



From our State Rep by Paul Demakis

Save the MDC

Two bills that would negatively impact open space preservation are currently before the Legislature. These bills would transfer control of parkways and parklands in the metropolitan Boston area from the Metropolitan District Commission to other government agencies.

Senate bill 628 would transfer MDC parkways, including Storrow Drive and Memorial Drive, to the Massachusetts Highway Department. These parkways, consisting of 152 miles of tree-lined corridors, serve as continuous, green boulevards that provide scenic routes throughout the metropolitan area.

Transferring the parkways to the Highway Department would potentially subject them to state and federal highway regulations and open them to trucks and high-speed traffic. Moreover, MassHighway would gain unprecedented authority to replace them with new expressways, which could result in the destruction of the entire parkway system.

If this occurred, trees, shrubbery and grass along these scenic thoroughfares would be uprooted to make room for asphalt and traffic. Recreational opportunities available in the green space bordering the parkway would be eliminated. No one wants to jog alongside a freeway.

MassHighway insists that it will preserve the parkways' character and not subject them to federal and state highway regulations if S. 628 is passed. However, the department's present intentions can change. Defeating S. 628 is the best way to ensure that the parkways stay as they are.

S. 629 would transfer the MDC's parklands to the Department of Environmental Management, which administers all state parks outside the MDC system. Designed by landscape architects Frederick Law Olmsted and Charles Eliot at the end of the nineteenth century, the MDC parklands form the Metropolitan Parks System, the nation's first regional open-space system for a modern city.

Created as a reaction against urbanization, the MDC parklands connect greenspace from Revere to Wollaston Beach, with the Charles

River Basin and the Esplanade serving as the grand centerpiece. These historic parklands offer open spaces for joggers, walkers, bicyclists, roller-bladers, skateboarders and sunbathers.

Under the MDC, these parklands receive special attention. This would be jeopardized if they were incorporated into the DEM system as they would be directly competing with other state parks for the agency's resources.

There is no question that the MDC has suffered from chronic underfunding and ineffective management. As a result, the MDC's parklands are not in the condition they should be.

However, DEM parks have also suffered from a lack of funding. Unfortunately, whenever budgetary constraints exist, parks fall victim to more pressing needs, such as education, health care and housing. Transferring the MDC's parks to

DEM will not alter this fiscal reality. Nor is there anything magical about a transfer that will guarantee improved management of the MDC's parks.

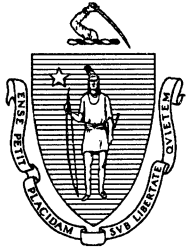
We should reject a superficial attempt to address the MDC's problems through bureaucratic reshuffling. Instead, the Legislature must find a way to provide the resources the MDC needs to maintain its parks and park-

ways adequately. Acting Governor Jane Swift should make the appointment of an effective manager with parks experience to run the agency a priority if, as expected, Commissioner David Balfour resigns his post later this year.

Many open-space advocates strongly oppose S. 628 and 629, including the Alliance of Boston Neighborhoods, the Boston GreenSpace Alliance, the Boston Preservation Alliance, the Charles River Conservancy, the Charles River Watershed Association, the Environmental League of Massachusetts, the Esplanade Association, the Massachusetts Audubon Society, the Massachusetts Sierra Club and the Metropolitan Park Council.

A decision on these bills is still pending in committee. Although the Senate recently rejected a budget amendment similar to these bills, we must remain vigilant to defeat all attempts to strip the parkways and parklands from the MDC's jurisdiction.

*The Legislature must
find a way to provide
the resources the MDC
needs to maintain its
parks and parkways
adequately.*



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

House of Representatives

State House, Boston 02133-1054

PAUL C. DEMAKIS
REPRESENTATIVE

8TH SUFFOLK DISTRICT
BOSTON • BROOKLINE • CAMBRIDGE

ROOM 446, STATE HOUSE

TEL. (617) 722-2460

FAX (617) 722-2897

Rep.PaulDemakis@hou.state.ma.us

Committees on
Public Service
Transportation

MAURA M. PELHAM
LEGISLATIVE AIDE

Maura.Pelham@hou.state.ma.us

July 3, 2001

D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk
Office of the City Clerk
Cambridge City Hall
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dear Ms. Drury:

Thank you for your letter concerning the Cambridge City Council's resolution to oppose Senate bill 628, "An act to transfer ownership and control of Metropolitan District Commission roadways and boulevards to the Department of Highways" and Senate bill 628, "An act to transfer ownership of Metropolitan District Commission parks and open space to the Department of Environmental Management."

You will be pleased to know that I strongly oppose these bills and that I testified against them at a public hearing held by the Legislature's Joint Committee on Housing and Urban Development on May 30. I am enclosing a column that I recently wrote for *The Beacon Hill Times* that explains my opposition to S. 628 and S. 629.

S. 628 and S. 629 were recently placed into a study. This means that these bills will most likely not come before the House for a vote this legislative term.

Please convey this information to the members of the City Council. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Paul C. Demakis

Paul C. Demakis
State Representative
8th Suffolk District

Enclosure

2001 JUL -6 A 10:14
OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

MS

Communication #6

A communication was received from Representative Paul C. Demakis, regarding Senate bill 628, "An Act to transfer ownership and control of Metropolitan District Commission roadways and boulevards to the Department of Highways and Senate bill 629, "An Act to transfer ownership of Metropolitan District Commission parks and open space to the Department of Environmental Management."

In City Council July 30, 2001

PLACED ON FILE