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NEWS ANALYSIS

Intermodal World

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With the price of fuel, and the need for efficiencies in general, the word "intermodal" is rapidly becoming a household term. Intermodal generically translates as a mixing of methods – and in the case of transportation – a mixing of transportation methods through use of a central hub, such as Boca Raton City Council is working toward at the city's planned Intermodal Transit Facility off Yamato Road, and near I-95.

The city's facility would coordinate bus, train, car and bicycle use in and around the facility to reduce traffic congestion, save fuel, and theoretically create a transit hub to serve workforce housing occupants west of the city.

Boca Raton is not alone in its intermodal labors. Palm Beach County commissioners recently accepted a guaranteed maximum price of \$3.2 million from Calalfumo Construction, Ltd for an Intermodal Transit Facility in downtown West Palm Beach.



The facility there will see construction of a new bus loop with 18 bus parking spaces, a public restroom, vending services, and a passenger vehicle drop off lane adjacent to the existing Seaboard Train Station in downtown West Palm Beach.

The facility will be operated and maintained by Palm Tran, "and will enhance the public ground transportation network by bringing together the commuter rail and bus systems in a manner which facilitates transfer between the different modes of public transportation," said commissioners.

Funding will come from a state grant, and no county or city funds are required, commissioners said.

MIC Center

A little further south, and located next to the Miami International Airport, the Miami Intermodal Center (MIC) is a major ground transportation hub being developed by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT).

To be completed by 2012 the MIC program consists of a rental car center, the Miami Central Station, major roadway improvements, the MIA Mover, said FDOT.

The MIC Center will provide connectivity for residents and visitors of Miami-Dade County and the South Florida region, where none currently exists – and also between the transportation systems in the Palm Beaches, Fort Lauderdale, Miami,

and the Florida Keys, "as well as decongest the streets in and around the busy airport," FDOT said.

Freight Move

FDOT also has a statewide intermodal mindset.

In response to federal and state legislative initiatives, and the growing importance of freight transportation in the state's economic growth, the FDOT Systems Planning Office is spearheading a major effort to develop an Intermodal Statewide Highway Freight Model for the state.

FDOT says "the Intermodal Statewide Highway Freight Model is intended to serve as a planning tool for the identification and measurement of truck activity within the state in support of providing adequate highway connection to other modes and regional freight hubs."

And perhaps to put the need for intermodality into perspective, in January 2008 – and in that month alone – the US Bureau of Transportation Statistics says Americans drove a total of 226 billion miles.

Yep – with a B.