



News Clip

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State to start building roads to transportation hub

By Samantha Joseph

The Florida Department of Transportation is building roads into a planned commuter hub at Miami International Airport but won't be able to update county leaders on other parts of the project until September.

The department expects to start roadwork this week to support Miami Intermodal Center, a major transportation hub linking passenger traffic with the airport.

Department officials must wait until next month to discuss contracts for the pivotal car-rental businesses with Miami-Dade County commissioners. Until then, transportation officials do not expect car-rental companies to sign concession agreements that are to help pay for the project.

Commissioners must review the planners' use of the space in the car-rental center, a \$190 million project that is expected to house about 18 companies. The county commission is not scheduled to meet again until Sept. 9.

Planners compare the intermodal center to New York's Grand Central Station. They say the center would allow for a convergence of taxis, trains, buses, private vehicles, planes and bicycles. It would allow travelers to easily switch from one form of transportation to another.

The project is set to incorporate more than 1 million square feet of commercial space that could include offices, restaurants, entertainment spots, meeting rooms and a hotel.

The roads into the proposed center are the first phase of the project transit officials say will cost more than \$1.9 billion and take about 20 years to complete.

The transportation department will begin working this week on an \$18 million road-construction program between Northwest 25th Street, Northwest 38th Court, Northwest 21st Street and LeJeune Road. The program is designed to streamline traffic by creating feeder roads around the center.

"We're not designed to handle the volume or designed in a geometric way to work in and out of the MIC," said public-affairs manager Ric Katz. "Ultimately, you'll be able to drive onto (State Road) 836 and go onto a road designed specifically to take you into the MIC. ... What we gain from this is that we give back LeJeune Road to the citizens of Miami-Dade County as a major north-south artery."

By Friday, the department expects to start reconstructing Northwest 25th and 21st streets. The work is set to continue until Nov. 12 and will cause temporary traffic detours.

"Essentially, the roads that you will find when this is completed will bear little resemblance to the existing roads," Mr. Katz said.

The transportation department will issue periodic notices to inform commuters of changes that result from the construction. Officials promise that the end result will be traffic relief on LeJeune, one of the busiest roadways.