



News Clip

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Rail link from MIA to transit center inaugurated

The inauguration of a rail link from MIA to the intermodal transit center marks a milestone for the airport's development — and for its director

By Alfonso Chardy

José Abreu was 13 years old when he arrived in Miami in 1968 as a Cuban refugee, landing at Miami International Airport.

Almost half a century later, on Thursday, Abreu was the center of attention, applause and recognition at the inauguration of the automatic train connecting the airport with the huge Miami Intermodal Center transportation facility east of MIA, one of the most expensive and complex projects in South Florida history.

At a cost of \$1.7 billion, the Miami Intermodal Center is part of the renovation of MIA under the leadership of Abreu, director of the Miami-Dade County Aviation Department, which operates MIA. Abreu, once Florida's secretary of transportation, was part of the team that helped plan and design the MIC, which includes the MIA Mover train, inaugurated on Thursday, as well as the rental car center that opened in 2010 and which by 2013 will have stations for Metrorail, Tri-Rail, Amtrak, Metrobus and Greyhound.

The next milestone in the MIC's construction will be next spring's inauguration of a Metrorail extension to the airport.

The MIA Mover trains were supplied by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, and the rails and stations were built by Parsons-Odebrecht Joint Venture at a total cost of \$270 million. The train will begin to carry passengers on Friday for free.

The automatic train, similar to those that connect terminals at major airports, will replace the buses that rental-car companies have used to transport passengers to the rental car center.

For Abreu, 57, the MIA Mover train is not only a professional accomplishment but something personal, since his association with the airport and the transportation center project go back to his days as a Cuban refugee. Before the ceremony, Abreu reminisced about those times in an interview with El Nuevo Herald.

He said that during airport renovations last year, workers knocked down the arrival gate of the old airport, and then gave him with a plaque to recall his arrival there as a refugee.

“It was gate C5, and they gave me a photo of that era to commemorate my arrival,” Abreu said.

Abreu said he left Cuba alone, sent by his parents to Spain, where he took a plane to New York. There he changed flights and boarded a flight on the now-defunct Eastern Airlines that brought him to Miami.

“I remember the flight number, Eastern 401,” he said. “It was a DC8 and I my assigned seat was 10A.”