ITS SEMINAR

THE "BIG DIG": BOSTON'S CENTRAL ARTERY/TUNNEL PROJECT

Co-sponsored by the
Department of Planning, Policy and Design

FRIDAY, APRIL 30, 2004
12:00 noon - 1:30 p.m.
Room 408, Multipurpose Academic & Administration Bldg.

This seminar will feature a 2002 PBS documentary on the planning, engineering and construction of Boston's Central Artery/Tunnel Project ("Big Dig"), the largest and most complex urban infrastructure project in the world and the deepest underwater connection in North America. The Big Dig involves the construction and reconstruction of nearly 161 lane miles of interstate highway running directly through Boston's downtown. Over half of these miles are underground or underwater, dodging a maze of subway lines and 300 years worth of urban infrastructure. The underground project is replacing a 1950's-era elevated steel and concrete freeway (dubbed the "Green Monster" by locals) that severed traditional neighborhoods and divided the city from its waterfront. During the conceptual phases of the project, planners pledged to minimize the impacts of construction as far as humanly possible. Of the projected $15 billion budget, nearly one-third of total costs have been set aside to keep interstates, streets and sidewalks open. When the project is completed, a 100-acre city dump, 44 acres of industrial space and 27 acres of prime downtown real estate will be converted from urban blight to desirable open spaces and parks. A new underground tunnel between downtown and the city's Logan Airport will relieve congestion. While the 30-year undertaking with a projected 196% cost overrun has been widely criticized, there is no question that it was an engineering feat for the ages. Only time will judge whether or not its projected benefits were worth the time and effort.