

Memorandum



Date: July 1, 2014

To: Honorable Chairwoman Rebeca Sosa and Members
Board of County Commissioners

From: Carlos A. Gimenez
Mayor 

Subject: Report on a Program to Use the Area Underneath the Metrorail Guideway for a
Mobility / Recreational Corridor and Greenway (i.e. The "Greenlink")

In 1983, as part of the original Metrorail construction, a nine-mile pedestrian/bicycle path from Dadeland South Station to the Miami River area called the M-Path was built under the Metrorail guideway. Over the years, residents have discovered its many uses and the M-Path is primarily utilized today as a bicycle commuter route and a jogging/walking trail. The M-Path is one of the most significant bicycle and pedestrian corridors in Miami. This trail connects the Metrorail Stations of Brickell, Vizcaya, Coconut Grove, Douglas Road, the University of Miami, South Miami, Dadeland North and Dadeland South. My goal is to continue raising awareness and encouraging the use of the M-Path, by connecting trails and developing exercise activity opportunities along this corridor, to provide the communities with healthy, safe and convenient access to daily activities, and to ultimately increase ridership; however, funding for both improvements and maintenance of the M-Path are limited.

Background

Active steps have been taken over the last few years through the implementation of parts of the Metrorail M-Path Master Plan developed by the Miami-Dade Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in 2007. These include the construction of missing M-Path sections, the pedestrian bridge over the Snapper Creek expressway and the on-going Miami-Dade Transit (MDT) Metrorail Bike Path Improvements (M-Path) project which is addressing needs at intersections (i.e. installation of new directional, way-finding and traffic signs).

Shortly thereafter, in February 2008, the Board of County Commissioners passed Resolution No. R-171-08 adopting the Parks and Open Space System Master Plan which serves as the County's framework for a system of parks, public spaces, natural and cultural areas connected by greenways, waterways, trails and streets that serve as linear parks. This plan is designed to be integrated into the overall fabric of the community to create a healthier, greener and more economically vibrant environment; a place where County residents want to live, work and play, and that tourist want to visit. In 2009, the Open Space Master Plan was incorporated into the Comprehensive Development Master Plan (CDMP) and the Parks Department has been charged with coordinating the County's various agencies toward its implementation.

The GreenLink

Recently, a group of interested citizens led by Ms. Meg Daly began to engage MDT, Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces (PROS) as well as Public Works and Waste Management (PWWM), in an effort to work with Miami-Dade County to use the area under the southern leg of the Metrorail for a mobility/recreational corridor and greenway. This citizens' initiative has come to be known as Friends of the GreenLink, an initiative that I endorse and support. Friends of the GreenLink is a 501.c3 non-profit organization.

Friends of the GreenLink goals for the M-Path are:

- To increase Metrorail ridership by attracting and encouraging auto commuters to use Metrorail as a healthy, economical and efficient alternative to driving;

- To encourage exercise – 400,000 residents within one-half mile of the GreenLink will be able to safely walk, bicycle, and recreate in an urban environment;
- To increase public green space;
- To provide economic development;
- To re-image US-1 from a congested road just for cars into a corridor that moves people from their homes to businesses, whether by driving, riding Metrorail, biking or walking;
- To connect communities with a safe, accessible and beautiful greenway;

I have directed MDT and PROS to work closely with Friends of the GreenLink to obtain approval on all planned activities. These activities will include advocating for the development of the GreenLink, seeking and securing private and foundation funding sources, and assistance in seeking public funding. Funds will be used to plan, design, construct, beautify and maintain the County-owned land underneath and alongside Metrorail from the Dadeland South Metrorail Station to the Miami River. Friends of the GreenLink will engage stakeholders along the corridor to ensure broad-based community support. Friends of the GreenLink estimate the cost of planning, design and construction to range between \$3 million and \$5 million per mile.

As these activities evolve, there will be a need to formalize a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Friends of the GreenLink. The MOU will provide a framework for a close coordination effort between Friends of the GreenLink and Miami-Dade County to implement the vision to use the land under Metrorail from Dadeland South Metrorail Station to the Miami River for a mobility/recreational corridor and greenway. This MOU will require approval of the Federal Transit Administration and the Florida Department of Transportation and will be brought to the Board of County Commissioners for final approval.

Other Related Projects

Another similar initiative MDT is working on with PROS is in transforming the area under the Metrorail guideway, from the south shoreline of the Miami River to SW 13 Street. This area is known as the Brickell Promenade and a portion of it was designated as the Ludwig Van Beethoven Promenade in 2009 by BCC Resolution R-373-09. This project will create a transit oriented open space and greenway which will promote alternate transportation modes, create a seamless connection between transit and Brickell area destinations and establish a recreational area for residents and tourists to celebrate social, cultural, recreational and environmental opportunities. PROS is working closely with MDT and the GreenLink team and has secured FDOT construction funding, while working with the City of Miami to identify and secure Design funding for this project. The Brickell Promenade will serve as the Demonstration Project, or Proof of Concept, for the GreenLink and will serve as a design standard for the green spaces along the M-Path.

In the interim, MDT has been developing Transit Oriented Developments (TOD's) at station areas. We are presently working on implementing TOD's at several rail stations. It is important that these areas be maintained as TOD's since they increase and sustain ridership, increase economic development and provide a revenue source for the Transit Department. I have also tasked MDT with implementing the use of air rights along transit corridors and other assets for development efforts. In its agreements with developers at these and other stations along the GreenLink tract, MDT will ensure that developers coordinate their proposed development closely with the GreenLink trail. Likewise, these developments will implement designs that are pedestrian-friendly and address ground-level civic spaces to foster programming and activity at the stations once developed.

Another project involves an interlocal agreement with the City of Miami and MDT for the construction of the Overtown Greenway. This project will be implemented in phases and will be designed to meet the Green Local Government Designation Standard. It will provide enhancements including a greenway with a bicycle/pedestrian path, sidewalks, and amenities such as benches, trash bins, and lighting. These enhancements and amenities will be located within the Overtown community along NW 2nd Avenue, NW 3rd Avenue, NW 11th Terrace, NW 11th Street and the Metrorail Corridor.

Greenways such as New York's High-Line, the Bloomingdale Trail in Chicago ("the 606") and Indianapolis' Cultural Trail are all examples of successful projects by cities that have recognized the economics of connecting great public spaces and the transformative effect on those communities through which they run. Last year, New York's park in the sky attracted more than 3.7 million visitors and generated \$2 billion worth of private investment surrounding the park. It is predicted to exceed \$900 million in new tax revenues for the city over the next 20 years. We must move Miami-Dade County towards achieving successes such as these and I believe the M-path and partnership with the GreenLink along with the various developments described above are steps toward that goal.

I will continue to report on the progress of this effort in the coming months. If you have any questions, please contact Deputy Mayor Alina T. Hudak at 305-375-2531 or me directly.

c: Alina T. Hudak, Deputy Mayor and Interim Director of Public Works and Waste Management
Jack Kardys, Director, Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces
Ysela Llort, Director, Miami-Dade Transit
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Meg Daly, The GreenLink