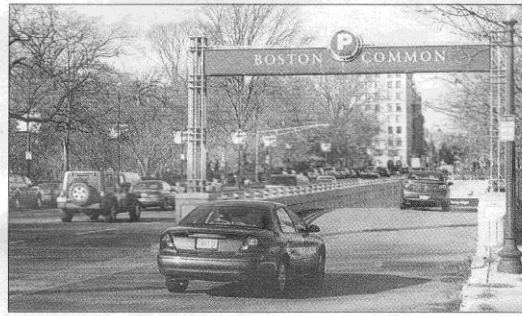


Letter to the Editor



Boston Common Garage

When I picked up the *Courant* I had to check again to make sure I hadn't accidentally picked up an old copy from the 1960s. It is hard for me to believe that in 2009 a proposal to expand an already large parking facility under the oldest public park in America, in "America's Walking City," in the heart of a downtown that is served by five major public transit lines, and has three major commuter rail and Amtrak hubs within a half-mile radius, would even be seriously considered in this day and age.

It was these outdated urban renewal policies that destroyed America's cities in the '50s, '60s and '70s. Have we not learned our lesson? It is Urban Planning 101 these days that cities like San Francisco, New York, Chicago and London that have put public transit, cabs and walking first over increased parking facilities have vibrant and prosperous downtowns. Cities like Cleveland, Detroit and Dallas that have the most parking per square foot downtown are failed downtowns that few want to go to. Those cities would kill to have what we have here in Boston, and they are now doing what they can to re-think their policies; places like Dallas and Salt Lake City are putting in light rail, building more densely downtown and moving away from the parking über alles mentality. They are doing this because that policy has been thoroughly disproved and financially ruinous. (They had to learn the hard way.)

When are we going to say enough and take real efforts to move Boston toward a balanced view of how to get people into and moved around downtown? Stuffing it with more cars and parking will have a hugely detrimental effect on the city and the area. The MBTA is crumbling, and every penny we can spare should be spent to improve public transit. As the cradle of liberty and birthplace of America we should be leaders on these issues. Instead we are putting forth what would have to be one of the most regressive public works projects currently proposed in America.

Residents in Boston have much higher asthma rates than the norm. The smog and exhaust from cars damages trees and historic buildings, and pollute the air. Not to mention our city and state have a responsibility to help our country move away from foreign oil and polluting the planet.

The Convention Center is a great success. I am thrilled that they are trying to expand it, but putting more parking in the Boston Common will have no positive impact on the Convention Center's continued and future expansion and successes. But it will have a tremendously negative impact on the Common and the surrounding neighborhoods. The myth that parking and more cars are an economic generator and panacea for urban woes has time and time again been shown to be the cause of the problem, not the solution. Everyone I have spoken with in the area is admittedly opposed to the idea, and I respectfully request the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority and the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center rethink this misguided proposal.

Greg Selkoe, Washington Street

Letters to the editor may be sent to letters@bostoncourant.com.