

A.R.T.

ALLIANCE FOR RELIABLE TRANSPORT

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NEWSLETTER AND MEETING AGENDA

- 1 A Streetcar Tale of Two Cities**
- 2 Meeting Agenda for August 15, 2005**

1 A Streetcar Tale of Two Cities

Six months ago, the City of Miami [approved \\$550,000 to study](#) the feasibility of a proposed streetcar linking downtown to the Midtown Miami project. This week, the investment hit a 100:1 funding jackpot as the federal government [approved a transportation bill including \\$50,000,000 for the Miami Downtown Streetcar Project](#).

On the other side of the water, the story of Miami's sister city is less fortunate.

Three years ago, the City of Miami Beach was in prime position to obtain federal funding for a rapid transit line linking the South Beach area to downtown Miami. After completing the design phase of a comprehensive formal process, all that was needed was for Miami and Miami Beach to come to agreement on the mode of transit, and for the selected proposal to be forwarded to the federal transit agency for funding approval. The City of Miami chose light rail as its preferred mode of transit and waited for Miami Beach to do the same. And waited....

Two years ago, after the new Miami-Dade County 1/2-cent tax brought renewed life to transit projects, a divided Miami Beach Commission finally waded through a series of workshops and hearings and came to a decision: YES to transit, and the preferred mode should be the lightest version of light rail, the streetcar. The City of Miami agreed, but the story was not over. Opponents of the rapid transit project, including the mayor, campaigned vigorously against the BayLink project and sought to elect anti-streetcar candidates to overturn the commission's 4-3 endorsement. Beach voters supported both pro-transit incumbents, and new public workshops were held to iron out the details of the streetcar plan.

One year ago, with the streetcar plan worked out, the County Metropolitan Planning Organization planned to submit the proposal to federal transit officials but the submission was unexpectedly put on hold – one of the pro-streetcar commissioners, in a political horse-trade, agreed to put the streetcar plan before Miami Beach voters. Despite a funded campaign against streetcars, Beach voters solidly backed the plan and even opponents conceded that the voters had given the final word. Yet the the County never submitted the BayLink proposal for federal funding – advocates of the North Corridor heavy rail apparently feared their project would look inefficient, compared to a streetcar system that served more people for far less money, and the City of Miami had already hired Miami Beach's transit consultant and turned its attention to other streetcar projects after years of indecisive Miami Beach leadership.

Today, the Alliance for Reliable Transport congratulates those who showed decisive leadership and achieved real gains in transit infrastructure – both the City of Miami streetcar supporters and Miami-Dade County advocates of two new heavy rail lines. Many of us strongly believe that the

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medium-density North Corridor – and the county – would be better served by light rail, which studies consistently show stimulates development more effectively than heavy rail, at half the cost. Unfortunately the Citizens' Transportation Trust has never raised this issue, though cost savings to the county would fund additional transit lines, and to their credit the North Corridor advocates stayed united behind a strategy to provide rapid transit to their neighborhoods after years of delay.

Those of us who have long supported the re-birth of the historic streetcar to the beach have one note of consolation: when the first cars start operating along the downtown/midtown corridor, we know it won't be long before new streetcar lines move forward to Miami Beach and other parts of the county.

Mark Needle on behalf of the ART Steering Committee

2 MEETING AGENDA

Monday, August 15, 2005, 7:30 PM

The Seymour, 945 Pennsylvania Avenue, Miami Beach

- 1. Welcome and Introductions**
- 2. Guest speaker Gabrielle Redfern**
Gabrielle Redfern is running for the open seat on the Miami Beach City Commission, will be attending to discuss her views on public transportation and policy.
- 3. U.S. Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart Transportation Funding 'Coup':**
What it means for BayLink and the Miami Downtown streetcar project
(<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/12261048.htm>).
- 4. Old/New Business**
Update from Tobias and Jeffrey on meetings held, meeting minutes, website updates.

The Alliance for Reliable Transport was formed in 2003 by Miami Beach residents who share an interest in improving public transportation. Meetings are open to the public.