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**CONSTRUCTION OUTLOOK
MONTHLY MAGAZINE**

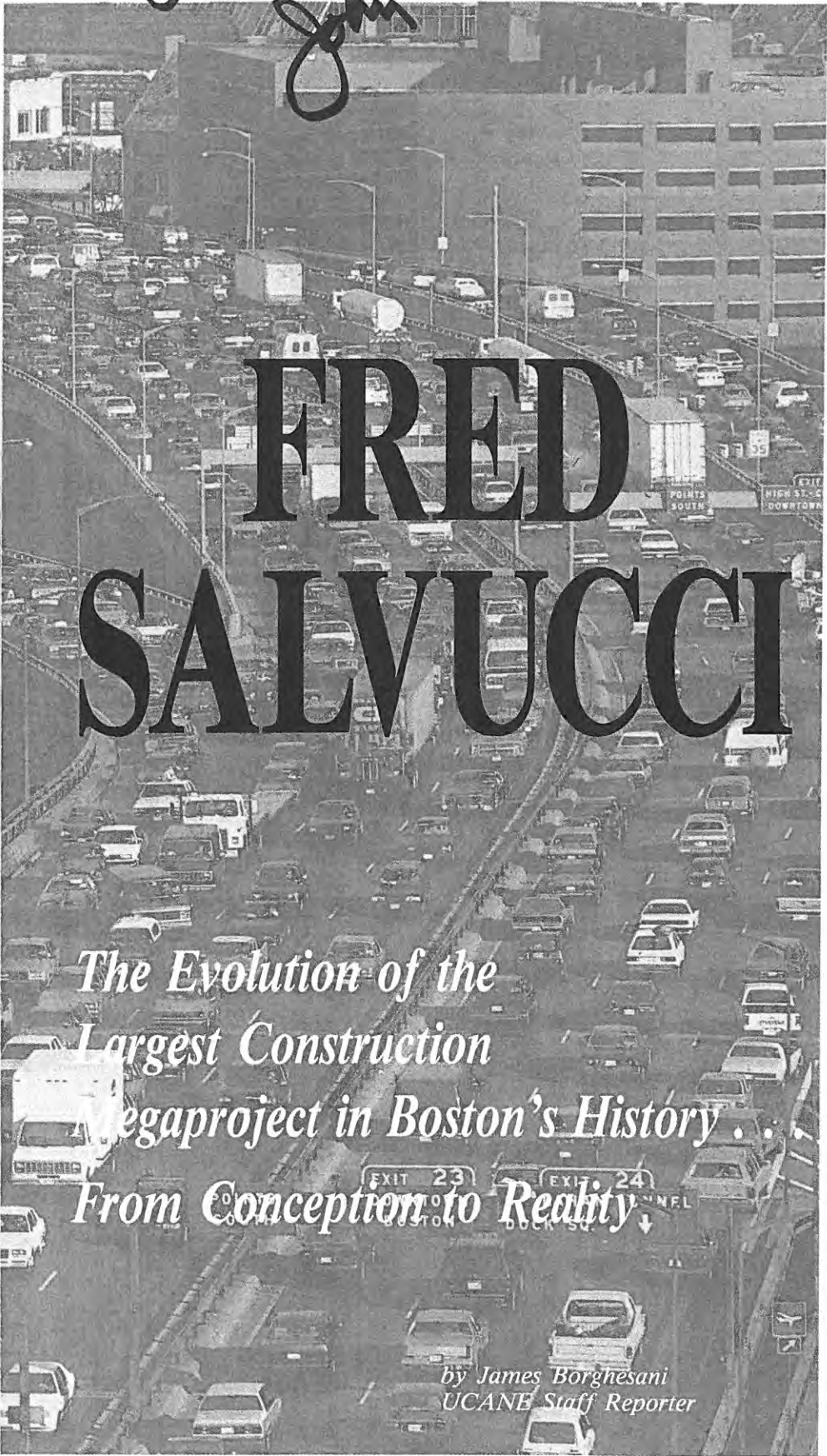
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FRED SALVUCCI

*The Evolution of the
Largest Construction
Megaproject in Boston's History
From Conception to Reality*

*by James Borghesani
UCANE Staff Reporter*

The 1990s will begin a bit early in Boston. In June of 1989, specifically. On that date, an extraordinary construction project will commence; a project so vast that it will profoundly affect Boston well into the next decade.

The Central Artery/Third Harbor Tunnel project, after nearly two decades of plans and studies, is soon to begin. For Secretary of Transportation Frederick P. Salvucci, the project represents an odyssey of stalled proposals, crucial deadlines, narrow victories and indignant residents. Salvucci has guided the project from its inception to its confirmation, and it all started, he says, with a contractor.

"The guy who convinced me that depressing the artery was the right answer was Bill Reynolds, a partner in a small construction firm," Salvucci recalls. "He said that highways could be beautiful things, but the Central Artery was like a giant billboard saying 'highways are bad.' People's attitudes would never change, he said, until we fix the Central Artery. And the way to fix it was to build a new one under it, and tear the old one down."

That was in 1970, when Salvucci was working in city hall. He dismissed the idea at first, because he didn't see how it could be staged. "I asked him 'Bill, what will we do? Put a big 'Closed for Renovations' sign at both ends of the Artery?' And he kept saying 'there's a way to do it,'" Salvucci says. Salvucci often crossed beneath the Artery as he walked to city hall, and he gradually became aware that enough space existed to stage the job so traffic could be maintained during the construction of the tunnel. Reynolds' idea began to intrigue him.

Salvucci represented the city on transportation matters in the

early 1970s, so after exploring the idea further, he and Bill Reynolds went to Secretary of Transportation Allen Altshuler with the basic proposal. "He promised to look into it," Salvucci remembers, "and that's how the whole thing got started."

It was hardly the first attempt to improve the Artery. At least 5 major studies had focused on the road and its links to the North Station-Government Center areas. Every one ended in a similar conflict: improving the Artery meant widening the existing structure and adding more ramps and parallel service roads, which meant razing property — but there was no tolerance for knocking down buildings in the area, and no plan addressed the structure's unattractiveness.

"I had seen all the studies on how to make the elevated road work, and I knew that we didn't have any answers. MDC, Port Authority, DPW, BRA, Boston Traffic Division . . . everyone had taken a shot at it. It was always the same thing: Let's take a fresh look. And it always ended in the same conflicts. So when Reynolds said 'let's put it underground,' he really hit the nail on the head," Salvucci says.

Reynold's plan neutralized the conflicts. No buildings would come down. Aesthetically, a depressed artery was ideal. What was ugly and inefficient would become beautiful and practical. Salvucci was getting hooked.

A preliminary tally revealed that the override, which needs a two-thirds majority, was short — by a single vote.

"He was always asking if I had thought about his idea," Salvucci says. "I kept walking under the road, thinking about it, and

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finally we were at a meeting in Peabody, and I said to him, 'Are you really serious about that idea?' and he said 'Of course I'm serious.' So we put an official presentation together before DPW and Transportation officials, with me representing the city and Reynolds representing business. Then the thing really started to move."

That was in 1970. Six years later, after exhaustive studies on urban design, transportation improvement and ability to maintain traffic during construction had developed the concept further, Salvucci, now Secretary of Transportation, went to Washington with Lt. Governor Thomas O'Neill Jr., to convince the Federal Highway Administration (FHA) that Massachusetts was serious about proceeding with the Artery project. The FHA added the project to the Interstate Cost Estimate for 1976.

So now the project, past the conceptual and planning stages, entered the federal legislative stream. But events in Massachusetts undermined the project's advancement in Washington. Governor Dukakis was defeated by Edward King, and the Central Artery project lost its momentum. Salvucci, replaced at Trans-

portation and officially disconnected from the project, began teaching at MIT.

Though the Artery project stalled under the King administration, another project gained momentum. And Bill Reynolds again played a key role.

The idea for a third harbor tunnel had been around for ages. Mayor Curley may have been the first to promote it. But the positioning of the tunnel was always its primary weakness. The original plan called for the tunnel to run from the Mass. Turnpike to Fort Point channel as an elevated road, with ramps connecting into it, then submerge at Fort Point channel and emerge next to Maverick Square in East Boston.

The plans were accepted, the studies completed, the methods of construction approved. Money was the last battle, and Congress the last battleground.

"There were flaws on each end of the plan," Salvucci says. "It would have been extremely disruptive for East Boston, with traffic emerging at Maverick
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Secretary of Transportation Frederick Salvucci

Fred Salvucci,

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Square and then tying quickly into Route C-1. The potential traffic problems sparked community opposition in East Boston, which was (former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives) Tip O'Neill's district. That opposition drew a lot of media attention."

But the concept had problems on the Boston end as well. The MBTA's Red Line tunnel, built in 1910, runs under the Fort Point channel. Putting additional loads on the old tunnel was risky. And Gillette Company, the largest industrial manufacturer in Boston, uses water in the channel to cool its production facilities. Any additional fill in the channel would reduce the water available

to Gillette, so the company firmly opposed the plan. Though the King administration seemed favorable to pursuing a third harbor tunnel, the plan was mired on its own flaws.

Enter Bill Reynolds.

"I was correcting papers at MIT one day, and I got a call from Reynolds," Salvucci remembers. "He said, 'From where I'm calling, I can see a clear right of way for the tunnel. It's nothing but parking lots and railroad yards. You don't have to knock down a building. You don't have to fight Gillette. You can go right to the airport and miss East Boston altogether.' I asked him why he was calling me; I was out of government. He said that no one else would listen."

Salvucci looked at the new proposed route for the tunnel and realized Reynolds was right. He persuaded Reynolds to write a letter to the Secretary of Transportation Barry Locke outlining his proposal. Reynolds, still dubious, wrote the letter and told Salvucci, "If Dukakis gets back in, and you go with him, we're going to build this tunnel." The letter, Salvucci says, was ignored. But Dukakis got back in, Salvucci was reappointed Secretary of Transportation, and the depressed Central Artery and third harbor tunnel projects were combined.

"The first thing I was asked, when I was reappointed, was what project was going to be pushed. The King people had pushed the tunnel, and I was perceived as being the Artery person. I answered that we had to do both," Salvucci says. "Not many people believed me, but they didn't know about the call from Reynolds."

But a new obstacle loomed. A new law mandated that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the entire project had to be submitted by October 1, 1983, in order to be eligible for federal funds. There was an EIS draft on Salvucci's desk when he re-entered office, but it was on the original tunnel plan. Salvucci and his staff had 10 months to draft a new EIS.

"To get an Environmental Impact Study of that proportion done in 10 months — actually less, because the FHA wouldn't let us start until March — was practically impossible. But Matt (Matt Coogan, Undersecretary of Transportation) got it done," Salvucci says.

“To get an EIS of that proportion done in 10 months — actually less, because the FHA wouldn’t let us start until March — was practically impossible. But Matt (Matt Coogan, Undersecretary of Transportation) got it done,” Salvucci says. “The questions that had to be answered were: Could the Artery remain operational while the tunnel was dug, would the realignment of the third harbor tunnel work, and what would be the resulting impact on traffic.”

Extensive engineering studies confirmed the feasibility of the first two questions. Projected traffic data indicated that one project alone would not significantly reduce the traffic pressure, especially on the Sumner Tunnel to Charles River portion of the Artery. Both projects were needed, both were feasible. The winding path of the Central Artery/Third Harbor Tunnel project led, again, to Washington. And, once again, it stalled.

Salvucci represented the city on transportation matters in the early 1970s, so after exploring the idea further, he and Bill Reynolds went to Secretary of Transportation Allen Altshuler with the basic proposal.

“We suddenly had a fight over legislative clarification for eligibility of federal funds,” Salvucci remembers. “We thought it would be straightened out in the Surface Transportation Act of 1983. But the Act didn’t pass. Then we discovered that we had additional problems with the FHA.”

Now the battle for the Artery/Tunnel project spread to two cities. In Boston, the Department of Transportation conducted

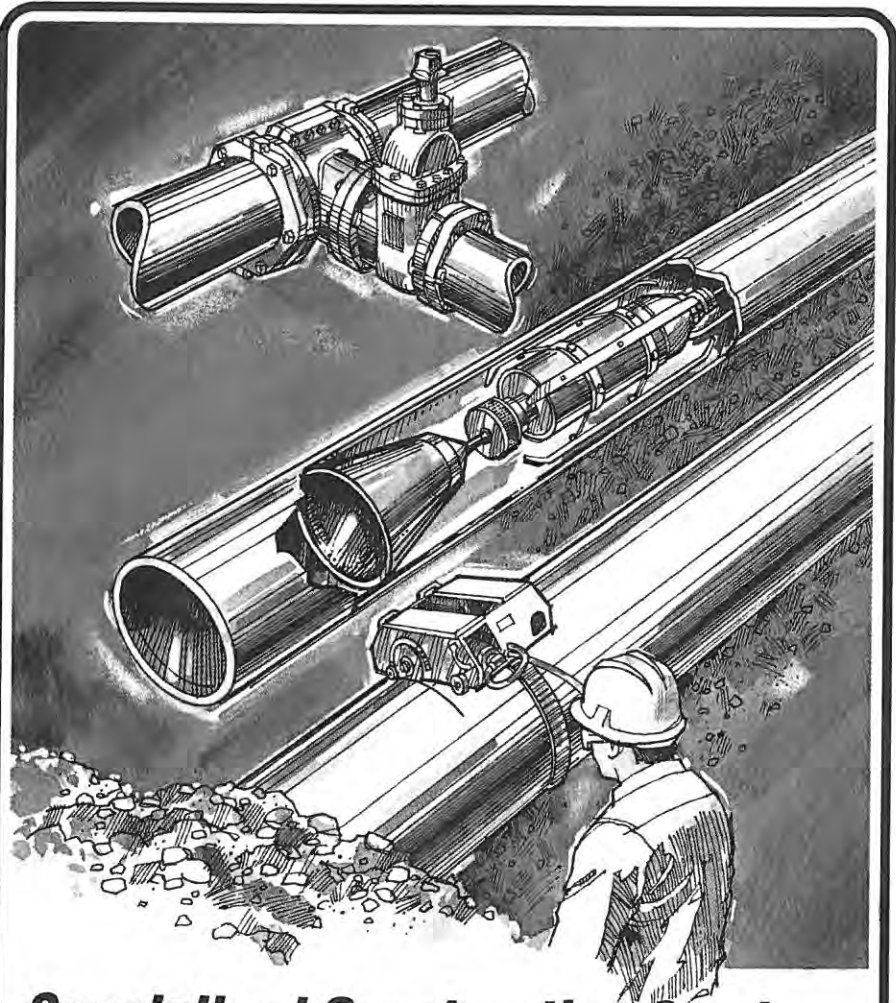
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more studies and hired Bechtel/Parsons/Brinckerhoff, a Boston engineering firm, to manage the construction project. The problems with the FHA were eventually worked out, and by August 1986 a basic agreement was reached. In January 1987 the FHA approved the Environmental Impact Statement.

Boston was done. The plans were accepted, the studies completed, the methods of construction approved. Money was the last battle, and Congress the last battleground. The Massachusetts congressional delegation launched an organized effort to include the \$10 billion project in a new Surface Transportation Act. Passing the Act was the next hurdle. While Salvucci and his staff were solving the differences with the FHA, they anxiously awaited word from Washington.

"It was the 'perils of Pauline,'" Salvucci recalls. "Rumors that the legislation was about to move. Then nothing. Then another rumor. It went on for four years. Some legislators considered it a boondoggle for Tip O'Neill and turned against it. We had to convince these legislators that the project was viable on its own merits. The amount of lobbying was incredible."

Finally a Surface Transportation Act which satisfied the various delegations was hammered out. It passed the House and the Senate and was sent to President Reagan. The Artery/Tunnel project teetered at the pinnacle; just one more signature. It didn't get it. Reagan vetoed the bill.

Amid the exasperation and crushed hopes, the Artery/Tunnel advocates prepared for the next — and perhaps final — battle: overriding the President's veto. Such a task is extremely difficult. Party lines begin to tighten; few Senators in the President's party wish to cross their leader. A new wave of cajoling,

persuading and lobbying ensued. A preliminary tally revealed that the override, which needs a two-thirds majority, was short — by a single vote. The man closest to the edge was Senator Terry Sanford of North Carolina. He resisted a commitment to either side, and his became the crucial vote. The fate of the Artery/Tunnel project lay in the hands of a man who lived 1,100 miles from Boston.

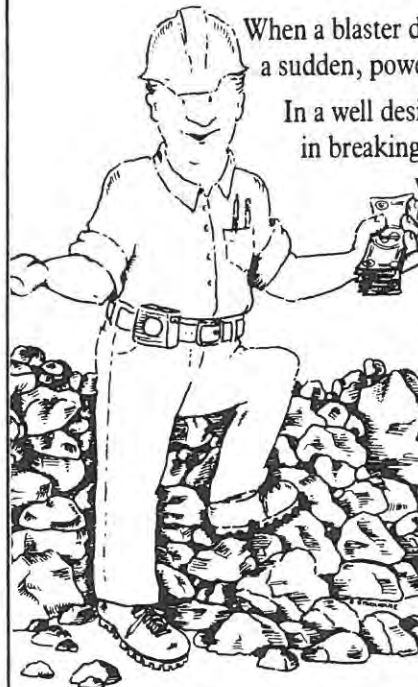
The Central Artery/Third Harbor Tunnel project's complex 17-

year journey began with a discussion between two friends in Boston. It wove its way through countless studies, hearings, meetings and revisions. It culminated with a discussion between two friends in Washington.

"Senator Sanford was a longtime friend of the Kennedy family, so Senator Kennedy spoiled with him and ultimately convinced him to vote our way," Salvucci says. "We won by one vote. After all that work, in those years. One vote." ■

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