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\$526M Metrorail extension to get under way

By Bill Frogameni

Groundbreaking is to take place Friday morning on a \$526 million project that will extend Metrorail 2.4-miles – connecting the Earlington Heights station with Miami International Airport.

The project will result in 2,200 direct jobs, as well as 9,700 more indirect and “induced” jobs, a Miami-Dade Transit official said.

The extension will reach the airport at the Miami Intermodal Center – a facility designed to link busses, a rental car outlet, Tri-Rail, Amtrak and Metrorail – which is under construction.

Metrorail currently has no direct connection to the airport.

“The MIC-Earlington Heights connector is the most important expansion we’ve done on Metrorail in 25 years,” Miami-Dade Mayor Carlos Alvarez said in a statement. “It is also an important first step in an expanded Metrorail system that we hope to extend as financing becomes available.”

The county has sketched plans to add, in phases, 19.5 to 22.5 more miles to the system, depending on funding.

The project is expected to be complete in 2012. The bulk of the funding will come from the halfpenny tax for transportation that county voters approved in 2002, with the Florida Department of Transportation contributing \$100 million.

In March, transportation officials broke ground on the MIA Mover, a \$342 million light-rail system that, when completed, will connect the airport with the MIC.