

THE INSIDER

PUBLIC HOUSING UPGRADE: Miami-Dade's management of public housing, which had been graded "substandard" by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development since 2009, was upgraded to "standard" in the past fiscal year, Mayor **Carlos Gimenez** told commissioners in a memo this month.

DELINQUENCIES RISE: Miami-Dade County's past due accounts receivable have risen from something over \$36 million at the end of last year to \$37.3 million at the end of March. The Water and Sewer Department had the most delinquencies, at just under \$12.5 million, down from \$12.8 million at the end of 2015. The Aviation Department was owed nearly \$10.9 million that was at least 60 days past due, up from under \$10.5 million at the end of last year. In reporting the delinquencies, Mayor **Carlos Gimenez** noted that county departments must transfer these outstanding balances to the Finance Department's Credit and Collections Section or approved outside agencies after 90 days.

MORE CONSTRUCTION JOBS: The number of persons working in construction in Miami-Dade County hit 46,100 in March, up from 44.6 in February, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. The number was the most since 46,700 working in the industry in August 2008, though far below the decade's high of 56,600 active construction workers in September 2007 at the start of the county's condo collapse.

NEW CITY MANAGER: Miami Springs this week named assistant city manager and finance director **William Alonso** to be city manager effective Aug. 1, after the July 31 retirement of City Manager **Ron Gorland**. Before coming to the city, Mr. Alonso was for three years accounting firm Grau and Co.

TRANSIT PLANNING OFFICERS: The Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC) has elected new officers to serve a two-year term. **Alan B. Fishman** was selected as the CTAC Chair, and Dr. **Claudius A. Carnegie** was selected as Vice Chair. The committee advises the Miami-Dade Metropolitan Planning Organization Governing Board on citizens' views regarding transportation planning.

HOLLO RECEIVES TOP HONOR: **Tibor Hollo**, chairman and president of Florida East Coast Realty and a pioneer in development in Miami-Dade County, will receive the Jay Malina Award at the 14th annual Beacon Council Awards May 4 at the Hilton Miami Downtown. Launchcode is to receive the Education Award, Baptist Health South Florida the Chairman's Award and Topp Solutions the Corporate Social Responsibility Award. Nine industry awards will also be made.

CITYWIDE ENERGY UPGRADES: Miami Mayor **Tomás Regalado** and other civic leaders have voted to bring Florida's largest climate resiliency property assesses clean energy (PACE) program to every resident and business in the city's five districts. In Florida, Ygrene has financed more than 90% of the PACE projects to date, providing residential, commercial and multifamily property owners financing to immediately install efficiency, renewable energy and climate resiliency upgrades with no up-front costs. The voluntary program allows homeowners to make energy improvements and add hurricane protection immediately and repay the cost over up to 20 years through yearly assessments on their property tax bills.

RAPID ACCESS: Miami city commissioners have agreed to pay for a medical device used to establish stable and secure vascular access. On April 14, commissioners waived requirements for competitive sealed bidding and awarded a contract for the EZ-IO Intraosseous Infusion System and accessories from Arrow International Inc. for the Department of Fire-Rescue for a three-year term for an estimated \$75,000. EZ-IO can establish stable and secure vascular access in less than 10 seconds for adults or children, awake or unconscious. Many EMS services in the US use EZ-IO as their first-line solution for vascular access in cardiac arrest and resuscitation scenarios, enabling critical medications and fluids to be given very early in resuscitative efforts, according to officials. A staff investigation determined that Arrow is the only provider of this equipment.

POPULAR PASSPORT KIOSKS: Roughly half of all international passengers arriving at Miami International Airport use Automated Passport Control kiosks, Miami-Dade Aviation Director and CEO **Emilio González** told the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce this month. MIA was the second airport to have functioning self-service kiosks, which he said aren't federally funded. The first 36 in 2013 cost \$3.6 million. The kiosks can be used by US citizens and those of 38 countries participating in the US Department of State's Visa Waiver Program.

KEEPING TRACK: Miami leaders want to make it easier to deal with vacant and rundown buildings. The city commission has approved an amendment requiring the registration and maintenance of certain real property by the mortgagee, providing for penalties and enforcement. City Attorney **Victoria Mendez** said the amendment tightened up the existing ordinance. "It streamlines the process," she said. The move establishes a process to address the deterioration and blight of neighborhoods caused by vacant properties and properties with defaulted mortgages, and to regulate and reduce these properties. Foreclosed, vacant and abandoned properties cause communities increased compliance concerns, often threatening community health and vitality, the legislation reads. This amendment aims to give the city a better grip on properties being left vacant and not maintained properly.

CORRECTION: Several recent stories have misstated **Neisen Kasdin's** title. He is office-managing partner of Akerman LLP.



Photo by Maxine Udan

Current plans would have one rail line across the MacArthur Causeway link with one along the Beach.

State disagrees with Baylink plan, won't take lead to make it happen

BY SUSAN DANSEYAR

While the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) will continue to financially support a design and engineering study to develop a Beach Corridor Direct Connection, the department won't take the lead on a long, costly examination of building fixed-guideway rail linking downtown Miami to the Miami Beach Convention Center via the MacArthur Causeway.

An agreement, based on the Metropolitan Planning Organization's Policy Executive Committee (PEC), came before county commissioners April 19 but was deferred. Commissioner Bruno Barreiro must put off approving the agreement with FDOT and the cities of Miami and Miami Beach to develop what was formerly termed Baylink.

It was the second time he asked for a deferral. He said last week he didn't want to hold up the decision but was postponing on behalf of the county transportation department, which was awaiting additional information.

On Tuesday, Mr. Barreiro received an email from Gus Pego, district secretary for FDOT, explaining that the department is not in agreement with the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) placed on the commission's April 19 agenda.

"As you are aware, the MOU was based on the previous recommendations of the MPO [for] 'the direct connect' and not the expanded and bifurcated scope enhanced by the PEC," Mr. Pego's email stated. "As more information becomes available, the MOU



Photo by Marlene Quaroni

A Tuesday email from Gus Pego said the state disagrees with plans.

should be revised accordingly."

Mr. Barreiro told Miami Today on Tuesday that county Transit and Public Works Director Alice Bravo requested that he make a motion to defer voting while she and FDOT officials looked into how best to apply for federal funds. The federal environmental study could take years and cost about \$10 million.

"My understanding is the City of Miami has funding in place for its portion of the study and construction," Mr. Barreiro said. "Ms. Bravo was working with FDOT on finding the best funding outcome for the continued study with the final objective for capital funding."

The county commission is now scheduled to vote on the agreement May 17.

The agreement, which to date only the City of Miami has signed, states the cities and county each agree to contribute \$417,000 (4.17% apiece of the initial project funding), the state \$5 million (50%) and the Citizens' Independent Transportation Trust \$3.75 million (37.5%). The funds would be returned or increased based on the respective percentages, depending on actual project costs. Light rail connecting Miami Beach with the mainland could cost more than \$532 million.

On Feb. 4, the MPO's PEC, comprised of the mayors of Miami-Dade, Miami and Miami Beach and county commissioners Xavier Suarez and Mr. Barreiro, unanimously supported the agreement to build Baylink.

Now that FDOT has said that it's not supportive of the PEC's vote, Mr. Barreiro said a new lead agency must be identified,

which could be the county or another government entity.

The agreement, which Mr. Pego said should be revised, stated the parties wanted to continue the efforts already underway to improve regional mobility, which have involved local, regional and state stakeholder collaboration and coordination, including ongoing efforts to identify optimum multimodal alternatives for a balanced regional transportation system.

"The development of a multimodal transportation system within the southeast Florida region involves numerous transportation agencies and stakeholders and is a complex undertaking," the agreement says. "Each of the parties has skills and abilities necessary for successful implementation of the Beach Corridor Direct Connection."

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**Bruno Barreiro**