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MDX, where's the beef?

By Grant Miller



I recently wrote a column "MDX should seek new solutions to county traffic woes" concerning the need for the Miami-Dade Expressway Authority (MDX) to use some of its funds to improve transit and do something more than just build more roads. MDX, via its charter, has the ability to invest in public transit solutions, not just

highways.

MDX prepared a very nice response which has been

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Organization (in 3): sounds good.

My question to MDX is, in the words of the wonderful Clara Peller, "Where's the beef?" MDX is spending a lot of money but is any of it going to improve transit?

MDX stated in its response that the latest MDX Five-Year Work Program totals \$880 million. Now that's a lot of money. How much of it was spent on transit improvements and enhancements along the MDX network? Did they build any park and ride lots? Did they build any HOV (High Occupancy Vehicle) or dedicated bus lanes? For that matter, did they purchase any buses?

The answer to these questions is no. MDX advises that its investments will relieve bottlenecks throughout the system. It is working with MDT, FDOT and the MPO to commence "planning" on Express Bus Service. Its contribution to date has been to allow MDT buses to operate on the shoulders of certain stretches of highway.

Really – \$880 million and the total commitment to transit is letting MDT use a few shoulders on the side of the road? MDX widened SR 836 all the way from the Palmetto Expressway to the turnpike and didn't have the foresight to put in a bus or HOV lane? They are now spending hundreds of millions of dollars from the Palmetto to downtown without any thought of a bus or HOV lane? This so-called "Express Bus" will not resemble anything close to an express if it operates in the same traffic.

MDX needs to follow the lead of FDOT on I-95 and I-595. These dedicated lanes are extremely effective and thousands of cars are now off the road while commuters enjoy new state-of-art articulated buses operated by MDT and Broward County Transit. FDOT is even helping pay for the buses.

It seems like MDX is talking the talk but not walking the walk. It sure looks like they are spending all of the money on building more roads and not investing anything significant in transit. Clara, you are right – Where's the beef?

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Transit lip service is what MDX is good at. RBT, Rapid Bus Transit is often talked about at MDX, but no real plans can be found. The mission of MDX must be changed to incorporate REAL transit. We can't continue fooling ourselves that MDX is going to implement real transit. They have to be restructured from the ground up. Yes, \$880 million is a lot of money to keep up the insanity of road building and widening. When MDX succeeds, in its present state, mass transit fails in Miami-Dade.

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