



The Research Bureau

Testimony on the Route 146/MassPike Interchange Project

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Sutton Town Hall

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I want to thank the Senate Post Audit and Oversight Committee, chaired by Senator Pacheco, for holding this hearing on the Route 146/MassPike Interchange Construction Project, and for inviting me to testify.

I endorse Senator Moore's comments on the importance of the project to the Central Massachusetts region, and I applaud the Committee for monitoring the progress of the project to ensure that it is completed by 2007, and hopefully, under budget. As Senator Moore mentioned, the Research Bureau issued an update on the project in May 2003, and discovered that there would be an additional two-year delay from our previous update completed in 2001. Through the efforts of the Central Mass Legislative Caucus collaborating with State transportation officials, it was agreed that work on the final two segments, Brosnihan Square and Hurley Square, could occur simultaneously, resulting in the commitment by State officials of a 2007 completion date.

There are four issues about the project that I would like to call to the attention of the Committee for further review.

The first is motorists will be unable to access local streets at Brosnihan Square which they can do currently. What are the implications of this decision for the redevelopment of the Brosnihan Square area, Cambridge Street to Webster Square and beyond, as well as access to Clark University?

Second, there will be no access between Route 146 north and I-290 west. If we were ever to build an east-west connector off the Hope Avenue exit of I-290 that would provide access to Worcester Airport, Paxton, Leicester and Holden as discussed several years ago by Mass Highway, there would be no connection from Route 146 to that road from I-290. I implore you to revisit these decisions and determine whether they are really in the best interest of the City and the region as a whole.

The third issue ties into Senator Moore's comments on congestion problems generated by the traffic lights along Route 146 in the Sutton area. It has been a long held opinion of the Research Bureau that once the Route 146 connector into Worcester is completed that work should begin on upgrading Route 146 to an interstate highway for both safety reasons as well as for the economic development potential.

Finally, I'd like to refer to Commissioner Cogliano's testimony where he attributed much of the delays in construction during the past couple of years to requests for additional work from Worcester and Millbury in particular. Since some of the examples he gave referred to requests for the Hurley Square and Brosnihan Square segments, I am wondering whether those requests have been completed or whether they still need to be done. If the latter, will

these requests cause further delays in construction, which will push the completion date beyond 2007?

Again, thank you for your attention to these matters. The Research Bureau stands ready to assist you in any way we can.