

# MIAMI TODAY

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## TUNNELS MIGHT SPEED MASS TRANSIT UNDER DOWNTOWN, FLAGLER, KENDALL, PG. 2



**ORCHESTRA IS OFFICIAL:** The Miami City Commission voted to recognize the Miami Symphony Orchestra/Orquesta Sinfonica De Miami, Inc. (MISO) as the official symphony orchestra/orquesta sinfonica of the City of Miami. This authorizes MISO's use of the city seal. City Manager Art Noriega said the move is a springboard for the orchestra's expanded public outreach, which will include performances in all city parks. MISO

was founded in 1989 by the late Manuel Ochoa. Its mission is "to present symphonic music of consistently high-performance standards to a culturally diverse audience in a variety of settings and formats with the aim of educating, engaging, and enriching the community of one of the world's most international cities," the resolution reads.

**ADDING YOUNG VOICES:** Miami commissioners unanimously gave final approval to add young voting members to the city's Climate Resilience Committee. With the change, two of the nine appointed members must be in the 18-to-25 age range. Commissioners will make the two appointments. The young adults to be added are to have "a strong interest in and background or education in climate resilience including but not limited to impacts on infrastructure, water supply and quality, ecosystem health, housing, socioeconomic, or advocacy for vulnerable low-income communities," the resolution says. Numerous youths asked for representation on the committee, arguing their generation will be the most affected by climate change.

**UKRAINIAN ART AND FREEDOM:** As Ukraine battles for its life with Russia, a series of Ukrainian avant-garde works revealing freedom at the time Ukraine came out from under the rule of the former Soviet Union goes on display today (5/19) at the Coral Gables Museum, 285 Aragon Ave. It's the first stop on a traveling exhibit entitled "Painting in Excess: Kyiv's Art Revival 1985-1993." The exhibit comes to the museum thanks to a grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. The exhibition was on display at Rutgers University in New Jersey earlier this year, but many works could not be returned to Ukrainian collections because of the war.

**CRYPTO RENT ACCEPTED:** Real estate investment and development firm BH3 says it has begun demolition of a two-story building at 3801 N Miami Ave. in the Design District to make way for a 90,000-square-foot retail, showroom and office development. The development, called Design 38, was announced almost three years ago. The latest announcement says the owner will accept cryptocurrency as an option for lease payments. "With Miami emerging as the cryptocurrency capital of the world, accepting it as a form of lease payment is a timely point of differentiation for potential tenants," said BH3 co-CEO Daniel Lebensohn.



**Gen. Laura Richardson**  
Overseeing 31-nation region for US Southern Command  
The profile is on Page 4

## 15 electric bus fleet to transitway

By GABRIELA HENRIQUEZ STOIKOW

Miami-Dade keeps expanding its electric bus fleet, with a new buy of 15 buses to roll down the South Dade Transitway starting in August 2023.

Commissioners on Tuesday OK'd a grant pact with the Florida Department of Transportation to get the 60-foot electric buses for a \$17.47 million total cost, of which the state is to pay \$8.7 million and the county the remainder from half-penny transit surtax funds. Kionne McGhee cast the only 'no' vote.

The South Dade Transitway Corridor is one of the six rapid transit corridors of the Strategic Miami Area Rapid Transit (SMART) Plan. The 19.8-mile route runs from Dadeland South Metrorail station along US 1 to SW 344th Street.

The bus buy is part of an active solicitation of 100 60-foot electric buses, a memo from Chief Operations Officer Jimmy Morales details. "These are articulated buses with more passenger capacity," said Luis Espinoza, transportation department spokesperson.

The Miami-Dade Transportation Planning Organization Governing Board OK'd an amendment to the Transportation Improvement Program last week to include new federal funding to buy ten battery-powered electric buses.

The county has been shifting toward electric power since 2019, when commissioners agreed to buy 33 battery-electric buses and install depot chargers from Proterra. In 2021 the county bought 42 more buses, bringing total electric-powered transit buses to 75.

The shipment of 33 electric buses will begin to arrive in July, followed by another 42 from October through January 2023, Mr. Espinoza said. "Upon the full delivery of the 75 vehicles, DTPW will run one of the largest fleets of 40-foot battery-powered electric buses in the United States."

The department is now testing for service its first-ever all-electric bus, Mr. Espinoza added.

Proterra battery-electric buses feature zero tailpipe emissions, saving about 230,000 pounds of greenhouse gases a year when replacing a diesel bus, a county press note says.

## County seeks cyclist safeguards after fatalities

By GABRIELA HENRIQUEZ STOIKOW

Miami-Dade commissioners seek immediate action to protect cyclists just days after a Jeep SUV fatally injured two bicyclists on the Rickenbacker Causeway.

Commissioners Tuesday brainstormed actions and agreed to discuss cyclists' safety in a Transportation Mobility Committee meeting June 7. Raquel Regalado and Eileen Higgins said they would craft a proposal and Ms. Higgins asked Mayor Daniella Levine Cava for immediate actions beforehand.

Commissioners proposed immediately erecting barricades in high-incident areas and having tough conversations about funding needed improvements. For the long term, they said, the county should target federal and private funds and begin teaching people of all ages to respect cyclists.

"I am directing our department immediately to take urgent measures; I have in my authority up to \$250,000 that we will be using for short-term bicyclist safety enhancement measures on the Rickenbacker, exactly at the places that are most vulnerable," the mayor said.

Key Biscayne Mayor Michael Davey said the county's public works department is working with the village's staff to develop a conceptual plan for the causeway.

"While we appreciate the discussions that

### ■ \$90 million needed to replace Rickenbacker's Bear Cut Bridge, pg. 13

are taking place concerning the short-term ways to improve safety along the causeway, we believe that it is critical to work together toward a long-term solution for the Rickenbacker," he said.

Commissioner Regalado advocated barricades to protect cyclists in high-incident areas. "I don't know what else is it going to take for us to take some immediate steps, so I would like the administration to respond to that," she said.

Chairman Jose "Pepe" Diaz said enhancing the cyclist's security is going to take time to study before the county starts spending money on solutions.

"The issue of protected bike lanes in this county it's embarrassing how behind we are. I don't know if we're one decade, two decades or an entire century behind the rest of this country," said Ms. Higgins.

She criticized that the county's Vision Zero plan, whose aim is to eliminate all traffic-related deaths and serious injuries by 2030, "I think is an absolute joke."

"I just think the cycling [tragedy] on the Rickenbacker Causeway is similar to gun violence in my neighborhood and around North Miami and Liberty City," Commissioner

Sean Monestime said. "We just don't want to do what we're supposed to do about these things. It costs a lot of money to solve these issues [and] it requires very tough decisions."

Kionne McGhee argued for the temporary barricades to protect cyclists. "The temporary barricades, the partnership with someone on the outside, a private company or private donor, I think that needs to be done now."

Vice Chairman Oliver Gilbert agreed. "If we can do things like barricades now, to make specific areas safer, which we know are high-incident areas, I think that we should do it because I would much rather explain why we moved quickly to do something than explain to someone that we move slowly and did nothing and someone else died," he said.

Sen. Javier Souto advocated educating people of all ages to respect cyclists. "Bikers need to be respected, and that starts home and starts with the school," he said.

At Tuesday's meeting, commissioners approved a report by the mayor in which the Department of Transportation and Public Works identifies steps needed to replace the causeway's Bear Cut Bridge, another needed infrastructure project without funds allocated yet for design or construction.

## AGENDA

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC MISSION HAS LONG SHOPPING LIST ...	3	COUNTY STAYING WITH ITS SHORT-TERM INVESTMENTS ...	9
FLORIDA SETS A FIRST-QUARTER RECORD FOR VISITORS ...	3	EXPERTS LOOK FOR A RISE IN SAVINGS INTEREST RATES ...	11
VIEWPOINT: GREETING A SHERIFF WE NEVER ASKED FOR ...	6	AS MORTGAGE RATES RISE, BUYERS MIGHT SCALE BACK ...	12
UM OFFERING SCHOLARSHIPS TO UKRAINIAN REFUGEES ...	7	MIAMI GIVES \$2 MILLION TO BAKEHOUSE ART COMPLEX ...	15

# THE INSIDER

## BEACON COUNCIL HUNT:

After the appointment of **William D. Talbert III** as the Beacon Council's interim president and CEO following the death of **Michael Finney**, the county's economic development partnership is expecting in about six to 12 months to have a permanent president candidate for the role, said a spokesperson from the Beacon Council. The search committee is chaired by **Yolanda Cash Jackson** from law firm Becker and Poliakoff, chair-elect of the council, and **George Bermudez** from Bank of America, who is the current chair. The council would be looking to continue the Miami momentum on community and leadership, said the spokesperson. In a statement, Ms. Jackson said, "We are looking for a visionary leader who champions collaboration, understands how to drive long-term, inclusive prosperity, and is committed to this community."

## GABLES SEEKS CONSULATES:

Coral Gables Mayor **Vince Lago** is on a recruiting mission to add to the group of what he noted are 20-plus global consulates in his city. As he introduced the speaker, US Southern Command's Gen. **Laura Richardson**, at the Miami Consular Corps' lunch meeting at the Biltmore Hotel last week, he told the leaders of the area's consulates that "We are open for business... Please join us. We will roll out the red carpet."

## KEYS AND PASTA:

In giving the Key to the City of Coral Gables to Gen. **Laura Richardson**, Mayor **Vince Lago** took pains to note that he does not pass such keys around indiscriminately. It was the third key he'd given in the past year, he said. Gen. Richardson, looking forward to the Biltmore Hotel's lunch menu, told the ballroom full of guests not to worry about how much they would consume, noting that "It's National Eat What You Want Day." A website tracking such days say a ranking of foods Americans would eat every day if they didn't have to worry about the consequences puts pizza first at 13%, followed by pasta at 12%; and then burgers and ice cream at 11% each. The Biltmore lunch did include pasta. If you don't know Eat What You Want Day, it's no wonder: the website lists 3,133 days celebrated.

## SAND IN HIS SHOES:

**Manny Medina**, the founder of eMerge Americas, will receive the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce's annual Sand in My Shoes award this year, the organization announced Tuesday. The award, established in 1981, honors people who become committed to the community and stayed the course here. The "Sand in My Shoes" phrase was coined by short story author and reporter **Damon Runyon**, who moved to South Florida from New York in the late 1920s and became enchanted with the area. "The truth is, Bill, I've got sand in my shoes," Runyon wrote to a friend. Mr. Medina is founder and managing partner of Medina Capital, chairman of Cyxtera Technologies, and chairman of Appgate. The Sand in My Shoes award is to be given at a ceremony on Jungle Island on Oct. 27.

## MIA RECOGNITION:

Miami International Airport received four national awards from the National Association of Counties for improved passenger and cargo operations. In the Health category, MIA's Vaccine Outreach Program was recognized for making Covid-19 vaccine more easily accessible to employees and travelers with two airport vaccination sites from May to July 2021, an Aviation Department note says. The Transportation category recognized the airport's MIAVAC19 Task Force, created in late 2020 to prepare and coordinate MIA's cargo community for vaccine arrival and mass distribution. The airport won in Information Technology for launching automated chatbot "Mia" in English and Spanish for customer service inquiries and Covid-19 concerns. In that category, MIA was recognized for creating the Part 139 Safety Inspection app to digitalize the daily airfield self-inspection, which historically was performed and cataloged via paper data collection. "We look forward to delivering many more customer service enhancements at MIA in the year ahead," said **Ralph Cutié**, aviation director and CEO.

## PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIANS:

Are at shortage in the State of Florida and it is anticipated that they would continue to be as many physicians are approaching retirement age and as fewer physicians going into primary care, **Bill Ulbricht**, CEO of Baptist Hospital told Miami Today. "Baptist Health is working on a primary care strategic plan, not just for Baptist Hospital, but for the overall system to determine what we need to do, where we need to do it, and how do we need to do it to increase the primary care opportunities and access," he said. Mr. Ulbricht explained that some primary care physicians with over 20 years in the field may be fully booked and people can't have access to them, while other physicians are not that busy. "It's an access problem, sometimes [concerning] to an individual physician, sometimes to a community," he said.

## PASSPORT TO EQUITY:

Twenty-five Miami Dade College students who have never had a US passport will get one free through a grant in which the college participates in the Institute of International Education American Passport Project. The college was the only Florida higher education institution selected to receive this grant. "Through this grant, Miami Dade College will move one step forward in closing the equity gap, in promoting access and study abroad educational opportunities to underrepresented college students, who comprise the majority of the diverse populations we serve," said **Michaela Tomova**, vice provost of academic affairs, who oversees the Office of International Education at the college. Qualifying students must be at least 18, US citizens, be requesting a passport for the first time, be a first-year student, and Pell Grant eligible. In addition, applicants must meet diverse identity criteria. Established in 1919, the Institute of International Education is a global not-for-profit that designs international education strategies and program services.

**GAS PRICE RECORD:** Gasoline prices have hit a record high in Florida, as the state average reached \$4.49 per gallon Sunday, according to AAA - The Auto Club Group.



Y. Cash Jackson



Vince Lago



Manny Medina



Bill Ulbricht



Michaela Tomova



Photo by Miami Today

The county's major tunneling project was the PortMiami tunnel, shown during its 2013 completion.

# Tunnels could expand mass transit under downtown, Flagler, Kendall

By GABRIELA HENRIQUEZ STOIKOW

The Miami-Dade Transportation Planning Organization is looking at the possibility of expanding the transit system underground. It just completed a study evaluating emerging technologies to assess the use of tunnel corridors in the county.

The study used a tiered level analysis to identify potential projects, and the report only includes tier 1 and tier 2. The 78-page study found in the tier 1 that the county has 25 potential transit tunnel corridors, of which six are part of the Long Range Transportation Plan (L RTP) and two are part of the SMART Plan — the Flagler Corridor and the Kendall Corridor.

The Long Range Transportation Plan is a comprehensive transportation infrastructure plan with goals for the year 2045. The corridors identified in this for potential tunnels are Miami Central to PortMiami, FTX Arena to the Design District, Miami Central to the Design District, the Overturn Connector, Magic City Casino to Douglas Road, and the Ludlum Corridor.

Tier 2 narrowed the corridors to 13, including the Flagler and Kendall corridors, the Ludlum Corridor, and the Miami Central to Design District.

If the county decides to further vet the transit tunneling technologies and corridors identified in the report, it would have to proceed with a tier 3 level analysis, which would identify potential environmental issues on the selected corridors, the concept development and layouts, the hours of operation and number of vehicles required, and the establishment of a project working group.

The organization's consultant, WSP, led the evaluation and screened the corridors against the coverage, connection, equity, and efficiency they would provide. WSP also studied small diameter tunnels, based on the Las Vegas Convention Center Loop, and large diameter tunnels, based on accommodating electric buses with 60-passenger capacity per vehicle.

Although both were studied, the tunnel system proposed would only be open to publicly operated or publicly contracted electric



*'The tunnels are intended to accommodate public transportation via electric multi-passenger transit vehicles for the advancement of mobility options.'*

Aileen Bouclé

vehicles for transit purposes. The system would have street-level stations and an open platform underground for vehicle distribution and transfer between routes, the report says.

"The tunnels are intended to accommodate public transportation via electric multi-passenger transit vehicles for the advancement of mobility options in Miami-Dade County," said Aileen Bouclé, TPO executive director, in a written statement to the newspaper.

The report details that the methods used nowadays to construct tunnels can be categorized into five, of which excavation by tunnel boring machine is preferred because it would cause the least surface disruption.

The study considered the cost per mile. "Typical tunnel costs would likely range from \$30 [million per] mile for smaller diameter tunnels with limited station work, to well over \$100 [million per] mile for projects that are of larger diameter and have significant underground stations involved," Ms. Bouclé wrote.

The report analyzed the costs for the Miami International Airport to Wynwood corridor and then applied it to the other proposals. The corridor is approximately 4.2 miles, and the estimated costs are based on twin 14-foot outside

diameter tunnels with five stations proposed.

The estimated cost for a twin 14-foot diameter bored tunnel along the entire length of the corridor is estimated at \$280 million, or approximately \$30 million per mile of tunnel. Each of the five stations has a mean base total cost of \$150 million.

Cross passageways would probably be constructed by conventional tunneling methods and would result in a direct unit cost between \$5 million and \$10 million per cross-passageway. This adds up to a minimum of \$240 million direct cost for all cross-passageways.

The overall construction of five underground stations, running tunnels, and cross passage for emergency egress totals \$1.08 billion to \$1.65 Billion.

The Flagler Corridor could cost \$1.5498 billion to \$2.457 billion; the Kendall Corridor, from Dadeland South Metrorail Station to Baptist West, could cost \$1.8991 billion to \$3.0108 billion.

The study did not include operation and maintenance evaluations, which would be addressed in tier 3 of the study.

Members of the county's Transportation Planning Organization first directed Ms. Bouclé to develop a scope and budget for the study last July. The study began in August 2021, was completed in February and was presented at the TPO's board of directors this month.

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