

GOOD EVENING, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!

IT'S AN HONOR TO JOIN ALL OF YOU HERE AT THE CORAL GABLES COUNTRY CLUB TONIGHT.

SOME OF YOU MAY NOT KNOW THIS BUT LONG BEFORE I STARTED MY CURRENT JOB AS COUNTY MAYOR, I SPENT TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AS A FIREFIGHTER IN THE CITY OF MIAMI.

IN THE PROCESS, I GOT TO KNOW OUR COMMUNITY LIKE THE BACK OF MY HAND.

I ALSO WITNESSED THE MASSIVE GROWTH OF OUR ENVIRONMENT FIRSTHAND - THE CITY AS WE KNEW IT WAS UNDERGOING A TOTAL TRANSFORMATION RIGHT BEFORE OUR EYES.

AND OVER THE YEARS, I CAME TO HAVE A GREAT APPRECIATION FOR THE INFRASTRUCTURE THAT - IN A VERY REAL SENSE - IS THE PHYSICAL BACKBONE OF OUR HOMETOWN.

OUR INFRASTRUCTURE UNDERPINS EVERYTHING THAT WE DO AS A COMMUNITY -

- SAFE DRINKING WATER;

- STREETS THAT DRAIN DURING A DOWNPOUR;
- DRAWBRIDGES THAT OPEN AND CLOSE SAFELY;
- BUILDINGS THAT STAND TALL IN A STORM;
- THE LIST IS ENDLESS.

SO IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT THE WORK THAT YOU DO AS ENGINEERS HAS A TREMENDOUS IMPACT ON EVERYONE WHO LIVES, WORKS OR VISITS MIAMI-DADE COUNTY.

AND AS YOU KNOW, ENGINEERING AND INFRASTRUCTURE ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR WORK AS COUNTY GOVERNMENT.

SO I WANT TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE YOU AN UPDATE ON SOME OF THE SIGNIFICANT ENGINEERING PROJECTS THAT WE'RE CURRENTLY UNDERTAKING, AS WELL AS WHAT'S TO COME IN THE YEARS AHEAD.

BUT BEFORE WE TURN OUR ATTENTION TO THOSE, I'D LIKE TO TAKE A STEP BACK AND REMIND EVERYONE THAT LIKE THE REST OF THE WORLD, MIAMI-DADE RECENTLY WEATHERED ONE OF THE WORST ECONOMIC TIMES IN MODERN HISTORY.

I WAS FIRST ELECTED MAYOR DURING THIS DIFFICULT TIME WHEN UNEMPLOYMENT IN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY REACHED NEARLY 13 PERCENT.

WITH THE ECONOMIC SITUATION DETERIORATING, MY ADMINISTRATION WAS ABLE TO KEEP OVERALL TAX RATES LOW AND REMAINED COMMITTED TO MAKING CRITICAL INVESTMENTS IN OUR COMMUNITY.

WITH THE SUPPORT OF OUR BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, WE CUT TAXES, STREAMLINED GOVERNMENT TO OPERATE MUCH MORE EFFICIENTLY, AND WELCOMED PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO COMPLETE PROJECTS THAT ARE CRITICAL TO THE FUTURE OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY.

SOME OF THOSE PROJECTS CANNOT GO WITHOUT MENTION. ONE OF OUR ECONOMIC ENGINES, PORTMIAMI, HAS WITNESSED THE COMPLETION OF TWO OF ITS BIGGEST PROJECTS: THE -50 FT DEEP DREDGE AND THE RETURN OF INTERMODAL RAIL SERVICE.

TWO WEEKS AGO, WE WERE JOINED BY OUR GOVERNOR AND LT. GOVERNOR TO CELEBRATE THE

CULMINATION OF THESE TWO CRITICAL MILESTONES.

THANKS TO THE DREDGE, PORTMIAMI IS NOW THE CLOSEST U.S. PORT TO THE PANAMA CANAL WITH A -50 FOOT DEEP CHANNEL, CAPABLE OF HANDLING THE NEW GENERATION OF LARGER CONTAINER VESSELS.

THIS ENSURES THAT WE'RE WELL-POSITIONED TO COMPETE IN THE POST-PANAMAX ERA... ALLOWING US NOT ONLY TO REMAIN THE CARGO GATEWAY TO THE AMERICAS, BUT A GLOBAL GATEWAY HUB.

AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, CREATING MORE THAN 30,000 JOBS.

JUST AS IMPORTANT AS THE DREDGING PROJECT IS THE NEWLY RENOVATED INTERMODAL RAIL SERVICE. THIS PROJECT, SIMILAR TO THE PORT TUNNEL, HAS NOT ONLY MADE OUR PORT MORE COMPETITIVE BY INCREASING THE SPEED AT WHICH GOODS ENTER AND EXIT THE PORT, BUT WE ARE NOW ABLE TO CONNECT TO 70 PERCENT OF THE U.S. POPULATION IN FOUR DAYS OR LESS...

AFTER A YEAR, THE PORT TUNNEL HAS PROVEN TO ALLEVIATE TRAFFIC ON OUR URBAN CORE SURFACE STREETS.

SPEAKING OF TRAFFIC, SOME EXCITING THINGS ARE HAPPENING WITH TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY OPTIONS IN MIAMI-DADE.

MIAMI-DADE TRANSIT RECENTLY PLACED 24 STATE-OF-THE-ART HYBRID-ARTICULATED BUSES THAT WILL ENHANCE SERVICE ALONG TWO OF THE MOST WIDELY USED BUS ROUTES IN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, ROUTES 34 AND 38.

THE 60-FOOT BUSES, WHICH LOOK LIKE TRAINS ROLLING DOWN THE DEDICATED LANES OF THE SOUTH MIAMI-DADE BUSWAY, ARE EQUIPPED WITH WI-FI MODEMS, AND CAN CARRY UP TO 90 PASSENGERS.

NOT ONLY ARE THESE BUSES HYBRID, THEY BENEFIT THE ECONOMY BY REDUCING FUEL AND ENERGY USE, WHILE PROVIDING AN ALTERNATIVE TO DRIVING.

WE WILL ALSO BE PLACING HYBRID BUSES ALONG BISCAYNE BOULEVARD AND 27 AVENUE TO ENHANCE SERVICE ALONG THOSE CORRIDORS.

IN TERMS OF THE COUNTY'S MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS, I'VE SAVED THE BIGGEST AND BEST FOR LAST, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

IT'S A PROJECT THAT YOU AS ENGINEERS WILL UNDERSTAND AND APPRECIATE MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE.

I'M TALKING ABOUT THE TOTAL OVERHAUL OF OUR AGING WATER AND SEWER SYSTEM IN THE YEARS AHEAD.

TO GIVE YOU A SENSE OF THE PROJECT SCOPE, OUR EXISTING SYSTEM CONSISTS OF:

- OVER 14,000 MILES OF PIPES;
- 3 REGIONAL WATER PLANTS AND 5 SMALLER WATER PLANTS;
- 3 WASTEWATER PLANTS;
- AND OVER 1,000 SEWER PUMP STATIONS

OUR WATER AND SEWER SYSTEM FACES CHALLENGES THAT WE ARE ALREADY TACKLING.

WHILE OUR COUNTYWIDE INFRASTRUCTURE - INCLUDING OUR PORTS, AND OUR WATER AND SEWER DEPARTMENT - IS RECEIVING UNPRECEDENTED LEVELS OF INVESTMENT, NOTHING IS MORE IMPORTANT TO US THAN OUR WATER. AS WE SAY HERE IN MIAMI-DADE, "IT STARTS WITH WATER."

THAT IS WHY DURING THE NEXT 15 TO 20 YEARS, THE COUNTY WILL INVEST APPROXIMATELY \$13.5 BILLION TO ENHANCE AND UPGRADE OUR WATER AND SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE THROUGH THE USE OF STATE-OF-THE-ART TECHNOLOGY AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS.

THAT BRINGS ME TO A FINAL POINT THAT I WANT TO TOUCH ON BRIEFLY BEFORE WE BEGIN THE INSTALLATION CEREMONY:

SIMPLY PUT, HOW DO WE PAY FOR ALL OF THESE PROJECTS?

IN SOME CASES, TRADITIONAL MUNICIPAL BONDS ARE STILL THE BEST WAY TO GO.

OUR AIRPORT AND SEAPORT, IN PARTICULAR, UTILIZE LARGE BONDS TO MEET A LOT OF THEIR CAPITAL NEEDS.

AT THE SAME TIME, MANY OF THEIR PROJECTS ALSO GET NEEDED FINANCING FROM THE STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS, AS IS THE CASE WITH THE DEEP DREDGE PROJECT.

BUT JUST LIKE MUNICIPAL BUDGETS, THOSE BUDGETS ARE GETTING SMALLER AND LESS MONEY IS MAKING ITS WAY DOWN TO US.

AS A RESULT, LOCAL GOVERNMENTS LIKE OURS ARE INCREASINGLY LOOKING TO PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS AS A VEHICLE FOR MEETING OUR INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS.

THE P3 MODEL IS ONE THAT I SUPPORT, AND I EXPECT THAT IT WILL BECOME THE RULE - RATHER THAN THE EXCEPTION - FOR MAJOR MUNICIPAL CAPITAL PROJECTS IN SHORT ORDER.

IN FACT LAST WEEK, I PARTICIPATED IN A TWO-DAY P3 CONFERENCE TO STUDY WAYS TO INCORPORATE MORE OF THESE TYPES OF PROJECTS INTO OUR CURRENT AND FUTURE PLANS.

CLEARLY, THIS IS A MODEL THAT WE ARE EMBRACING - PARTICULARLY FOR OUR LARGER CAPITAL PROJECTS - AND IT'S ONE THAT WE'LL CONTINUE TO USE.

SO THAT'S AN OVERVIEW OF WHERE MIAMI-DADE COUNTY STANDS NOW IN TERMS MAJOR OF INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS.

HOPEFULLY, YOU NOW HAVE A BETTER SENSE OF WHAT WE'RE DOING AND HOW WE'RE GETTING IT DONE.

ON THAT NOTE, I WANT TO CONCLUDE BY ONCE AGAIN THANKING THE CUBAN AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF CIVIL ENGINEERS FOR INVITING ME TO BE HERE TODAY.

I'M GRATEFUL FOR YOUR TIME AND ATTENTION - AND I'M EVEN MORE APPRECIATIVE OF THE WORK THAT YOU DO AS PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS.

THANK YOU, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!