

Friday, 05.01.09

Metrorail marks 25th anniversary by breaking ground on MIA tract

Local and state dignitaries celebrated the 25th anniversary of Metrorail Friday, with the groundbreaking of the Earlington Heights Connector, the long-sought fast-transit link to Miami International Airport's Intermodal Center.

Though work won't officially begin on the \$526 million, 2.4 mile stretch for another month, the imminent construction of the tract -- the first and likely only project to be funded by the failed voter-approved half-penny sales tax -- served as a proud moment for the embattled transit agency.

In 2002, Miami-Dade County leaders said the tax would deliver 88.9 miles of rail service. County sales taxes will cover 81 percent of the spur between Earlington Heights and Miami Intermodal Center, with the balance coming from the state.

The Intermodal Center will become the county's central transportation hub, linking ground, air, and rail with a centralized rental car facility.

It's expected to be operational by 2012.