



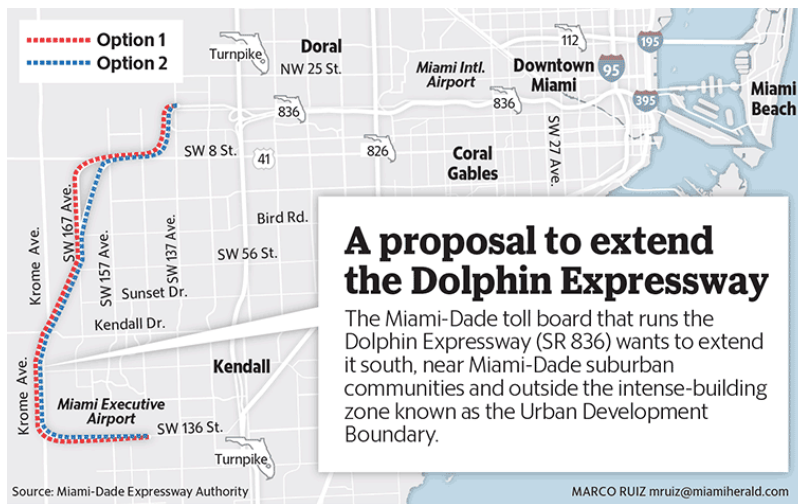
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

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Extension of Dolphin Expressway into Kendall faces early vote by Miami-Dade commission

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Miami-Dade’s toll authority wants to extend the county’s busiest expressway into Southwest Dade, a move that would bring a speedier route to clogged suburbs and could expand the boundaries for urban development closer to the Everglades.



The long-discussed proposal is inching closer to a concrete plan, and Miami-Dade commissioners could take their first vote on the idea next week by endorsing the concept in committee.

The roughly 15-mile extension of the Dolphin Expressway into the Kendall area would take the highway past the county’s Urban Development Boundary, crossing through suburban neighborhoods as well as farms, wetlands and other rural areas. To approve the project, Miami-Dade would need to rewrite current growth rules, which prohibit that kind of massive highway project outside of the urban boundary.

Toll payers would fund construction of the southwestern route for the Dolphin, formally called State Road 836. The Miami-Dade Expressway Authority, which supervises toll roads across the county, is wrapping up a four-year study of the extension, which would add a major north-south highway west of the Florida Turnpike.

Mayor Carlos Gimenez, who sits on the MDX and can veto any commission action on an extension, said he likes the idea of commuters in Southwest Dade having another expressway option beyond the Turnpike. But he said he would not want extending the Dolphin Expressway to be seen as a green light to spreading development in rural areas.

“It would be just to create a traffic alternative, not a development extension beyond the UDB,” he said.



IT WOULD BE JUST TO CREATE A TRAFFIC ALTERNATIVE, NOT A DEVELOPMENT EXTENSION BEYOND THE UDB.

Miami-Dade Mayor Carlos Gimenez

A 2010 presentation by MDX staff for the agency’s board described the extension design as having two goals. The first: “relieves congestion and provides valid mobility option.” The second: “could be used as ultimate urban boundary to limit western expansion.”

The Dolphin extension would sit about one mile west of the current urban boundary marker, which the Miami-Dade commission can move. Critics have attacked the concept as a way to bring residential subdivisions closer to the Everglades in Miami-Dade. “This highway is actually being built for developers,” said Jon Ullman, senior organizer in Miami for the Sierra Club. “It’s moving development into places where it should not be.”



A diamond to help traffic flow? The newly designed Diverging Diamond Interchange

Transportation engineers are building new highway interchanges on Highway 836 at Northwest 57 and 27 avenues in Miami. Left turns are eliminated in the design.

MDX

Proponents see a southern turn for the 836 as relief, with many residents along the proposed route opting for accident-prone Krome Avenue as the preferred north-south alternative to the clogged Turnpike.

Mario Diaz, an MDX spokesman, said the agency is still conducting engineering studies on the possible extension, and the findings should be ready next year. But the agency also is touting the concept as a needed expansion of the county’s expressway network.



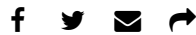
Traffic woes along U.S. 1 in South Miami-Dade

The morning commute for drivers in South Miami-Dade along US-1 North is full of stops and stalls. This time-lapse video shows how part of the drive, an 11.5-mile stretch along US-1 North, took 62 minutes on a recent Thursday morning, April 20, 2017.

Emily Michot - Miami Herald

Jose “Pepe” Diaz, whose district includes part of the extension route, submitted a resolution for Tuesday’s Government Operations committee meeting that describes the proposed extension as “a long overdue transportation improvement for Southwest Miami-Dade County and Kendall.” The resolution directs Gimenez to file an application this month to amend the county’s Comprehensive Development Master Plan to allow for extending the 836 past the urban-development line.

Because the 836 extension would also include express-bus lanes and the possibility of a new commuter-rail line, Miami-Dade would need to change the plan to allow for multi-mode transportation facilities outside of the urban boundary, too. If it passes the committee vote, it would then come before the full 13-member commission later in the month.



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