

Opening Statement
of Senator Inouye
Oversight Hearing on
The Boston Central Artery and Tunnel

May 3, 2000

Today we are here to review one of the largest and most technologically challenging transportation projects ever constructed -- the Boston Central Artery and Tunnel Project. This important project has required a lot of planning and engineering as well as a large investment of federal infrastructure dollars. Recently it has been brought to our attention that this project should have been the recipient of a greater level of state and federal oversight as well.

While the scope of this project is enormous, so too is the responsibility that comes along with it. The management system of this project failed to detect cost overruns and unconditionally accepted inaccurate information provided by the State. While it is fair to expect that the State would provide reliable data, the Federal Highway Administration continued to rely on State data rather than undertaking an independent review, even when faced with contradictory information from the Department of Transportation's own Inspector General.

I was pleased to see the recent report of the Federal Task Force on the Boston Central Artery/Tunnel Project. Clearly the implementation of the 34 recommendations contained in the Task Force's report will begin to restore the integrity and public confidence in the project. The relationship between the State and Federal governments needs to be based on trust rather than suspicion. I believe that the recent changes in the management structure and reporting begin to repair the breach, but all of the parties involved in this project will need to be constantly vigilant -- it will take time to restore the faith that was lost. Additionally, at the Federal level, we need to put into place a process or system that will prevent this type of failure from occurring again.

I am pleased to welcome all of the witnesses to the Commerce Committee. I look forward to hearing testimony from all of you this morning.