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STUDY RECOMMENDS MAJOR TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVES TO PROVIDE TOTAL ACCESS TO THE NEW BOSTON CONVENTION & EXHIBITION CENTER

Boston, Mass. (June 26, 2003) -- Major recommendations that would build upon the competitive advantages of the new Boston Convention & Exhibition Center (BCEC) and advance the development of the South Boston Waterfront were made public today in a comprehensive transportation study released by the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority, and the Artery Business Committee.

The recommendations, when implemented, will create and sustain unparalleled vehicular, public transit, pedestrian, and water access to the BCEC and the South Boston Waterfront. They are designed to strengthen the success of the new BCEC; protect neighborhood interests; preserve commercial, maritime, and trucking interests; and promote the further economic development of the South Boston Waterfront.

The study, titled *Total Access to the BCEC*, was jointly commissioned by the three organizations, and conducted by the Wallace Floyd Design Group and Cambridge Systematics, Inc.

The major recommendations are as follows:

- ***Back Bay Access: Immediate operation of a turnaround connection on the Massachusetts Turnpike directly before the Allston/Brighton tollbooths, and determination of the best long-term solution through engineering and environmental studies.***
- ***The Silver Line: Completing Phase III of the MBTA Silver Line and extending the transit tunnel under D Street (“T under D”).***
- ***A Pedestrian-Friendly BCEC: Developing a system of streets, sidewalks, and pedestrian ways that will help create a vibrant and safe urban environment in the South Boston Waterfront and reconnect the neighborhood with this area.***
- ***Water Transportation: Developing water ferry and water taxi service to link inner harbor hotel rooms with the BCEC.***
- ***South Boston Bypass Road: Developing a process for permitting use of the South Boston Bypass Road for travel to and from the BCEC on a limited, event-specific basis.***

Paul Guzzi, president and chief executive officer of the Chamber, stated, “The BCEC is critical to the revitalization of the region’s visitor industry and to the future development of the South Boston Waterfront.

The new facility already enjoys many advantages as a leading convention destination. By building the consensus that will advance the next generation of transportation improvements, we can provide even greater advantages and ensure Boston's standing as one of the world's great convention cities."

"With the opening of the BCEC just one year away, we need to increase the dialogue about how we can improve access for conventioners and visitors as well as residents and employees of the South Boston Waterfront," said James Rooney, MCCA interim executive director. "The ability to get around the city and the overall transportation experience are a vital part of any convention city's success and this report puts forth several recommendations that will help make the BCEC an even more desirable location for those looking to host an event in Boston."

"The recommendations outlined in the report will make Boston an even more visitor-friendly city," said Mayor Thomas Menino. "With improved transportation and access to the BCEC and to the rest of the city, Boston will continue its reputation as a premiere convention destination."

"The transportation improvements will not only enhance the economic viability of the BCEC and South Boston Waterfront," added Richard Dimino, president and chief executive officer of the Artery Business Committee, "but they will also serve to keep regional and convention related traffic off neighborhood streets."

The study recommends the following improvements:

Provide a fast and reliable connection between the BCEC and Back Bay hotels, while protecting neighborhoods from BCEC related traffic.

The study recommends a two-part strategy: (1) immediate operation of a turnaround connection on the Massachusetts Turnpike, directly before the Allston/Brighton tollbooths, and (2) a determination of the best long-term solution through engineering and environmental studies.

The proposed connection would link the Turnpike's westbound and eastbound lanes, making it possible for authorized vehicles such as shuttle buses and taxis to travel between the BCEC, the South Boston Waterfront, and the Back Bay hotels without encroaching on city streets or commercial and residential neighborhoods. The connection would be constructed entirely within the existing regional highway system at a relatively low cost, and would require no new ramps onto city streets. Other strategies have been studied to link the BCEC to the Back Bay, and these options should be thoroughly analyzed to determine the best long-term solution.

Maximize public transportation access to the BCEC.

The study calls for the completion of Phase III of the MBTA Silver Line, which will create a one-seat ride from Dudley Square to Logan Airport and reduce the need to travel to the South Boston Waterfront by motor vehicle or shuttle bus. Phase III is critical to the success of the Silver Line as the primary public transportation link between the BCEC and Back Bay hotels, and between the South Boston Waterfront and other city neighborhoods. It will connect Phases I and II, provide a link to the Green and Orange Lines, and provide public access to jobs in the South Boston Waterfront.

The study also recommends extending the transit tunnel to under D Street (“T under D”), which will allow Silver Line buses to avoid a street-level, signalized intersection at D Street that could create gridlock and delays during major Convention Center events, traffic accidents, or poor weather.

Create a pedestrian-friendly BCEC.

The study recommends developing a system of streets, sidewalks, and pedestrian ways that will help create a vibrant and safe urban environment in the South Boston Waterfront, and a link between the BCEC and all points that will connect to the facility.

The South Boston Waterfront has the potential to be as pedestrian-friendly as the Back Bay. The BCEC, which has its own Silver Line stop, is within a short, five- to 10-minute walk of existing or proposed public transit stations, hotels, offices, restaurants, shopping, water transit, and other South Boston Waterfront amenities.

The recommended pedestrian connections include redesigning and rebuilding Summer Street between the BCEC and Fort Point Channel into an attractive gateway to the BCEC and the South Boston Waterfront; constructing a mid-block roadway linking Summer Street to Seaport Boulevard; continuing to improve D Street as a handsome link between the South Boston neighborhood and the harbor; completing Viaduct Street; designing pedestrian connections linking the BCEC with the Fort Point Channel; and planning further Summer Street improvements from the BCEC to the Reserve Channel.

Create fast, efficient water transit service to hotels on or near the harbor.

The study recommends expanding and promoting water ferry and water taxi service as a widely used way to travel to and from the BCEC and convention-related waterfront activities and venues.

There are approximately 2,500 existing or proposed hotel rooms on the edge of the inner harbor within a five-minute walk to existing or proposed water transit terminals. Moreover, existing or proposed terminals in the South Boston Waterfront are also within a five-minute walk to the BCEC. These assets provide significant opportunities for conventioners and other visitors to patronize South Boston Waterfront restaurants, shops, and other businesses as they travel between docks, hotels, and the BCEC.

Provide direct, off-neighborhood street access to the BCEC from the west and south.

The study recommends developing a process for permitting limited use of the South Boston Bypass Road for travel to and from the BCEC on an event-specific basis.

When the Central Artery/Tunnel project is complete, only trucks and some limited bus traffic will be allowed to use the South Boston Bypass Road. For more than a decade, however, it has functioned well as a roadway for both trucks and commercially plated vehicles such as buses, taxis, and limousines. The study concludes that limited use of the roadway by a specific class of vehicles, on a time-of-day and day-of-week basis, for a small number of events, would protect the South Boston residential community, and industrial and maritime businesses in the South Boston Waterfront. The study recommends development of a process to permit this usage on a case-by-case basis.

To access the report electronically, visit <http://www.wallacefloyd.com/projects/bcec/>

