



O'DONNELL  
& ASSOCIATES

Intelligence. Guided by Experience.

## LEWISTON-QUEENSTOWN BRIDGE PLAZA EXPANSION LEWISTON, NEW YORK

### PROBLEM

The American side of the Lewiston-Queenston Bridge was in dire need of Federal Funding. Border crossing wait times and traffic congestion were a major hindrance for economic development in the surrounding area. The main difficulty the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission had was getting lawmakers to coalesce around one solution and provide a unified front for funding even after almost a decade of work. NFBC hired OD&A to build a coalition of State and Federal lawmakers and develop an effective advocacy strategy.

### RESULTS

- The change from a capital lease to an operating lease made the project viable under federal budget scoring in 2015/16 but also created other obstacles with both Customs and Border Patrol and the General Services Administration.
- OD&A's strong relationship with Senator Schumer and his senior staff allowed us to enlist the Senator to go directly to the Jeh Johnson, head of Homeland Security; Gil Kerlikowske, Commissioner of Customs and Border Protection; and of the General Services Administration. We worked closely with the Senator's staff as well as NFBC to make sure the lease was scored as an operating lease. Customs and Border Patrol agreed to pay over \$70 million in additional rent over the terms of the lease, cover \$22 million in Furniture, Fixtures, and Equipment (FF&E) costs, and provide over \$3 million/year in additional staffing costs.

### STRATEGY

In order to be successful, first and foremost OD&A had to design innovative solutions to make the plaza expansion possible from a fiscal standpoint. Second, OD&A had to build unified support for a plaza expansion at the Lewiston-Queenston Bridge.

The strategy for NFBC started with our team identifying a reasonable solution. NFBC—and local elected officials—had been pushing for capital funds, but the rules and scoring around capital projects would never favor this project.

Our team found an innovative solution for increased funding for an operating lease at the bridge— one that would provide higher rents from Customs and Border Patrol to the Bridge Commission which would provide additional funding to pay off bonds from the capital construction.

OD&A also weaved together support from local and state elected officials with public advocacy from local tourism boards and business groups focusing on both jobs being lost without action and the potential for job creation with the project's completion. With the message delivered by these groups, OD&A developed NFBC's jobs 'hook' to raise this issue to become a priority for elected officials.