

MDX Executive Director Speak Out

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By Javier Rodriguez

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The traffic issues we face today in our community are not easy to solve, but working together to develop options for our community is a step in the right direction. On Sunday, June 7, 2015, the Miami Herald published the second story of a series on traffic titled "In Miami-Dade, drivers (and politicians) feeling toll shock". The Miami-Dade Expressway Authority (MDX) oversees five of the county's busiest and most important east-west highways. Since 1996, MDX has had the responsibility of maintaining and operating these highways and yes, it is expensive.

Before I address possible solutions, it is important to clarify some misconceptions about MDX. Tolls collected by MDX stay in Miami-Dade and are put back into the highway system for maintenance, operations and improvements. These tolls are the only funds MDX receives — NO property tax, NO gas tax, or NO half penny transit sales tax, and NO state or federal dollars. Closing the system (everyone pays) followed the principle of making the funding of the improvements more fair and equitable. This means that every motorist that uses these roads pays for the segment that they use. Although not a popular decision for MDX, the Miami Herald editorial board agreed when they wrote an editorial on March 2nd 2006 titled "The Future of east-west traffic."

Save



Javier Rodriguez, PE, executive director of the Miami-Dade Expressway Authority (MDX)

MDX began down this path when we built and opened the extension of SR 836 to NW 137th Avenue. Closing the system was planned to occur by 2010, but the MDX Board of Directors in response to a recession, decided to postpone the final phase (SR 836 and SR 112) to 2012 and then to November 15, 2014. Since 2006, MDX has continued to improve the highways under our jurisdiction, but we have also continued to work with our transportation partners to ensure that major projects become realities;

- SR 826- SR 836 interchange (MDX Contribution \$215 million) (Partner – FDOT)
- SR 826-SR 874-Bird Road interchange (\$60 million) (Partner – FDOT)
- Miami Intermodal Center (\$86 million) (Partner – FDOT, MDT, MDAD, SFRTA)
- Airport link Metrorail expansion (\$4 million) (Partner – MDT)
- Central Boulevard the main entrance to the Airport(\$35 million) (Partner – MDAD and FDOT)

These are just a few of the investments by MDX in our community, totaling more than \$480 million, assuring that a total investment of \$3 billion dollars-worth of infrastructure improvements were funded, built and completed, which otherwise would not have been constructed.

The June 7th story clearly laid out the major improvements that MDX has committed to on SR 836 and how the improvements will improve traffic. Still the truth is that the needs to address congestion and the delivery of multiple transportation options in this community, far outweighs the funds available. There are no free rides in transportation. In having an honest conversation about transportation, why are we not discussing how much in gas tax has been collected within Miami-Dade on a Federal, State and County level (55 cents per gallon) and where that money has been used. Regarding gas taxes which funds projects for FDOT and the County, not MDX, Miami-Dade County

always has been a donor county and Florida a donor state. That means we never get back as much as we send to Tallahassee or Washington D.C. and there has always been a debate on whether Miami-Dade receives its fair share. As to MDX, all of MDX's funds are collected locally and invested locally.

Some solutions for providing our community choices in travel include developing Express Bus Service on the highways that connect transportation hubs throughout the county. MDX is participating in the delivery of the Dolphin Park & Ride facility which along with the concept of using SR 836 for an express bus service will begin to provide choices to the community. Aside from the improvements outlined in the Herald story, MDX is well underway of developing a Strategic Master Plan. MDX has long stood for connectivity, technology, and transit in the development of our projects. It is imperative that our facilities connect effectively with other modes of transportation, that we prepare for the emergence of technology in transportation, and that we prepare our highways to provide transit as a choice.

I invite the community to get informed (www.mdxway.com) and provide feedback on the strategic master plan as we bridge the gap between what we need today and what we want for tomorrow.

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