

October 26 CCTMP Update

(Coastal Communities comprise the cities of Miami Beach, Aventura, Sunny Isles Beach, North Bay Village, and the towns of Bay Harbor Islands, Bal Harbour, Surfside, and Golden Beach. The Coastal Communities Transportation Master Plan (CCTMP) Technical Steering Committee is a group of city officials, planners, and residents working with the Corradino Consulting Group to study ways of addressing the area's growing vehicular problems. I sit on the steering committee.)

The CCTMP is beginning to prove its worth. At last Wednesday's meeting we started moving away from defining transportation problems to outlining solutions.

Preliminary findings indicate:

- *Local, not subregional, or "pass through" traffic is the primary cause of congestion*
- *Most traffic flows east/west along the causeways, not north/south on the major corridors*
- *Where "pass through" and local traffic mix is the locus of most problems*
- *Major corridors must be made more user-friendly than neighborhood side streets*

The Committee is currently outlining a three-part solution approach: First, to immediately employ the means available under local, County and FDOT auspices to relieve traffic pressure points, including tweaking vehicular flow patterns, using traffic calming measures, running express buses between parking/employment hubs; second, to concentrate on solving pressing rapid transportation issues of realigning existing bus routes, and implementing neighborhood circulators; and third, to identify the best ways of tying together the various regional rapid transit modes.

An important part of this study examines the bus route alignments, and recognizes that a viable rapid transit alternative to the single-occupancy car must be implemented as soon as possible. Of the 10 bus lines that now serve Miami Beach, for instance, only two do not also provide inland service over the causeways. This results in a redundancy that helps neither the traffic flow nor the transit riders, who continue to experience unacceptably long waiting times.

Possible solutions:

- *Two A1A "superlines" one local, one express, traveling north and south. Causeway buses will continue running east/west only, while their passengers heading north/south will transfer at convenient "nodes" (commuter gathering points). This will reduce the number of bus trips and expedite service.*
- *'Spoke & Hub' feeder systems, where park & rides, neighborhood circulators, and causeway and "superline" buses efficiently converge at regularly set schedules.*
- *Streetcars replacing buses as buses suffer from a negative image, which translates into lower ridership because premium riders won't use them. The study, in fact, found buses "not positive", creating "friction hotspots" and "blockage." (I can personally attest as to how grueling using this system is, as buses do not get you to your destination so much as acquaint you with what it means to wait for a bus). Findings indicate that while bus technology may continue to improve, streetcars are the best proven method of moving the most people rapidly and efficiently, a position I strongly endorse.*

Nascent transportation nodes are already emerging: 72nd Street & Collins, and Lincoln Road & Washington Avenue on Miami Beach (others may possibly include Surfside City Hall, Mt Sinai, and 5th & Alton), and on

the mainland, 36th Street, the terminus of the soon-extended Miami Streetcar—there's talk already of extending it up Biscayne Boulevard to 79th Street—will probably rapidly evolve into a Miami/Miami Beach commuter node.

Our Coastal Communities' mature, dense and mixed-use urban environment is well-suited for public rapid transit, which Miami Beach is only belatedly realizing. Essentially, Miami Beach is becoming a gigantic pedestrian-use area, and maximizing this growing urban environment's potential will mean creatively combining the best technology that streetcars, buses, and bikeways have to offer—and making them convenient for people to use.

Community meetings for gathering input from Coastal Community residents will commence shortly.

Jeff Bradley