



News Clip

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Multi-modal mobility hubs “The Wave” of the future

By Valerie J. Armor

While the first half of the Envisioning South Florida’s Future conference hosted by the Urban Land Southeast Florida / Caribbean Institute’s in Fort Lauderdale on Friday May 4, 2012 seemed more focused on commercialized transportation, the rest of the program was spent addressing South Florida’s Regional Needs: Transit. With representation from Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade Metropolitan Planning Organizations including Miami-Dade Transit, our tri-county region has become the fourth largest metropolitan region in the country. Projected by 2035 to have about 7.5 million people, there are regional initiatives underway to address these transportation needs; managed lanes, intermodal hubs, “The Wave”, highway projects, needing around \$70 billion which is about twice their current budget. The 2040 Regional Transportation Plan which addresses these includes initiatives such as a National Greenway Plan that provides for statewide bicycle routes.

The Metrorail AirportLink of 2.4 miles is Metrorail that “moves people from where they live to where they want to go” as explained by Ysela Llort, Director of Miami-Dade Transit.

Focused on building connections, the Miami Intermodal Center and the Metrorail AirportLink and Government Center Station, are being designed to integrate with each other incorporating all modes of transportation; Metrobus, Metrorail, Metromover, commuter rail (FEC), jitneys, taxis, shuttle service, bicycles and pedestrians as well as additional services to attract users to the facilities.

Gregory Stuart, Executive Director for the Broward MPO, reviewing its past, present and future discussed the expansion of managed lanes, rapid bus transit, passenger rail on FEC and a streetcar originating from Fort Lauderdale and going west. He cited a plan developed in 1972 that he happened to find abandoned on a shelf in the library that promoted many of the same transit concepts.

Currently under way in Fort Lauderdale is "The Wave", a 5 mile streetcar route in the downtown area. Stuart mentioned that Secretary Wolfe has been very supportive, stressing to get it done and not let it end up on a shelf covered with dust like the 1972 report. The City of Fort Lauderdale in November 2012, will issue an RFP/RFQ for a maintenance facility for a very large mixed use

project named the Mobility Hub to include “The Wave” facility. It will need to provide for a comfortable pedestrian environment, active mixed use, “The Wave” resting and rejuvenation facility with the Broward MPO investing \$8million dollars for the projects’ infrastructure.

Stuart went on to speak about regional coordination. Being the middle county, between Palm Beach to the north and Miami-Dade to the south, he is very aware of the mobility between the counties and the need to develop an integrated system that addresses these diverse needs stressing that these are opportunities for cities to support mass transit, increase their tax base and generate additional economic opportunities. The panelists of the Regional Approach to Transit including moderator Michael Busha, Executive Director, Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council, Joe Giulietti, Executive Director, S. Fl. Regional Transportation Authority, Ysela Llorc, Director, Miami-Dade Transit, Gus F. Pego, District Six Secretary FDOT, Gregory Stuart, Executive Director, Broward MPO, Randy Whitfield, Executive Director, Palm Beach MPO and James Wolfe, District Four Secretary, FDOT emphasized that it is a win-win situation.

“Those who pay and those who benefit” might be the key to a funding model that utilizes this as a base according to Ysela Llorc. James Wolfe referred to more tolls and premium transit. Are gas taxes a way to supply funding or is this an outdated model? All of the panel members agreed that solutions should be regional not decided by the state. This was supported by the keynote presentation by Secretary Ananth Prasad, Florida Department of Transportation.

His message was clear, transportation = money. Citing that increasing the “gas tax is not sustainable” due to the increase of hybrid and electric vehicles on the road, we “need to invest in the infrastructure that [we] want”.