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SMART Plan set to transform transportation in the county

By: Carolina Busto | March 26, 2017



Miami-Dade County is getting smart about managing mobility. It all starts with a plan — the Strategic Miami Area Rapid Transit (SMART) Plan — which has been set in motion and will transform transportation in the county.

The SMART Plan was adopted and endorsed officially in 2016 by the Miami-Dade MPO Governing Board. It brings together Miami-Dade County's Department of Transportation and Public Works (DTPW), Transportation Planning Organization (TPO; formally MPO), Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and the Citizen's Independent Transportation Trust (CITT).

In short, the strategy involves expanding public transportation services into six rapid transit corridors



supported by a bus express rapid transit network.

In total, there are six approved corridors that are in the works:

Beach Corridor: Connecting Midtown Miami to Miami Beach Convention Center along the MacArthur Causeway;

East-West Corridor: Connecting Miami Intermodal Center (Miami International Airport) to Florida International University;

Kendall Corridor: Connecting Dadeland area Metrorail stations with SW 167th Avenue along Kendall Drive;

North Corridor: Connecting Martin L. King, Jr. Metrorail station with NW 215th Street along NW 27th Avenue;

Northeast Corridor: Connecting Downtown Miami with City of Aventura along the Florida East Coast Railroad, and

South Dade Transitway: Connecting Dadeland South Metrorail station with Florida City along US1.

The rapid transit corridors can either be elevated rail, like the existing Metrorail system, or light rail, which consists of a train operating at the street level. Different alternatives will be evaluated for each corridor including using existing Metrorail and emerging technologies.

When it comes to Bus Express Rapid Transit — or BERT — that means allowing the buses to have the right-of-way on the streets, sometimes with their own dedicated bus lanes. In the case of State Road 836, the Miami-Dade Expressway Authority (MDX) is in the process of widening and reinforcing the median lanes in order to accommodate for an express bus route along that particular highway. The Metrobuses on these future routes will use the regular lanes until traffic becomes too congested; they then will be permitted to drive on the widened median shoulder or express lanes at a speed of 35 mph.

In January of this year, Miami-Dade County, along with MDX and FDOT, broke ground on the new Dolphin Station Park & Ride lot along NW 12th Street. The station



is the first transit hub that will service the proposed East-West Corridor.

“The construction of this transit station is an important first step in the implementation of our SMART Plan,” said Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos A. Gimenez in a recent statement. “The express bus service that will operate from this facility will provide a much needed transit option for our residents in west Miami-Dade County that travel to downtown.”

Scheduled to be completed by the end of 2017, the station also will have more than 850 parking spaces and eventually service three bus rapid transit routes, including the new 836 Express. The 836 Express route estimates a 30-minute commute time to downtown Miami during peak hours — that’s nearly half the current time for rush hour commuters.

The Dolphin Station Park and Ride lot is the first out of three being built in the coming years. The other two are Panther Station (at FIU’s Modesto Maidique Campus), and the Tamiami Station (on the corner of SW Eighth Street and 147th Avenue).

“When it comes to mobility in Miami-Dade County we are listening to our residents and working to improve conditions and move Miami forward,” said Alice N. Bravo, PE, director of DTPW.

In the coming months for the further implementation of the SMART Plan, DTPW will begin a refresher study of the East-West Corridor as well as studies on the Beach Corridor and South Dade Transitway Corridor. Currently under construction are: the MiamiCentral Station, which will service the Northeast Corridor; several Park & Ride lots and Transit Oriented Developments (TOD) that will service the South Corridor, and one TOD that will service the North Corridor.

Learn more at miamidademppo.org or miamidade.gov/transit.

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