State Affirms Inner Belt Route
HANRON, ROBERT
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pg. 1

Cambridge Foes to Fight On

State Affirms Inner Belt Route

By ROBERT B. HANRON
Staff Reporter

The controversial Inner Belt through Cambridge from Joy st., Somerville, to Putnam av. near the Charles River, will be built on the original Brookline-Elm st. alignment recommended last March.

This offical announcement was made Friday by Edward J. Ribbs, state commissioner of public works, and endorsed by Gov. Volpe.

If the plan is approved by the Federal Bureau of Public Roads, which pays 90 percent of the cost, construction will get under way in two years and the road will be completed in 4½ years.

Opponents of the Brookline-Elm route, who have delayed the road's construction for years, will continue to fight.

Prof. Robert Goodman of M.I.T. and Dennis Blackett, members of a Cambridge citizens' group who recommended the so-called Portland-Albany alternate route, said they will take legal action to thwart the D.P.W.'s route plan.

Sen. Francis X. McCann (D-Cambridge) said Cambridge citizens have already asked Cong. Thomas P. O'Neill to appeal to the Bureau of Public Roads to disapprove the route.

"On the state level," he said "we've gone as far as we can go in our opposition to the recommended route."

INNER BELT Page 5

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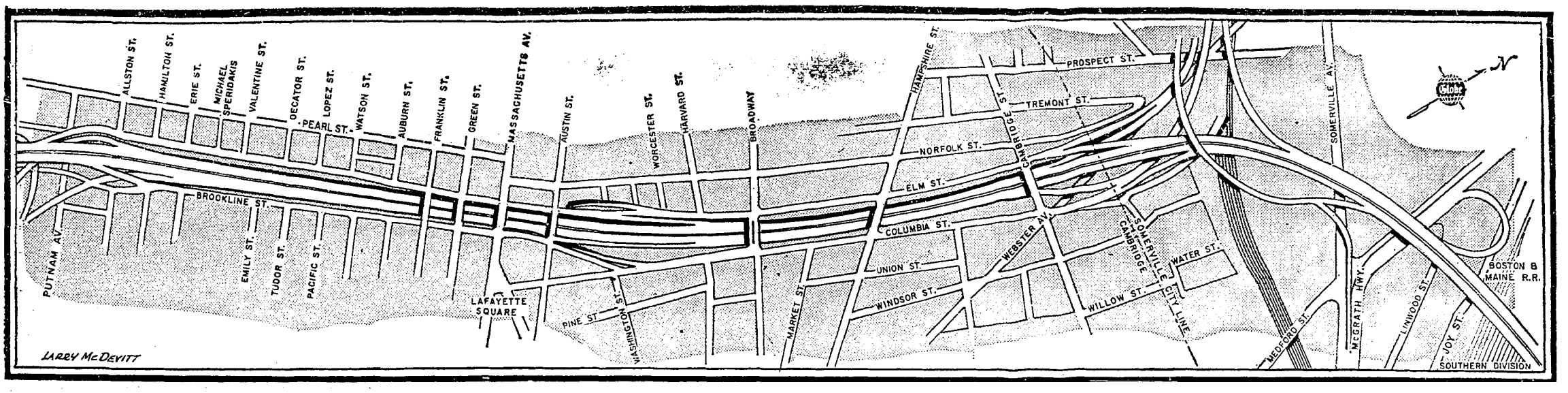

Landtaking in Year On Cambridge Belt?

★ *INNER BELT*

Continued from Page 1

The D.P.W. announcement was made public after Volpe and Ribbs had conferred for more than an hour with legislators and municipal officials of Cambridge and Somerville.

Rep. John Toomey (D-Cambridge), an opponent of the Inner Belt, had a grim look as he walked out of the governor's office.

"This is a sorry day for Cambridge," was his only comment.

Sen. Denis L. McKenna (D-Somerville) charged that the D.P.W. in selecting the alignment was "more interested in saving universities and businesses than in people."

TERSE 'NO'

Asked if there was any hope that the road could be blocked by further opposition, McKenna responded with a terse "no."

The proponents of the recommended route were enthusiastic.

Frank X. Christian, president of the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, applauded the decision and said it will enable the D.P.W. to go forward with the construction of the Inner Belt.

He said the announcement means "the end of a stalemate which has held up development of the entire Metropolitan highway system for years.

"No road," he added, "has been more scrupulously studied and planned than this one. We can now look forward to the day when this link will carry cross-bound traffic which now burdens the streets of the core areas in the Metropolitan District."

Robert W. Jenney, chairman of the Chamber's Mass. Transportation Committee, said the D.P.W. made "every reasonable effort to accommodate area residents, businesses, cultural and educational institutions in the path of the circumferential highway.

"We hope," he continued, "these efforts will be continued in relocating those displaced by the project."

Mayor Lawrence F. Bretta of Somerville said the D.P.W. decision on the route saved his city "a great deal of property, saved its business area and a number of homes, and left the on-ramps to the highway in the new Industrial Park."

Volpe said that the nearly 3 miles of highway through Cambridge, including a tunnel under the Charles River to Brookline, will cost approximately $125 million.

He said that this is $37 million less than the cost of the alternate Portland-Albany plan proposed by the Cambridge group and that it will mean the loss of far fewer jobs.

6-MONTH STUDY

The decision, he continued, was made after a detailed six-month examination of the alternate plan, and the choice was made in the best over-all interests of Cambridge.

The governor said the D.P.W.'s reecommendations will be forwarded to the Bureau of Public Roads next week, and officials hope the bureau's approval will be forthcoming in two or three months.

He expressed confidence that the recommended tunnel under the Charles will be given Federal approval also, but added that he has no assurance of this.

Volpe pledged that the State D.P.W. and the Bureau of Relocation will give all assistance possible and work with Cambridge and Somerville to find new housing for those displaced.

Asked if he had discussed the recommended route with Cong. O'Neill recently, Volpe replied:

"No, but our decision was based on a common sense judgment and I would hope he would accept it as such."

If Federal appropriations are not delayed because of Vietnam, Volpe said, block landtakings in Cambridge and Somerville can begin in about a year.

He pointed out that the eight-lane highway will run depressed through Cambridge and that this will allow construction of housing through the use of air rights over the road.

Statistics issued by the D.P.W. show that the road will displace a total of 1669 families in Cambridge and Somerville, 159 businesses and 2715 jobs.

The recommended Portland-Albany route, modified by the D.P.W., would have displaced 656 families but meant the loss of 136 businesses and 7131 jobs.

The Inner Belt (I-95) will cost more than $200 million and will be the most expensive stretch of highway ever built in the state. It will run from the Central Artery, Charlestown, through Somerville, Cambridge, Brookline and Boston, where it will hook up with the Artery again near City Hospital.

The route through the Fenway section of Boston will be partly depressed and partly by tunnel.

The entire road will be a little over 10 miles long.

SEVEN RADIALS

It will intercept seven radial arteries heading into the core city of Boston:

—Callahan and Sumner Tunnels.

—Mystic River Bridge to I-95 north.

—I-93 in Somerville which runs through Andover, Methuen and into New Hampshire.

—Rte. 2 to Concord.

—Massachusetts Turnpike.

—Southwest Expressway (I-95 south) to Providence.

—Southeast Expressway (actually Central Artery near City Hospital).

Construction of the Boston section is scheduled to begin late this year or early in 1968 depending on the availability of Federal funds.

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