Combining Citizen Involvement and Government Bureaucracy to Illumination the Memorial Bridge between New Hampshire and Maine with LEDs

PETER SOMSSICH, Illumination Committee, Portsmouth NH — The innovative design and construction of the new Memorial Bridge connecting New Hampshire and Maine has made headlines in respective professional publications. The contributions of the Public Advisory Committee, required by federal law for such projects, has not. A subgroup, the Illumination Committee, decided that this bridge needs some enhancement to make it not only functional but as pleasing to the eye as possible. They proposed an illumination design for the bridge and raised $250,000 to successfully install color-changeable LED lighting on this bridge, making it the first ever illuminated bridge in New Hampshire. Using LED technology and the design work of John Powell (Boston), the bridge illumination can now be changed in both color scheme and switched to either static or dynamic mode, but the illumination can also be triggered by sensors, e.g. day or night. Even though this group raised all of the funding without public funds, federal and state bureaucracies were not equipped to have local citizens be willing to help beautify a federal infrastructure project. With the support of the New Hampshire Department of Transportation and the City of Portsmouth, NH, this group was able to navigate the obstacles which were even more difficult than the fund-raising.