

News Clip

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Provided by: Jenine Spoliansky, Kommunikatz, Inc.
jspoliansky@kommunikatz.com

TODAY'S NEWS

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Transit tax funds rail link, rail cars

BY ASHLEY HOPKINS

Large-scale transportation spending is in full-swing in Miami-Dade, with the Metrorail link at Miami International on line to open this summer and 136 new rail cars expected to soon head this way.

In 2002 voters approved a half penny increase in the county's sales surtax to support the People's Transportation Plan, a publicly-supported transportation improvement program established to develop a mass transportation network and complete roadway improvements.

Of the projects funded through the plan, the Metrorail link at Miami International Airport has been the greatest, said Charles Scurr, executive director of the Citizens' Independent Transportation Trust, a 15-member body that oversees People's Transportation Plan funds.

Nearly \$405 million in People's Transportation Plan funding will be used to finance the \$506 million project. The Florida Department of Transportation is contributing \$101.3 million to the link, which will connect Earlington Heights to Miami International's Intermodal Center, now under construction.

In a prior interview Ysela Llort, director of Miami-Dade Transit, reported that the link was 97% complete and should open this summer.

But while the Metrorail link at the airport is one of the largest projects funded under the People's Transportation Plan, Mr. Scurr said transportation officials are also working to re-



Photo by Marlene Quaroni

Rail tie-in to intermodal center should open in summer: Ysela Llort.

place and renovate county rail cars and buses.

■The county is working to purchase 136 new rail cars for \$375 million. Mr. Scurr said the contract should come before the county commission in upcoming months.

■For the last four years the county has been working to replace 29 Metromover cars for about \$70 million. While two-thirds are in service, the rest are being tested and should soon be in use.

■The county has purchased 596 new articulated buses at \$135 million, built 1,030 bus shelters and installed 10,000 new bus signs.

■The county has dedicated nearly \$10 million to repair in-

frastructure at Metrorail and Metromover stations and nearly \$7 million to renovate station escalators.

But while public transportation is the bread and butter of the People's Transportation Plan, Mr. Scurr said funds are also used to supplement public works projects.

Ms. Scurr said that the county has used more than \$70 million on 700 road projects and is completing the first phase of a \$58 million traffic management system that would put Miami-Dade's 3,000 traffic signals under one umbrella.

Details: <http://www.miamidade.gov/citt/>.