

Water Symbol Design and Photocatalytic Concrete Mark Mississippi River Crossing in New I-35W Bridge Gateway Elements

Nazareth, Pennsylvania, September 17, 2008 – Ancient Egyptians’ and Mesopotamian’s used wavy lines to symbolize water, as have people everywhere since. Now the universal symbol for water greets travelers on the new Interstate 35 West Bridge spanning the Mississippi River in downtown Minneapolis. Two gleaming white concrete sculptures, each comprised of three wavy columns, tower 30-feet high on each side of the bridge in a vertical interpretation of the universal symbol for water, recalling the river and the flow of life.

These symbols serve as markers for travelers that they are crossing the very significant Mississippi River, a fact which was not evident on the previous bridge. The sculptures were developed by the design team of FIGG and Oslund,,working with the Visual Quality Advisory Group set up by the Minnesota Department of Transportation to include community and park representatives.

Opened to traffic on September 18th, in just 11 months from notice to proceed with design and construction in just 13 months since the collapse of the last bridge, the I-35W span incorporates several design “firsts.” The two most visible for the driver are the extensive LED lighting which will dramatically illuminate the structure at night, and the pioneering use of self-cleaning, pollution-reducing photocatalytic cement in its dramatically white water symbol monuments.

With concrete produced by Minnesota provider Cemstone Products Company and precast by Stoneworks Architectural Precast, the monuments are the first high-profile North American application of TX Active photocatalytic cement. TX Active is produced by Essroc Italcementi Group, a leader in sustainable cement manufacturing and research, headquartered in Nazareth, Pennsylvania.

“Architectural surfaces formulated with TX Active cement are efficient in destroying atmospheric pollutants,” explained Essroc’s TX Active Product Manager, Dan Schaffer. “The results are cleaner concrete surfaces and cleaner air. In the case of the I-35W Bridge in Minneapolis, the results will be cleaner monuments and improved air quality.”

TX Active has been in use in Europe for over a decade on landmark architecture like Rome’s soaring Dives in Misericordia Church, designed by renowned American architect Richard Meier; Air France headquarters at Charles de Gaulle International Airport in Paris and numerous other high-end structures. But the I-35W Bridge is the highest-profile application of the self-cleaning cement to date on this side of the Atlantic, according to Schaffer. “It’s an inspired choice for these gateway monuments built to express the significant journey across the Mississippi River, as symbolized by the international symbol for water”

The I-35W Bridge was constructed by Flatiron-Manson Construction Company and designed by FIGG.

For more information see: www.essroc.com, www.cemstone.com, www.figgbridge.com

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Essroc, based in Nazareth, PA, is the North American company of the **Italcementi Group**, the fifth largest cement producer in the world. The Group companies combine the expertise, know how and cultures of 22 countries in 4 Continents, boasting an industrial network of 63 cement plants, 15 grinding centres, 5 terminals, 134 aggregates quarries and 613 concrete batching units. In 2007, Italcementi Group had sales amounting to over 6 billion Euro while sales volumes and internal transfers by business were: cement and clinker 64.6 Mt, aggregates 56.3 Mt and ready-mixed concrete 20.5 Mm³.
