

Work begins on Metrorail link to Miami International Airport



AIMING HIGH: Miami-Dade County officials break ground on a 2.4-mile Metrorail extension to Miami International Airport, to be completed in 2012. From left are County Commissioner Audrey Edmonson, Citizens' Independent Transportation Trust member Anna Ward, Commissioner Javier Souto, Florida Department of Transportation District 6 Secretary Gus Pego, Miami-Dade Transit Director Harpal Kapoor, Commissioners Dennis Moss, Barbara Jordan and Katy Sorenson, Miami-Dade Mayor Carlos Alvarez, Commissioners Rebeca Sosa, Bruno Barreiro and Sally Heyman, and County Manager George Burgess.

Miami-Dade County has opened a new chapter in Metrorail history – 25 years to the month after Metrorail carried its first passengers.

County leaders broke ground May 1 on a 2.4-mile extension of Metrorail from the existing Earlington Heights station to the Miami Intermodal Center, the county's future central transportation hub under construction next to Miami International Airport.

The new Metrorail line is scheduled to open in 2012. Passengers will connect to the airport via a people mover linking MIA to the MIC, which will also serve Metrobuses, Amtrak, the tri-county Tri-Rail commuter rail system, and Greyhound and feature a centralized car rental facility.

"This 2.4-mile Metrorail extension will connect Miami International Airport to downtown Miami – a vital link for the millions of visitors, residents and employees who travel to and from the airport every year," Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos Alvarez said at the groundbreaking ceremony, which drew a crowd of hundreds of residents and officials. "Imagine: no more having to fight traffic,

call a taxi or pay for airport parking. Residents and visitors can just hop on Metrorail and take the stress out getting to the airport."

Most of the funding for the \$526 million project will come from the People's Transportation Plan half-penny sales surtax approved by County voters in 2002. The Florida Department of Transportation is contributing \$100 million.

Officials also celebrated the 25th anniversary of Metrorail, which opened on May 20, 1984. Five of Metrorail's original train operators and mechanics were on hand to participate in the festivities, which included birthday cake and a performance by a local high school marching band.

"I can think of no better way to celebrate Metrorail's first quarter century than by starting construction on the next phase of the system," Miami-Dade Transit Director Harpal Kapoor said. "The MIC-Earlington Heights Connector will serve as a cornerstone of Miami-Dade's development as a world-class community by providing a rapid transit connection to the airport."