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Miami Intermodal Center



News Clip

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TODAY'S NEWS

Passenger projects on a fast track

By PATRICIA HOYOS

With several multimillion-dollar transportation projects underway, Miami-Dade County and the City of Miami are making strides toward improving public transportation and reducing traffic congestions.

One of the major transportation projects in the county is the Miami-Dade Transit's AirportLink project, a 2.4-mile extension of the Metrorail that will run from the existing Earlington Heights station to the Miami Intermodal Center.

The extension will ease transportation for millions to and from the airport, said Karla Damian, information officer for Miami-Dade Transit. It will help those who work at the airport, she said, by providing them with another viable means of getting to work.

The AirportLink project and the new Metrorail station being built at the intermodal center are expected to be finished in spring and Miami-Dade Transit hopes to begin operation of the AirportLink in the summer, she said.

"People who travel for business and come to downtown can now easily fly in one day and fly back, all using public transportation," she said.

Funding for the project, which is more than 90% complete, comes from \$404.7 million from the People's Transportation Plan's half-penny sales tax and \$101.3 from the Florida Department of Transportation.

The AirportLink will run west from the existing Earlington Heights Station over Northwest



Photo by Maxine Usdan

The Miami City Commission last week approved an operating agreement to run 28 free trolley buses.

27th Avenue, parallel to State Road 112, turning south just west of Northwest 37th Avenue. The alignment crosses the Miami River just east of the South Florida Rail Corridor Bridge, continuing south until it terminates at the intermodal station at the airport.

"This project will provide a reliable connection for those who travel to and from the airport," Ms. Damian said.

Last September, the first part of the project wrapped up, creating a MiaMover system that linked the airport to Amtrak, Tri-Rail and Metrorail stations.

Once the project is complete, passengers looking for quick access to the airport can board Miami-Dade's MiaMover, an automatic train connecting the airport to the Miami Intermodal Center.

Greg Chin, communications director for the county's aviation department, told Miami Today in October that the MiaMover has greatly reduced traffic congestion surrounding the airport. Once the extension project is complete, he said, he expected the trend to continue.

Another major transportation development is the Miami Intermodal Center, which is to be a major transportation hub. Being developed by the Florida

Department of Transportation, the center will be next to the Miami International Airport. The project consists of major roadway projects that were completed in May 2008, the rental car center that opened in July 2010 and the MiaMover, which began operations in September. The final facet of the project is the Miami Central Station, which is to be completed by 2013.

Located east of the rental car center, the central station will accommodate various transportation connections for the Tri-Rail, Metrorail and Amtrak, among others.

Once the center opens, it will serve as a transfer point for commuters and visitors between the different public transit options available to get anywhere from West Palm Beach to Homestead.

The county isn't the only entity looking to improve transportation and connectivity for its residents. Also coming this year is the debut of the Miami Trolley system.

Although no official launch date has been set as the city awaits a final approval from the county's transportation committee, city officials had hoped to have the system up and going by the beginning of the Marlins baseball season in April. Whether that will

be possible remains to be seen.

During last week's city commission meeting, the city approved an operational agreement with LSF Shuttle to operate the trolleys and be in charge of maintenance. Right now, the trolleys are being stored at the city's general service administration's garage. Once they become operational, LSF Shuttle will be in charge of storing the 28 trolleys.

The trolley system is to run routes for Brickell-Biscayne, Overtown-Allapattah, Health Center-Stadium District and Coral Way. A main goal of the Health Center-Stadium District route is to serve those who will attend Marlins games.

Riding the rubber-tire trolley system will be free at first, but once a ridership is established, commissioners have said they might create a fare structure. The commission also has the flexibility to change the routes and hours of operation, which at the moment are set for 6:30 a.m. to 11 p.m., once ridership is analyzed.

Without a fare, city staff estimates the system's money, which come from federal stimulus funds, will last until 2020. With a fare, depending on gasoline prices the money could potentially last until 2024.