

# A.R.T.

ALLIANCE FOR RELIABLE TRANSPORT

ON THE WEB AT [HTTP://WWW.PROTRANSIT.ORG](http://www.protransit.org)

## NEWSLETTER AND MEETING AGENDA

February 6, 2005, 6:30 pm

at

The Seymour, 945 Pennsylvania Avenue, Miami Beach

Please note that our meeting schedule has changed. The meeting will take place from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. this Monday. Meetings will be held every other month on the first Monday at 6:30 p.m. from now on.

### Agenda

#### 1. Welcome and Introductions

#### 2. DISCUSSION: Impact of Urban Development Boundary (UDB) on Transportation

In February 2005, ART resolved to support preservation of the UDB and to encourage affordable housing along existing transit corridors, in order to strengthen rather than dilute the public transit infrastructure. ART also resolved that the County Commission process be revised, by requiring a Commission super-majority or ratification by vote of the public. Developers have since mounted a major lobbying campaign to move the line, raising the question of whether a public referendum may in fact be needed to review proposed extensions of the UDB. The ART resolution will be discussed and updated.

#### 3. DISCUSSION: 20-mile Tri-Rail extension south along the CSX rail line

Plans being developed by the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority and Miami-Dade Transit could extend regional commuter rail service 20 miles from Miami International Airport to the Kendall-Tamiami Airport. The service would supplement Metrorail lines in the county's People's Transportation Plan and could begin service in as little as 16 months. (See Miami Herald article and editorial, below.)

#### 4. RESOLUTION: Move forward on required planning for BayLink streetcar project

Following Commissioner Libben's campaign proposal, the following resolution is proposed to move the BayLink process forward (see Miami Herald Neighbors, Oct. 15 2005, [http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/local/states/florida/counties/miami-dade/cities\\_neighborhoods/beaches/12903697.htm](http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/local/states/florida/counties/miami-dade/cities_neighborhoods/beaches/12903697.htm)):

The City of Miami Beach should act to use its share of funds from the county transportation tax, along with any matching funds made available by the Miami-Dade County Metropolitan Planning Organization, to pay for Phase II study for the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) in order for the BayLink streetcar project to be considered for federal funding.

#### 5. UPDATE: Route changes for the South Beach Local

In March 2004, ART resolved and began advocating that the Electrowave and W bus routes be integrated into a South Beach circulator, following the proposed route for the BayLink streetcar. The initial route for the South Beach Local, however, does not follow the recommendations adopted by the Miami Beach Commission in 2003 after extensive public hearings, workshops, and professional analysis by the City's engineering consultants. ART continues to urge that routing be revised as soon as possible (1) to serve the Collins Park area, (2) to stop as close as feasible to the Belle Isle area, and (3) to follow the Alton Road transportation corridor.

## 6. 2006 Meeting Schedule

## 7. Old/New Business

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### Transportation Issues on the Web:

1. Plans take Tri-Rail south, west
2. Bring Tri-Rail to the traffic-clogged south

### Miami Herald, Posted on Mon, Jan. 23, 2006

#### TRANSPORTATION

#### Plans take Tri-Rail south, west

[http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/breaking\\_news/13688555.htm](http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/breaking_news/13688555.htm)

Citing existing traffic woes – not future needs – officials are pushing for a no-frills commuter rail line into southwest Miami-Dade that would open next year.

BY LARRY LEBOWITZ [llebowitz@MiamiHerald.com](mailto:llebowitz@MiamiHerald.com)

Local transportation officials are pushing to build a new Tri-Rail extension 20 miles into the heart of southwestern Miami-Dade County – a line that would provide a new commuting option for hundreds of thousands of suburbanites.

Dozens of critical details are still in flux. For one, nobody has approached CSX Transportation to see if the company would be willing to lease or sell a freight line that runs through the heavily populated area. But proponents hope to start running a bare-bones system, with the next generation of diesel-powered trains, as soon as April 2007.

The line would run from Kendall-Tamiami Executive Airport, past Metrozoo, the Snapper Creek rest area on Florida's Turnpike and the Miami Dade College-Kendall campus en route to Tri-Rail's Miami Airport station. Commuters could ride two stops beyond MIA and transfer to Metrorail to complete the journey downtown, according to plans being developed by the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority and Miami-Dade Transit.

"I really think it's doable -- and doable in short order," SFRTA executive director Joseph Giuliatti said. "I think we'll draw ridership out there from Day One."

Miami-Dade Transit would be responsible for maintaining the tracks and constructing concrete slab platforms on property already controlled by the county.

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"We're not talking about a lot of creature comforts," said Transit Director Roosevelt Bradley. "We just want to get the service out there, get it up and running. We think the ridership will be there."

The project is being pushed by County Commission Chairman Joe Martinez, who represents the west Kendall area.

### HELP FOR COMMUTERS

"I've always called Metrorail 'Metrofail' because it doesn't go where people actually live," Martinez said. "This line we're talking about here would run right through the Kendall suburbs. And these people need help right now." Martinez knows firsthand.

If he leaves his home in the Hammocks by 7:30 a.m., he's lucky to make it downtown by 9:20 most mornings. The return trip isn't much better for hundreds of thousands who live in Country Walk, Richmond Heights, Kendale Lakes and other densely populated areas on both sides of the Don Shula Expressway and Florida's Turnpike.

Preliminary engineering studies on the tracks and possible platform locations are underway. A price tag is forthcoming, Transit Deputy Director Albert Hernandez said.

Unlike the busy 71-mile corridor that Tri-Rail shares with CSX and Amtrak from Jupiter to Miami, the single-track line under consideration is comparatively quiet. CSX runs, at most, one or two trains a day down to a lumberyard and building-supply wholesaler in Homestead.

CSX spokesman Gary Sease said neither Tri-Rail nor Miami-Dade has approached the rail company to open talks for a possible short-term lease or purchase of the line.

Martinez is pushing for trains that would depart every half-hour during the weekday rush.

That might be an overly optimistic goal unless the county and Tri-Rail are willing to spend an unknown sum to upgrade the existing freight tracks so they would meet minimum federal safety standards for passenger service that would move fast enough to meet Martinez's wish.

The new rail line is far from a done deal, especially given the complicated political history of competing commuter rail and mass-transit dreams in South Florida.

Martinez has been pushing for a Tri-Rail expansion into Miami-Dade on a different set of freight tracks since he was elected to the commission in 2002. But he, Giulietti and others have been repeatedly thwarted in their attempts to win support for an extension parallel to the Dolphin Expressway from the airport to west of the Turnpike.

County managers and transit boosters feared that even a bare-bones Tri-Rail operation in that area would siphon away riders needed to secure hundreds of millions in matching federal construction funds for Metrorail's long-planned East-West expansion.

That Metrorail line – from the airport to Florida International University – would cost \$1.3 billion and could open in 2014 at the earliest.

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Martinez wants something that can happen faster and cost less. "My attitude is, the traffic's bad now. People are stuck now," Martinez said. "We can't wait five or 10 years to see if we can qualify for federal funds and then build [the Metrorail East-West line]. We can get thousands of cars off the road right now. And we can do this a lot cheaper than Metrorail."

Tri-Rail is slated to receive the first two trains for the new service – known as Diesel Multiple Units, or DMUs – from the Colorado Railcar Co. in early February.

### A DRY RUN

To build support, Martinez is hoping to invite a large number of elected leaders and transportation officials to take a dry run on the new trains in late February or early March. Three more trains are slated for delivery in July.

The double-decker DMUs are the wave of the commuter-rail future, Brad Barkman, Tri-Rail director of operations, said. Tri-Rail currently runs a series of 130-to-150-seat passenger coaches behind a 3,000-horsepower locomotive with no seating capacity.

By comparison, the DMUs are 1,200-horsepower vehicles that can carry 188 passengers. That means a typical three-car DMU train -- one 218-seat passenger coach sandwiched between two power units -- could carry up to 494.

The trains are ultimately destined for Central Florida, where state officials are trying to kick-start a 61-mile, four-county commuter rail service tentatively slated to start in the fall of 2009.

The state purchased the five trains for \$22.9 million, the vast bulk of the funding earmarked by Rep. John Mica, a Central Florida Republican who chairs an influential transportation subcommittee.

Giulietti said Tri-Rail has permission to keep using the trains if the Central Florida rail line isn't ready by then. And if the Kendall area rail line draws riders, Tri-Rail and Miami-Dade Transit would both apply for federal funds to purchase additional cars and make track and station improvements.

### **Miami Herald, Posted on Sat, Jan. 28, 2006**

#### **Bring Tri-Rail to the traffic-clogged south**

<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/editorial/13733520.htm>

**OUR OPINION: TRAIN COULD BRING RELIEF TO KENDALL-AREA DRIVERS** An enthusiastic Yes to the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority's proposal to expand Tri-Rail south and west in Miami-Dade County. The commuter train would run for 20 miles on little-used tracks south from Miami International Airport to Kendall-Tamiami Airport, a route that includes Metrozoo and Miami Dade College's Kendall campus. Going northbound, it would take passengers to the 79th Street Metrorail station for the ride to downtown Miami.

One of the prime promoters of this plan is Miami-Dade Commission Chairman Joe Martinez, who wants to bring traffic relief to his beleaguered West Kendall constituents. Mr. Martinez would score a genuine coup if the plan succeeds, and there's no reason why it shouldn't.

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In March, Tri-Rail will greatly increase train service along its 71-mile Jupiter-to-Miami route when all but one small section of the ambitious double-tracking project is complete. The second track frees Tri-Rail from playing second fiddle to Amtrak and CSX Transportation trains. Soon trains will run every 20 minutes instead of hourly.

The first five miles of the track south of MIA is owned by the state, the rest is owned by CSX, which runs trains on it only twice a day. The state currently is negotiating with CSX for use of tracks elsewhere in the state. Florida officials should bring Tri-Rail's proposal to the talks, too.

The one stumbling block to expanding Tri-Rail's service has been Miami-Dade itself. Some in county government are concerned that if the commuter rail seeks federal funding to expand, this would dim the county's chances of getting grants to expand Metrorail southward. The regional authority has worked diligently to reassure county officials that Tri-Rail wouldn't compete with Metrorail plans.

In any case, the big attraction for Tri-Rail is that if it gets the go-ahead it could be operating by 2007, offering a genuine alternative for commuters heading north. The earliest they could get relief from Metrorail is 2014. Meantime, bring on Tri-Rail -- the sooner the better.

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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.