



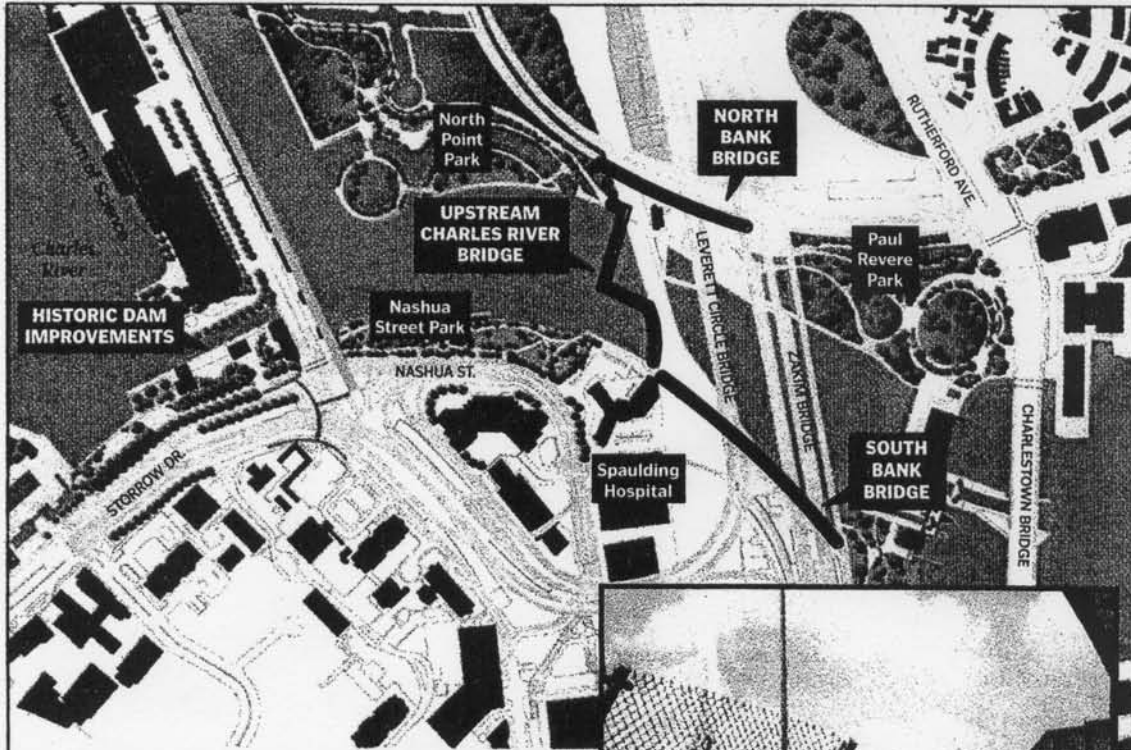
WalkBoston

# BOSTON Herald

WEDNESDAY, JULY 6, 2005 • 50 CENTS (75 CENTS 30 MILES OUTSIDE BOSTON)

WEDNESDAY, JULY 6, 2005 BOSTON HERALD

# BURNING BRIDGES

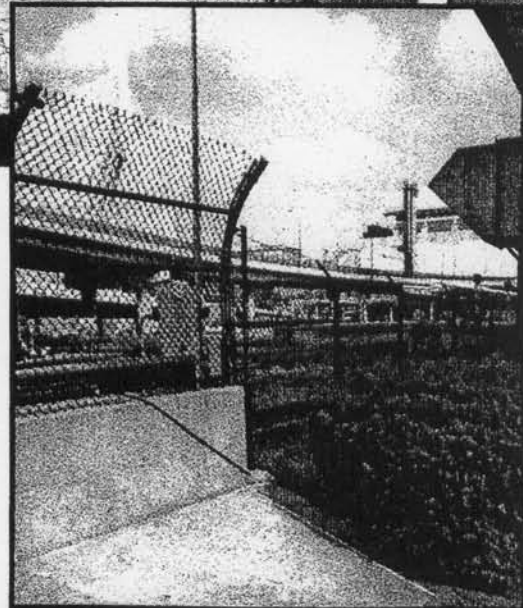


## THE MISSING LINKS

Big Dig officials battling a budget crunch have proposed cutting millions in pedestrian bridges and other improvements linking parks and walkways in the Charles River Basin. Here's what could be lost if money is not found:

- **THE SOUTH BANK BRIDGE:** A pedestrian/bicycling walkway extending from the Nashua Street Park, over an MBTA rail bridge, and under the Leonard P. Zakim bridge. The bridge, estimated to cost \$4.6 million, would connect the Esplanade to the Rose Kennedy Greenway and Boston Harborwalk.
- **THE UPSTREAM CHARLES RIVER BRIDGE:** A pedestrian/bicycling walkway along the MBTA rail bridge between Boston and Cambridge. The \$3.4 million bridge would provide a direct link for recreational traffic that now must travel along busy bridges and roads.
- **THE HISTORIC DAM IMPROVEMENTS:** Landscaping and building restorations on land surrounding the Science Museum. The improvements, valued at \$3.2 million, would provide another link in a chain of parks around what was once a desolate segment of the Charles River.

— CASEY ROSS



STAFF PHOTO BY DOUGLAS MCFADD  
**BRIDGE TO NOWHERE:** The intended entrance to a walking bridge lies behind the Spaulding Rehab Center near the Nashua Street Park.

Source: Massachusetts Turnpike Authority

STAFF GRAPHIC BY JEFF WALSH

MAKING OUR COMMUNITIES MORE WALKABLE

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# Cash-strapped Dig balks at pedestrian walkway projects

By CASEY ROSS

Big Dig officials caught in a worsening budget quagmire are trying to evade legal commitments to build critical pedestrian bridges linking \$90 million worth of new parks in the Charles River Basin, outraged environmentalists said.

Failure to build the bridges would not only violate a 1993 agreement, it would also kill the long-held vision of a continuous walkway linking the Esplanade to the Boston Harborwalk and Rose Kennedy Greenway, several officials said.

"These are major mitigation pieces promised as part of the Central Artery project and without them this park network is very incomplete," said Wendy Landman, executive director of WalkBoston, which is planning a rally July 13 to urge construction of the pedestrian/bicycle bridges.

The pair of bridges in danger of being cut were planned to link Boston and Cambridge over the Charles River and connect the new Nashua Street Park to the Kennedy Greenway downtown and Harborwalk through the North End.

Also on the chopping block is work to improve landscaping and historic buildings on land adjacent to the Science Museum, said Anne Fanton, a former chairman of the Central Artery's Environmental Oversight Committee.

Revelations of the potential cuts come as city officials and environmental activists are scrambling to rescue plans to

build a \$75 million botanical garden and learning center on three large parks running through downtown.

Without a significant funding boost, environmental officials say, a large chunk of the



recreational benefits promised in exchange for Big Dig pain and pollution will be lost.

In an e-mailed statement yesterday, a spokeswoman for the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, which oversees the Big Dig, said the two Charles River bridges are still being evaluated because of cost and logistical concerns.

"The project has honored its commitment," spokeswoman Mariellen Burns wrote.

"The budget commitment made in 1993 was capped at 80 million dollars. In 1997 there was an amendment to the agreement to add inflation, and we have lived up to that and greatly improved the areas involved."

But environmental officials said the Turnpike Authority is already out of money to build the pedestrian bridges because of high costs to remove contaminated soil in North Point Park.

They said the Turnpike has proposed removing the bridges from the plans.

"If you can't get to these parks, you can't use them," said Robert Tuchmann, chairman of the Big Dig's environmental oversight committee.