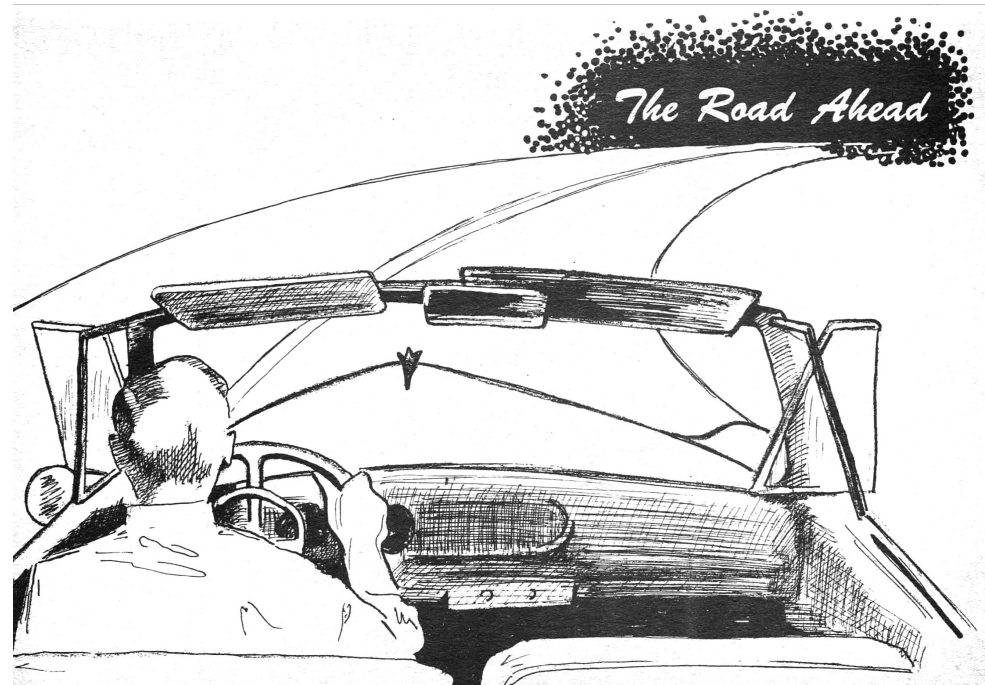


Cover graphic from *The Road Ahead: Progress and Goals in Cambridge* by the Cambridge Planning Board, 1950. From the collection of the Cambridge Historical Society.

# THE INNER BELT

## Symposia



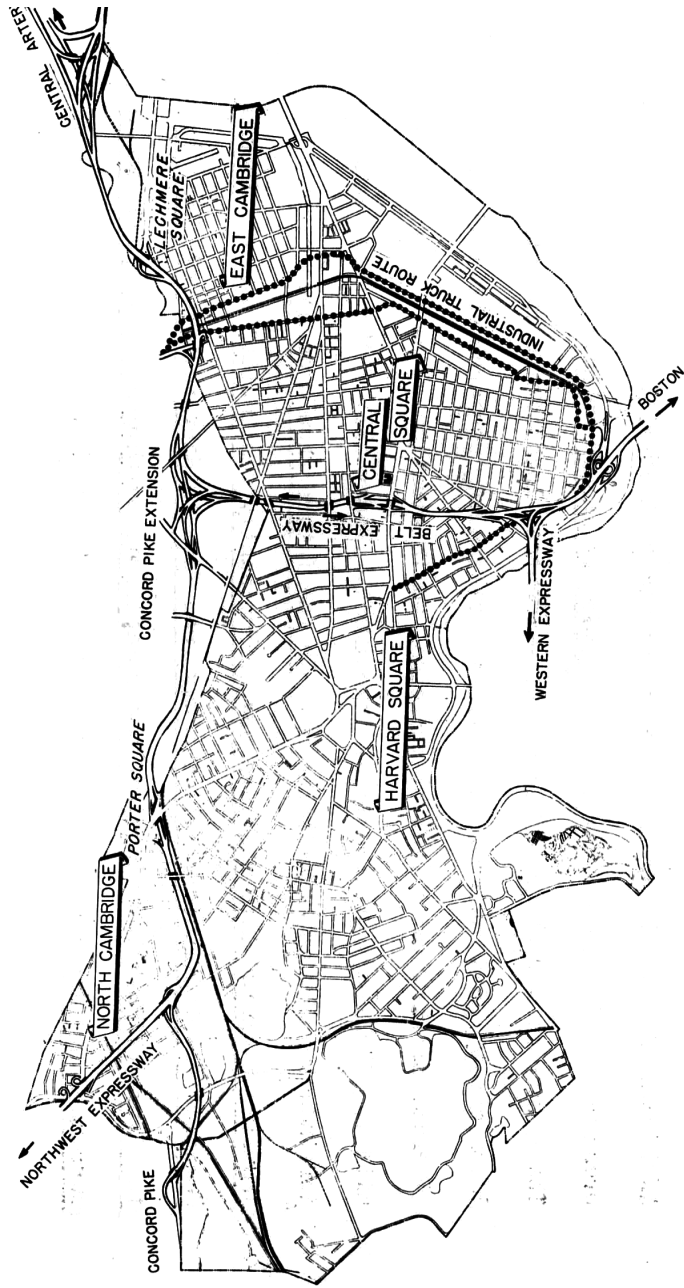
The CAMBRIDGE  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY



Program Three:  
The Legacy of the Inner Belt

April 25, 2012

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**ROUTES OF THE METROPOLITAN HIGHWAY PLAN passing through Cambridge - part of a master plan for the whole metropolitan area prepared in 1948 by a joint committee representing the State Planning Board, the State Department of Public Works, and the Metropolitan District Commission. The Cambridge Planning Board collaborated on local needs. The Concord Pike Extension and the Industrial Truck Route are badly needed to relieve present-day traffic jams. The Belt Expressway and the Northwest Expressway need further study in terms of location and effect upon Cambridge.**

Opposition to the Inner Belt had begun in the 1950s in Cambridge; opposition to the Southwest Expressway began with environmentalists in the outer suburbs and neighborhood activists in the inner city. A group of city planners, community activists, universities, and politicians formed a coalition that by 1969 had become a regional alliance that included groups and officials from Brookline, Cambridge, Dedham, Lynn, Milton, Needham, Revere, Saugus, Somerville, and Boston's East Boston, South Boston, Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, Hyde Park, and the South End.

As a result of community and political pressure, Governor Frank Sargent formed a Task Force on Transportation. John Wofford was tapped to be executive director of this task force by Alan Altshuler, then a professor of political science at MIT and later to become the state's first Secretary of Transportation. In 1970 the Governor accepted the recommendations of the Task Force and imposed a moratorium on most highway construction in the Boston Area and ordered that there be a 3-year restudy of planned highway and transit projects, John Wofford was selected to direct that process, known as the Boston Transportation Planning Review. The Governor called for an open process, examining all highway and transit options with wide community and municipal involvement and with thorough analysis of all environmental, economic and transportation impacts.

The Restudy produced the first Environmental Impact Study in the country following the enactment in 1969 of the National Environmental Policy Act. The Restudy had a "technical assistance" component to help neighborhoods develop alternatives to the highways, as well as alternative alignments for transit extensions. In 1971 the governor rejected the Inner Belt; in 1972 he rejected the Southwest Expressway and I-95 North; and in 1973 he approved plans to extend the Red Line from Harvard Square to Alewife along a new route via Porter and Davis Squares. He also led the successful effort to change federal law so that funds could be used instead for transit -- funds that were used for the extensions at both ends of the Red Line and for the relocation of the Orange Line in Boston.

Cambridge played a major role in battling one highway for decades, eventually sparking a process that led officials to remake transportation policy for the Boston area inside Route 128, with an emphasis on transit rather than highways for access to the inner core of the area. This policy had long been advocated by Governor Michael Dukakis, who succeeded Sargent in 1974.



Aerial photograph of Cambridgeport and Area 4 showing the impact of two proposed routes of the Inner Belt, the Brookline-Elm Street Route and the Portland-Albany Street Route. Image courtesy of the Cambridge Historical Commission (modified by CHS to highlight routes).

## Brief Overview of the Inner Belt

The Inner Belt was a proposed eight-lane expressway that would have begun at Route I-93 in Somerville and circled through Cambridge near Central Square, crossed the Charles River near the BU Bridge, touched a portion of Brookline, crossed the Fenway past the Museum of Fine Arts, and moved on through the Roxbury section of Boston to connect to the Southeast Expressway at the point where it joins the Central Artery heading toward downtown Boston. The Inner Belt and Central Artery thus would have been joined to create a ring road around and through the inner Boston area, with major intersections along the way: at a proposed extension of Route 2 from Alewife, at the Turnpike in Allston, at a proposed Southwest Expressway (I-95 South) originating in Dedham, at the Southeast Expressway, and at a new tunnel under Boston Harbor (I-95 North).

Continued

# THE INNER BELT Symposia

Program Three:  
The Legacy of The Inner Belt

Hosted by  
Richard Garver

Featuring  
Anthony Flint  
Susanne Rasmussen  
John Wofford

The Cambridge Public Library  
Lecture Hall  
449 Broadway, Cambridge

April 25, 2012, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

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Jim Peters

**Anthony Flint** is a fellow and director of public affairs at the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy [www.lincolninst.edu](http://www.lincolninst.edu), author of *Wrestling with Moses: How Jane Jacobs Took on New York's Master Builder and Transformed the American City* (Random House), and a former Boston Globe reporter.

**Susanne Rasmussen** is the director of Environmental and Transportation Planning for the City of Cambridge. She has an M.C.P. in City Planning from MIT and an Ms.C. in City Planning from Aalborg Universitet in Denmark. The Environmental and Transportation Planning Division of the Community Development Department is responsible for improving the city's quality of life by working to protect and improve its environment and natural resources and by planning improvements to its transportation system.

**Jack Wofford** is a mediator, facilitator, and arbitrator with his own national and international practice based in Cambridge. He was a fellow and associate director at the Institute of Politics of Harvard's Kennedy School and director of a study of Legal Issues in Urban Transportation at Harvard Law School when he was tapped to be the director of the Boston Transportation Planning Review, the 3-year Restudy which examined highway and transit controversies for Governor Sargent. After rejecting most of the highways, the governor named Jack associate commissioner of the Department of Public Works in charge of highway construction. He then became the first director of the Central Transportation Planning Staff under Governor Dukakis, and later the deputy general counsel of the US Department of Transportation in the Carter Administration. Jack was a law clerk for a United States District Judge, a partner in the real estate department of a Boston law firm, and a senior mediator at Endispute, Inc. In 1999, President Clinton appointed Jack to the Federal Service Impasses Panel, which resolves disputes between the federal government and its unionized employees; he served until 2002. He is a graduate of Harvard College, Harvard Law School, and Oxford University, where he was a Rhodes Scholar.