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New train car arrives at MIA

By Alfonso Chardy

The first of eight Japanese-built cars for an automated train that will link Miami International Airport to a nearby transit hub arrived at MIA Monday and was immediately hoisted onto the elevated guideway the system will use once it starts operating next year.

MIA Mover, which resembles the futuristic Skytrain automated people mover now operating at MIA's North Terminal, is expected to start running by next September linking MIA to the transit hub now being built just east of MIA.

Arrival of the first dark blue and white car, around 1 p.m. Monday, marked the latest milestone in the \$1.7-billion transit hub formally known as Miami Intermodal Center or MIC which houses a rental car center and will later accommodate a rail facility including Metrorail, Tri-Rail and perhaps in the future high-speed rail.

The opening of the rental car center earlier this year marked the completion of the first major phase of the Miami Intermodal Center travel hub, which eventually will connect in one site virtually all major county modes of transportation: aircraft, cars, rail and buses.

On hand to witness the arrival of the first Mitsubishi-supplied car was José Abreu, head of the Miami-Dade Aviation Department which joined forces with the Florida Department of Transportation to finance the more than \$260-million MIA Mover system.

“This is one of the most important milestones in the MIA Mover project to connect MIA to the MIC,” said Abreu, who before taking over the county's aviation department helped guide the MIC to fruition when he worked for the Florida Department of Transportation, first as head of the Miami office and later as statewide secretary.

Over the next few weeks and months, a small locomotive will be pushing and pulling the cars around the elevated guideway to “exercise” them in advance of the formal opening of the system, said Abreu. The 1.2-mile guideway is being built by Parsons Odebrecht, said Luiz Simon, the deputy project executive.

By March, Abreu added, the guideway will be “energized” with electricity and then by September the system will begin carrying passengers between MIA terminals and the MIC. At first, Abreu said, the majority of passengers are expected to be people picking up or dropping off rental cars.

Once the MIA Mover starts operating, the rental car shuttle bus now carrying passengers to the rental car center will be discontinued.

One of the main goals of the project is to reduce the traffic congestion that now clogs roads at MIA.

When the rental car center opened earlier this year, the rental car companies had their individual shuttle bus services merged into a single integrated shuttle bus system between MIA and the rental car center.