

River Street Bridge permanent illumination set for September



The Charles River Conservancy plans to add permanent lighting to the River Street bridge.

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Allston, Mass - Moving steadily forward in its plan to illuminate the bridges that span the Charles River between Watertown Square and the Charles River Dam, the Charles River Conservancy announces the addition of permanent lighting on the River Street Bridge.

The new bridge lighting will both beautify and draw attention to the architectural treasures that connect Boston and Cambridge over one of America's most historic rivers. Lighting designer John Powell of Light Time in Space Inc. will work with the Charles River Conservancy, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation and the LEF Foundation, as he has in the past, to illuminate the Anderson Bridge, the Western Avenue Bridge and the Weeks footbridge.

"The bridge illumination will complement RiverSing, the celebration of the autumnal equinox on the River Street Bridge. Illumination will become a permanent feature of the parklands and show off the beauty of this prominent architectural feature even when the water and the parklands are bathed in darkness," said Renata von Tscharnier, president and founder of the Charles River Conservancy.

"The illumination will emphasize the rich sculptural quality of the bridge's decorative elements for people who pass by on Memorial Drive and Storrow Drive at night," said Powell. He will use off the shelf industrial lighting mounted close onto the bridge structure and energized with existing power systems for these bridges. In the years to come, the illumination will continue down the Charles. Illuminating these bridges is a key way to accentuate the grandeur of the city.

"We support this artistic effort as it draws attention to the beauty of both the parklands and the elegant structures that cross the river. The illumination of the under arches doubles the effect, as light is also reflected in the river running underneath," said Lyda Kuth of the LEF Foundation, a private foundation that supports the contemporary arts in New England and California. It is largely through the support of the LEF Foundation that other bridges have been permanently illuminated along the Charles River: the Anderson, Western Avenue and the Weeks Footbridge.

Built originally in 1810 as a flat wooden structure with a draw, the River St. Bridge was replaced in 1926 with three arches of reinforced concrete that span 330 feet. It has neoclassical cutwaters that are pointed in the upstream (western) elevation and rounded on the downstream (eastern) designed to break up winter ice as it floats downstream. The bridge was designed by architect Robert P. Bellows and is stylistically similar to the Pont Neuf in Paris.

In conjunction with the bridge lighting, Revels and the Charles River Conservancy present “RiverSing 2007: Bridging the Charles with Voice and Light,” the fourth annual free outdoor “sing” celebrating the autumnal equinox and the beauty of the Charles River parklands and bridges. This event on Sunday, Sept. 23, is free and lasts from 6-7:30 p.m. at the Weeks footbridge.