region's utilities (both public and private), and virtually all of downtown's major property owners and employers. Hestnes, who has been involved in business/government relations for over four decades, contends:

This is greatest loaned talent effort of any business community effort that I have ever seen. ... Some of the most competent and credible people you could imagine came to the table and people devoted hundreds of hours to this. ... It was marvelous and it continues to this day."<sup>16</sup>

## EXPECTED AND UNEXPECTED ISSUES

The design committee was chaired by Robert (Buz) Brannen, the chair of Jung/Brannen Associates a local architectural firm that had done work for Leventhal and many other members of the ABC board. Working with Gary Hack, an MIT professor ABC hired as a consultant, the committee soon focused on a dispute between the city and the state over the city's request that the state add a downtown off ramp (at Pearl Street) so the highway would better serve downtown Boston's Financial District. ABC members initially supported the city but the committee also found merit in state concerns that the city's proposal had serious legal and technical problems. ABC turned to expert consultants who found that the proposed ramp would not perform adequately, would require significant takings, and would face significant permitting problems. In September 1989, ABC issued a report, which cited the analysis as the basis for its recommendations that the city drop its plan and that state and city officials develop alternative ways to improve downtown access from the new road. The report also helped ABC develop a reputation as an impartial group, which, in the words of a *Boston Globe* editorial, made recommendations that were "not just an opinion – not even just the opinion of the city's major corporate leaders – but a reasoned analysis based on a review by its own consultants."<sup>17</sup>

With prodding from Coughlin and ABC's leaders, city and state officials subsequently resolved their differences, along the lines that ABC had suggested. According to Sidman, this agreement, along with ABC's assistance in resolving several other state/city disputes made Salvucci, who "was upset about us initially ... realize that we were great for him." Salvucci echoed this view in a February 1990 letter thanking ABC for helping resolve disputes between the city and the state, communicating information to both the business community and other public officials, and providing valuable volunteer technical expertise.<sup>18</sup>

ABC closely reviewed other design issues, including the unresolved question of what would be built on the approximately 27 acres of land created when the original elevated artery was torn down. A 1985 state plan called for mid-rise commercial and residential buildings on most of the new land, as did a 1988 plan prepared by the Boston Society of Architects. In the late 1980s, however, Stephen Coyle, director of the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), began touting the idea of making most of the new land a linear park and in 1988 the BRA hired both Ricardo Bofill, a Spanish architect who had designed a highly regarded linear park in Valencia, Spain, and Alex Krieger, an urban designer who was on the faculty of Harvard's Graduate School of Design, to develop more detailed plans for the new land. Bofill's plan generally followed Coyle's lead and called for

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.....



a linear spine of neoclassical gardens, pavilions, winter gardens, and a tower at Dewey Square. Krieger, on the other hand, called for seven public squares separated by an equal number of mid-rise commercial and residential buildings. Meanwhile community groups in the North End and Chinatown pressed for housing and community facilities on parcels near their neighborhoods. In early 1990 Coyle released a plan that set aside about 75 percent of the new artery land, almost all of it in the Financial District, for a linear park and building mainly affordable housing and community facilities on parcels located near the North End and Chinatown. Though ABC's leaders generally favored the plans that allowed more construction in the corridor, the group did not take an official stand. Instead, it called for designing and permitting the artery in ways that did not "unduly constrain future decisions" about what could be built on the new land.<sup>19</sup>

**Spectacle Island:** State officials estimated that CA/T project construction would generate about 13 million cubic yards of excavate, enough to fill one million trucks and cover a football field with a 1.2-mile high pile. State plans called for putting the bulk of the material on Spectacle Island, an island in Boston Harbor that had once been a landfill and now was leaking contaminants into the harbor. The plan required significantly expanding the island's footprint, which required a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Officials with both the Corps and the regional office of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which had to advise the Corps on the issue, balked at the plan on the grounds that the state had not adequately examined alternatives, including dumping it on inland sites. State officials resisted this approach because they feared it would generate massive opposition in the communities where the sites were located.

Though it had not anticipated getting involved in this issue, ABC's operations committee became worried about it. The committee initially supported the state but after meeting with federal officials, the committee urged state officials to examine alternative disposal sites. When the state filed its preliminary environmental impact study on the project in mid 1990 it generally followed ABC's recommendations but still concluded that most the fill should still go to Spectacle Island. This analysis did not sway the officials with Corps of Engineers and EPA, who warned that they still were not likely to approve the state's plan for disposing of project excavate. Concerned that the issue might delay or even halt the entire project, ABC's board convened an expert task force, whose members included Gary Hack, Myrna Putziger, an attorney specializing in permitting issues who had done extensive work for Beacon; David Marks, the chair of MIT's civil engineering department whose specialty was environmental engineering; and Jerry Schubel, then the dean and director of Marine Studies at SUNY/Stony Brook and later the president and CEO of the New England Aquarium.

In early August, the task force convened an all-day meeting where key state and federal officials presented their concerns and proposals. The committee concluded that the issue clearly was serious but that there might be room for compromise because federal officials were not opposed to any dumping on Spectacle Island and were even willing to allow a modest expansion of the island's footprint to fully contain leaking landfill. With prodding from the ABC's leaders, state officials agreed to reconsider their plans and to begin meeting

regularly with federal officials to develop a mutually satisfactory plan. By October, this approach produced a revised plan, which allowed the state to use Spectacle Island but only for about one quarter of the excavate called for in the state's initial plans (and about a third of what it had called for in its modified plan.) Most of the excavate would instead be used to cap local landfills and as backfill on the project itself.<sup>20</sup>

**Scheme Z:** In mid 1989, the state released its plan for how the project would cross the Charles River and make connections to several important regional highways and roads. The plan, known as Scheme Z (because it was the 26<sup>th</sup> of 31 options studied) called for a 16-lane, 254-foot wide bridge over the Charles River and a massive ramp structure on industrial land on the Cambridge side of the river. (See Figure 2)

Individuals and groups interested in protecting and enhancing recreational opportunities in the Charles River strongly objected to the plan on the grounds that it would make it impossible to carry out long-discussed (but never funded) plans to extend the Charles River Basin parkland all the way to Boston Harbor. They also claimed the bridge's many piers would directly hamper recreational boating and warned the bridge and ramps would be so massive that they would make boating less enjoyable as well. They therefore called on the state to scale down the bridge and/or build some of the crossing in a tunnel. State officials responded that the tunnel was technologically unfeasible, that the proposed bridge was in a corridor that had always been used for transportation purposes, and that there was no other way to build a crossing that could serve transportation needs without directly impacting nearby existing historic neighborhoods.

As the dispute unfolded, an ABC committee and consultants tracking environmental permitting issues closely reviewed the state's plan and objections to it. They generally concurred with the state's assertions but also concluded that the bridge was poorly designed. ABC, therefore, supported Scheme Z but pressed the state to improve its appearance because, as Brannen told the board, "a reasonable exchange was a beautiful bridge instead of a tunnel."<sup>21</sup>

**The Environmental Review Process:** In August 1990 John DeVillars, the state's environmental affairs secretary, told the press in August 1990 that his soon-to-be released ruling on the project's draft environmental statement would "extract every last ounce of environmental and recreational benefit that the law and common sense allow." DeVillars said he would make it clear that he would not approve the project's final environmental document unless state transportation officials filed a final plan that: greatly improved Scheme Z's design; created new parkland along the Charles River; set aside most of the new artery land for open space; committed to constructing a park at Spectacle Island; and made binding commitments to fund major improvements to the region's rail transit system.<sup>22</sup> The comments shocked Leventhal, who recalled:

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*ABC supported Scheme Z but pressed the state to improve its appearance because, as Brannen told the board, 'a reasonable exchange was a beautiful bridge instead of a tunnel.'*  
.....

Figure 2: Scheme Z



Scheme Z Chronology. Available online at <http://libraries.mit.edu/rotch/artery/schemez.gif>, accessed 10/15/2003

I was reading the *Sunday Globe*, and I saw that [DeVillars] was going to turn down [the project's report]. ... Monday morning, I got on the phone to try and reach Mike Dukakis. I called his office and said I have to see him. Finally, late in the day, I get a call, 'Come see him in his house at seven o'clock that night.' So I went to his house [along with Sidman and Gary Hack] that night. He was alone, went to the kitchen, brings us drinks, we discuss it and he says he doesn't know what he can do about it. Finally I said to him "Mike. Fire the son of a bitch." He said "Norman, that could be the worst thing I could do. Let me handle it." And he straightened it out.<sup>23</sup>

Salvucci and the governor's senior advisors also were deeply concerned by DeVillars' comments and over the next few days they had intense discussions with DeVillars' top aides about the rulings' specific wording. (DeVillars had left the country to attend a previously scheduled conference.). The final ruling, which was released the following Wednesday, only minutes before the legal deadline, was much more temperate than many expected. Summing up the changes, *Boston Globe* reporter Peter Howe, wrote:

Reportedly under intense pressure from Dukakis to back down, DeVillars ultimately issued a report ... that – while wide-ranging in its suggestions – contains few do-or-die requirements for the Artery planners. It is long on "should seriously explore" and "strongly suggest" but short on "musts."<sup>24</sup>

James Gomes, the state undersecretary of environmental affairs, who had represented DeVillars in the negotiations, however, downplayed both the talks and the changes in report language, contending, "We have not been under any pressure from these offices. Certainly, we've talked a lot about it, but we have not been under pressure from them."<sup>25</sup>

Dukakis also minimized the reports of internal battles:

It's been a long and difficult and careful and not always an easy process ... but we have worked together as a team in this administration. I don't think there has been any disagreement in the administration about the importance of this project. ... We want to use this opportunity, within reasonable limits, obviously, to enhance the overall environment of this city.<sup>26</sup>

In general, ABC's leaders were satisfied by the ruling, which Coughlin contended was "well within the scope of the secretary's responsibilities."<sup>27</sup> Privately, however, some ABC leaders were concerned that DeVillars' ruling expressed support for the BRA's proposal to set aside about 75 percent of the new artery land as open space. They decided not to press the issue, however, largely because city officials indicated that they intended to be flexible

about what might be done with the land closest to the Financial District, where the ABC leaders' properties were concentrated.<sup>28</sup>

## ENTERING THE POLITICAL REALM

ABC's leaders expected to devote some resources to communicating with the public about the project and working with key elected officials on project-related issues. To spear-

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*ABC's leaders decided to use the poll results as part of a larger effort aimed at preventing the growing controversies about the project from becoming issues in the race to succeed Governor Michael Dukakis.*  
.....

head this effort, not long after ABC was founded, it hired Mary Fifield, a former television news reporters and producer who had also worked in both state and national government. In late 1989, ABC also hired John Gorman, one of the region's most respected pollsters, to gauge public attitudes about the project. Not surprisingly, Gorman found that people generally did not trust government, and were particularly angry with state government. Somewhat surprisingly, however, he found that about half the public knew about the project and, of those, 65 percent supported it (largely because they believed it would provide traffic relief and bring jobs to Massachusetts) and 62 percent were more likely to vote for a candidate who backed the project while only 14 percent would vote for someone who opposed it.<sup>29</sup>

ABC's leaders decided to use the poll results as part of a larger effort aimed at preventing the growing controversies about the project from becoming issues in the race to succeed Governor Dukakis, whose popularity had plummeted as the state fell into a deep recession in the late 1980s. The centerpiece of this effort was a series of small breakfast meetings in the spring of 1990 with each of the five major gubernatorial candidates. The meetings' aim, Fifield told the board, was to "educate [the] candidates ... about the economic and transportation benefits of the Artery" and to "outline ABC's role as project assessor and monitor and its potential as the sole source of continuity outside of state government." Given the poll results, she added, the meetings, should particularly focus on the artery's fiscal benefits by emphasizing that:

- "The State needs money and Massachusetts citizens are not eager to dig into their own pockets for it.
- "The federal government is offering to inject more than \$3.5 billion into our ailing economy.
- "Elected and would-be elected officials should therefore be doing everything in their power to ensure that this funding is not endangered, and to underscore its importance to Massachusetts' fiscal health."<sup>30</sup>

The briefings generally went well. None of the candidates said they would actively oppose the project and three said that if they won the election, they would ask ABC to take the lead on artery issues during their transition.<sup>31</sup> Like many ABC leaders, Hestnes believes ABC's success in preventing the project from becoming an issue in the 1990 campaign—and subsequent gubernatorial campaigns as well—is one of the group's most important accomplishments:

There is nothing we worked harder at on the political scene than to keep gubernatorial candidates out of this. Now I had a distinct advantage; Bill Weld [who ultimately won the election] was one of my partners [at Hale and Dorr]. ... When he announced I said ... "Bill, stay away from this. Anyone who runs for governor and makes this an issue is never going to be able to get out of it. Your whole campaign is going to be tied to aspects of that issue. And we're going to go to all of your Democratic opponents and make the same pitch." We did ... and we got a commitment from all of them that unless something blew up in their face they were not going to initiate anything [against the project].<sup>32</sup>

ABC's political efforts in 1990 went far beyond the gubernatorial briefings. After Boston University President John Silber won the Democratic primary, officials with his campaign asked Fifield to join them for the final campaign. ABC's leaders agreed that she could do so, in part to ensure they had access at the highest levels of his administration if he won the general election. ABC did not deploy a similar staff member to the Weld campaign because Hestnes was close to Weld.<sup>33</sup>

Several ABC board members with ties to the state's Republican Party also tried to persuade James Rappaport, who was running against incumbent Senator John Kerry, to stop attacking the project during his campaign. Though ABC's efforts—and Kerry's attacks on Rappaport for criticizing the project—did not persuade Rappaport to support the CA/T project, he did tone down his anti-Big Dig rhetoric in the fall campaign.<sup>34</sup>

ABC also moved to shore up support for the project in Washington, which they were counting on to provide the bulk of the project's funding. In particular, ABC organized a briefing for the state's congressional delegation and a fundraiser and project briefing session for U.S. House Speaker Thomas Foley, who publicly expressed his support for the project at the fundraiser. Leventhal later recalled:

Here's another instance where we got involved. There was an appropriations bill coming before Congress. ... We decided we would raise some

.....  
*ABC also moved to shore up support for the project in Washington. Leventhal recalled, 'We decided we would raise some money for Tom Foley—I had to raise \$100,000. Foley came to Boston and we had a big-time lunch with him.'*  
.....

money for Tom Foley—I had to raise \$100,000. Foley came to Boston and we had a big-time lunch with him. The only ones who never came through was Shawmut Bank: they made a commitment but they never came up with the dollars. My son [Alan Leventhal, a major Democratic Party fundraiser] also arranged for Foley go to Filene’s Basement for suits. In fact, they opened up early for him. ... You know these political things help. He was a great supporter.<sup>35</sup>

In the fall of 1990 ABC also worked to defeat a ballot measure that would have greatly limited the state’s use of consultants, including the about 1,000 people employed by the private consortium—headed by the Bechtel Corporation and Parsons Brinckerhoff — that the state had hired to manage the CA/T project. The measure had been placed on the ballot by the union representing state DPW workers who wanted state employees to perform that work. As drafted, however, the measure also applied to about 40,000 people who worked for non-profit human service providers that contracted with the state and many small private firms as well.<sup>36</sup>

The city’s major engineering firms began organizing against the measure by raising money and convincing many human service providers to join a coalition against it. Though ABC was not part of these initial efforts, in July 1990 its leaders agreed to vigorously support this campaign. An ABC-funded poll found that the measure had strong support but that support quickly dropped when people were told that the measure also applied to people such as day-care workers, mental health counselors and snowplow operators. These findings were used to shape an extensive advertising campaign against the measure. ABC’s members helped fund this effort and many also spoke out publicly against the measure as well.

These efforts helped produce a clean sweep for ABC on Election Day. Weld was elected governor; Kerry defeated Rappaport; and the measure limiting the use of consultants was defeated.

## **SCHEME Z AND THE TRAVERSE STREET RAMP**

ABC’s leaders could not fully savor their victories, however. Just before the election, Salvucci told them that he was eliminating what they viewed as a critically important on-ramp at Traverse Street, near North Station and the new Fleet Center.<sup>37</sup> Salvucci tried to convince ABC’s leaders that it was impossible to keep the ramp, resolve the Scheme Z dispute, and (as both he and ABC’s leaders wanted) to obtain an important state environmental permit before the Dukakis administration left office. The problem, he explained was that as part of his effort to address the Scheme Z controversy, he had agreed to keep the bridge within the confines of the Charles River’s historic transportation corridor and to replace Scheme Z with a more elegant—but somewhat wider—cable-stay bridge. The only way to both build a cable-stay bridge and stay within the corridor, he contended, was to eliminate the Traverse Street ramp. Salvucci claimed, moreover, that given deadlines for public hearings it was impossible to change the decision and release the project’s final state environmental impact report in enough time to allow DeVillars to issue the project’s major environmental approval before Dukakis left of-

office on January 3. This was critical, he believed, because a new administration was likely to take several more months to review the environmental documents before issuing its ruling on the project.

Salvucci's arguments did not persuade ABC's leaders, who also were enraged by the sudden and unexpected way the decision was made. Hestnes recalls:

Fred sprung that on us at the last minute in Norman's office. ... And Norman just said, "you can't do that; and you're not leaving here until we work out this problem." It was almost like locking the door but we didn't know what the hell to do. ... We made it very clear to Fred that ... we just weren't going to stand for it.<sup>38</sup>

Finally, Salvucci and ABC's leaders agreed on a strategy that would allow the state to reinstate the ramp *after* the environmental document was approved. In particular, Salvucci made minor changes in the environmental documents, which were going to press. ABC, in turn, cited the new language in its comments on the report, which called on DeVillars to approve the project but also require the immediate formation of a committee that would examine ways to improve the Charles River Crossing, including reinstating the Traverse Street ramp. With this agreement in place, ABC issued a statement supporting Scheme Z, as "the best of all solutions considered from a transportation standpoint." The debate about the crossing, the statement added, "should not be allowed to delay the project's environmental approvals" particularly since the design could be improved after the project had gotten its state permits.<sup>39</sup>

Despite Salvucci's efforts, there was growing and increasingly public controversy over the project, particularly over Scheme Z. Leading opponents included several major environmental groups and some neighborhood activists. Another foe was Richard Goldberg, the local representative of a group that owned a parking lot near Logan Airport, who was fighting the state's plan to take the lot as part of the CA/T project. Like other property owners fighting state plans, Goldberg began laying the groundwork to challenge the adequacy of the state's environmental documents in court and he actively lobbied state and federal legislators to stop it. Unlike other property owners, he also decided that it was in his interest to generate as much controversy about the project as possible. He therefore hired public relations experts and lawyers to help create and then assist a coalition of project opponents, called Citizens for Regional Transportation (CRT).

.....  
*Salvucci and ABC's leaders agreed on a strategy that would allow the state to reinstate the ramp after the environmental document was approved. With this agreement in place, ABC issued a statement supporting Scheme Z, as 'the best of all solutions considered from a transportation standpoint.'*  
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To the dismay of project supporters, the CA/T related disputes generated extensive and often negative coverage in the local press. Though CRT's leaders were often quoted in those stories, Peter Howe, who covered the project for *The Boston Globe* at the time, later defended his aggressive coverage as entirely appropriate:

As I look back at the Scheme Z story, I remember feeling like the guy who smelled a gas leak, stupidly struck a match to see where it was coming from, and then watched as a fireball erupted. Scheme Z was a political and urban-planning controversy waiting to explode. I know some people thought at the time I was crusading to destroy the artery-tunnel project and drive Transportation Secretary Fred Salvucci to a sanitarium. In reality, I just happened to stumble into an amazing story that took on a life of its own, thanks in large part to the willingness of *Globe* editors ... to give it serious space and attention. ... The *Globe's* reporting on Scheme Z reflected what newspapers should always do when confronted with a proposal to build something huge and spend hundreds of millions of dollars—namely, subject it to intelligent, constructive scrutiny.<sup>40</sup>

ABC's leaders, however, believed the negative coverage not only threatened an important project, but also that it mainly reflected the views of a small group of "project opponents, particularly those funded by narrow special interests who are intent on killing the Artery"<sup>41</sup> They therefore mounted a multi-pronged effort to alter the way the story was being covered by the local press.

In December, at ABC's request, the *Globe's* publisher, all of its top editors, and the reporters and columnists who were writing about the project met for two hours with ABC's leaders to discuss how the paper was covering the project. After the meeting, Fifield told the ABC board "while we don't expect a narrowing any time soon in the schism between the editorial and news pages regarding the project ... both sides agreed that 'aerating' both sides" of CA/T project-related issues "is desirable."<sup>42</sup>

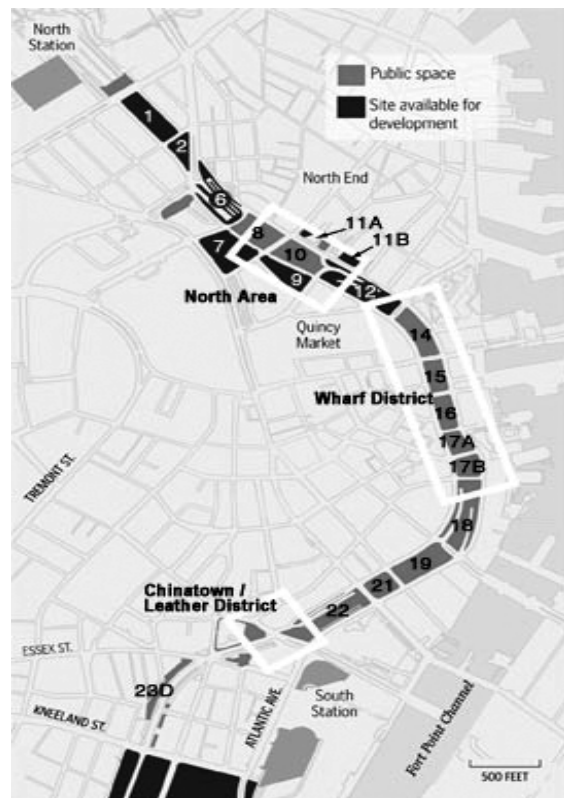
ABC's leaders also attacked the credibility of project critics, particularly CRT's oft-quoted leaders. In article about CRT published after the meeting at the *Globe*, Fifield, charged that CRT "is a very well-crafted and very well-concealed front, but it is nonetheless a front." Guy Rosmarin, a long-time supporter of the North/South Station rail link and a member of CRT's board, responded: "No one has any illusions about why Richard [Goldberg] is [helping CRT]. ... But to say that CRT is a front for Richard Goldberg is to say that the ABC is a front for a dozen real-estate developers who stand to gain millions if the artery comes down and the tunnel is built." Fifield conceded that both group's backers had an economic stake in the project. She contended, however, that ABC's members had better "qualities of interest" because they were civic leaders fighting for what are widely seen as the best interests of Boston, while Goldberg merely was using CRT to achieve his narrow aim of turning "a block of land into gold."<sup>43</sup>

Finally, as part of an effort to show that the project had broad-based support, in mid-December ABC agreed to provide financial and logistical support for Move Massachusetts

2000, a new pro-CA/T project coalition of environmental, labor, and business groups, organized by Robert Weinberg, the president of Friends of Post Office Square and former chair of the Massport board, and Mark Primack, executive director of the Boston Greenspace Alliance. The new group quickly sprung into action, most notably by meeting with DeVillars only a few days before he was scheduled to issue his final ruling on the project. (ABC’s leaders, in contrast, never met directly with DeVillars.)<sup>44</sup> Over the next decade, says Robert O’Brien, head of the Downtown North Association and a long-time leader of Move Massachusetts 2000, the groups developed a symbiotic relationship. ABC often provided needed resources while members of Move Massachusetts not only “broadened the base” of support for the project but often did the “heavy lifting” needed to move key issues forward as well.

DeVillars announced in late December that he was likely to approve the CA/T project but intended to impose some particularly stringent conditions on it as well. In particular, he backed an agreement reached earlier in the month between the state and the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF) about transit commitments that CLF’s leaders contended (in the virtual absence of any supporting data) were needed to ensure the new project did not lead to more automobile travel and air pollution.<sup>46</sup> DeVillars’ comments greatly angered those concerned about the cost of the CLF agreements such as Weld’s top advisors and representatives of the cities and towns that partially funded the region’s transit system. In keeping with the summer’s pattern, DeVillars’ subsequently approved the project, subject to conditions that were less stringent than what his rhetoric had suggested. From ABC’s perspective the most important of these conditions was the new governor had to appoint a committee to review the Charles River Crossing, including the question of the Traverse Street ramp. DeVillars also accepted the BRA’s plan for the new artery land and expanded on it as well – requiring that a hotel the BRA had proposed for a centrally located parcel near the New England Aquarium, be replaced with open space.<sup>47</sup> (See Figure 3)

Figure 3: Required Uses for the Central Artery Corridor



Graphic from *Beyond the Big Dig, About the Parcels*. Available online at [http://www.boston.com/beyond\\_bigdig/parcels](http://www.boston.com/beyond_bigdig/parcels). Accessed on 10/15/2003.

## TRANSITIONS

With the election of a friendly governor, ABC continued to actively work to ensure the project proceeded in a timely fashion and with a design that benefited downtown Boston. Hestnes played a major role on Weld's transition team and, along with other ABC leaders, lobbied Weld to retain Salvucci as either secretary of transportation or at least as the head of the CA/T project. Republican Party stalwarts strongly objected to this idea and persuaded Weld not to retain Salvucci. ABC's leaders joined in the search for Salvucci's successor and Weld finally tapped Richard Taylor, a Boston developer who had become a member of ABC earlier in the year.

**Scheme Z and The Bridge Design Review Committee:** Recognizing that they came into office with limited knowledge about the project and little time to respond to project-related disputes, Taylor and his top aides welcomed ABC's help. Leventhal, for example, played a major role in shaping the bridge design review committee. He recalls:

All of a sudden it was a big crisis. You had to have somebody to make a decision and announce something the following Monday and announce somebody to do the job. I told Richard "I have somebody in mind to do the job—Stanley Miller [a well-known local businessman]." But Stanley didn't know about it. Now I had to go to Florida that weekend. I went down [and] I made some calls. I couldn't reach Stanley Miller. ... I kept asking people "Where's Stanley Miller?" They said they think he's in Florida. So I call various hotels to find Stanley Miller; and around midnight I got him and I said "Stanley I have to meet with you." I met with him 7 am on Sunday morning. I said Stanley I want you take on this job I have to get Richard a decision; I think it's a great thing to do."<sup>48</sup>

That afternoon, Leventhal called Taylor, who agreed to appoint Miller as the committee's chair. Taylor also appointed two ABC representatives to the 42-member committee. (Other ABC members and Thomas Nally, its planning director, served on various subcommittees, including the one that drafted the committee's report.) Working with Christian Menn, a Swiss expert in cable-stay bridge design hired as a consultant at the urging of ABC's leaders, the committee soon produced several options. Each produced a smaller, more elegant bridge than Scheme Z but they were all much more expensive than Z, which was then estimated to cost \$473 million. In May, the committee was asked to choose between a \$757 million plan that carried all cross-river traffic on a bridge, an \$863 million plan that carried most traffic on a bridge and some in a tunnel, and a \$954 million plan that had a smaller bridge and larger tunnel.<sup>49</sup>

Though ABC's representatives supported the all-bridge plan, the committee narrowly voted to back the cheaper of two combined bridge/tunnel plans. After the vote, Taylor and

his top aides moved to develop more detailed plans based on this vote. This process (which ABC closely tracked) was unexpectedly difficult and time-consuming, largely because they were trying to address the concerns expressed by representatives of the neighborhoods, institutions, and major property owners near the crossing. Finally, in September 1992, Taylor and the committee agreed to back a revised tunnel/bridge plan, then estimated to cost about \$1 billion.

**Fending Off Legal Challenges:** Anticipating legal challenges to the state’s approval of the Big Dig, in early 1991 ABC created a litigation committee. Hestnes chaired the committee, whose members included partners from five of the city’s most prominent law firms. The committee met with attorneys from both the state Attorney General’s office and the U. S. Attorney’s office to develop joint legal strategies for fighting these suits. The committee’s members also filed briefs and motions in support of the state’s position, usually as representatives of Move Massachusetts 2000.<sup>50</sup> As a result of these efforts, as well as negotiations by others (notably Weinberg, who brokered an end to the dispute with Goldberg), the suits were all defeated or settled out of court.<sup>51</sup>

**Refocusing on Design:** With the project moving into detailed design in early 1991, Leventhal and key members of the design committee also were increasingly concerned about what the artery would look like when it was done. In keeping with its by-now standard practices, ABC formed yet another committee and based on its recommendations Taylor established a small blue-ribbon committee charged with reviewing the “quality of architectural design.” He agreed, moreover, to let ABC coordinate the new committee’s activities. He also accepted Leventhal’s recommendation that he appoint William Porter, dean of MIT’s school of architecture and planning whose faculty chair was named after Leventhal, as the committee’s chair. Reviewing the committee’s work, Leventhal says: “We didn’t get everything we wanted but we got many things.”<sup>52</sup>

At the same time, another ABC committee closely followed the work of city and state planners who, in accordance with DeVillars’ ruling on the project, were developing more detailed plans for the land created by removal of the elevated highway and changing to city’s zoning code so that it reflected these plans. Though they were uncomfortable with DeVillars’ requirement that 75 percent of the land be set aside as open space, ABC’s leaders did not raise the issue at this time, largely because they did not want to anger allies, such as Move Massachusetts 2000, whose chair Mark Primack had warned:

... the commitment to the Project of environmental groups represented in Move Massachusetts 2000 is predicated on the Project’s commitment to open space improvements [in the artery corridor], parkland at the Charles River,

.....  
*In early 1991, Leventhal and key members of the design committee also were increasingly concerned about what the artery would look like when it was done. In keeping with its by-now standard practices, ABC formed yet another committee.*  
.....

and the creation of a park on Spectacle Island. If these commitments are not upheld ... there is a danger that these environmental groups will reconsider their support for the project.<sup>53</sup>

Sidman, who, as is discussed later, openly challenged the guidelines several years later, adds:

The politics of the front end were the politics of expediency. ... "Park" was really political shorthand to satisfy every political interest and causing them not to think through what that means. ... Because of that formulation, everybody got a free pass at the beginning on the type of planning needed ... during the project's endgame.<sup>54</sup>

**Project Management:** In March 1991 ABC's construction committee released a detailed report critiquing the state's management plans for the project. Taylor and State Highway Commissioner James Kerasiotes generally were receptive to ABC's recommendations but efforts to carry them out were hindered by increasingly poor relations between the two officials. (Though Taylor nominally was Kerasiotes' superior, he had little formal power over Kerasiotes, who as the head of the state's highway department, technically was in charge of the project's management and planning.) At times, relations between the two officials were so bad, that ABC's leaders felt the need to intervene in their disputes. Over the next decade, ABC would frequently perform this role when other officials – such as Kerasiotes and Boston Mayor Thomas Menino – feuded about CA/T-related issues.

.....  
*The recession and continued consolidation in many industries affected the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce and the Vault. The former group reportedly lost one-third of its members (falling from about 2,600 members in 1988 to less than 1,600 members in 1991) and the group's budget was in the red. The Vault experienced a similar decline.*  
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.....

In response to concerns expressed in a 1990 survey of its members, ABC's leaders also began to focus on ensuring that project construction did not disrupt essential utility services or greatly worsen downtown traffic problems. To address the former issue, ABC brought together representatives of the city's major utilities, who, surprisingly, had never met together to discuss the

CA/T project. Over the next two years, a subcommittee whose members included representatives of utility companies as well as senior representatives of major employers and property owners familiar with their firms' and tenants' utility needs, worked closely with state officials to develop and carry out the project's utility relocation plans.

**ABC and the City's Business Leadership:** Financial successes did not follow ABC's political and policy ones. Rather, the region's recession, which had a particularly sharp im-

pact on real estate and banking, took its toll on ABC and its members. Revenues from member dues dropped from \$568,000 in 1990, to \$505,000 in 1991 and were projected to drop again in 1992.<sup>55</sup> The recession and continued consolidation in many industries affected the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce and the Vault. The former group reportedly lost one-third of its members (falling from about 2,600 members in 1988 to less 1,600 members in 1991) and the group's budget was in the red.<sup>56</sup> The Vault experienced a similar decline. In 1988, Shawmut Bank, whose CEO had revitalized the Vault in the early 1980s, was bought by an out-of-state bank. In 1989, Vault chairman Ferdinand Colloredo-Mansfeld, who headed Cabot, Cabot and Forbes, one of the city's best-known development firms, was forced out by that firm's out-of-town owners. And in 1991, federal bank regulators seized the Bank of New England, one of the region's most venerable institutions, because of the high default rate on its loans. As a result of these forces, Leventhal says that by early 1991, "I became concerned about what was happening and where we were going. ... So I appointed a committee [headed by Bank of Boston president] Bill Brown ... who came in with a report saying the Chamber of Commerce is a disaster and we should take over the Chamber" – particularly in light of the fact that Chamber President James Sullivan was planning retire at the end of the year.<sup>57</sup>

Leventhal and some ABC board members expressed concerns that the merger would cause ABC to lose its focus. Other ABC leaders – particularly those with ties to both the Chamber and the Vault – strongly supported the idea. In early August, a little more than a month after the idea first became public, the chamber's executive and ABC's board agreed to open detailed negotiations aimed at merging the organizations and to have Coughlin head both groups while the merger was being negotiated. These decisions, asserted Joan Vennoch, *Boston Globe* columnist focused on politics and business, were: "a public confession by Boston business executives that they desperately need a leader, one with a voice louder than a mumble."<sup>58</sup>

**Forging New Relationships:** Within a year of its affiliation with the chamber, ABC's influence began to wane. Most project-threatening conflicts had been resolved, often with significant help from ABC. More important, many ABC leaders had strained relations with Kerasiotes, who Weld had appointed as state transportation secretary after Taylor resigned in late 1992. The problem was that many ABC leaders had lobbied against the appointment because they believed Kerasiotes, who was known for his aggressive management style, was too partisan and lacked the diplomatic skills to get the job done. To make matters even more complicated, Kerasiotes was close to (and had worked for) former Governor Edward King while the Leventhal family was close to King's archrival Michael Dukakis. (Alan Leventhal, Norman Leventhal's son, had been national finance chairman of Dukakis' 1988 presidential campaign.)

Realizing they needed Kerasiotes to achieve their goals, ABC's leaders moved to develop good relations with him. Leventhal stepped down as ABC's chair and was replaced by John Larkin Thompson, who had longstanding ties to the national and state Republican parties. The new chair made it clear that ABC was more than willing to work with the new secretary. Kerasiotes, in turn, made it clear he welcomed such support but also that he would not be as close to ABC as Taylor had been.

An early and important test of the new relationship came when Kerasiotes met with ABC's executive committee and asked them to support his plan to replace Taylor's bridge/tunnel plan with an all-bridge plan similar to what the Bridge Design Review Committee had narrowly rejected almost two years earlier. The change was needed, he asserted, because Taylor's plan was too costly, would take too long to build, faced serious permitting problems, and did not meet federal guidelines for highway performance. The all-bridge plan, he added, would cost about \$300 million less, could be built in 8.5 instead of the 13 years, would meet federal highway standards and did not face serious permitting problems. Although ABC had backed the all-bridge plan in 1991, its leaders did not immediately embrace Kerasiotes' decision. Rather, they expressed concern that it would lead to controversies and lawsuits that could delay or even threaten the CA/T project.<sup>59</sup> Kerasiotes was adamant, however, and ABC's leaders later agreed to support him on the grounds that it was a vast improvement over Scheme Z and that it was time to resolve the issue, which had already imposed significant delays on the project as a whole.<sup>60</sup> Though Kerasiotes' decision angered some Cambridge officials and residents, such opponents could not generate much support to fight him or convince the courts to stop him.<sup>61</sup>

**Figure 4: The Zakim Bunker Hill Bridge**



Graphic from *The Central Artery/Tunnel Project, The Charles River Bridges*. Available online at [http://www.bigdig.com/thtml/gw\\_crc.htm](http://www.bigdig.com/thtml/gw_crc.htm). Accessed on 10/15/2003.

The crossing—officially known as the Leonard P Zakim Bunker Hill Bridge—ultimately cost at least \$1 billion more than Scheme Z. Despite the high cost, as Brannen suggested when ABC first became involved in the issue, the bridge’s striking design has been widely hailed. (See Figure 4)

Reflecting on this outcome, ABC’s current chair, John Drew, who also is president of the World Trade Center Boston, a major development on the South Boston waterfront, notes:

The state did not originally intend to build that bridge. Their design, while architecturally pleasing, was not nearly as spectacular as what was ultimately built. This is an excellent example of how the ABC and the public process were beneficial in pushing the state to the next level, and everyone involved is delighted with the result.<sup>62</sup>

In many ways the effort also was typical of ABC’s interactions with Kerasiotes, who headed the project until 2000 when was forced to resign for concealing a multibillion cost overrun on the project. According to Thompson:

There were some things where [Kerasiotes] recognized that he had a valuable resource and there were other things where he wondered whether the intrusion [by ABC] was worth the benefit. ... But it was never war or that kind of thing. ... Actually, he did a pretty good job. ... He, in that dominant style, drove people very hard, maybe too hard at times. ... But he managed to cut through a lot of typical, bureaucratic impediments ... He was a kind of bulldog ... in the style of Robert Moses or Edward King or William Callahan ... that get it done and there was a time when we really needed that.<sup>63</sup>

.....  
*The crossing—officially known as the Leonard P. Zakim Bunker Hill Bridge—ultimately cost at least \$1 billion more than Scheme Z. Despite the high cost, the bridge’s striking design has been widely hailed.*  
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## **PART II: REASSESSING ABC’S ROLE**

In about 1994, ABC’s leaders became convinced that Coughlin could not, in fact, head both ABC and the Chamber and subsequently that a full merger with the chamber was not in their interests. They therefore decided that while ABC would share overhead costs with the Chamber, it would be an independent group with its own a full-time president. They then hired Richard Dimino, who had worked closely with ABC in the late 1980s and early 1990s when he served as Boston’s transportation commissioner and as the city’s point person on the CA/T project. Not long after Dimino was hired, ABC launched a strategic planning process, which concluded that ABC should focus on:



- **Planning and Execution** By far, the members' top priority – and one that Dimino and ABC's executive committee agreed would take up about 40 percent of the staff's time – was continued review of construction plans and monitoring of how those plans were carried out.

- **Funding and Political Support** Ensuring that the project had the funding it needed to proceed.

- **Surface Restoration** A new focus on the question of what would be built on the 27 acres of land that would be made available when the existing artery was torn down – with a particular eye towards developing a “viable and sustainable land-use and development plan” for that land.

- **Increasing Membership** Accomplishing these goals required more financial and human resources, which meant that ABC had to grow.<sup>64</sup>

## PLANNING AND EXECUTION

With the project moving into construction, the time-consuming work of reviewing plans and ensuring they were carried out became increasingly important to ABC's members. Theodore Oatis, a principal in the firm that owns International Place, a major office complex adjacent to the artery and the long-time chair of ABC's construction mitigation committee, recalls:

As the project moved into its execution phase it became increasingly less glamorous and just more nuts-and-bolts detail work [such as] the detailed execution of the design, the careful definition of the way it was going to be undertaken, the order of the work, and the on-site planning. ... Very few people have the patience for that [kind of work]. And frankly, if I didn't feel as though I were the representative for a population of 7,000 at this block, for instance, or 25,000 people at this intersection there were times when I would have lost interest.<sup>65</sup>

As this effort matured, key project staff often would proactively raise issues with ABC's staff and the relevant committees, even when Kerasiotes was feuding with top ABC officials. Oatis explains:

ABC became an intermediary for the project to deal with the public because ABC had, among its members, representatives of the city as well as major employers and landlords. [For example] someone at the project would say, “we're thinking about making changes to the project's construction plan ... [such as] closing State Street or Atlantic Avenue [which the project ultimately did]. We can pick up construction time and save money and the total

project will take less time if we make this dramatic change, which is going to affect a lot of people at the surface. What do you think, ABC?" And then we would work through logging all the issues, making sure that there's wide participation among the affected population, that the trade-offs are weighed, that the alternatives are explored ...<sup>66</sup>

ABC's efforts generally focused on three interrelated concerns: utility maintenance, traffic management, and construction mitigation. As already noted, ABC helped develop detailed utility relocation plans in the early 1990s. Once downtown construction began, ABC's leaders and staff worked closely with contractors and project officials to ensure that the utility relocation was carried out as planned. As a result of these efforts, project construction produced relatively few utility problems and contractors and project officials quickly responded when problems did occur. In fact, Dimino notes, "in many respects, the utility relocation aspect of this Project has been an invisible success story that has helped keep the city functioning while Artery construction continued."<sup>67</sup>

To address the concerns about traffic, in 1993 ABC's leaders recruited Joseph Sussman, a professor of civil engineering at MIT, to chair a new committee focused solely on traffic management. According to Nally, the group, which met monthly for the next five years, helped project and city officials develop a traffic management program, critiqued the project's response to several significant traffic incidents (such as when a lumber truck knocked out a column on the Tobin Bridge), participated in a series of task forces established to carry out major traffic changes in downtown and the Massachusetts Avenue interchange area and then closely monitored how those changes affected traffic in downtown Boston.<sup>68</sup>

Finally, as the project moved into construction, ABC staff and committee members regularly visited construction sites and issue detailed report cards on whether contractors were following required mitigation plans. According to Oatis, who developed and oversaw this process:

Much of mitigation is actually performed by the contractor. So ABC went into the report card generating mode to give feedback to those contractors. When the project began, there were contractors that were just horrible...in terms of cooperation with ABC and the abutters. ... [When they did] ABC

.....  
*ABC became an intermediary for the project to deal with the public. Someone at the project would ask ABC, 'We're thinking about making changes to the project's construction plan, what do you think?' Then we would work though logging all the issues, ensuring a wide participation among the affected population and weighed trade-offs and alternatives.*  
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has knowledgeable enough people who would do everything they could [to correct the problems]. We'd call the senior management of the construction company and ask, 'what is going on? You guys are not doing a good job.' We'd go to the Bechtel/Parsons guys. We'd do everything possible to try and beat them up and get their attention."<sup>69</sup>

Over time, he adds, contractors who were not committed to mitigation generally have stopped bidding on contracts, while those who embraced mitigation won an increasingly large share of work.

Reflecting on the fact that downtown Boston has largely been free of utility outages, massive traffic problems, or unacceptable construction impacts while the project has been built, John Drew, ABC's current chairman notes: "when the project began all the questions about noise, dirt, traffic and utilities weren't there. At the end of all this, however, they were all embraced and became part of the project's culture."<sup>70</sup>

## FUNDING AND MANAGEMENT

In the mid 1990s, project funding reemerged as an important issue. First, despite Kerasiotes' best efforts, project costs continued to increase. State officials maintained that as it had in 1991 the federal government would agree to pay 80 to 90 percent of the new costs cost when the federal surface transportation act was reauthorized in 1997. There were signs, however, that Kerasiotes was being overly optimistic about federal aid. Control of Congress had shifted to Republicans after the 1994 election and many key Republicans represented Sunbelt states that historically had sent more money in gas taxes to Washington than they had received in federal highway aid (though most of these states were overall winners in the total federal system).<sup>71</sup>

Kerasiotes downplayed this problem and sharply rebuked those who raised it. He believed it was critical to press contractors as hard as possible to hold down costs. Weld, who decided to challenge Senator Kerry in 1996 also wanted to convey the message that project costs were under control and reinforce his image as a tax-cutter by eliminating several sources of transportation funding. After his unsuccessful Senate race, Weld resigned and was replaced by Lt. Governor A. Paul Cellucci. When Cellucci ran for a full term in 1998, Kerasiotes continued to downplay questions about project funding and costs.

Throughout this period, ABC closely tracked project finance issues and continued to lobby for the project on both Capital Hill and Beacon Hill. At the suggestion of state lobbyists ABC's leaders briefed and raised funds for key legislators, including James Oberstar, the ranking Democrat on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, who visited Boston in January 1998.<sup>72</sup> ABC's leaders were increasingly worried that Kerasiotes' poor relations with the state's all-Democratic congressional delegation hampered the state's already poor chances in the battle over federal highway and transit funding. Working with leaders of groups representing the state's construction firms, they cultivated close

relationships with members of the state's congressional delegation, most notably Representative J. Joseph Moakley, the ranking Democrat on the House Rules Committee, and Representative James McGovern, a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. ABC's leaders also went directly to Cellucci when they thought he should contact key members of the state's delegation but had not done so because he was following Kerasiotes' advice about how to proceed. Such efforts did not prevent Congress from significantly cutting the state's federal highway aid when it passed a new surface transportation act in early 1998. They did, however, hold the loss to a bit less than appeared likely when the House/Senate conference committee was hammering out the law's final details.<sup>73</sup>

**Lobbying for Non-Partisanship:** Throughout this time, ABC also sought to replicate its 1990 efforts to keep the project from becoming a major political issue in statewide campaigns. In early 1996, the *Globe* reported that a few months earlier Kerry (along with Senator Kennedy) had sent a letter asking U.S. Transportation Secretary Federico Peña to look into rumors (which later proved to be true) that the project was over budget and behind schedule.<sup>74</sup> After the article appeared, Weld, who was challenging Kerry, attacked him for taking steps that might undermine support for the project at a time when some key members of Congress were questioning whether the federal government should provide any more funds for it.<sup>75</sup>

ABC's leaders reportedly were "infuriated" by the letter.<sup>76</sup> They privately informed Kerry that they did not believe the issues raised in the letter were valid and, as they had in the past, they wanted to ensure that unsubstantiated rhetorical attacks, did not undermine public support for the project. Speaking publicly, Dimino stated: "To the extent political candidates choose to see the Artery/Tunnel project as a kind of political football, it will not help the project. We need the full consensus of public officials to keep this project moving forward."<sup>77</sup>

Except for raising the management issue during an April debate (and in a campaign appearance the day after the debate), Kerry did not press the issue (which polling found had barely registered with voters) for the rest of the campaign.<sup>78</sup> In 2000 when the cost and schedule problems reemerged as a major issue, Kerry recalled:

I raised some of these questions [about cost and schedule] back in 1996 ... but regrettably the nature of the political contest ... precluded those questions from being answered in a way that did not also carry with it a sort of political baggage. [As a result] it was ... lost in the electoral process."<sup>79</sup>

.....  
*ABC closely tracked project finance issues and continued to lobby for the project on both Capital Hill and Beacon Hill. ABC leaders were increasingly worried that James Kerasiotes' poor relations with the state's all-Democratic congressional delegation hampered the state's already poor chances in the battle over federal highway and transit funding.*  
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Asked in 2003 whether he stopped raising the issue because of pressure from ABC, Kerry replied, through a spokesman, that he did not back off because of pressure from ABC leaders, and also contended that he frequently made the project and its costs an issue during the 1996 campaign.<sup>80</sup>

ABC's leaders moved to replicate their efforts in the state's 1998 gubernatorial campaign. With the exception of State Treasurer Joseph Malone who unsuccessfully challenged Cellucci for the Republican nomination, they again succeeded in keeping the issue out of the campaign. In a *Boston Magazine* article written after Kerasiotes' resignation, Malone recalled that when a contingent of ABC leaders visited him, they told him:

... when Bill Weld and John Kerry were running for the Senate [in 1996] we got their word that they wouldn't bring up the Big Dig as an issue. They both stuck with that promise Joe, why don't you do the same thing? I said, you're in the wrong place if you think I'm going to let this boondoggle get further and further out of control."<sup>81</sup>

Dimino, however, says that ABC's goal was not to prevent discussion of the project but to make sure that it was productive. He explains: "Objective critiques of the project were always welcome. In fact we generated much of it ourselves. What we were concerned with was rhetorical shots across the bow."<sup>82</sup>

**Damage Control:** Throughout the late 1990s, Kerasiotes regularly asserted that the project was on time and on budget. In early 2000, however, he conceded – under pressure from

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*Testifying before a U.S.  
Senate committee hearing  
that was chaired by Senator  
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Dimino backed many of  
management and reporting  
changes proposed by the  
project's federal auditors.*  
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both the state secretariat of administration and finance and the state treasurer – that the project was \$1.4 billion over budget. When the cost overruns were first revealed, ABC's leaders moved to shore up public support for the project. Meeting with Kerasiotes during the crisis, board members indicated they would talk with newspaper editors, key legislators, and business leaders as part of a damage-control effort. The key message was to "keep the project non-partisan" and "to remind the public what has been accomplished in the last nine years," by "emphasizing the Project's benefits and achievements in engineering, construction mitigation and safety."<sup>83</sup> ABC's leaders also began working with Kerasiotes and other state officials to develop and secure passage of a plan to for covering the shortfall with state funds.

In April, Kerasiotes was forced to resign in the wake of a federal audit, which found that the project was almost \$2 billion over budget and that he and other senior project managers had inappropriately failed to inform key state and federal officials – and the public – about the higher costs. ABC's leaders now moved to ensure that the revelations did not

keep the project from moving forward. Testifying before a U.S. Senate committee hearing that was chaired by Senator John McCain, a vocal critic of the project and attended by Kerry, who was a member of the committee, Dimino backed many of management and reporting changes proposed by the project's federal auditors and noted:

Boston's business community was disappointed to learn of the Project's reported \$1.4 billion overrun and surprised at the audit's conclusion that Project officials had deliberately misled FHWA's overseers and the public. We were disappointed because the business community has been otherwise impressed by the Project's sound construction management, excellent safety record, and its success at keeping the city operational and economically viable during major construction. Our reaction is tempered by the knowledge that this Project is truly unprecedented, an engineering challenge like no other, and every cost adjustment is rooted in the difficulties these challenges present.<sup>84</sup>

**Protecting Turnpike Toll Increases:** In the mid 1990s ABC strongly supported Kerasiotes' plan to move ownership and control of the project to the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, which would provide about \$350 million for the project to be funded with bonds repaid by increases in turnpike tolls. In 1997, after the increases went into effect, a small group of western suburban residents and business owners gathered signatures needed to put a referendum question on the 1998 state ballot that would have banned the tolls. Early polls indicated that about two-thirds of voters backed the measure. Concerned that the measure would undermine CA/T funding, ABC's leaders – who contended the measure was backed by a "special interest group" – decided to challenge the measure's constitutionality.<sup>85</sup> They not only convinced other business and construction groups to join the suit but also persuaded the Conservation Law Foundation as well. (That group's leaders explained they did so because they opposed anything that decreased the cost of driving).<sup>86</sup> In July 1998, the state's Supreme Judicial Court ruled the measure was illegal.<sup>87</sup>

Two years later, ABC played an active role in the coalition that defeated a ballot measure that would have given state income tax credits for tolls and automobile excise taxes. As part of that effort, ABC sponsored over 60 radio spots attacking the measure that aired on the weekend before the election.<sup>88</sup> In 2001 and 2002 ABC strongly supported Acting Governor Jane Swift's decision to fire two members of the three-member Massachusetts Turnpike Authority board who sharply questioned Bechtel/Parsons' management of the project and refused to approve toll increases needed to repay turnpike bonds. When the board members challenged their firings in court, ABC offered to assist state officials in fighting that suit but the governor's legal office declined the aid.<sup>89</sup> In early 2002, the state's highest court ruled the firings were illegal.

## THE FINISHED PRODUCT

DeVillars' 1991 environmental certificate, the city's *Boston 2000* plan, and the city's zoning code called for open space on about 75 percent of the 27 acres of land that would be created when the artery was torn down. (The zoning, it bears mention, generally allowed construction of several relatively small structures on the open space parcels.) In the mid-1990s, however, key ABC leaders – notably Leventhal, Sidman, and Dimino – became increasingly concerned that this plan was badly flawed. Hestnes recalls:

All of us thought of this as a *Champs Elysees* open space. And we did well until the 90s until Norman Leventhal came back from Florida one day and said, "you know we've got this all wrong. It would be crazy to just spread grass seeds and trees there. It's just going to collect litter. You've got to have reasons for people to go there. You don't need office buildings [on the new land]. But you've got to have retail space and you've got to have cultural aspects so that people have a reason to go there and not just drive their cars through or across. And unless you have residential areas, you don't have reasons for people to come sit in a park, which is basically a throughway [or] surface street." It's the first time I really thought about it. The question is how do you do that?<sup>90</sup>

As they began considering this question, ABC's leaders grew concerned no one knew how much the new parks might cost, who would own and maintain them, and where the funding for both capital and maintenance costs would come from. Resolving the issues would require agreement between Kerasiotes and Menino, who often had less than friendly relations.

ABC's leaders developed a three-pronged strategy. First, they formed a new committee to focus on the surface restoration. Second, they pressed key state and city officials to put the issue back on the public agenda. As a result of the latter effort, Kerasiotes and Menino agreed to create and fund a working group to review the key issues that had to be addressed in what was known as the "surface restoration process." Menino and Kerasiotes also appointed Dimino and Robert O'Brien, a leader of Move Massachusetts 2000, as co-chairs of the working group. Finally, reflecting the importance of the issue, ABC hired Hubert Murray, who had been the CA/T project's chief architect and Alex Krieger, an urban designer whose late 1980s plan for the corridor (which had been prepared for the BRA) called for setting aside about corridor as open space. While ABC's leaders hoped these efforts would resolve key issues within a year or two, as of this writing in early 2004, three key questions about the corridor land remain unresolved.

**What Should the Land Be Used For?** ABC's leaders and the expert consultants hired by the group saw two primary problems with DeVillars' plan to set aside 75 percent of land for "open space," much of it in the portion of the corridor closest to the city's commer-

cial core. First, they believed the plan called for too much parkland in relation to the number of people who lived, worked, shopped, or visited the area. Krieger, for example, observed that the total amount of parkland proposed in the corridor was 13 times greater than the size of the park at Post Office Square, which is surrounded by office buildings. Though the latter park was highly regarded and heavily used, he asked: “Would 13 of these together be 13 times better?”<sup>91</sup> Second, some ABC leaders, along with architects and designers advising them believed that DeVillars’ plan incorrectly aligned the corridor’s use along the road’s right of way, which ran roughly from north to south. This part of the city, however, generally was oriented on an east/west axis, which suggested that any plan for the new land should re-knit the scar that had disconnected downtown Boston from its historic waterfront.

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Because of such concerns, ABC's leaders worked to ensure that the formal planning process for the new land did not preclude consideration of uses and structures that did not comply with the early 1990s plan and zoning for the new land. As a result of such efforts, the final report issued by the surface restoration task force co-chaired by Dimino explicitly called on policymakers to consider allowing buildings on two Wharf District parcels initially reserved for open space.<sup>92</sup> A few years later, while serving on a turnpike authority committee overseeing the development of a master plan for the corridor, Dimino ensured that those planners were allowed to “explore and test the earlier premises” about whether some structures should be built on the parcels.<sup>93</sup>

ABC also established committees to review public planning for the corridor's various sections and, in some cases, to develop their own plans and guidelines for those areas as well. In some cases – notably the artery's northern section – these committees included representatives of other community groups. In the central portion, which became known as the Wharf District, the committee, which was co-chaired by Sidman and the New England Aquarium’s Jerry Schubel, was comprised primarily of ABC's members. While each of the committees developed more detailed plans, only the Wharf District group proposed structures and uses that were substantially different than what was envisioned in the Boston 2000 plan and allowed under the zoning adopted to carry out that plan. (See Figure 5)

In particular, in late 2001 the Wharf District committee released a plan that called for construction of:

- A museum on the parcel between Rowe’s Wharf and International Place (Parcel 18)<sup>94</sup>
- A performing arts center with above- and below-grade space on the parcel near Rowe’s Wharf and the adjacent Harbor Towers residential building (Parcel 17)
- A sculpture garden on a parcel located between a major parking garage and low-rise commercial buildings (Parcel 16)



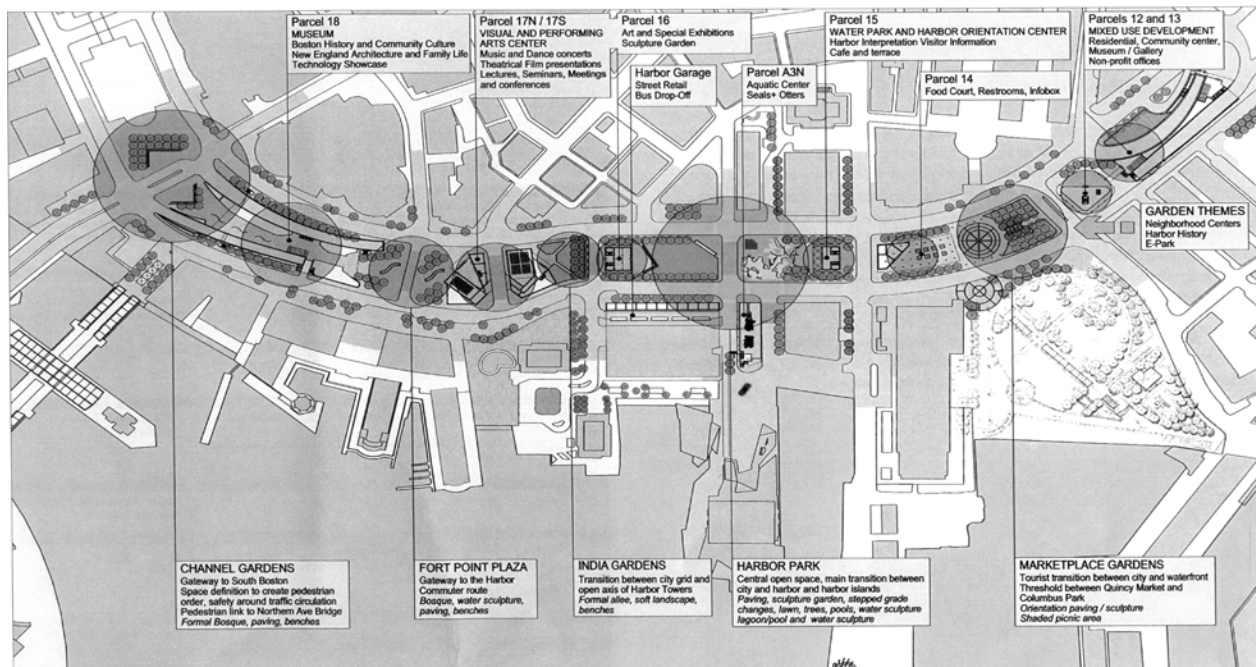
- A Harbor Visitor’s Center, as well as bathrooms, cafes, and a water park on two parcels located between Quincy Market and the wharves housing the New England Aquarium, Marriott Long Wharf hotel, and boats offering tours of Boston Harbor (Parcels 14 and 15).

Funding for the facilities, the group believed, would come from a combination of other public sources as well as new and existing non-profit groups. (Leventhal and Sidman subsequently helped organize a new group interested in building the proposed museum or cultural facility on Parcel 18.)

The plan’s authors contended that their approaches did not violate DeVillars’ requirements that these parcels be reserved for “open space” because that term meant more than parks. The committee argued, while parks grew out of a nineteenth century need to provide open space for those living in an unhealthy and overcrowded city:

... the urban malaise of the early twenty-first century is arguably less to do with physical morbidity than with ... social and psychic alienation. ... By creating shared space in the center of the city, a civic realm which defines community on a grander scale than the self, the street, or the neighborhood, the city will be performing an act as vital to its continuing health as the Emerald Necklace accomplished in its time.<sup>95</sup>

**Figure 5: ABC’s Wharf District Proposal**



Graphic from Wharf District Working Group, “Harbor Gardens: A Concept for Boston’s Wharf District, a report prepared by Hubert Murray and Jung Brannen Associates, Inc.,” Decmeber 2001, .p. 21.

The plan's authors did acknowledge that several of the proposed structures were larger than what was called for in the Boston 2000 plan or allowed under the parcels' zoning. Most notably, the size, height and square footage of facilities proposed on Parcels 17 and 18 were substantially larger than what the zoning allowed on those parcels.<sup>96</sup> In addition, while the total square footage of the visitors' and harbor orientation facilities proposed for Parcels 14 and 15 was about what the zoning code allowed, the proposed buildings did not comply with the code's explicit limits on the footprint of any single building on each parcel, which were designed to ensure that a series of small unobtrusive structures, rather than one or two large buildings, were built on these two parcels.<sup>97</sup>

ABC's critiques and the way its leaders pursued their agenda angered many environmental groups and Wharf District residents. In 1999, for example, Patrice Todisco, executive director of the Boston Greenspace Alliance and, like Dimino, a member of the turnpike committee's master plan committee, wrote in a *Boston Globe* opinion piece:

The open-space community is being maligned for expecting what the public was promised: a system of parks, plazas, park buildings, and sidewalks knit together by a tree-lined boulevard and anchored by gateways that are uniquely landscaped and punctuated by public art.<sup>98</sup>

Several years later, Chris Fincham, a resident of Harbor Towers, one of the few residential buildings in the area, contended the ABC plan for the district, is "in your face. It's everything in front of us that we don't want."<sup>99</sup>

Open space advocates also took issue with ABC's contentions that its plan was in keeping with the spirit of DeVillars' MEPA certificate. Jay Wickersham, head of the state office in charge of the environmental review process, confirmed this assessment in a July 2000 letter, written after environmentalists asked him to clarify the issue. With the exception of a proposed winter garden near Dewey Square, he wrote, "the location of any significant structure on any other open space parcel" was prohibited. Proponents of buildings, including cultural facilities, he added, could only change the policy by going through a formal environmental review process.<sup>100</sup>

.....  
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.....

ABC's critics, and even some of its longtime allies, also were upset by ABC's strategic decision to unilaterally push its vision for the new land. Robert Tuchmann—an attorney specializing in environmental and real estate law who was both ABC's long-time representative to the Central Artery's Environmental Oversight Committee and co-chair of Mayor Menino's task force on surface restoration issues—warned Dimino that the Wharf District plan "could be the greatest plan since sliced bread. But if it is not generated in a way that the community feels was an open process, it will be dead on arrival."<sup>101</sup>

Such criticism did not deter Dimino, who asserts “there was such a significant void in vision for the Wharf District that we felt we had to get focused and engaged ... even if it meant” angering some key individuals and constituencies.<sup>102</sup> In some cases, moreover, ABC’s approach had begun to pay off – as illustrated by the fact there was no significant outcry when the Central Artery Corridor master plan called for construction of a major cultural facility or museum on Parcel 18, just south of Rowes Wharf.<sup>103</sup>

He further notes that in sharp contrast to the disputes about the Wharf District parcels, ABC worked collaboratively and successfully with community groups and public agencies to develop more detailed plans for the corridor’s northern and southern areas. Working in those areas was easier, Dimino contends, because DeVillars’ certificate allowed a mix of uses on the new parcels and because ABC could partner with well established community and business groups who had a long-respected history of speaking for those areas’ residents and businesses. In contrast, he notes, the Wharf District has few residents, which led property owners to conclude they should have the greatest say over uses of the new land but led a variety of other community and environmental groups to believe that they should have a large say in the plans because the proposed downtown parks were “everybody’s open space.”<sup>104</sup>

**Who Would Pay to Build – and Maintain – Proposed Parks?** In addition to design issues, ABC’s leaders worried about funding. The Working Group estimated in 1998 that, excluding the horticultural society’s parcels, building the proposed new parks would cost \$20-to-\$40 million plus another \$10 to \$20 million for visitor, cultural, community and recreational facilities that might be built on some parcels. The turnpike authority, however had budgeted only about \$20 million for park planning and construction.<sup>105</sup>

The working group also estimated that maintaining the parks would cost \$2-\$4 million a year plus about \$2 million more for programming, figures that together represented about a third of the Boston Parks Departments’ *total* operating budget. Neither the city nor the state had developed plans to provide such funds, however. Some officials had suggested that some needed revenues would come from the sale or lease of parcels at the corridor’s northern and southern ends, where development was allowed. The working group task force, however, found that given those parcel’s locations, the structural limits on what could be built on them, and the high costs of building over a tunnel, it was highly unlikely that any significant commercial development soon would be feasible on those sites, even if the state gave the land away.<sup>106</sup>

In contrast, there was an unspecified acknowledgement that corridor businesses would likely be tapped to pay at least some of maintenance costs. ABC’s leaders generally indicated they were willing to pay some of these costs but only if corridor businesses retained significant control over how those funds were spent.

**Who Would be in Charge of the New Land?** The questions about funding brought to the fore the question of who should own and control the new land. Mayor Menino wanted the city to control the land but was unwilling to do so if the city had to use existing revenue sources to pay for maintenance and programming. Many state officials – notably House

Speaker Thomas Finneran—felt that if they funded maintenance they also should control the land, which, they noted, the state had bought from the city in the early 1990s. As noted above, ABC’s leaders were willing to contribute funding only if the business community had some control over how that money was spent.

ABC’s leaders and some parks advocates also worried that the parks would not be well maintained or programmed if they were controlled by a state or city entity with many other responsibilities. For all these reasons, the task force, with ABC’s strong approval, recommended that control of the corridor be turned over to a new entity with the sole task of building and maintaining the parks. ABC’s leaders further argued that the new group should be as free as possible from public-sector constraints on issues such as contracting. The working group, however, did not specify how that body would be organized, whether it would be subject to public-sector rules and regulations, and whether it would oversee only the corridor’s parks or, ..... as ABC’s leaders preferred, all the corridor’s new land.

**Near Agreement:** For several years after the Boston 2000 Working Group issued its report ABC pressed state and city leaders to resolve the outstanding governance and funding issues. In March 2002, Menino, Acting Governor Jane Swift, and House Speaker Thomas Finneran announced that they had reached broad agreement on a governance plan that called for creating a new entity—with members appointed by the governor, the mayor, and top legislators—to control the land. Funding for maintenance and programming would come, at least in part, from a surcharge on downtown commercial properties. The three leaders did not release a draft bill formalizing these agreements until mid-July, about two weeks before the legislature was to adjourn. That bill called for:

- Turning control of the land over to a seven-member trust (five appointed by the governor and two by the mayor, one of whom had to be a business community representative);
- Creating a 27-member board with nominal responsibility for overseeing the trust but virtually no substantive powers;
- Giving the trust control of the parcels designated for parks and those slated for development as well and allowing the trust to use the approximately \$2 million a year that the development parcels were projected to generate to help fund park operations, maintenance and programming.
- Imposing a tax on property near the corridor that would generate another \$4 million a year that the trust could use for park operations, maintenance and programming.

These proposals generated a storm of controversy. ABC’s leaders objected to the requirement that the private sector pay the bulk of the maintenance costs but had no control over how the money was to be used. Environmental and neighborhood groups—including

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Menino's task force on the artery parcels – feared provisions giving the new body control over both parks and development parcels was the first step towards accomplishing ABC's goal of allowing buildings on parcels currently slated for parks. Senior Massachusetts Turnpike Authority officials reportedly lobbied against the proposal because they did not want to lose control of the parks project. As a result of all these forces, some powerful legislators – most notably Senator Robert Travaglini, whose district included the North End (and who was later elected as Senate president) and House Majority Leader Salvatore DiMasi, who also represented the North End – turned against the bill as well. The small group drafting the legislation tried to respond to concerns by altering the governance structure. Each effort, however, seemed to generate more opposition from one camp or another. With time running out, ABC's leaders, who at one point seemed willing to accept the measure now judged that it “did not warrant support.”<sup>107</sup> With support collapsing, Finneran and Rep. Joseph Sullivan, the House chair of the Joint Committee on Transportation, decided to let the bill die without a vote.

**Fallback Positions:** Though ABC's leaders and others kept trying to resolve the issues that had stymied the legislation, as of early 2004, most of those questions remained unresolved. With no agreement immediately forthcoming, turnpike authority leaders decided in late 2002 to continue moving forward with detailed planning for the corridor's three main areas.

Not surprisingly, ABC was deeply involved in several aspects of this effort. ABC's leaders and committees, for example, closely monitored the process for selecting the teams that would design various sections of the new land and in critiquing early schemes prepared by those teams. ABC's leaders, moreover, sometimes served as intermediaries in discussions between officials in the new Romney administration and the turnpike authority who were barely speaking with each other because the new governor wanted to abolish the authority. And in 2003, ABC in collaboration with the city and turnpike authority mounted an “edge study” on how to best integrate the new publicly owned land in the corridor with privately owned properties abutting the corridor. (Funding for the project came from the Boston Foundation, ABC, and other abutters.)

ABC also continued to press its plans for the Wharf District parcels. In early 2003, it issued a study examining the technical feasibility of the proposals made in its 2001 Wharf District plan. Dimino and other ABC leaders also worked to build support for key elements of ABC's Wharf District. They began meeting with the National Park Service, the New England Aquarium, and advocates for Boston Harbor Islands to develop more detailed plans for the visitor's facilities and harbor information center proposed for two parcels close to the New England Aquarium and Quincy Market. In early 2003, Dimino and others from ABC also agreed to join a group being formed by residents of Harbor Towers and Rowes Wharf who were worried that neither the turnpike nor the city were responding to their concerns about emerging Wharf District plans. According to Chris Fincham, a Harbor Towers resident (and sometime ABC critic) who helped organize the group, “the residents in the Wharf District by ourselves have so little power that we had to reach out” to groups

such as ABC, the New England Aquarium, and others who owned businesses and property in the area to see the area's residents, businesses, and institutions could agree on at least some key issues. Members of the group, which called itself the Wharf District Task Force, hired an outside consultant who helped them reach a rough consensus on program and design guidelines for the Wharf District parcels.

The areas of agreement were detailed in a September 2003 report, which included explicit and positive references for three key elements of ABC's Wharf District plan: a visitor's facility near Quincy Market, a major cultural facility on Parcel 18, and underground cultural facilities on Parcel 17. The report did not endorse the proposed "head house" on Parcel 17, stating instead that the structure "should be considered." Reflecting residents' concerns, moreover, the report also explicitly warned that the land between the visitors' center and the cultural facilities should not be "over-programmed" or (as had once been discussed by turnpike authority officials) focused around a performance space that would generate additional "noise, crowds, and parking demands."<sup>108</sup>

In contrast, Todisco says that "in general, the open space community continues to be suspicious of ABC's intent for several key parcels ... and the methods ABC has used in pursuit" of those plans — particularly what they view as ongoing, private behind-the-scenes discussions with potential allies such as Wharf District residents and harbor islands advocates.<sup>109</sup> Despite these concerns, she adds, many open space advocates have indicated they are willing to consider the proposed museum on Parcel 18 and the underground cultural facility on Parcel 17. As of this writing in early 2004, however, most open space advocates continue to oppose the head house proposed for Parcel 17 and the visitors' facility and harbor orientation center near Quincy Market.

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## **EXPANDING ABC**

In the mid-to-late 1990s ABC's traditional membership base continued to shrink. In the 1990s, the Fleet Financial Group acquired the three commercial banks that had been original members of ABC — Bank of New England, Bank of Boston and Shawmut National Corp, the parent company of Shawmut Bank and in late 2003, Bank of America, which is based in Charlotte, North Carolina announced that it was going to acquire Fleet Bank. Boston Gas became part of New York-based Keyspan in 2000. A 1994 restructuring of NYNEX, New England Telephone's parent firm, saw many key executive functions move to New York City and in 2000, NYNEX merged with Bell Atlantic. Consolidation also came to the com-

mercial real estate industry. In 1997 Chicago-based Equity Office Properties Trust purchased Beacon Properties for \$4.4 billion—a move that made Equity the largest single owner of commercial space in downtown Boston.<sup>110</sup> By 2003 three other national real estate firms that had been members of ABC in 1989—Hexalon Real Estate, Prudential Realty Advisors, and JMB/Urban—also had sold off all (or most) of their Boston properties and were no longer members of ABC. In total, by 2003, about two thirds of ABC’s members as of August 1990 had been acquired by or merged with out-of-town firms.<sup>111</sup>

In addition to replacing these companies, ABC’s leaders were eager to add more members so they could fund new activities and tap new talent to work on ABC’s committees.

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As part of these efforts, ABC reached out, particularly to firms in Boston’s Back Bay and the South Boston Waterfront and began to work more intensely for the construction of turnpike ramps that would better connect the Back Bay (and its many hotels) with both South Boston (home to the city’s new convention center) and Logan Airport. As a result of these efforts, by early 2003 ABC’s board had 66 members compared to 42 in 1989 and its budget had grown to \$1 million.

Three notable changes have come with this growth. First, while developers and property managers continue to represent a little more than 40 percent of the board (as of 2003), almost half of these individuals represent out of town firms (up from less than a third in 1989). Second, professional service firms (mainly law firms) that are heavily involved with real estate related issues have displaced financial service firms as the board’s second largest source

of members. (See Tables 2 and 3) Finally, although ABC has successfully increased its membership, it has been less successful in getting individuals from out of town firms deeply involved in its activities. As of early 2003, for example, only two representatives of out of town firms were serving on ABC’s 20-member executive committee and only one was among the 14 people who chair or co-chair one of ABC’s substantive committees.<sup>112</sup>

John Drew, ABC’s current chairman, speculates:

The people who represent national firms typically attend our meetings, because they need to get firsthand information to communicate back to their headquarters. Also, some of these people are not as well known (in Boston). We're giving them access that would take years to in fact acquire on their own. The local members tend to take a much more active and participatory role. They're drilling down deeper and getting more involved. Now, this is a generalization, but overall, I think that's the biggest difference.<sup>113</sup>

**Table 2: ABC's Membership in 1990 by sector and local ownership**

	<b>Total Members</b>	<b>% of all members</b>	<b>Locally based firms</b>	<b>% Local based firms</b>
<b>Sector</b>				
Construction	1	2%	1	100%
Financial Services	8	20%	7	88%
Hospitals and Health Care Providers	2	5%	2	100%
Health Insurance Co.'s	2	5%	2	100%
Other (Vault and Chamber of Commerce)	2	5%	2	100%
Professional Services	5	12%	4	80%
Real Estate	17	41%	12	71%
Utilities	4	10%	2	50%
<i>Total</i>	41		32	78%

**Table 3: ABC's Membership in 2003 by sector and local ownership**

	<b>Total Members</b>	<b>% of all members</b>	<b>Locally based firms</b>	<b>% Local based firms</b>
<b>Sector</b>				
Construction	4	6%	3	75%
Financial Services	11	17%	9	82%
Hospitals and Health Care Providers	2	2%	1	100%
Manufacturing	1	2%	1	100%
Professional Services	12	18%	11	92%
Real Estate	29	45%	16	55%
Tourist and Visitor	4	6%	4	100%
Utilities	3	5%	2	67
<i>Total</i>	66		47	72%

Sources: author's calculations Lawrence DiCara, "Nominating Committee Report for 2003," in "Board of Directors Briefing Book," February 26, 2003 and list of board members in the Appendix to ABC, "Evaluation of the Central Artery/Tunnel Project Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement," June 1990.



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*The idea that the network of individuals active in ABC is itself a valuable resource has also begun to generate serious discussions about ABC's future. There are other things ABC should be doing because there is no other group acting as a spokesperson or supporter of things that have to be done in the city.*

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Thomas O'Brien, who worked with ABC when he headed the Boston Redevelopment Authority and now is the local representative for TishmanSpeyer Properties, a New York based firm that owns many Boston properties, echoes this view, noting that representatives of out of town firms often join ABC because "you want to be in the room. I care about the issues ABC addresses but I also find it makes business sense for me to just be there."<sup>114</sup>

While recognizing the value of the network created by ABC, Sidman contends that to date out-of-town firms rely too heavily on others to look out for their interests. In fact, Sidman, who became a member of Equity Office Property Trust's board after it bought Beacon, says in late 2003 he explicitly told that board that the firm has to encourage its local representatives to become more involved both directly and in groups such as ABC because if they "don't do it, who will?"<sup>115</sup>

The idea that the network of individuals active in ABC is itself a valuable resource has also begun to generate serious discussions about ABC's future. In general, ABC's founders and many of its members began with the belief that ABC should close its doors when the CA/T project is done, and many ABC members still believe that the organization should disband when the CA/T project is done. Some ABC leaders, however, now question this assumption. Leventhal, for example, says:

There are other things ABC should be doing because there is no other group acting as a spokesperson or supporter of things that have to be done in the city. ... For example, there's so much do done with infrastructure—such as connecting the Back Bay with the Massachusetts Turnpike or building circumferential transit. I believe in organizations ending when they do their job but I don't know who's going to do this if ABC doesn't.<sup>116</sup>

As early 2004, this question remained unresolved. The future of the ABC will be the subject of significant discussion in the near future.

## LESSONS AND IMPLICATIONS

ABC is a particularly notable group because it emerged at a time when many of Boston's traditional sources of business leadership were in decline. Its history, therefore, might offer some important lessons for students and practitioners of urban policymaking. Assessing whether it does, requires asking four questions. Was ABC successful? What factors most contributed to that success? Why did key actors get involved? Can it be replicated?

## ASSESSING ABC'S RECORD

ABC has generally succeeded in doing not only what its founders intended but also in carrying out a host of unexpected tasks as well. In particular, by working collaboratively with key officials from the project, the city, the state, and the Bechtel/Parsons management consortium, as well as with a variety of other interest groups and individuals, ABC has played a major role in:

- **Minimizing Construction Impacts:** ABC's efforts helped ensure that project construction did not regularly curtail downtown utility services or make downtown Boston inaccessible. ABC, moreover, helped develop and track plans to reduce and mitigate construction related impacts on downtown Boston, such as excessive noise and dust or closing off of important pedestrian byways.

- **Improving Project Plans:** ABC's members actively worked to alter the roadway's design to ensure that it enhanced access to downtown Boston. ABC's leaders have also highlighted and framed the discussions on the uses the land that will be created when the old elevated highway is torn down. While these efforts have had significant impacts on emerging plans for part of the artery corridor, to date key interrelated questions about the governance, funding, and (especially in the Wharf District) uses of the new land are unresolved.

- **Resolving Project-Threatening Controversies:** To its founders' surprise, ABC often worked to resolve several project-threatening controversies. Most notably, ABC played a critical role in finding a solution to dispute over Spectacle Island. Similarly, though they initially supported Scheme Z, ABC's leaders played a central role in efforts to resolve that dispute, most notably by convincing state officials that solving the problem required construction of a signature bridge across the Charles River. ABC, moreover, played a major role in defeating a project-threatening referendum in 1990 and in helping state officials beat back several serious legal challenges in the early 1990s.

- **Securing Needed Funding:** Lobbying by ABC's leaders, helped the state's efforts to secure significant amounts of federal aid for the project. ABC also helped convince state legislators to provide significant resources when project costs rose and (despite ABC's efforts) the U.S. Congress did not increase federal funding for it. ABC also played a major role in defeating proposed referendums that would have rolled back turnpike tolls, which are a significant source of project funding.

- **Ensuring Continued Support:** ABC's leaders have assiduously and successfully worked to ensure that the state's senior officials (and candidates for higher office) generally supported the project and refrained from making its desirability, funding, or management an issue in their campaigns. ABC's leaders have also cultivated support among key members of Congress and, at times, have played an important behind-the-scenes role in trying to convince them to stop public attacks on the project (or to at least tone them down.) ABC, moreover, has worked to build and sustain public support for the project, most notably by helping create and support the creation of Move Massachusetts 2000.

• **Undertaking Needed Planning:** In addition to its efforts to reframe debates about the Wharf District, ABC at times has taken the leadership role in bringing together a variety of community groups, along state and city agencies, to develop more detailed plans for all other parts of the artery corridor – including both the new land that will be created when the artery is torn down and how to better connect the new land with existing buildings on either side of the corridor.

Like many key ABC organizers, Sidman believes these successes produced a project that “by far is better than what otherwise would have been built.”<sup>117</sup>

## CRITICAL FACTORS

ABC’s success seems to be based on five key elements.

• **A Unique Project:** ABC was focused on a project that was so large, so visible, and potentially so damaging – as well as beneficial – that the heads of major downtown firms immediately understood why it was important that they become part of an entity designed to protect and advance their interests. For their part, senior elected and appointed officials not only recognized that ABC’s backers were so influential that they could not be ignored but generally concluded that ABC could be a valuable ally in ensuring that the project – which they generally believed was critical to the region’s economic health – was designed and built in ways that produced the most benefits and the least harm to the region as a whole.

• **Significant Resources:** As noted above, ABC was able to bring significant financial, institutional, and political resources to bear on the problems it identified as important. It hired talented individuals as staff and consultants and tapped a wide network of experts employed by its member firms (and the professional service firms that do work for ABC’s leading members). In addition, the requirement that member firms be represented by their CEOs at ABC board meeting gave the group access to – and credibility with – senior elected and appointed officials. In the words of Robert Beal, an ABC’s founder who later chaired the group, “when we walk in, the political leadership takes note.”<sup>118</sup>

• **Responsiveness and Staying Power:** Because ABC had knowledgeable staff, well-informed committees, and highly motivated leaders it could quickly respond when important issues unexpectedly emerged. As important, notes Sidman, this structure means that ABC can (and does) “stay involved with really knotty questions ... until they are resolved.”<sup>119</sup>

• **Multifaceted Focus:** ABC’s staff and key leaders understood that accomplishing the mission required that they focus on a full spectrum of issues and questions – from seemingly mundane questions about mitigation to highly technical questions about construction management to very broad questions of political authorization and public support. In doing so, ABC made itself the primary conduit for project-related information to flow between the business community and the public sector.

• **Flexible Tactics:** ABC’s leaders have used a variety of tactics and strategies to achieve

their aims. At times, they used approaches that have been long-time staples of well-organized, well-funded groups such as arguing that problems are technical issues not political ones or using their access to senior officials to advance their agendas. Unlike the Vault or the Chamber, however, ABC's leaders raised and devoted significant resources towards analyzing key issues and using those analyses to help broker agreements on significant disputes such as those concerning project excavate, downtown access, and the Charles River Crossing. ABC's leaders also recognized that the combination of environmental laws and the region's inclusive political culture required that they work collaboratively with an unusually wide range of stakeholders to achieve their aims. ABC's support for Move Massachusetts 2000 and its underwriting and managing a collaborative planning process for surface parcels near the North End and the Fleet Center were good examples of this approach.

### **SELF INTEREST, COLLECTIVE ACTION, AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST**

Individuals who try to organize a group effort to influence public policy often face the "free-rider" problem which is the fact that potential beneficiaries are tempted to let others provide the needed financial and human resources. Groups generally try to deter free riders by ensuring that only members get the benefits of the group's actions. They may also prevent free-riding and outright opposition to the group's efforts by use of selective incentives and punishments to further the group's aims. The free-rider problem is particularly significant for large groups where it is easier for individuals to shirk responsibilities without being noticed. In contrast, the members of small groups are better able to monitor and bring pressure on each other, to reward those who cooperate, and to punish those who do not. In addition, if the stakes for key actors are high enough, they may be willing to put up with some free riding by those who will receive only modest benefits from desired actions.<sup>120</sup>

Viewed from this perspective, ABC's effectiveness grew out of the fact that its core membership was a relatively small group of business leaders who had a substantial stake in minimizing potential harms from the CA/T project while maximizing the benefits that project might provide for their firms. These core members clearly recognized that they not only had many shared concerns but also that they were more likely to get those concerns ad-

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dressed if they came together in an organized and systematic way. As theory suggests, moreover, these leaders invested substantial resources to achieve their goals and used a combination of personal and professional networks to convince others to aid their efforts. In addition, they generally supported those who aided them (such as the members of MoveMassachusetts 2000) while actively working to stymie those whose actions threatened their efforts (such as the owners of the Park 'N Fly lot in East Boston or politicians whose criticisms of the project went beyond what ABC's leaders thought was appropriate.)

While ABC's leaders never denied that their efforts would advance their own interests, from the onset they asserted that their efforts should be seen as "enlightened self-interest" because they would produce significant benefits for the city and the region as well. Sidman, for example, contends, "We started this because we had a need to protect our interests. But we also wanted to see something good done for the city. It was a 'Perfect Storm' kind of thing."<sup>121</sup>

While fully assessing this claim of "enlightened self interest" is beyond the scope of this case study (and may not even be possible), it is possible to develop the basic contours of such an assessment. At one level, it is hard to make the case in support of ABC leaders' assertions because there is no plausible cost-benefit analysis showing the CA/T projects' many benefits exceed its \$14.6 billion cost. This is particularly true because fundamental urban economics suggests that many of the projects' benefits – particularly those associated with improved downtown access and a more pleasant downtown landscape – will be capitalized into the value of buildings and land adjacent to the project. The owners of those properties however, are not paying a significant portion of the CA/T project's costs. Thus it is quite reasonable to argue – as some ABC critics have contended – that ABC, which draws its membership and leaders primarily from corridor property owners, served to protect and enhance the value of its members' holdings at the expense of others from outside downtown Boston.

On the other hand, ABC did not exist when the project was conceived and authorized and its leaders played only a modest role in helping state officials secure initial authorization and funding for that plan. Rather, ABC came into being as a group focused on questions of *how* the project would be built, not *whether* it should be built at all. (ABC's leaders subsequently tried to ensure, however, that the latter question did not become an issue in political campaigns and that the project was not threatened or delayed in court.) ABC's members clearly had a great stake in both the question of how the project would be built and whether its implementation would be greatly delayed. But the city and the region arguably also had great stakes in both questions as well. Thus to the extent that ABC's leaders made sure the project was built relatively quickly and in ways that most benefited its core business district, they can accurately claim to have advanced the larger public good.<sup>122</sup>

## IS THE MODEL TRANSFERABLE?

ABC could serve as a model for business-led groups in three ways. First and most obvious, ABC's strategies and approaches are likely to be of interest to business in other cities discussing major projects, such as Seattle, where there are serious proposals to replace an elevated waterfront highway. Second, as previously noted, some of ABC's leaders as well as others active

in Boston's civic affairs have begun to discuss whether they can and should tap the strong personal networks created over ABC's 15-year history. Finally, ABC's history might suggest that with the demise of local banks, insurance firms, utilities, and retailers, future business leaders in Boston (and perhaps other cities with similar histories of business leadership) may come primarily from those who develop, own, and manage commercial property.

Future groups clearly can learn from ABC's multifaceted approach to key issues and its tactical flexibility. For two reasons, however, it may be difficult to generate the scale of fiscal and human resources that greatly contributed to ABC's success.

First, and most important, the CA/T project is unique both in its scale and its potential to significantly harm a major commercial district. Theories of collective action strongly suggest that without such a project, many business leaders are unlikely to provide the money or the time for an organization modeled on ABC. For the same reason, once the CA/T project is done, it may be difficult to convince many members to keep paying ABC's currently high dues.

Second, as the real estate industry consolidates into larger national (and international) firms, the pool of the locally based firms that have thus far provided the leadership for key groups will continue to shrink. The question is whether the representatives of the out-of-town firms can and will take up the slack. On the one hand, regardless of ownership, the value of buildings in downtown Boston (and elsewhere) is linked in large measure to public policies for investment, maintenance, and land-use regulation. This suggests that, as Sidman told Equity's board of directors, local representatives of out of town firms will have to become more deeply involved in local affairs. On the other hand, ABC's recent efforts to involve such out-of-town owners suggests that those people managing local properties and projects (like those in charge of the regional offices of national banks and power companies) may have less interest and/or less ability than their counterparts in locally-owned firms to become deeply involved in place-specific groups such as ABC. To the extent that ownership is dispersed, moreover, those in charge of major real estate firms, like those in charge of many other industries, may decide to concentrate their involvement in public policy to seeking changes in national regulatory and tax policies that would benefit all their holdings rather than focussing on efforts, such as major infrastructure projects, that are likely to affect only a handful of their holdings.

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Whether or not ABC is a harbinger of business leadership in the 21st century, its history still offers an important but easily overlooked lesson. Effective civic leadership – whether by business leaders or others – requires a core group of people who not only can mobilize significant institutional resources to achieve their goals, but who also have the skills, networks and, ultimately, the willingness, to do that often difficult and time-consuming work.

## NOTES

1. On the demise of business-led coalitions, see Charles H. Heying, "Civic Elites and Corporate De-localization: An Alternative Explanation for Declining Civic Engagement." *The American Behavioral Scientist* 40 (5), March-April 1997, pp. 657-68. On recent efforts to revitalize business leadership in some cities, see James E. Austin, "Business Leadership Coalitions." *Business and Society Review* 105 (3), fall 2000, pp. 305-322.
2. For more on the project's long and complex history see Alan Altshuler and David Luberoff, *Mega-Projects: The Changing Politics of Urban Public Investment*, Brookings Institution Press, 2003, Chapter 4.
3. This lesson had been underscored in 1985 when unexpected legal and political controversies caused New York to abandon Westway, which would have replaced the aging West Side Highway in Manhattan with an underground highway to be built in landfill on the city's Hudson River shoreline. (See *Ibid.* pp. 89-90 and 231-234.)
4. Some date the decline in the chamber's influence dated back to the onset of the Great Depression. (See Margot Stage, ed. *Who Rules Boston?* The Institute for Democratic Socialism, 1984, p. 45.)
5. The group's official name—the Coordinating Committee—referred to the fact that one of its major roles was to coordinate the activities of the region's various business groups. It was known as The Vault because it originally met in a boardroom near the vault of the Boston Safe Deposit and Trust Co., whose CEO was one of the group's founding members. For more on The Vault see Stage. *Who Rules Boston?* pp. 36-44.
6. Norman Leventhal, author's interview, May 22, 2002.
7. The *Boston Globe*, December 11, 1983 as cited by Esther Scott, "Post Office Square Park," Kennedy School of Government Case Program, 1993, p. 1. The park was completed in 1991 and in 1997 it was renamed the Norman B. Leventhal Park.
8. See Peter J. Howe. "Artery option cheaper and faster, but it could disrupt public transit." *The Boston Globe*, March 12, 1988, p. 20 and Peter J. Howe. "New Artery site will save time, money, officials say." *The Boston Globe*, June 30, 1988, p. 43.
9. For a good overview of Leventhal's career, see Jerry Ackerman, "The Leventhal Touch." *The Boston Globe Magazine*, October 27, 1996
10. Norman Leventhal, author's interview, May 22, 2002.
11. John Larkin Thompson, author's interview, August 1, 2002.
12. Harold Hestnes, author's interview, May 20, 2002
13. Author's calculations from Stage. *Who Rules Boston?* and ABC, "Updated List, Board of Directors," April 22, 1989 in ABC, "Executive Committee Briefing Book," June 8, 1989. The shift in active leadership towards the real estate community seems to be at odds with much of the theoretical literature on urban politics, which generally contends that because of their economic interest in regulatory and public investment policies, real estate interests play a dominant role in local and regional debates about these issues. (See, for example, John R. Logan and Harvey Molotch, *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place*, University of California Press, 1987) Boston, however, was not unique in drawing business leadership from its bankers and other industries. In the 1950s and 1960s, for example, Pittsburgh's Richard King Mellon, whose family owned the



Mellon Bank and were major stockholders in several of the city's other firms, was the driving force behind the city's famed Allegheny Conference on Community Development. At the same time, David Rockefeller, who headed Chase Manhattan Bank, was the most visible business advocate of public efforts – such as the World Trade Center – to ensure that lower Manhattan continued to be the city's primary business district. Bankers also dominated the Dallas Citizen Charter Association, that city's leading business group. See Jon Teaford, *The Rough Road to Renaissance: Urban Revitalization in America, 1940-1985*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990, pp. 45-54, Michael Danielson and Jameson W. Doig, *New York: The Politics of Urban Regional Development*, University of California Press, 1982, pp. 317-318, and Stephen L. Elkin, *City and Regime in the American Republic*, University of Chicago Press, 1987, p. 64.

14. "Mission Statement for the Artery Business Committee," November 1, 1988 as reprinted in ABC, "Business Plan, 1996-1998," in "Board of Directors Briefing Book," November 15, 1995.
15. ABC, "By-Laws," December 12, 1988, Article II in ABC, "Executive Committee, Report to the Board of Directors," May 10, 1989.
16. Harold Hestnes, author's interview, May 20, 2002. The list of committee members is from ABC, "Evaluation of the Central Artery/Tunnel Project Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement," June 1990, Appendix.
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22. Peter J. Howe. "DeVillars poised to weigh in on Artery." *The Boston Globe*, August 26, 1990, p. 1.
23. Norman Leventhal, author's interview, May 22, 2002. See also, Peter J. Howe. "DeVillars fanfare on Artery project is muted." *The Boston Globe*, August 31, 1990, p. 1.
24. Peter J. Howe. "DeVillars fanfare on Artery project is muted." *The Boston Globe*, August 31, 1990, p. 1. When asked about the incident in 2003, DeVillars contended that the requirements were substantially what he had originally proposed and that he never felt pressure from Dukakis to soften them. (See Frank Phillips. "Report says lobbyists muffled Big Dig criticism business group said to influence Kerry, others." *The Boston Globe*, December 25, 2003, p. B1. (This article was written by a reporter who obtained a draft version of this report.)
25. Peter J. Howe. "DeVillars fanfare on Artery project is muted." *The Boston Globe*, August 31, 1990, p. 1.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. See John Bok and Thomas Nally, "Joint Development Subcommittee Update," in "Board of Directors Briefing Book," September 26, 1990 and John Bok and Thomas Nally, "Status Report on Joint Development Process," in "Board of Directors Briefing Book," November 15, 1990

29. ABC, "Minutes, Board of Directors' Meeting," January 30, 1990.
30. Mary Fifield, "Political Strategy," in "Board of Directors Briefing Book," January 30, 1990.
31. Mary Fifield, "Gubernatorial Breakfast Series, Board of Directors' Briefing Book," in "Board of Directors Briefing Book," May 15, 1990.
32. Harold Hestnes, author's interview, May 20, 2002.
33. Mary Fifield, author's interview, April 18, 2003.
34. See ABC, "Minutes, Board of Directors' Meeting," November 15, 1990.
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36. William Coughlin, "Question 2," in "Board of Directors Briefing Book," November 15, 1990.
37. Traverse Street is roughly parallel to—and located between—Causeway Street and New Char-don Street.
38. Harold Hestnes, author's interview, May 20, 2002.
39. Peter J. Howe. "Business group pushes Scheme Z for artery's sake." *The Boston Globe*, December 12, 1990, p. B1. See also ABC, "Minutes, Board of Directors' Meeting," November 15, 1990
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41. Mary Fifield, "Move Massachusetts 2000," in "Board of Directors Briefing Book," February 14, 1991.
42. Mary Fifield, "Boston Globe Lunch," in "Board of Directors Briefing Book," February 14, 1991.
43. Peter J. Howe. "Anti-tunnel group's link raises question." *The Boston Globe*, February 4, 1991, p. 1.
44. See Mary Fifield, "Move Massachusetts 2000," and ABC, "Chronology of Major Events--Artery Business Committee, November 15-February 14, 1991," both in "Board of Directors Briefing Book," February 14, 1991.
45. Robert O'Brien, author's interview, March 24, 2003.
46. See Altshuler and Luberoff, *Mega-Projects*, pp. 109-113.
47. See "Secretary's Certificate on the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report," January 2, 1991, p. 11. As part of this requirement, DeVillars (echoing the city's view) required that three parcels near South Station, encompassing about four acres of land, be turned over to the Massachusetts Horticultural Society for an enclosed winter garden and outdoor gardens as well. As of this writing in early 2004, the society reportedly has raised only a few million of the about \$70 million needed to build the facilities. See Robert Turner, "Glass Act: A Spectacular Winter Garden is the Centerpiece of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society's Plan for the Parkland above the Depressed Central Artery. But Can The Society Get The Job Done?" *The Boston Globe Magazine*, March 30, 2003.
48. Norman Leventhal, author's interview, May 22, 2002.
49. Bridge Design Review Committee, "Report on the Charles River Crossing," May 1991, p. 18.
50. See Harold Hestnes and Myrna Putziger, "Litigation Support Subcommittee," in "Board of Directors Briefing Book," May 16, 1991.
51. The swap was never completed because Goldberg was subsequently convicted of bribing the Speaker of the Massachusetts House as part of his efforts to fight the taking in the late 1980s. Rather, in 2001 Massport purchased the Park 'N Fly lot. (See Altshuler and Luberoff, *Mega-Projects*, p. 112.)
52. Norman Leventhal, author's interview, May 22, 2002.
53. ABC, "Minutes, Board of Director's Meeting," February 4, 1991. See also See John Bok and Thomas Nally, "Joint Development Subcommittee Update," in "Board of Directors Briefing Book,"

- February 14, 1991.
54. Edwin Sidman, author's interview, July 19, 2002.
  55. Robert Beal, "1990/1992 Expense Budgets," in "Board of Directors Briefing Book," November 14, 1991.
  56. Doug Baily. "Bill Coughlin has the Boston Chamber on the mend, but he's struggling to make it a player." *The Boston Globe*, May 19, 1993, p. 39.
  57. Norman Leventhal, author's interview, May 22, 2002.
  58. Joan Vennoch. "Voices in the Mist." *The Boston Globe*, July 24, 1991, p. 31.
  59. ABC, "Minutes, Executive Committee Meeting," February 4, 1993.
  60. William Coughlin, "Letter to Trudy Coxe, Secretary of Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and Daniel Berman, Project Manager, Central Artery Tunnel Project, Federal Highway Administration on the Charles River Crossing, Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Report," October 5, 1993
  61. See *Daniel E. Geer, Jr., et al., v. Federal Highway Administration, et al. and City of Cambridge v. Federal Highway Administration*, United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts, 975 F. Supp. 47, (1997).
  62. John Drew, author's interview, June 3, 2002.
  63. John Larkin Thompson, author's interview, August 1, 2002.
  64. See ABC, "Business Plan, 1996-1998," in "Board of Directors Briefing Book," November 15, 1995.
  65. Theodore Oatis, author's interview, April 14, 2003.
  66. Ibid.
  67. Richard Dimino, Letter to Michael Lewis, October 15, 2003
  68. Thomas Nally, E-mail to the author, September 12, 2003.
  69. Theodore Oatis, author's interview, April 14, 2003.
  70. John Drew, author's interview, November 29, 2003.
  71. See Herman (Dutch) Leonard and Jay Walder, *The Federal Budget and the States: Fiscal Year 1999 Retrospective Issue 1983-1999*, Taubman Center for State and Local Government, Kennedy School of Government, 2000.
  72. ABC, "Minutes, Board of Director's Meeting," February 25, 1998. Oberstar raised about \$5,000 at a Boston fundraiser held in January 1998 that was attended by several ABC leaders (including Beal, Hestnes, and Dimino) as well as several local lobbyists and individuals with ties to construction and engineering firms (such as David Perini and the PAC affiliated with Stone & Webster). See Oberstar's April 1998 quarterly campaign finance report available from PoliticalMoneyLine. [www.tray.com](http://www.tray.com) (accessed on August 8, 2003)
  73. Richard Dimino, author's interview, June 18, 2003 and John Larkin Thompson, "Report of the Funding and Finance Committee," in "Board of Directors Briefing Book," September 11, 1997. Many of ABC's top leaders, it bears mention, were generous contributors to both McGovern and Representative Joseph Moakley, the ranking Democrat on the House Rules Committee who also played a major role in the funding effort. Source: campaign finance reports available at PoliticalMoneyLine. [www.tray.com](http://www.tray.com) (accessed on August 8, 2003)
  74. Frank Phillips. "Handling of Artery questioned by Kerry; Weld management assailed in letter." *The Boston Globe*, January 12, 1996, p. A1.
  75. Frank Phillips. "Kerry jeopardizing Artery, Weld charges." *The Boston Globe*, January 13, 1996, p. A1.
  76. Ibid.
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79. U.S. Senate, Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, "Hearing on Oversight Hearing on The Boston Central Artery/Tunnel Project," May 3, 2000.
80. Frank Phillips. "Report says lobbyists muffled Big Dig criticism business group said to influence Kerry, others." *The Boston Globe*, December 25, 2003, p. B1. (This article was written by a reporter who obtained a draft version of this report.)
81. Phil Primack, "The Blame Game." *Boston Magazine*, September 2000, p. 146.
82. Richard Dimino, author's interview, December 19, 2003
83. ABC, "Minutes, Board of Directors Meeting," February 15, 2000.
84. Richard Dimino, testimony, U.S. Senate, Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, Oversight Hearing on The Boston Central Artery/Tunnel Project, May 3, 2000.
85. ABC, "Minutes, Board of Directors Meeting," May 28, 1998,
86. Thomas Palmer. "SJC is asked to take anti-toll referendum off ballot." *The Boston Globe*, December 19, 1997, p. B4
87. See *Dimino v. Secretary of the Commonwealth*, Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts, 427 Mass. 704, (1998).
88. ABC, "Minutes, Board of Director's Meeting," November 15, 2000
89. Steve Crosby, author's interview, April 14-2003.
90. Harold Hestnes, author's interview, May 20, 2002.
91. Thomas Palmer. "Planning, debate over use of Surface Artery Space pick up." *The Boston Globe*, October 9, 2000, p. B2
92. Boston 2000 Working Group, "Toward Boston 2000," January 1998
93. Richard Dimino, author's interview, June 18, 2003
94. See Steve Bailey. "A Center for All?" *The Boston Globe*, October 11, 2002, p. E1.
95. Wharf District Working Group, "Harbor Gardens: A Concept for Boston's Wharf District, a report prepared by Hubert Murray and Jung/Brannen Associates Inc.," December 2001, p. 5.
96. The plan called for a for a 65-foot high 90,000-square foot cultural facility (with about two-thirds of the space located below grade) on Parcel 17S. The zoning for the parcel allowed a 35-foot-high, 11,823-square foot building. On Parcel 18, the plan called for a 70-foot high, 180,000-to-250,000 square foot museum. The zoning allowed a 35 foot-high, 33,395-square-foot building. (Ibid. pp. 16 and 22.)
97. The code allowed only several small buildings on each parcel. The ABC plan, however, called for consolidating the allowable footprints and total square footage into fewer but larger structures on each parcel. (Ibid. pp. 16 and 22.)
98. Patrice Todisco. "For a wide-open Artery space plan." *The Boston Globe*, July 26, 1999, p. A15.
99. Thomas Palmer. "Open conflict over open space delay fuels fighting over 30 Big Dig acres' use." *The Boston Globe*, January 24, 2002, p. E1
100. Jay Wickersham, "Letter to Corridor Master Plan Steering Committee," July 11, 2000.
101. Robert Tuchmann, author's interview, March 10, 2003.
102. Richard Dimino, author's interview, June 18, 2003.
103. Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, "Boston Central Artery Corridor Master Plan, prepared by WMWM/The Cecil Group with the Halvorson Company," May 2001, p. 8.
104. Richard Dimino, author's interview, September 18, 2003
105. Boston 2000 Working Group, "Toward Boston 2000," January 1998, pp. 27-28.
106. See Robert Brannen and Ronald Druker, "Report of the Design Committee and Parcel Design

- and Development Committee," in "Board of Directors Briefing Book," February 27, 1997. By late 2001, ABC's leaders believed that property values had risen so dramatically that the properties could, in fact, be successfully developed and generate as much as \$2 million a year that could be used to maintain the new parks. By mid 2003, however, some ABC leaders contended that this figure probably was too high, given the region's continued economic slowdown.
107. ABC, "Minutes, Board of Directors Meeting," September 25, 2002.
  108. Wharf District Task Force, "Program and Design Guidelines for the Wharf District Parks," September 2003, pp. 5-7. (Quotes about the head house and over-programming references are both on page 5; the language about the performance space is on p. 6).
  109. Patrice Todisco, author's interview, October 29, 2003
  110. As part of this sale, Sidman became a member of Equity's board of directors. Alan Leventhal, who had been the president of Beacon Properties, started Beacon Capital Partners, which recently purchased the landmark John Hancock building in Boston's Back Bay and is developing a major mixed-use project in South Boston.
  111. Author's calculations from list of board members in the Appendix to ABC, "Evaluation of the Central Artery/Tunnel Project Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement," June 1990.
  112. Susan Wolkoff of Fleet Bank and Peter Shields of Equity Office Properties serve on the executive committee; Christopher Maher, of the Boston Garden Development Corporation (a subsidiary of an out-of-town firm) co-chairs the funding and finance committee. Sources: Lawrence DiCara, "Nominating Committee Report for 2003," in "Board of Directors Briefing Book," February 26, 2003, Mary Ann Marino, "Report of the Treasurer," in "Board of Directors Briefing Book," February 26, 2003 and list of board members in the Appendix to ABC, "Evaluation of the Central Artery/Tunnel Project Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement," June 1990.
  113. John Drew, author's interview, June 3, 2002
  114. Thomas O'Brien, author's interview, March 28, 2003.
  115. Edwin Sidman, author's interview, December 9, 2003
  116. Norman Leventhal, author's interview, November 26, 2003.
  117. Edwin Sidman, author's interview, December 9, 2003.
  118. Robert Beal, author's interview, May 13, 2002.
  119. Edwin Sidman, author's interview, December 9, 2003.
  120. For a detailed discussion of this issue see Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*, Harvard University Press, 1965, particularly pp. 43-52. For discussion about how this idea applies specifically to urban politics see Clarence Stone, *Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta, 1946-1988*, University Press of Kansas, 1989, particularly chapters 1, 9 and 11 and Altshuler and Luberoff, *Mega-Projects*, pp. 53-61.
  121. Edwin Sidman, author's interview, December 9, 2003.
  122. There are significant disputes in the literature about whether downtown development benefits the community as a whole. For an affirmative view, see Paul E. Peterson, *City Limits*, University of Chicago Press, 1981. For a negative one see Logan and Molotch, *Urban Fortunes*.

## APPENDIX ONE: TIMELINE OF THE CENTRAL ARTERY

- 1930** Sumner Tunnel opens, connecting downtown Boston and East Boston.
- 1957** Massachusetts Turnpike opens from Weston to NY state line.
- 1959** Elevated Central Artery is finished.
- 1961** Callahan Tunnel opens under Boston Harbor.
- 1965** Pike extension opens.
- 1968** Massachusetts Turnpike Authority proposes a six-lane third harbor tunnel.
- 1972** Governor Sargent cancels highways planned for Greater Boston except for two projects: a two-lane, Boston Harbor tunnel and study of a new idea — depressing the Central Artery.
- 1974** Sargent is defeated in the polls by Michael Dukakis who appoints Frederick Salvucci, the artery depression's most ardent champion, to be state secretary of transportation.
- 1978** Edward King defeats Dukakis. He reinvigorates plans for the six-lane tunnel surfacing in East Boston and stops planning for the depressed Central Artery.
- 1982** Dukakis defeats King and reappoints Salvucci who proposes depressing the Central Artery and building a four-lane, general purpose Boston Harbor Tunnel.
- 1987** Congress approves a highway and transit bill that commits the federal government to paying 85 percent of the project's cost, then estimated to be \$3.2 billion.
- 1991** Congress provides additional aid for the project, which is now estimated to cost \$5.2 billion.
- 1992** Construction begins on the Third Harbor Tunnel.
- 1995** The tunnel, which is named after former Boston Red Sox star Ted Williams, opens, but only to taxis, buses, and trucks.
- 1998** Though the project's estimated cost had risen to over \$10 billion, including inflation, Congress declines to provide additional funds for its construction.
- 2000** James Kerasiotes, chair of the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, which oversees the project, resigns in the wake of revelations that he had concealed a multibillion cost overrun on the project.
- 2003** The project, now estimated to cost \$14.6 billion, opens new roadways in South Boston that connect the turnpike with the Ted Williams Tunnel, which is open to all vehicles. A few months later, the project opens the northbound portion of the depressed artery and new Charles River bridge.

## APPENDIX TWO: HIGHWAY TO HEAVEN?

By Sarah Abrams, reprinted from the John F. Kennedy School of Government Alumni Bulletin, Spring 2003

Early last winter, in a tunnel under Boston's Fort Point Channel, Federal Highway Administrator Mary Peters stood before a crowd of construction workers, engineers, and dignitaries and spoke the words many Bostonians had longed for: "I-90 is now complete."

The January celebration, replete with brass band and ribbon cutting, marked the finish of a 3 1/2-mile roadway, most of it in tunnels, extending the Massachusetts Turnpike (I-90) to Boston's Logan Airport. The new roadway represented an engineering feat that created a highway tunnel that, among other challenges, stretched under railroad tracks near Boston's South Station and over a subway tunnel (built of unreinforced concrete) in Fort Point Channel, a small waterway adjacent to downtown Boston.

The event also signaled, after almost two decades of planning and construction, fruition of the region's \$14.6 billion Central Artery/Tunnel project (CA/T or known locally as the "Big Dig") — the most expensive public works project in the nation's history and perhaps the most technologically complex highway ever built as well. The project, which, in addition to the I-90 connector tunnel, also includes an eight-to-ten lane stretch of underground highway in the heart of downtown Boston and a major new bridge across the Charles River, is scheduled for completion in 2005.

While enthusiasm for the project's incredible technical achievement ran high that day, some of the project's more difficult realities were left unstated, according to the Kennedy School's Alan Altshuler and David Luberoff, authors of the recently published *Mega-Projects: The Changing Politics of Urban Public Investment*. Co-published by the Brookings Institution and the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, the new book reviews and analyzes the history of many major projects, including the Big Dig project.

In particular, say Altshuler, a Kennedy School professor and director of the school's Taubman Center for State and Local Government, and Luberoff MPA 1989, associate director of the center, contrary to the conventional wisdom of the mid-1970s, the unstated question posed by the project is not whether we can build big projects, but whether the projects we are building are worth the money we are spending on them.

### LESSONS LEARNED

Interviewed in Altshuler's office, the authors explained that while the project's scale and cost are unique, its history offers many important lessons about what it now takes to build major projects in urban areas.

"Perhaps the project's most important lesson," says Altshuler, "is that project planners and supporters today face tremendous pressures to 'do no harm.' The rise of environmentalism in the 1970s made it difficult for mega-projects to proceed if any significant group or

area might be adversely affected. No longer is doing the most good for the greatest number of people an acceptable paradigm.”

Such was not always the case. In the 1950s and 1960s, states and localities built new highways in urban areas, tore down whole neighborhoods for urban renewal projects, and greatly expanded existing airports (or built new ones on much larger sites). In Boston such projects included the original elevated Central Artery (to be torn down when the Big Dig project is completed) and the Massachusetts Turnpike (see map). It also included an entire new residential community (Charles River Park), built on what had been Boston’s West End, a densely populated residential neighborhood, and new runways and terminals at Logan Airport, most of them built on land that had been parks and houses a few years earlier.

While the construction boom had enormous cultural and economic consequences, the projects were highly disruptive, often displacing thousands of people and devastating urban parkland. “The thinking back then,” says Luberoff, “was that the impact should be sustained for the greater good. As Robert Moses, New York’s famed master builder who oversaw the construction of many highways and urban renewal projects was fond of saying, ‘You can’t make an omelet without breaking eggs.’”

Altshuler, who was Massachusetts secretary of transportation in the early 1970s, played a central role at the time in stopping many highways then planned for greater Boston and approving the first planning studies for the artery depression. “Massachusetts, like other states,” he recalled, “profited greatly from the new highways but, also like them, it saw the extensive disruption that major road building often causes, especially when done within a major city.”

By the early 1970s, he added, public backlash against such impacts, combined with new environmental laws, made it virtually impossible to build such projects in urban areas.

In response, some public officials began to seek ways to build projects that had fewer negative impacts and that mitigated any remaining impacts. In the early 1970s, for example, Frederick Salvucci, then a transportation advisor to Boston Mayor Kevin White KSGP 1958, proposed replacing the elevated Central Artery with a depressed highway whose construction not only would not take any houses but also would allow the removal of an elevated eyesore. Salvucci went on to pursue the project as Governor Michael Dukakis’s secretary of transportation in the mid 1970s, and, in 1983, when he and Dukakis returned to office, Salvucci combined the artery depression idea with the concept of building a third Boston Harbor tunnel connecting Boston and its airport — a project long desired by the region’s leading business groups.

At about the time Salvucci was first proposing the artery depression, planners in New York City were suggesting a similar scheme, later named Westway, to replace Manhattan’s aging, elevated West Side Highway. This project was highly controversial and was abandoned in the mid-1980s after a series of adverse court decisions about the project’s environmental impacts — specifically project efforts to ignore data showing that Westway would harm fish in the Hudson River.

In a slightly different vein, in the late 1970s, California officials broke a longstanding impasse over the Century Freeway, a planned highway in Los Angeles. The project’s planners



agreed to reroute some of the road so it would not destroy as many houses and to build (or renovate) more than 4,000 units of housing in partial replacement of the approximately 8,000 units of housing lost in the course of building the road.

Other regions, in contrast, dropped highway plans and instead chose to build new rail transit lines, which were much easier to site. Meanwhile, few airports and runways were built after the 1970s. Most airports did rebuild terminals to better accommodate wide-body planes and new hub-and-spoke route systems. Similarly, after urban renewal and its strategy of tearing down neighborhoods came to an end in the early 1970s, most localities turned to projects that were easier to site. Festival markets located in historic buildings, such as Boston's Quincy Market, and new stadiums, arenas, and convention centers often located in older industrial areas close to downtown office districts became the new projects, all of which, note Altshuler and Luberoff, exemplify the "do no harm" planning paradigm.

Another lesson from the Artery/Tunnel's history, they say, is that projects are easier to build when local taxpayers are not asked to pay a substantial portion of their costs. Instead, projects are funded by higher-level governments or (as is the case with many stadiums and convention centers) via levies that fall most heavily on outsiders, such as taxes on hotel rooms and meals.

"The Big Dig project," says Altshuler, "illustrates the quest for outside funding at a particularly grand scale, but also shows how the best-laid plans can go at least somewhat awry." After an intense lobbying campaign in the mid-1980s, the project's advocates — mainly state political and local business leaders — secured federal legislation adding it to the Interstate Highway system. This meant that, if all went well, the federal Interstate program would cover about 85 percent of the project's cost, then estimated at \$3.1 billion — funds over and above the state's normal allotment of federal highway aid.

In 1991, however, the project's estimated cost having risen to \$5.2 billion, and with Massachusetts now the only state in the nation still at work on its Interstate system, Congress capped the project's Interstate aid. Future cost increases were now the state's responsibility, says Altshuler, and the project's cost eventually rose to \$14.6 billion. "The result is that whereas special Interstate funding was once expected to cover 85 percent of the cost, the current estimate is 29 percent. Another 29 percent will be drawn from federal aid streams allocated to the state by formula, which could have been used for other state highway and transit projects." (See graph, right.)

The lesson, says Luberoff is that "while the Big Dig, by almost any conceivable measure, is a wonderful project, it would have attracted virtually no support if its ultimate costs to Massachusetts had been known at the outset. More generally, it seems true that when state and local taxpayers expect that outside benefactors — whether higher-level governments or merely visitors from other jurisdictions — will cover most project costs, they pay little attention to the question of whether benefits and costs are commensurate." In fact, he adds, most economists find that the rail transit, stadium, arena, and convention center projects built in recent decades are "hugely expensive in relation to likely benefits."

In general, says Luberoff, there have been two responses to this situation. Advocates of

the current projects maintain that the economists' critiques are invalid because they miss intangible project benefits such as fostering community pride. Proponents of the kinds of projects stymied by current rules, in contrast, have pressed in recent years for the federal government to relax the environmental laws that prevent new runway and highway projects, which benefit-cost analysts tend to rate more favorably.

## MOVING FORWARD

Both Altshuler and Luberoff observe that there is no easy resolution to these issues because they involve tradeoffs between important, deeply held values. They assert, however, that their review of a half-century of public works projects in urban areas left them with two clear impressions about good ways to proceed.

"First," says Altshuler, "states and localities should be required to bear half or more of the cost of projects they undertake, because great windfalls of earmarked money from higher levels of government tend to overwhelm serious local deliberation." Second, Altshuler adds, "there are still no substitutes for strong environmental regulation and vibrant local democracy in helping to ensure that, as local growth coalitions proceed, they do not leave fouled environments and devastated neighborhoods in their wake."

For more info about *Mega-Projects: The Changing Politics of Urban Public Investment* go to <http://www.brookings.edu/>.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**David Luberoff** is Associate Director of the Taubman Center for State and Local Government at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. His research and writing focus on the political economy of infrastructure and land use policies, and he is the coauthor of *Mega-Projects: The Changing Politics of Urban Public Investment* and the author of several articles, case studies, and reports on infrastructure finance, decision-making on major public projects, and land use planning. From 1995 to 2001 he also was a columnist on infrastructure issues for *Governing* magazine. Before joining the Taubman Center, Luberoff worked as an editor for the Boston Redevelopment Authority and as Editor in Chief of *The Tab*, greater Boston's largest group of weekly newspapers. He received a master's degree in public administration from the Kennedy School.

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The role of the Artery Business Committee in the Planning, Design, and Construction of the Central Artery / Third Harbor Tunnel project

## Applied Research

- Lewis H. Spence, "Better Management for Better Schools" (January 2002)  
A review of the structure and functions of the Cambridge Public Schools administration
- Ashley G. Lanfer, "The Heart of the City" (November 2004)  
An analysis of the people and places of neighborhoods in Boston's geographic center

**Additional research and reports are continued on the inside.**