

New main roadway taking off at entrance to Miami's airport

BY ASHLEY D. TORRES



Central Boulevard, says Aviation Director José Abreu, "is really the nerve center of the circulation here."

A revamp of the main roadway connecting Miami International Airport with local streets and expressways is underway in line with other projects geared to improve transportation to and from the flying hub. The Central Boulevard Widening Realignment and Service Loop project aims to improve entering and leaving the airport, reduce congestion and separate commercial from passenger traffic by building service access roads.

The project coincides with other transportation improvements impacting the airport including the Florida Department of Transportation's Miami Intermodal Center program, which features the rental car center, MIA Mover and Miami Central Station. Central Boulevard, said **José Abreu**, Miami-Dade Aviation Department's director, "is really the nerve of the circulation here."

The boulevard's quarter-mile long roadway with three to four lanes in each direction connects the airport with LeJeune Road, which feeds into the Airport Expressway (State Road 112) and

Dolphin Expressway (State Road 836). The widening is to add one to two boulevard lanes in any given direction, said Juan Toledo, the authority's assistant director of engineering, and provide an additional airport entrance and exit. Central Boulevard construction is to be complete in fall 2013.

Construction began in June, funded by the transportation department under former Gov. Jeb Bush's Growth Management Act and the Miami-Dade Expressway Authority, Mr. Toledo said. Each agency contributed \$36 million to the project, which has a direct designing and building cost of \$42 million and a total cost of about \$72 million.

In addition, an east-to-west Central Boulevard bridge is to rise to lift traffic over Perimeter Road, Mr. Abreu said, and further improve the airport's traffic flow. As of about five months ago, a north-to-south Perimeter Road bridge crossed over Central Boulevard. During construction, at least three Central Boulevard lanes are to remain open at all times. Lanes may be closed from time to time at off-peak hours, Mr. Toledo said, but the authority is coordinating with the airport so operations aren't interrupted.

As a design-build project, boulevard designs and construction take place simultaneously. This project type, Mr. Toledo said, allows a construction plan to be created in components over a three-year period instead of beginning construction after a complete design plan, which can take up to three years. An additional reason for the boulevard improvements, Mr. Abreu said, is that the roadway wouldn't be able to handle growing traffic volumes beyond 2015, according to the airport's volume projections.

The current Central Boulevard configurations also didn't provide enough decision sight distance, the distance drivers need to see a situation ahead and make a decision; stopping sight distance, the distance they need to see a situation ahead, brake and stop; and weaving distance, enough space for cars to move from lane to lane.

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