



*A new lighting system adorns the old 10th Street Bridge in Great Falls.*

## Dozens of lights to illuminate local landmark

By **RICHARD ECKE**  
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Work on lighting the historic 10th Street Bridge should be effectively completed this week, Miami lighting expert Bob Daniels said Thursday.

The bridge is expected to be fully lit tonight.

Preservation Cascade, which will pay the lighting bill, plans to light the bridge on holidays and weekends, said group officer Arlyne Reichert.

A formal party to celebrate the project is expected to take place in May, when the weather is balmy.

Daniels came to Great Falls from Florida, where high temperatures are in the 80s this time of year, to oversee final placement of bridge lights. Temperatures in Great Falls were expected to drop below zero Thursday night, and do so again tonight.

"All I know is it's cold," Daniels said with a laugh in an interview Thursday.

Daniels, working with Great Falls contractor Liberty Electric, directed the pointing of beams of light on the bridge's west side

Wednesday, and supervised work on the bridge's east side Thursday night.

Reichert said the west side of the bridge looked "spectacular" Wednesday.

Daniels sat in a truck both nights, using a hand-held radio to direct Liberty employees floating in a boat on the Missouri River. He said Liberty employees and managers deserve credit for their efforts and patience.

"They're out there in the cold," Daniels said. "They take the boat out to each pier." The lights are sealed, and a blue filter over each light provides the color, said Andrew Finch, the city's senior transportation planner.

Daniels said aiming the beams of silver-blue light is tricky, since the 10th Street Bridge features

sweeping concrete arches that are curved. As a result, each beam must be placed perfectly. "You have to play with this two or three times," he said. Each light takes

about five or ten minutes to adjust. "It just smooths out into a beautifully lit arch," Daniels said. Lock-washers are tightened down to permanently set the position of each light.

Daniels contrasted the historic bridge with the buildings of today, most notably strip malls and chain stores.

"That's back when they did things for beauty," Daniels said of the bridge. The 10th Street Bridge was one of city founder Paris Gibson's last major projects following World War I.

Daniels believes Great Falls should be proud of its special structures, including the bridge, which was completed in 1920.

"This is a very special and unique place," Daniels said.

The bridge has drawn complaints from critics who say its

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## 10TH STREET BRIDGE BEAUTIFICATION

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renovation has been slow, and note its location near an oil refinery. Bridge-backers with Preservation Cascade say they're planning a future fundraising campaign so they can complete the renovation. They also say prevailing winds blow the refinery smell away from the bridge.

Reichert said the bridge-lighting project was financed using federal Community Transportation Enhancement Program dollars, a competitive federal grant program. She added that no local tax money was used to renovate the bridge.

Liberty Electric has a \$139,500 contract with the city to install the lights, and the work is about 99 percent complete, Daniels said. Federal CTEP money paid \$120,779, and Preservation Cascade contributed \$18,721.

Bridge backers successfully sued to save the bridge from demolition, but renovation costs have risen since the structure got its reprieve.

The city's Public Works

Department will oversee sophisticated bridge lighting controls, but Preservation Cascade will pay the light bill. Reichert, who said the group can't afford to light the bridge every night, said it also might be lit for special occasions.

Finch said he is glad to see the project wrapping up.

"We're really looking forward to the result," he said.

Daniels said he is impressed by Preservation Cascade's efforts, and those of area residents, to preserve the arched structure.

"That's what makes being in a small town very special," Daniels said.

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*Blue lights illuminate the arches on the 10th Street Bridge.*