

X-WAY WONDER: RAMP IN 6 _ WEEKS; BUILT FOR TRUCKS HAULING BIG DIG DIRT

Thursday, December 4, 1997

The Patriot Ledger

By Lane Lambert

QUINCY -- After a lightning-fast, around-the-clock 6 1/2 weeks of construction, a new Southeast Expressway ramp for trucks hauling Big Dig fill to a West Quincy golf course site opened to traffic today.

A highway project like this usually takes seven years from design to completion, contractor Richard McCourt said. "This is definitely the fastest project I've ever been involved in," he added.

The 1,500-foot southbound ramp, located a quarter-mile north of the Furnace Brook Parkway exit, will allow Big Dig contractors to haul as many as 800 loads of dirt a day to the former city dump for the next couple of years without creating backups in regular traffic.

However, developers and city officials say the volume probably won't reach more than 500 trucks a day. About 200 trucks have been using the Furnace Brook Parkway exit during ramp construction.

The ramp also will be open to other local traffic.

McCourt's crews worked around the clock, six days a week, through rain, an early snowfall, and the blasting of 12,000 cubic yards of rock in the ramp's path.

The schedule was hastened because it was a private job for Quarry Hills Associates developers, McCourt said. As a result, the project didn't require the usual time-consuming reviews and approvals that delay regular state road work.

But the biggest help was the Big Dig itself. With millions of yards of dirt to dispose of, state officials were ready to do anything they could to make sure all that fill could be moved as soon as possible.

Charles Geilich of Quarry Hills praised the speed of work of the McCourt Construction Co. of Boston. "I'm sure this has never been done before," he said.

McCourt agreed, saying, "The average time for a highway project from design to completion is seven years, and we did it in 10 weeks."

With the ramp now open, McCourt will spend another month finishing a related realignment of Willard Street, which now merges with the Furnace Brook rotary at the Ricciuti Drive intersection.

State and local officials joined the Quarry Hills Associates developers for a ceremony today at the intersection of the ramp and Ricciuti Drive, which the trucks will follow to the former city dump.

The Quarry Hills partnership announced its winning bid Oct. 1 to take as much as 7 million cubic yards of fill from the Central Artery project. Ramp construction began a couple of weeks later.

The \$ 63 million Quarry Hills project will include an 18-hole, privately run golf course and at least six municipal soccer and baseball fields.

The total cost includes \$ 54 million for construction of the golf course and sports fields, \$ 2 million for the ramp, \$ 1 million to widen and repave Ricciuti Drive and \$ 6 million in start-up money for Quarry Hills Associates.

The sports fields, being built on Metropolitan District Commission land, are expected to be ready by the summer of 1999. The golf course won't open until 2002.