



U.S. Department of  
Transportation

Office of the Secretary  
of Transportation

The Inspector General

Office of Inspector General  
Washington, DC 20590

July 27, 2006

The Honorable Michael E. Capuano  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1530 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515-2108

Dear Representative Capuano:

We are writing to you and the other Members of the Massachusetts congressional delegation regarding your July 18, 2006 request concerning the recent fatal accident in a section of the Central Artery/Tunnel Project (CA/T). Separate from the National Transportation Safety Board's investigation into the cause of the accident which they are performing at your request, you have also called for a comprehensive safety review and asked us to provide independent oversight of that review. Acting Secretary Maria Cino has also requested that we provide oversight as the safety review moves forward.

The Commonwealth has announced plans to conduct a "stem to stern" review of the project and the State Legislature has provided authority and financial support for that review. The details of that review have not yet been defined. For example, the recently-enacted State law appropriated \$20 million to perform a "comprehensive critical infrastructure safety audit of any and all tunnels" that are part of the metropolitan system. In our view, a comprehensive safety review of the CA/T project should examine more than just the tunnel infrastructure. We believe a comprehensive review would necessarily encompass the entire project, including:

- Physical infrastructure (tunnels, bridges, ramps, and roadways),
- Mechanical and electrical systems (including fire, emission detection, and ventilation equipment), and
- Integrated project control systems (including security, emergency response communications, and closed circuit TVs).

We have been in contact with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration to provide our recommendations with respect to the elements of a comprehensive review and those efforts to define the appropriate scope of the review are continuing.

We plan to provide independent oversight of the activities performed by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration in the planned safety reviews. Our intent is to provide assurance to Acting Secretary Cino, Congress, and most importantly, the public, that these reviews are performed in a rigorous and complete manner. To that end, we will report periodically on the progress being made and provide any observations and recommendations that we have about the process.

Our initial plans are to exercise this independent oversight in several overlapping phases, including reviews of: the scope of the effort; study approaches and safety inspection protocols; inspection activities; inspection and test results; reports; and recommended corrective actions.

In carrying out these tasks, we anticipate that the State's comprehensive safety review will apply a risk-based approach to prioritize systems' components posing the highest risk to the traveling public. One key element of the risk based approach should be a review of design, engineering, and construction documents to identify risk areas. Another will be inspections and tests of key project components.

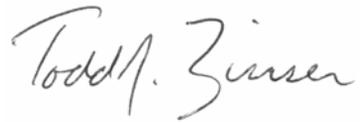
To accomplish our oversight activities, we will redeploy and reassign staff in our investigative, audit, and engineering units. However, it will be necessary to supplement our capabilities in certain areas, such as with specialized engineering expertise acquired from the Army Corp of Engineers or another independent source. To provide the type of robust oversight required for such an effort, we estimate that our office will require additional funding in the order of \$2 million. Since our appropriation does not set aside special funding for emergencies, we will need to work with the Department and Congress to obtain the resources necessary to carry out our oversight activities and would appreciate your support in that regard.

Finally, we also wanted to make you aware that our Special Agents are currently participating with the United States Attorney and the Massachusetts Attorney General in their investigations. Further, we remain an active member of the United States Attorney's Big Dig Task Force.

We will keep you and the other delegation members informed of the status of our efforts and any significant matters we might identify as we proceed.

Should you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (202) 366-1959.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Todd J. Zinser". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Todd J. Zinser  
Acting Inspector General