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Miami-Dade Transportation Planning Organization study aims to tie bike, walking trails into mass transit plan

Written by [Jesse Scheckner](#) on July 2, 2018



The Miami-Dade Transportation Planning Organization has ordered a budget to study a project to connect non-motorized bicycle and pedestrian paths with the Strategic Miami Area Rapid Transit (SMART) Plan.

“We’re going to get all the trails united,” Commissioner Rebeca Sosa said after voting for the plan and asking to co-sponsor the resolution by City of Miami Mayor Francis Suarez.

Several major public-private trail projects could be considered for a SMART Trails program, including the Underline, a 10-mile linear park and urban trail below the Metrorail running from the Miami River north of the Brickell Metrorail station to the Dadeland Metrorail station; the 6.2-mile multi-use Ludlam Trail running parallel to and west of Ludlam Road from near Northwest

Seventh to Southwest 80th streets; and the Miami River Greenway, a public pathway running about 5.5 miles on both sides of the river west from Biscayne Bay toward Miami International Airport.

Around 20 community members arrived to support the SMART Trails program, including Citizens' Independent Transportation Trust Executive Director Javier Betancourt, Everglades Bicycle Club President Susan Kawalerski, Friends of the Underline founder Meg Daly and Swire Properties Development Manager of Community Outreach Jami Reyes.

“As a daily bike commuter, my bike is like the horizontal elevator that takes me from my house to our transit system,” said town planner Victor Dover, who in November 2015 helped bring WHEELS, a four-day biking, walking and transit educational event, to South Miami. “During that one week, 3,912 people did it and 49,000 others participated in some way online. There’s a huge interest.”

With millions of dollars poured into expanding the county’s mass transit network, failures to help pedestrians and cyclists reach the system within one mile of their homes and workplaces are missed economic and mobility opportunities, said Friends of the Underline board member Steven Wernick.



“Linking first- and last-mile solutions is critical,” he said. “It’s for people of all ages, abilities, modes of transportations and, especially in my heart, kids – and that’s our future, of course.”

Several speakers, including Ms. Daly, attorney and cycling activist Eli Stiers and architect and Green Mobility Network chair Maricé Chael, recommended the county work to develop the Miami Loop, a 225-mile contiguous circuit comprised of all South Florida trails, greenways and non-motorized paths.

If completed, the Miami Loop could connect to the Florida SUN Trail, a connected network of trails throughout the state paid for by a recurring \$25 million annual budget derived from new vehicle registration fees.

“Let’s go ahead and show the world what Miami is capable of for tourism, for having our kids walking and biking to school, for people biking to work,” Ms. Chael said.

The Transportation Planning Organization’s approval to determine a budget for SMART Trails came just two days after county commissioners unanimously green-lighted the purchase of the Ludlam Trail from Brightline owner Florida East Coast Industries, whose discontinued railroad corridor comprises the six-mile linear greenway.

Once developed, the Ludlam Trail is to connect more than 34,000 people within a half-mile radius of the trail to five greenways, five schools, four parks and two transit hubs.

“We are very happy, said Jose Gonzalez, FEC senior vice president, “to support this resolution to keep studying the trails, connectivity and how it connects to our transit.”