

# ETC.



## The Charles Street Rotary

By Don Rubin

A 1971 policy study prepared for the Boston Redevelopment Authority and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development called the Charles Street Rotary a "city driver's nightmare . . . a no-man's land . . . chaotic . . . confusing . . . a complex mass of islands and passages."

Sounds like a ride at an amusement park.

"In fast-moving heavy traffic," the experts said, "the rotary can be navigated only at severe risk to one's safety. Attempting to cross

it on foot, they snickered, "is an exercise in reality testing."

Why not color code the lanes with thermoplastic tape, or cover the entire maze with "an air-inflated polyethylene balloon or a geodesic radar dome?" they asked. "In other cities of the world such junctions are treated as important events."

The interchange—officially George Washington Circle—"could become a delightful and memorable experience in the humdrum routine of city driving . . . an event to be anticipated with pleasure." Let's think in terms of the fountain in Piazza della Repubblica, in Rome, the study concluded.

So in 1983 the city reversed the one-way signs on Charles Street.