

# \$2.8 billion transportation improvement drive in high gear

By LOU ORTIZ

The Transportation Improvement Program for Miami-Dade County has scores of projects on the drawing board over the next five years — with some already underway — and a budget of \$2.8 billion.

The Transportation Improvement Program, known as TIP, is prepared by the county's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in cooperation with other transportation agencies including the Florida Department of Transportation District 6, the county's Expressway Authority, Aviation Department, Transit Agency and Seaport, along with the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority and Florida Turnpike Enterprise. District 6 also includes Monroe County.

The 2013 fiscal year for the program began July 1 and ends June 30, 2013. The five-year plan runs through fiscal 2017, which ends June 30, 2017.

The \$2.8 billion budget includes \$2.120 billion for improvement projects for highways, bridges, transit, aviation, rail, seaport, freight and bicycle paths. It also includes the cost of buying land for rights of way, resurfacing improvements and safety programs.

The budget also sets aside \$2.5 million for administration; \$275.5 million for operations and maintenance; \$306.8 million for environmental and planning studies, project development, construction engineering and management, among other things.

In addition, there is \$119.3 million for the State Infrastructure Bank, maintaining the state's mobile equipment and the operation of the warehouse and supply system.

The improvement program sets priorities on transportation projects for federal, state and local funding and plays a role in putting projects into action.

"The TIP is a changing document," the plan says. "Frequently, projects may be added to meet changing priorities or to take advantage of a special opportunity."

Funding for the projects comes from federal and local gasoline taxes, the state motor fuel tax, voter gasoline tax, motor vehicle and road impact fees, and other user fees like tolls.

Some projects outlined between fiscal 2013 to 2017, with some carried over from 2012, include:

- The Miami Intermodal Center (MIC), which includes a Rental Car Center, the MIC Central Station, the Miami International Airport (MIA) Mover, and access road and highway improvements. The roadway improvements have been completed and the MIC is under construction. The Rental Car Center opened in 2010 and the MIA Mover in 2011. MIC Station construction began in September, and it is expected to open next year.

The station is designed to accommodate and provide connections to various forms of transportation, including Tri-Rail, Metrorail, AMTRAK and future high-speed rail service. The station will also include service for bus, private vehicle parking,



The ramp of the 25th Street viaduct west to the Palmetto Expressway north will hasten air cargo's flow.

Metrobus, taxis and shuttle buses now serving the airport.

- Northwest 25th Street reconstruction and viaduct construction. The reconstruction is divided into two projects. The first, from the Palmetto Expressway east to 67th Avenue, is done. The second, which is underway, is from the Palmetto Expressway west to 89th Court. It's expected to alleviate heavy truck traffic and improve traffic flow on Northwest 25th Street. It's also expected to improve the movement of cargo to the airport's west-side cargo facilities and provide direct access from the Palmetto Expressway to the airport.

- Port Miami tunnel. Construction began in May 2010 and is scheduled to be done in May 2014. The tunnel will link the port to I-395 and I-95 via the MacArthur Causeway.

- Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Program. The system uses electronic technology to manage the state highway system in Miami-Dade and Monroe counties. It includes 24/7 traffic and accident management and traveler information to help increase the efficiency of the roadways.

- "It has reduced travel delay by 40% since 2005, thus saving drivers approximately \$1.5 billion dollars in travel delay-related costs," the plan says. "Because of the benefits provided by services such as the 511 Traveler Information Service, 95 Express, Ramp Signaling and Road Ranger

- Service Patrols, among others, the program achieved its highest return on investment, with a benefits to cost ratio of \$24.05 for every \$1 invested in ITS."

- State Road 823 and Northwest 57th Avenue/Red Road corridor improvements. The project includes improved drainage, new sidewalks along the east side, new signs, new lighting and landscaping.

- A Miami Dade County Turnpike planned project to widen 22.5 miles of the Homestead extension State Road 821) in Miami-Dade:

- From Southwest 288th to 216th streets (expanding from four lanes to six).

- From Southwest 216th Street to north of Eureka Drive (from eight lanes to 10).

- From north of Eureka Drive to south of Kendall Drive (10 to 12-plus lanes).

- From south of Kendall Drive to 60th Street Canal Bridge (six to 10 lanes).

- From 60th Street Canal Bridge to Bird Road (six to 10 lanes).

- From Bird Road to State Road 836/Dolphin Expressway (eight to 10 lanes).

- Major road and bridge projects under construction or will begin construction include:

- Northwest 37th Avenue from North River Drive to Northwest 79th Street.

- Southwest 27th Avenue from US 1 to Bayshore Drive.

- Southwest 137th Avenue from US 1 to Southwest 184th Street.

- Old Cutler Road from Southwest 97th to avenues.

- Northwest 87th Avenue from Northwest 154th to 186th streets.

- Northwest 138th Street Bridge over Miami River Canal.

- Bicycle and pedestrian corridor improvements. The state does not usually build stand-alone bicycle and pedestrian projects; they are typically included in larger projects, the plan says. Some of the bicycle and pedestrian projects are done by local agencies, which oversee the construction and management-related tasks. In addition, some bicycle and pedestrian projects are funded through the Federal Transportation Enhancement Discretionary Program, according to the plan.

- Some of the projects from 2012 to 2013 include:

- Beachwalk Greenway Bike path/trail From Lummus Park to Washington Avenue, Miami Beach.

- Miami River Greenway Bike path/trail From Miami Avenue to South Miami Avenue.

- Old Cutler Trail Bike path/trail From Southwest 136th Street/Southwest 62nd Avenue to Cartagena Place.

- Biscayne Trail Bike path/trail from Black Point Park to Southwest 138th Street and Southwest 137th Avenue; Along L-31 E Canal from Southwest 300th to 328th streets.

- Middle Beach Recreation Corridor Bike path/trail along the dune from 46th to 64th streets, Miami Beach.

- The state also works with the MPO, Miami-Dade Transit, Miami-Dade Aviation Department, Port Miami and the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority on projects. Some include:

- State Transit Block Grant to Miami-Dade Transit for operating costs.

- Additional elevators at Dadeland North Metrorail Station.

- Biscayne Boulevard Bus Enhancement.

- State Road 836 Enhanced Bus Service.

- 27th Avenue Enhanced Bus Service.

- Projects at Miami International Airport include:

- Concourse D East Roof Rehabilitation.

- Park Six Garage (1,670 spaces).

- Runway 8R/26L Resurfacing.

- Concourse J & H A380 Gate Modifications.

- Runway 12/30 Rehabilitation.



MIA Mover pulls into the terminal at Miami International Airport. It's key to the Miami Intermodal Center.

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- According to the improvement program's statistics, the county's transit system operates a fleet of 817 buses, along with Metrorail and Metromover.

- "Miami-Dade's transportation network includes 40 miles of interstate freeways, 542 miles of major roadways, over 5,600 miles of local streets and roads, and 180 miles of bike paths," statistics show.

- "In all, that's over 6,000 miles that must be maintained, policed, cleaned and frequently repaired or rebuilt," statistics show. "In addition, there are 110 bridges, 130 miles of active railroad tracks, one major airport, and one seaport."

- During fiscal 2009-2010, average daily ridership was 224,200 for buses, 58,800 for rail and 26,200 for Metromover, statistics show. Besides public transportation, 1.4 million passenger vehicles travel the county's roads.

- "In total, those vehicles travel 44 million miles daily; by 2035, that will increase to approximately 63 million miles daily," statistics show. "The typical household makes eight trips a day. The average resident of Miami-Dade County consumed 392 gallons of fuel in the year

- 2005 and traveled 18.7 average miles per day. These figures are expected to increase by at least 35% over the next 20 years. Work trips account for nearly 20%."

- Statistics also show that "On an average workday, 95% of the region's commuters travel to work by car, 5% by public transit. One percent walks or travels by some other means, such as bicycle, motorcycle, or taxi."

- A study now underway is to determine whether to impose a new toll expressway in the county.

- The study is expected to determine the feasibility of adding managed lanes within the South Miami-Dade busway along US 1. It includes a 20-mile segment of US 1 from Southwest 344th to 88th streets. The study is expected to be completed in 2014.