



News Clip

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Tri-Rail working to offer seamless trip to Miami Airport

By Mike Turnbell

Getting to Miami International Airport these days via Tri-Rail takes a bit of planning, patience and extra time.

For the past 11 months, riders have had to get off the train in Hialeah, then catch a shuttle for a 10- to 15-minute ride to the airport.

But in about 14 months, the same trip will be virtually seamless.

Passengers will be able to walk off the trains, then up an escalator to a new automatic elevated train called the MIA Mover that runs directly to the terminals about a mile away.

"I just moved here from San Francisco where you can take the train directly to the airport and it's so convenient," said Ellen Thompson, who was waiting on a train in Fort Lauderdale to get to an international flight at the Miami airport. "The shuttles they have now are OK, but being able to take the train the whole way will be better."

Construction crews are about halfway through building a new Miami Central Station east of the the airport that will link Tri-Rail and Amtrak with Metrorail, Miami-Dade Transit and Greyhound buses, as well as the automated train to the terminals, taxis, and a new rental car center.

There's even room for high speed rail in the future, if such a proposal is ever revived.

In late July, a new \$506 million Metrorail line opened connecting the airport to downtown Miami.

"It's just gorgeous, all steel and glass and futuristic," said Tri-Rail spokeswoman Bonnie Arnold. "I was blown away how beautiful it is."

Tri-Rail's original Miami Airport station opened in 1998, becoming the southernmost station on the 72-mile line that runs from Miami to Mangonia Park, just north of West Palm Beach.

At the time, it was billed as the cornerstone of what was then just a dream - a \$1.7 billion transportation hub called the Miami Intermodal Center that would combine various modes of travel under one roof.

The original station, which had one platform, closed last September to make way for a larger station with two platforms and four tracks.

The Hialeah Market Station is now the last southern stop until the new station opens in October 2013. About 35,000 passengers used the station in June, many of them travelers and airport or airline employees.

Service to South Florida's three major airports is a big chunk of Tri-Rail's ridership. The commuter train doesn't stop directly at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International or Palm Beach International airports, but drops riders off at nearby stations where they board shuttles to and from the airports.

By about Thanksgiving or Christmas, Tri-Rail plans to increase service on weekends and holidays. Trains will run hourly on weekends and holidays instead of every two hours.

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