

## **Raising city revenue no accident under councilor's proposal**

By BETH TEITELL, The Boston Herald, August 2, 2006

Of all the schemes to bilk out--of--towners -- Mayor Menino's dream of upping restaurant taxes, former Councilor Paul J. Scapicchio's plan to exact an entry fee into Boston -- none is as delicious as the prospect of charging foreigners several hundred dollars if they cause a car accident while enjoying our hospitality.

With the word 'cause' to be loosely defined. Heh, heh, heh. Talk about playing to Boston's strengths. Between the potholes, dippy pedestrians, blind corners, absurdly short lights, confusing detours, rotaries and, of course, Boston Drivers, even if we do nothing but let nature take its course, the money will be rolling in. And imagine the windfall if we INADVERTENTLY trick the country folk into 'causing' the accident.

Oops. So sorry. Credit card number and expiration date, please.

City Councilor Robert Consalvo says his proposal is simply aimed at recouping costs of emergency services.

"It is not a toll tax or commuter tax," he told me yesterday.

But why settle for breaking even when we may have discovered the endless source of revenue needed to fix Big Dig mistakes? Heck, if this program gets underway, we'll be able to mosaic the inside of the tunnels with imported tiles and hire a docent to give tours to drivers stuck in traffic. Think of it as Boston's own oil well.

When I spoke with Consalvo, he planned to introduce the proposal at today's City Council meeting and then schedule a public hearing, probably in September.

Public input is good, but there's really only one issue to discuss: making sure Bostonians aren't mistakenly trapped into 'causing' an accident. Maybe we could follow the lead of broadcast networks operating in war zones, but instead of spelling out "TV" in masking tape on the hoods of our cars, write "Boston."

Because it wouldn't be fair if this brainstorm cost Bostonians any money in car repairs or increased insurance premiums. And let's hope some of the more aggressive suburbs don't start charging US for accidents on their turf.

That's no way to treat a guest.