Somerville Disturbed: 3 Agencies Push Rte. 93-Artery Link
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Somerville Disturbed

3 Agencies Push Rte. 93-Artery Link

By A. S. PLOTKIN

A new push to get a vital three-mile piece of Greater Boston's stalled expressway program rolling again has been quietly undertaken, the Globe learned Friday.

The present concentration by Federal, state and local agencies is on the final 1.8 mile segment of Interstate Rte. 93 in Somerville from the Medford line to a point near the Boston line and a 1.2 mile piece of the Inner Belt.

The enormous Inner Belt project and some of its most important radial expressway links has been stymied by local political opposition.

The roads would displace many families and, temporarily at least, wipe out millions in taxable property.

For that reason, mention of projects like the Inner Belt in Cambridge and Somerville and the Southwest Expressway in Hyde Park and adjacent points provokes hot political hassles.

The U.S. Bureau of Public Roads, disturbed by the slowdown, has selected the aforementioned three-mile strip as its current high-priority area.

The politically touchiest area affected is in Somerville. There have been several unpublicized conferences involving one Dept. of Public Works, Somerville officials and busi- ss, civic and church dignitaries.

The part of the route that lies in Charlestown was the subject of a parley in Mayor Collins' office Tuesday afternoon.

Attending were the heads of several Boston municipal departments, plus representatives of D.P.W., Bureau of Public Roads and Boston & Maine Railroad.

EXPRESSWAY

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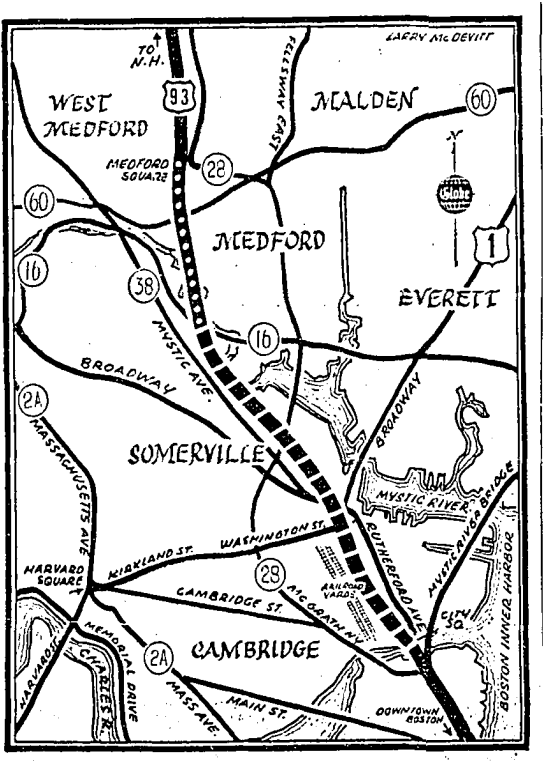

ROUTE RECOMMENDED for three-mile segment of Inner Belt and Rte. 93 (barred line) is opposed by City of Somerville, but new concessions may produce agreement. Traffic on Rte. 93 from north is now open to Medford sq.; and Mystic River straightening job should be completed this year.

EXPRESSWAY

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The Charlestown segment, since it lies almost entirely on railroad property, contains no political booby traps of the kind that give the horrors to mayors seeking re-election.

A side dispute, however, appears to have risen over a suggestion put foth by the City of Boston—that provision be made, when railroad land is taken for the Inner Belt road, for the relocated M.T.A. main line rapid transit line suggested as a major extension to Reading.

To this thought the reaction of the railroad representative reportedly was one of strong objection. The B.&M. has just launched a big test with commuters and wants to await its outcome before making major permanent commitments.

Out of all the informal meetings there appears to have emerged a mutual willingness to make some concessions in Somerville.

Somerville Mayor Lawrence F. Bretta insisted Friday night that he is still unalterably opposed to the route of the expressways originally recommended to D.P.W. by its consultants, also against the suggested alternates.

He said, however, that there has been some give and take.

He reiterated that Somerville has a population of 97,000 squeezed into only square miles and would suffer grievously from land-takings for the giant eight-lane expressways.

"We don't want to block Rte. 93," he said. "We realize that, sooner or later, it's got to come, but at least the damages to our small city should be held to a minimum."

Bretta emphasized that he had received no "concrete recommendation" from the state highway officials on an acceptable route.

He said that as late as Thursday the Somerville aldermen introduced an order demanding that he exercise his power of veto over the routes.

"They must be afraid," Bretta commented, "that the Legislature will lift the veto power."

On Somerville's share of the recommended Rte. 93 path, an estimated 503 households would be displaced. Many of these are families with small children, in three-deckers.

On the principal alternate route, an estimated 396 households would be disrupted. This alternative, however, has other major traffic and engineering disadvantages, according to the consultants who turned in their monumental $921,000 report on the Inner-Belt-plus-radial connectors last Summer.

Rte. 93 now runs from Medford, near City Hall, well into New Hampshire. That state is now pushing work on its share, and ultimately it will go to St. Johnsbury, Vt., near the Canadian border.

Completion of the three-mile link now being urged would have at least one major effect on Boston traffic.

It would provide some relief for the twice-a-day congestion of the Central Artery and its connection with the Mystic Bridge, as well as the whole City Square, Charlestown area.

At this point the main line of the Central Artery is deadended in elevated stubs.

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