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CAMBRIDGE CIVIC ASSOCIATION
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CAMBRIDGE MA.

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Tuesday, January 25, 1994

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL
City Hall
Cambridge, MA 02139

Re: Central Artery New River Crossing

To the Council:

The Board of the Cambridge Civic Association has devoted several meetings to the detailed consideration of the Commonwealth's proposal for the "New River Crossing" component of the Central Artery project. At its regular meeting of Thursday 20 January, the Board determined to convey to you its views on this matter as follows:

The New River Crossing design represents improvements relative to the horrific Scheme Z proposals of several years ago; given that Scheme Z was a truly terrible piece of engineering, improvements relative to Scheme Z do not necessarily merit applause. Many concerned citizens believe that the River Crossing design has progressed from the abysmal to the merely bad, and we do not dispute such opinions.

Of greater importance, our concerns about the River Crossing extend well beyond the particulars of the design detailing of bridges and ramps. The Board believes that the marginal traffic and transportation benefits of depressing the Central Artery are not really adequate to justify the destructive environmental impacts of the River Crossing and the increasingly staggering cost of the project as a whole. Further, we are dismayed at the way the Commonwealth has discarded the priorities and efforts of the Bridge Design Review Committee, demonstrating a deficient commitment to citizen participation in regional planning. Finally, we are disappointed with the short term thinking which has captured the Commonwealth's decision process; we believe the next generation of Cantabrigians and Bostonians will regret the New River Crossing just as much as the current generation regrets the existing Central Artery.

Despite all this, we also recognize that regional pressures to build something — build anything, just get it done — may be beyond control. Building the New River Crossing may be a disaster, but abandoning the Central Artery project may be a disaster too. The Commonwealth, by forcing the region to choose between two disasters, has made a significant mess. But that's where it's at.

Within this messy context, the Commonwealth now seeks Cambridge's cooperation and support for the New River Crossing. To get it, the Commonwealth appears to be offering Cambridge a variety of benefits intended to be compen-

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Cambridge City Council
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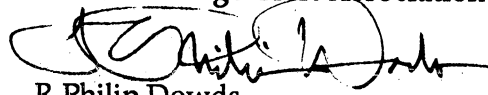
satory for the negative impacts resulting from the New River Crossing. These benefits, or "mitigations" as the Commonwealth calls them, are proposed improvements to traffic and transit conditions throughout the City. Many of these proposed improvements sound potentially valuable, and promise to address long-standing problems such as truck traffic in the Cambridgeport area.

The CCA believes that the negative impacts of the New River Crossing will be substantial, and that any package of compensatory benefits, if accepted by the City, must be substantial too. If the City chooses to continue negotiations for these mitigations with the Commonwealth, we ask you to take all measures necessary to ensure that the City's benefits are real, and not pie-in-the-sky. We point to what happened to the Bridge Design Review Committee, which indicates that the Commonwealth's promise to "study" something may not be worth much. Thus for each mitigation proposed by the Commonwealth or requested by the City, we ask you to insist upon: (1) a clear, non-ambiguous description; (2) a timetable for action; and (3) unequivocal assurances of implementation, including as appropriate firm contracts, consent decrees, guaranteed sources of funding, and/or other arrangements to secure performance.

If you find that the Commonwealth's promises of mitigations remain vague and indefinite, then we ask you to exercise all political and legal means, including litigation as appropriate, to ensure that the long-range interests of Cambridge are protected. The value of the mitigations and the negative impacts are great enough to call for the use of all necessary measures to ensure Cambridge gets the best possible deal.

As always, feel free to contact Executive Director David Leslie or me if you have further questions or requests in this matter.

Sincerely,
The Cambridge Civic Association



R Philip Dowds
President / For the Board of Directors

cc:

Bob Healy, City Manager
Mike Rosenberg, CDD
Paul Dietrich, Planning Board
James Kerasiotes, Transportation Secretary
William Weld, Governor
Scott Farmelant, Cambridge Chronicle
Bill Premo, Cambridge TAB
Jennifer Bloom, Boston Globe

Consent Communication #5

S22

A communication was received from the
Cambridge Civic Association regarding
the Central Artery New River Crossing.

In City Council January 31, 1994

Placed on file