



The Boston Globe

Editorial THURSDAY, JULY 21, 2005

THREE PROMISED BRIDGES

BETWEEN THE parks on both Charles River banks and the Boston Harbor is a forbidding no-man's land of locks, rail yards, and bridge abutments of the Charles River basin. Part of the great promise of the Big Dig is to make it possible for pedestrians and bicyclists to go from the river parks to the Harborwalk and the new Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway without having to brave Boston traffic. But that promise will be broken if the state falters on its pledge to build three crucial bridges.

One would be next to or even attached to the commuter rail bridge spanning the Charles just west of I-93's new Zakim Bridge, which has no pedestrian access. Like the rail bridge, the pedestrian-bicyclist bridge could be opened to allow boats to pass underneath. A second bridge would extend from the Boston end of the river-crossing bridge over the railroad tracks just north of North Station, coming down near the abutments of the Zakim Bridge. A third bridge, on the Cambridge side of the river, would also span railroad tracks, connecting the new North Point Park with Paul Revere Park in Charlestown.

The commitment to build the structures, along with the new river basin parks they will connect, was made in a 1993. Since then, the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, which is in charge of the Big Dig, has had to spend \$14

million for cleaning up contaminated soil at the new North Point Park, plus other expenses. The Big Dig project manager, Michael Lewis, reasserted his commitment to the bridges last week at a citizens advisory meeting but said money is short. Matthew Amorello, chairman of the Turnpike Authority, said Tuesday that one source of money for the bridges might be untapped contingency funds. Advocates want to make sure the Turnpike Authority or the state comes up with the \$16 million needed for the bridges.

"It's time for the people on foot and bicycles to get their share of the Big Dig," Renata von Tschanner, president of the Charles River Conservancy, said at a rally last week.

It isn't just weekend strollers or bicyclists who would benefit from the bridges. As one of the Boston area's premier "smart growth" projects,

Cambridge's North Point is to be the site of 3,100 new apartments. Many of the residents would find it convenient to walk across the river to catch trains at North Station or to go to workplaces or restaurants.

The basin is not a pastoral part of the Charles. But the new parks and bridges would let both walkers and cyclists appreciate this rail-river-highway transportation nexus and connect them to the harbor, just as the greenway will. The Big Dig won't be complete without these links.

