



Op-Ed MARCH 16, 2015

Let's provide residents real transit solutions

HIGHLIGHTS

Esteban Bovo Jr.: Let's use our tax revenue to start work on a new mass transit project.

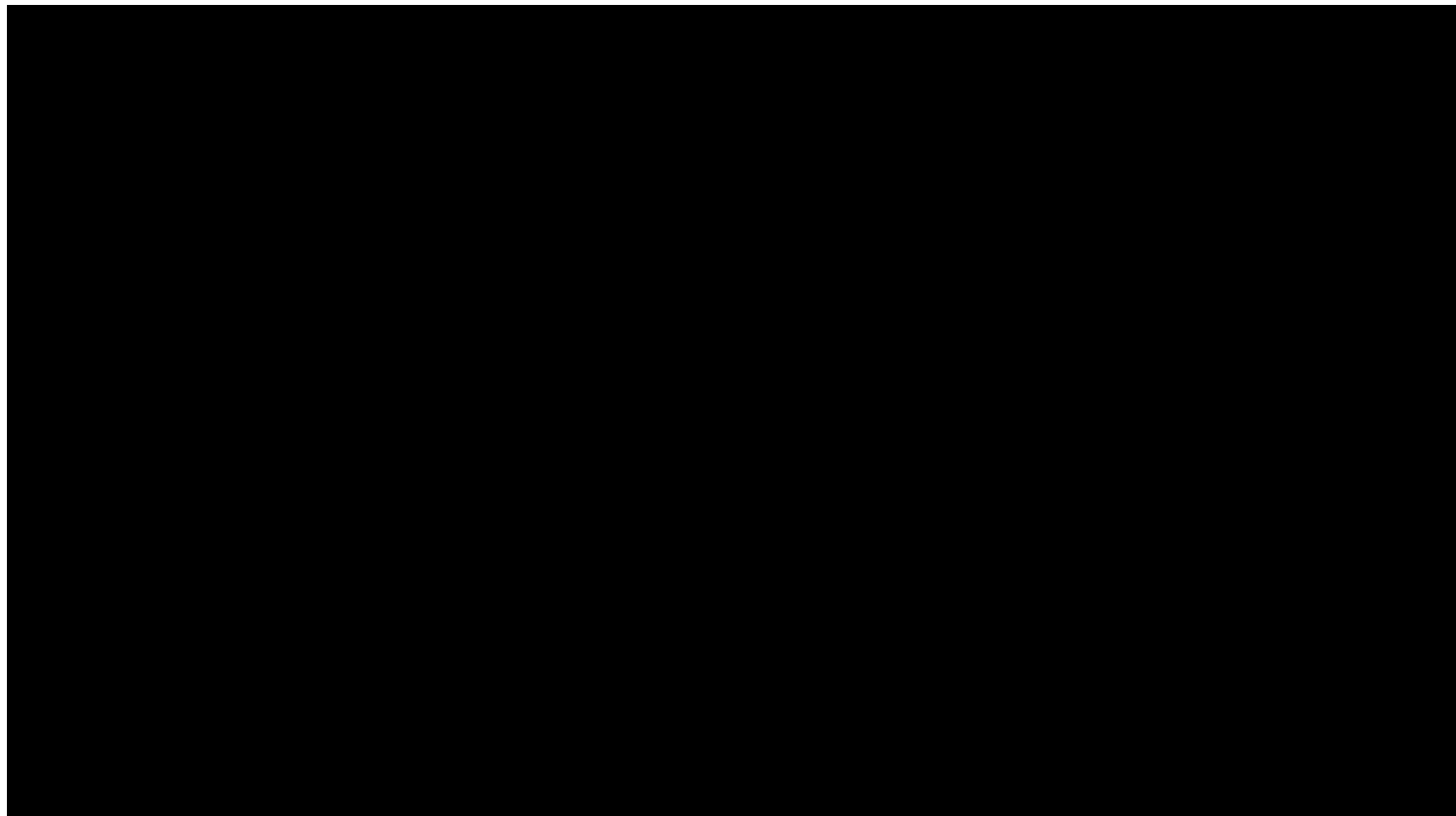
BY ESTEBAN BOVO JR.

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More than 10 years ago, Miami-Dade County residents were asked to contribute a half penny in additional sales tax to fund an array of public-transportation enhancements. While motivated by good intentions, the resulting People's Transportation Plan has proved woefully inadequate, and traffic congestion continues to plague our ever-growing community. Simply put, county leaders overpromised and underdelivered.

In January, I was appointed to serve a two-year term as chairman of the County Commission's Transit & Mobility committee. This committee oversees the operations of our public transit system. As chair, I am committed to producing tangible transit solutions in collaboration with public and private sector stakeholders. To succeed we must dedicate ourselves to building mass transit infrastructure that offers the public safe, reliable, and cost-effective alternatives to the status quo.



Ultimately, our success developing, building and operating an integrated system of mass transit will depend on identifying viable funding sources.

To that end, I will encourage county administrators to explore leveraging existing half-cent sales-tax dollars to develop, and break ground on, at least one major signature mass-transit capital project by the end of 2016. Additionally, I will examine ways that we can direct MDX, a state-created local public-transit agency, to actively invest in the building and operation of innovative and reliable mass-transit infrastructure, such as bus rapid transit, light rail and commuter rail systems.

Rather than pledge toll revenue in perpetuity to maintain overly congested expressways (that our community has bought and paid for several times over), why not dedicate a portion of that revenue to invest in providing residents with real transit solutions instead of delivering more of the same?

Make no mistake: Delivering quality mass transit in a community as dispersed as ours will take innovation and creativity. We must be willing to engage the private sector to identify public infrastructure projects that may be ripe for development through public/private partnerships. Let's not forget that this approach was successful in building the port tunnel project.

Finally, it is absolutely essential that we explore using hotel bed taxes, paid mostly by tourists and others,

for the development of mass-transit infrastructure. It is my sincere belief that we should be able to leverage the fuel that drives our community's economic engine on behalf of our year-round residents.

As you may recall, some county leaders were quick to push for a referendum that would have given the Miami Dolphins access to tourist tax dollars to help defray the cost of proposed stadium renovations. Tourists use our roads, too. Why not consider using these tax dollars to ensure that residents have access to a world-class mass-transit system? These and other funding ideas must be debated and adopted before we can engage federal and state partners for additional help.

President Ronald Reagan was fond of reminding Americans that, "[The most terrifying words in the English language are: I'm from the government and I'm here to help.](#)" While skepticism of elected leaders is healthy in a democratic society, it's essential that we as elected leaders work diligently to earn the public's trust by producing tangible and meaningful results for our taxpayers.

I have said publicly, and it bears repeating, that we will have failed future generations if county government cannot identify, fund and break ground on at least one signature mass-transit infrastructure project during the next two years. We elected leaders must be willing to stake our reputations on our ability to make good on the promises made to those who have entrusted us with the responsibility to lead.

Improving the county's transportation system is a critical quality-of-life issue for all of our residents and for our community's future economic success.

I hope that residents will support my efforts to make good on the decade-old promise of delivering reliable and efficient public-transit options for the people of Miami-Dade County.

ESTEBAN BOVO JR. REPRESENTS DISTRICT 13 ON THE MIAMI-DADE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS.

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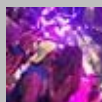
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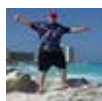
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Brent Nuncas · ★ Top Commenter · Alajuela

What he said....! The signature project needs to be an East-West Metrorail line from Govt. Center to FIU.....with a station close to Marlins Park.

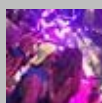
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Micco Mann · ★ Top Commenter · University of Miami

Unless the Marlins agree to kick in money for that spur that connects the stadium-- and knowing what we know about how unwilling they are to spend their own money re the stadium-- it will never happen.

Reply · Like · Edited · March 17 at 7:41am



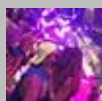
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Alicia Diaz · Barry University

This is one of the reasons I am leaving Florida - only one of them, the rest are even worse :(

Reply · Like · Follow Post · Edited · March 16 at 9:19pm



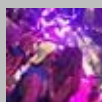
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Gino Junior · ★ Top Commenter · Works at Town of Miami Lakes

I think that tourist helping pay for some of our transit system is a good idea. I also think that we should include Uber and Lyft has part of a future transportation plan.

Reply · Like · 1 · Follow Post · March 16 at 11:13pm



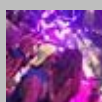
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Sid Kaskey · ★ Top Commenter

"Finally, it is absolutely essential that we explore using hotel bed taxes, paid mostly by tourists and others, for the development of mass-transit infrastructure. It is my sincere belief that we should be able to leverage the fuel that drives our community's economic engine on behalf of our year-round residents." This is an excellent idea and the primary reason why committing the tax for use by private businesses can be so destructive: the money should be used for the general public good and not to benefit a small segment of the population .

Reply · Like · Follow Post · March 17 at 7:47am



Posting as **Just Cindy**





Micco Mann · ★ Top Commenter · University of Miami

It's good to see at least one commissioner has some vision. Too bad it stops at thinking bus and light rail are the answers. Because they are at-grade "solutions," i.e., sharing a lane of traffic-- or at worst removing a lane of traffic for its use-- instead of giving us a fix they become part of the problem by contributing to ineffectual mass transit and gridlock. The solution lies off the grid; either below it (like a subway) or above it (like MetroRail). Here's a less than 10-mile-long BayLink plan that connects the MB convention center with downtown Miami. It costs less than the less than 1-mile-long PortMiami tunnel. <http://bit.ly/rrcFP6>

Reply · Like · Follow Post · March 17 at 7:51am



Posting as **Just Cindy**

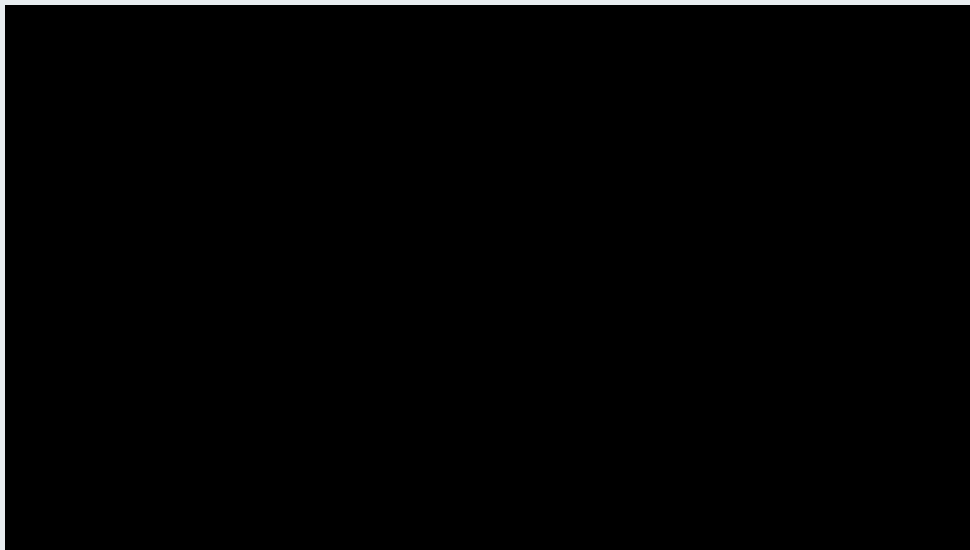


Mario Carozzi · Miami, Florida

Someone should draw up a picture of the future with both transportation options. One with multiple trains going up and down east and west (as many as are affordable in 50 years) and another using the same money with bus going up and

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