

**City of Miami Beach - City Commission Workshop
Commission Chambers, 3rd Floor, City Hall
1700 Convention Center Drive
March 22, 2002**

Mayor David Dermer	Present
Vice-Mayor Saul Gross	In at 2:26 p.m.
Commissioner Matti Herrera Bower	Absent
Commissioner Simon Cruz	Absent
Commissioner Luis R. Garcia, Jr.	Present for a while
Commissioner Jose Smith	In at 2:23 p.m.
Commissioner Richard L. Steinberg	Present

City Manager Jorge M. Gonzalez
City Attorney Murray H. Dubbin
City Clerk Robert E. Parcher

**CITY COMMISSION WORKSHOP
DISCUSSION REGARDING BAY LINK**

Meeting called to order at 2:17:31 p.m.

Robert Middaugh, Assistant City Manager, gave an oral overview and explained that this is a study of the transportation alternatives.

Mayor Dermer inquired about the City's role in this process, its jurisdiction, and how it is funded.

Wilson Fernandez, Program Manager from the Metropolitan Planning Organization, Board (MPOB) gave an oral presentation. He stated that the City of Miami and Miami Beach both play an important role in this project. They will go back to both Commissions seeking recommendations. The MPO is the policy planning organization. The decision will be made in July 2002. The technical information should be ready in May/June, 2002. A recommendation from the City Commission to the MPOB should be made prior to July 2002. He added that funding has not been completed, since it is just roughly drafted. In April 2002 the financial planning should be available. The projects are prioritized by the MPOB.

Phil Smeley, Senior Vice-President and Technical Director of Transit, gave a power point presentation.

The following members of the public spoke:

- Stewart Reed
- Mike Burke
- Joe Fontana
- Milton Montalvo
- Frank Del Vecchio
- David Kelsey

Morris Sunshine
Gerald Schwartz

Mayor Dermer stated that, in general, people feel it is a good idea to have a link, but that there is a lot of resistance. Mayor Dermer asked what was the popular opinion.

Commissioner Garcia opposes the idea of a rail system through the streets of Miami Beach. He envisions some type of link to the airport, downtown and the South Beach area with a distribution point with large buses. This is more attainable than what is being presented. He asked if funding was available.

Mr. Smeley stated that an estimate of 2,500 to 3,000 people per hour would be transported over and added that the traffic is projected to grow 25%.

Mayor Dermer asked if another City similar to Miami Beach has this system. Phil Smeley replied that San Diego is similar to our City and has implemented this mode of transportation. Actually San Diego is adding their sixth extension at the present time.

Mayor Dermer asked to compare other cities that have streets that are equivalent or similar to Washington Avenue and/or Ocean Drive. Mr. Smeley responded that Sacramento and San Diego are cities that have similar streets.

Vice-Mayor Gross requested information regarding the 17,000 people that according to the study would be using the link to come to the city. Most people that work in Miami and live in Miami Beach do not live in the South Beach area. He added that the Convention Center is the prime recipient of the ridership. There seems to be a business benefit but is not sure of the benefits to the residents of Miami Beach.

Mr. Smeley responded that the tourists comprise 35 % of the people that are assumed to use the link and 15% would be comprised of students and employees. One of the advantages of this system would be during large events, such as the Boat Show.

Vice-Mayor Gross asked what methodology was used to come up with the estimates. Mr. Smeley explained that they used the same methodology that is used by law on all transportation projects and that this was not based on local studies.

Stuart Reed, member of the Citizens Advisory Committee is not in favor of this project.

Mike Burke stated that the proponent of this system wants sustainable growth here to sustain the system. He feels that Miami Beach would not have any more sustainable growth. We need to reduce our traffic congestion. He is not interested in making it easier for people to go to the hotels in Miami. We are being the donors again to downtown Miami. This project will be taking people to Miami rather than giving us any real benefit. We should listen politely and decline this project.

Joe Fontana does not see any advantage to the City of Miami Beach. He feels we do not need any railing or trolley cars on Washington Avenue. Mr. Fontana asked why the Commission is considering this project and added that Miami Beach is very unique and that is how the residents want to keep it.

Milton Montalvo is a resident of Miami Beach and is in favor electrical transportation. He would like to see the entire city connected. He stated that we need the airport business for our restaurants and the downtown business. He hopes that this will also alleviate the traffic, which is the prime concern of residents.

Frank Del Vecchio inquired if the study can be trusted, what are the benefits for the City of Miami Beach's businesses and residents, and what are the adverse impacts. The benefits are speculative based on projections. We can trust the professional consultant. The working population of Miami Beach would like to see a rail system. Also, the bicycle and skate riders of South Beach would use the rail. The benefit of the tourists depends on the airport connection. However, the benefits for the City of Miami Beach could be adverse. The examples of similar cities are incorrect. There will be an impact to the Capital Improvement Programs especially on Washington Avenue. The preferred alternative is the west route. We do not have the route options for traffic that many other cities with lightrail have, so there will be a very significant adverse impact, which will made extremely bad precisely when we are trying to alleviate traffic during rush hour. The consultant said they would give us more information. He promised Commissioner Smith more information on this. **Joseph Johnson to handle.**

David Kelsey is not opposed to mass transportation system. The primary purpose is to alleviate the traffic on the McArthur Causeway. There is not that much traffic across the McArthur Causeway to justify this system. He is concerned about the parking in South Beach, especially for those people that are planning to park here and take the rail into Miami. He added that the Convention Center does not hold events on a daily basis; therefore, he does not see what would be accomplished with the connection to the Convention Center. Approximately 80 to 237 spaces of parking would be lost with this system and until all these concerns are addressed, he suggested that no action be taken on this project.

Morris Sunshine informed that this is a \$400 million dollar project and he believes the best mode of transportation is more buses.

Gerald Schwartz, Chairman of the MBTMA, stated that further studies and discussions should take place. MBTMA members have not been contacted to discuss the relationship with the project and needs to be done in the near future. The issue of concurrency needs to be addressed and the issue of having a dedicated lane for the rail.

Commissioner Steinberg asked if the mistakes made in the Metro rail system would had been corrected by the time the tri-rail was done and if there was a park and ride component. Mr. Smeley replied that this had been taken in consideration.

Vice-Mayor Gross inquired about Mr. Smeley's role in this project if the City approved this and how he would address the people's concerns.

Phil Smeley, as Senior Vice-President and Technical Director of Transit, specializes in rail transit. If the project goes forward, he would spend at least 50% of the time in Miami Beach and would be available at all times. He added that the MOP would go ahead with the project even if the municipality rejects it.

Commissioner Smith stated that the City would have to make a decision to use CDT moneys to fund the Bay Link system.

Mayor Dermer stated that he does not think the people want to put lines on Washington Avenue or Alton Road.

Mr. Smeley stated an impact list would be submitted so that they can distribute to the residents and businesses.

Commissioner Smith stated that if the half penny proposal goes up in flame, there will not be funds for anybody. The "wish list" exceeds \$15 billion and without dedicated funding he does not see this project moving forward. He added that the City might have to make a decision whether to use the taxes to do the project or an expansion to the Convention Center depending on the priority.

Mr. Smeley stated that their plan would dedicate a source of funding.

Mayor Dermer thanked everyone for the presentation.

Meeting adjourned 4:23:11 p.m.

Handouts:

1. Bay Link Brochure "Miami-Miami Beach Transportation Corridor Study."
2. Transit Link to South Beach. List of questions to consider.
3. Bay Link Project Update Power Point Presentation.
4. Miami Herald Ad.