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## **Transit center is a “national example” (translated from Spanish)**

Alfonso Chardy

John Mica, chairman of the powerful Transportation and Infrastructure Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives, toured the huge public transit center being built alongside Miami International Airport (MIA) on Monday, citing it as an example for other big cities that want to connect airlines, buses and trains, as well as other services.

Among Mica’s guests for the tour of Miami Intermodal Center (MIC), an installation that is being built at a cost of \$1.7 billion, were mayors and representatives from other states and cities interested in building similar transit centers.

The MIC, which should be finished by 2013, includes rental cars, Metrorail, Tri-Rail, and Amtrak as well as local and national buses.

“It is a great model to follow for linking all types of transportation,” Mica, a Republican representative from a Florida district near St. Augustine, declared before dozens of guests that listened to him narrate the history of the installation, whose origins date back to the 1980’s. He added that originally, when he started sending out invitations for the tour, he expected only 20 to 25 people to accept, but in the end more than 100 decided to come from all over the country.

“We have people from Washington, from Jacksonville, from Illinois, Oklahoma, Connecticut, Missouri, Dallas, Minneapolis, Georgia, Denver,” Mica said.

Phase I of the MIC, the rental car center, opened to the public in 2010. Today passengers that arrive at MIA and wish to rent a car travel in automatic trains connecting the air terminal to the transit center to pick up their car. They used to have to take buses. The elimination of the buses that rental car companies used has reduced traffic congestion in and around the airport by 34 per cent according to Jose Abreu, director of the Aviation Department that supervises operations at MIA.

The next phase shall be the inauguration of Metrorail’s new track to the airport, the system of elevated trains that currently operates only one line between Dadeland and Hialeah. On Friday, the Miami-Dade Transit Department (MDT) allowed a photographer and a reporter from El Nuevo Herald to travel on a test run without any passengers between the new station at the airport within MIC and a point near the Earlington Heights station, the starting point of the new track.

MDT is considering two options for operating the new track, which shall be called Orange Line: a train that runs from the Dadeland South station to the airport or a shorter service from Earlington Heights, where the transfers would occur.

Ysela Llorca, MDT's interim director, told El Nuevo Herald on Monday during the event that passengers shall be able to carry luggage on Metrorail and that the County is studying ways to change the criteria for parking, that currently do not allow leaving vehicles overnight. The change would permit passengers travelling to the airport to catch a flight to leave their cars for more than one night at Metrorail parking lots.

**Spanish version:** <http://www.elnuevoherald.com/2012/01/31/v-print/1114453/centro-de-transporte-es-ejemplo.html#storylink=cpy>

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