



News Clip

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Subject: **FDOT: Fix for design goof at new Miami airport central train station to cost millions, delay opening**

Provided by: Jenine Sussman, Kommunikatz
jsussman@kommunikatz.com

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FDOT: Fix for design goof at new Miami airport central train station to cost millions, delay opening

By Alfonso Chardy & Andres Viglucci

State transportation officials trying to fix a critical engineering snag at the new train station under construction at Miami International Airport's \$2 billion transportation hub have backed off the cheapest fix: closing off Northwest 25th Street. But they must now choose from a menu of alternatives that are all substantially more complex, costly and time-consuming.

The bottom line, engineers for the Florida Department of Transportation told members of the Metropolitan Planning Organization on Thursday: correcting the mistake could now cost up to tens of millions of dollars. A source familiar with the project said that could also delay opening of the \$88 million Miami Central Station by as much as a year, or to early 2015.

In January, FDOT said it realized only after construction had begun that the platform that will serve Amtrak was about 200 feet too short, meaning some trains would jut north into the busy street. FDOT, which has blamed erroneous information from Amtrak, at first considered simply permanently closing the street and re-routing traffic.

But FDOT higher-ups discarded that option after Miami-Dade Commission Chairwoman Rebeca Sosa objected and business and property owners on 25th Street, which is just one of two direct connections for motorists between Northwest South River Drive and LeJeune Road, complained. Sosa also chairs the MPO, the county's semi-autonomous transportation-planning agency.

"I want to assure you that the Florida Department of Transportation is not going to be closing 25th Street," FDOT representative Harold Desdunes told the MPO board.

Instead, FDOT officials said, the agency will now analyze 13 versions of several potential fixes, including tunneling under the train tracks, building an overpass over them, or lengthening the train platform to the south instead of into 25th Street.

The bills for the alternatives would range from \$6 million for the southward extension to \$20 million to \$25 million for the overpass, and \$35 million to \$55 million for the tunnel, said FDOT program manager Carl Filer.

The southward extension would also require relocation or demolition of structures already built within the transportation hub, according to the transportation consultant familiar with the project. Depending on what alternative is eventually chosen, the opening of the train station could be delayed six to 12 months, or even longer, said the consultant, who asked not to be named.

Asked whether Amtrak would help cover some of that additional cost, FDOT officials said they have no way to make the federal agency do so, and added that the state would probably have to cover it in full. Though officials did not address the point on Thursday, because of tight FDOT budgets, the money would likely come from other scheduled transportation projects.

FDOT and Amtrak have blamed each other.

FDOT engineers and consultants have said that Amtrak failed to advise them that it would sometimes use longer trains on its Miami route than those the station was designed for. FDOT said Amtrak raised no issues with platform length during extensive design-plan reviews that preceded the start of construction in May 2011.

Though Amtrak has disputed FDOT's version of events, emails between the federal train service and the state agency appear to support FDOT's account.