

THE INSIDER

NEW WALL AD: Another moneymaker for the City of Miami got the go-ahead last week. Commissioners awarded a contract to outdoor advertising company Fuel Miami to build and oversee a 50-foot by 50-foot mural facing I-95 on the city's administrative building, the Miami Riverside Center, 444 SW Second Ave. The deal is estimated to generate \$174,000-\$201,000 annually for the city.

NOT SO HOT: Miami City Manager **Carlos Migoya** said five or six companies had eyed the Riverside Center opportunity, but Fuel Miami was the only bidder. Officials said they had anticipated more interest but found that the building had unexpected challenges. "The way the building is laid out... it's not something that's squared to I-95," said building and zoning Director **Orlando Toledo**. A mural ad's value is measured by its exposure to drivers, Commissioner **Marc Sarnoff** added.

SKILL CENTER: Miami commissioners OK'd the sale of a portion of the Miami Skill Center to the Florida Department of Transportation for \$1 million at the Omni Community Redevelopment Agency meeting last week. The agency is purchasing the property at 29 NW 13th St. for \$3.1 million from Miami-Dade County's school board for use as a production facility. The school board must approve the purchase. The department of transportation hopes to use a part of the property as a staging site for I-95 construction.

SALES PRICE UP: Miami-Dade's median sales price of single-family homes rose 12% to \$199,100 in October from October 2009, one of only three home markets in Florida to post such an increase. But prices in the condo market took a hit, with the median sales price dropping 22% to \$107,700 compared to last year as a result of foreclosures and short sales, according to the Miami Association of Realtors and the Southeast Florida Multiple Listing Service. The jump in the median sales price of single-family homes is a positive sign. "Rising median sales prices reflect strengthening and stability of the Miami real estate market," said **Jack H. Levine**, association chairman. "Miami continues to outperform the rest of the state and the nation due to strong demand from all types of buyers." Overall, the county's home sales dropped 4% to 546 properties in October compared to October 2009, while condo sales rose 17% to 757. This was the highest increase in condo sales of any major metropolitan area in Florida.

DEPUTY HEAD: **Tony E. Crapp Jr.** has been named deputy Miami city manager. He was most recently an assistant city manager and chief of operations. He was also Miami Mayor Tomas Regalado's longtime chief of staff, according to the city's website, and started working for Mr. Regalado in 1996 when he was 23. Mr. Crapp holds a bachelor's degree in political science from Florida International University.

OPEN SPOT: The city's Deputy Chief of Police **Luis Cabrera** is to serve as acting chief of operations/assistant city manager. Public facilities, community development, grants, parks and recreation, solid waste and intergovernmental affairs are to be under his management.

THE FIRST STEP: Miami Art Museum is set to break ground on its \$150 million facility next at 10 a.m. Nov. 30 in Museum Park. On hand will be museum Director **Thom Collins**, Miami-Dade Mayor **Carlos Alvarez**, museum board Chair and attorney **Aaron Podhurst**, and **Christine Binswanger** of architect Herzog & de Meuron's partner-in-charge of the project. The facility, slated to open in 2013, is to feature expanded exhibition space for the permanent collection, along with space for traveling exhibits, showcases of local artists' work and educational spaces.

A BANKING COUP: **Hannes Hofmann**, managing director for JP Morgan Private Bank's investments recently chose to relocate here. "He literally could have written his own ticket to whatever office he wanted, globally," said **Alvaro Martinez-Fonts**, CEO of the private bank for Florida. "His belief in JP Morgan's growth in Florida is such that he decided to come here." Mr. Hofmann is a member of the Private Bank's Investment Team and the Private Bank's Advisory Council and previously led the JP Morgan Private Banking Equities business in the Americas.

JOINING FORCES: Florida International University is forging a partnership with Florida Power & Light to develop a customer care center at the university set to launch in January. The partnership is part of the university's new focus on developing links with local and international companies. To do so, **Divina Grossman**, formerly the nursing school dean, is now focusing on her new role as founding vice president of engagement. She was appointed in January to this position, to develop affiliations with corporations and not-for-profit groups, among others, she said. For example, in the case of Florida Power & Light, FIU students are to staff the center through internships. "Ultimately, the idea is for FP&L to hire those students who are gaining real life experience through this partnership."

SALUTING BUSINESS: The Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce's fourth annual International Business Leadership Awards on Nov. 18 at Jungle Island honored persons who have made a significant impact on South Florida's economy. **Eduardo Padrón**, president of Miami Dade College, received the special individual recognition for his work to promote Miami as a global city. Dr. Padrón has led Miami Book Fair International and the Miami International Film Festival and helped establish the university's Confucius Institute, a local host-outreach program.

TRANSIT WINS: Miami-Dade Transit won seven awards, including a marketing award for its Easy Card campaign, from the Florida Public Transportation Association, a nonprofit whose members include state-wide public transportation entities.



Carlos Migoya



Jack H. Levine



Thom Collins



Hannes Hofmann



Divina Grossman

City trolleys may roll in a year

By JACQUELYN WEINER

A year from now, some 2,000 people a day could be riding rubber-tire trolleys through downtown Miami. That's the estimated ridership of Brickell/Biscayne trolley route proposed by the City of Miami.

With three other routes proposed, trolleys would be carrying 5,500 people daily in all under city plans.

Alice Bravo, Miami's director of capital improvements, discussed results of a computer-generated ridership study of proposed City of Miami Trolley routes at last week's commission meeting.

The city's proposed routes are Brickell/Biscayne, Overtown/Allapattah, Coral Way and a Health District loop.

One key finding: while two-thirds of all trips through Miami originate outside the city, the trolley routes would actually enhance Miami-Dade Transit offerings.

"This trolley is in fact attracting new ridership and not taking it from existing services," Ms. Bravo said.

Based on the computer modeling — which takes into account factors like residents, employment and existing Miami-Dade transit routes — the Brickell/Biscayne route "shows a strong ridership" of 2,000 passengers daily.

Most of that is concentrated during peak times of 7-9 a.m. and 4-6 p.m. Ms. Bravo said those numbers could be skewed as the computer model is more sensitive to commuter flux, missing the travel between buildings or to and from parking.

Because the area is more congested, she said, the Brickell/Biscayne route would require 10 trolleys to keep on schedule.

The Overtown/Allapattah route is estimated to attract about 1,600 riders a day, she said, and complements county transit offerings. It calls for eight trolleys to service the route.

The Health District loop has "relatively strong ridership" of

1,000 a day, Ms. Bravo said.

"We think in fact it'll be higher because of those trips that the model just won't pick up."

The Health District is the second-largest employment area in the county, she said, with about 50,000 people going to work there daily. The largest employment area is downtown, she said, serviced by the Brickell/Biscayne route.

In addition, she said, about 40,000 visitors frequent the Health District every day.

The loop "looks like more of a true circulator" and there is no transit route with a similar alignment, Ms. Bravo said. It would use four trolleys.

The Coral Way route has the smallest projected ridership at about 900. It links the Brickell area to Coral Gables.

The route would need five trolleys.

All routes are proposed to run from 6:30 a.m.-6:30 p.m.

Extensions to the Marlins stadium are also being studied. The results are expected in December.

City officials have said such ridership studies were crucial to determining long-term viability of the routes.

However, Ms. Bravo and some commissioners pointed to the computer-generated model's flaws.

Francis Suarez said that Coral Gables used modeling to predict ridership for its Ponce de Leon Boulevard loop and actual rider volume was five to six times greater than what was predicted.

Some residents have voiced concern over duplicating Miami-Dade transit services with trolleys and long-term viability, he said. So he plans to go door-to-door with pamphlets allowing them to weigh in "so we can get a more true measure of what the demand is for these services."

And then there's the issue of fares.

Mr. Suarez said he'd prefer not to charge riders.

Commissioner Marc Sarnoff said he wants to charge at least \$1.

Fares could be the key to long-term sustainability, Ms.

Bravo said.

With \$1 fares, she said, the trolleys would produce \$1.4 million.

While the trolleys are funded now, that could dry up after the first few years.

Funding includes \$164,560 in state funds for the Health District route and \$600,000 for the Brickell-Biscayne Boulevard route, to be matched with city funds.

That ends after four years of service.

And the pot of money the city would use to match it — earnings for the county half-cent transit surtax — may also be cut.

The county is considering changing the way it divvies out surtax funds to include municipalities incorporated after the surtax was instituted. The city, along with four other municipalities, is in conflict resolution with the county over the matter.

On top of that, the city was awarded \$4.1 million in federal stimulus money for its trolley system. It must be spent by March 2012 or the city loses the money.

Now that ridership results are in, the next step is to re-bid for a trolley operator. Last time around in late 2009, the city received just one response.

"We think we can get better rates and more competition," Ms. Bravo said.

Commissioners must cancel the previous bid at the December commission meeting before the city seeks a new trolley operator.

Ms. Bravo said the aim is to start operating routes within 90 days of awarding the bid, potentially September or October of 2011.

Commissioner Frank Carollo asked the city to request a 30-day turnaround, which Mr. Sarnoff said he'd like.

Mr. Sarnoff added that rather than continuing to evaluate numbers, he simply wants to see the trolley project move forward.

"Let's start the process," he said. "If we're so political that we can't agree that this is good for the city, then we shouldn't be sitting up here."

4 PR firms pitch to handle chamber account

By ZACHARY S. FAGENSON

Four public relations firms put forth their best pitch to become the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce's agency. The winner will get \$35,000 worth of in-kind services, mostly marketing opportunities, from the region's biggest business group.

Though the chamber couldn't say which the four are, public relations firm rbb, whose CEO Christine Barney chairs the chamber's marketing and member services group, isn't among them.

The chamber, which boasts that its 2,000 members represent 400,000 employees, is to announce its selection by Dec. 15, said Lorraine Reigosa, senior director for communications and external affairs.

"There'll be a small committee of internal chamber staff and committee members that'll be looking at the proposals and helping us see who would be a good fit," she said.

In that group will be chamber Chair Maria Alonso, marketing committee Chair Alfred Sanchez along with senior chamber staff members like President and CEO Barry Johnson.

We're "looking for folks who've had a lot of experience with media and a lot of media connections," Mr. Sanchez said. We "want somebody who can say, 'Let's creatively get this message or event out there so people will know about it.'"

The ultimate goal of hiring a firm, however, is to exploit every possible way to bring in new members and keep existing ones.

"As any nonprofit, we tend to really be skimpy with our dollars to get our word out, but it's really time for us to step it up," Mr. Sanchez said in a previous interview. "In order to do that properly, we need a professional firm to help us put together that message and create opportunities.

"We have a great website and great e-mail communication,

but we need to have other avenues to be able to get out to our own members what it is that their chamber dollars are doing for them and their employees every single day."

We want to hear from YOU!

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