

# Civic group has bright ideas for the darkened Lechmere viaduct

Light Boston sponsors a design competition to illuminate the concrete span that carries the Green Line over the Charles River near the Museum of Science.

By **Tim Logan** Globe Staff, Updated February 11, 2020, 5:00 a.m.



The first-place winner in a competition for ideas to light the historic Lechmere viaduct over the Charles River near the Museum of Science. DAN WEISSMAN, MAURA CLARK, SRUSHTI TOTADRI AND NIKI DESIMINI/LAM PARTNERS

Could the massive Lechmere Viaduct over the Charles River finally see the light of night?

A civic group dedicated to brightening Boston's night hopes so. And it has some illuminating designs in mind.

Light Boston has announced the winners of a competition it held for ideas to light up the concrete span near the Museum of Science. Built in 1910 to carry the MBTA's Green Line over the Charles, the Viaduct lacks the grandeur of its neighbors, the Zakim and the

Longfellow bridges. But the contest, says Light Boston, is a chance to beautify a long-neglected stretch of the Charles that's starting to emerge from its industrial past.

"It's not attractive. It's kind of cruddy," said Todd Lee, an architect and the group's president. "But it's a great canvas. What an opportunity."

Last fall, the nonprofit launched a design competition to seek ideas for how best to illuminate the span. It received 25 proposals from architects and designers in Boston and beyond. A jury picked three winners and seven honorable mentions. First prize went to "moonPHASE," from Cambridge-based lighting consulting firm Lam Partners, with a design that aims to represent "lunar cycles and changing daily tides." Light Boston hosted an event to honor the ideas last week.

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The contest comes as the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority [prepares to shut down train service over the viaduct for about a year](#) starting this spring, to bolster it structurally to handle additional trains as part of the Green Line Extension into Somerville and Medford. Any new lighting would likely come after that work is done, and the viaduct re-opens. Lee says he expects the project would be funded through private donations, as other Charles River Bridge lighting work has been.

Officials working on the Green Line Extension project came to Light Boston's award ceremony, though the MBTA has not committed to the lights. A spokesman said the agency is keeping "a laser-focus on completing the viaduct project on time."

But when that's done, Lee said, his group is hopeful that the designs will get careful consideration.

"There's going to be more trains, more passengers, more people around this bridge," he said. "They should use it as a great, triumphal thing."

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