

Ferry service fares to start at \$3, Beach told

BY KYLIE HENSELER

A new affordable ferry service could soon offer commuter transit between Miami and Miami Beach as a way to mitigate traffic congestion between the two cities.

"Poseidon (Llc)," CEO Jonathan Silva told the Miami Beach Marine and Waterfront Protection Authority on Tuesday, "is a waterborne transportation service. We've been working with Miami-Dade County, the City of Miami Beach and the City of Miami to offer (transportation) services from Miami to Miami Beach."

The proposed project, he said, will reduce traffic by introducing ferry services as a way to get from place-to-place in the county at low public-transportation prices. One-way fares, he said, will begin at \$3.

According to Poseidon's website, the first proposed route would run from the Miami River Bay Walk in Miami to the Bentley Bay Marina in Miami Beach, with 16 departures from Miami Beach each day. Mr. Silva said, and the Catamaran boat would usually be docked for about 15 minutes each hour to let passengers load and unload.

While the vessel's capacity is 130, he said, this will be halved during Covid-19. Original projections were 15-20 passengers per trip, leaving plenty of room for social distancing.

Poseidon, Mr. Silva said, is 100% privately funded and will not ask the city or county for any subsidies.

The proposal has received mixed reviews among residents of the Bentley Bay condominiums, he continued, but Poseidon is happy to work with these residents to ensure they have VIP access to services, including priority boarding privileges.

"We're trying to coexist with our neighbors," he said, "(and) make sure that they are considering the ferry services as more of an amenity than a hindrance."

One concern Mr. Silva said could be addressed was the possibility of noise complaints. The company, he said, would be happy to come up with signage and protocols directing passengers out of the marina and toward city buses. Notably, he continued, service is set to stop at 9:30 at night, and the frequent runs and commuter nature of the ferry make it unlikely the large crowds of passengers will be offboarding by the buildings.

"Every municipality has been encouraging the county to deploy waterborne transportation services as a commuter service using Biscayne Bay," said Irene Hegedus, chief of the Miami-Dade County Department of Transportation and Public Works. "It's amazing that we've found a partner that's able to offer the commuter service for only \$3 one way, which is very similar to what we are charging right now for buses."

"As the signature bridge gets built and 395 gets reconstructed," she continued, "the traffic will be a nightmare between Miami and Miami Beach."

According to Miami Today's

previous reporting, Miami-Dade County has explored traffic mitigation and waterborne transit for years.

"The infrastructure question is longstanding, remarked on in numerous county studies dating as far back as 2003," an October 2019 article stated. One possible barrier to this method of transportation, it said, is simply the lack of ports in Miami Beach.

At a March Miami Beach commission meeting last year, a city official in the transportation department told the protection authority, a resolution was adopted "directing the administration to pursue traffic mitigation strategies." A few years ago, he continued, a pilot program of a similar ferry service was launched but failed to be competitive due to double-digit prices.

"This is the first time that we are able to make something happen that would be a real commuter service," he said. "Our goal is to improve mobility any way we can, and we have a great opportunity now."

John Lee, the chair of the authority, asked Mr. Silva if all appropriate permits had already been obtained. Mr. Silva replied that they were still in this process, and that Poseidon's engineering team was working diligently.

A second member of the authority asked how there could be assurances that, once Covid-19 is gone, the ferry service would not change from its original plan and offer "party boat" services or raise fares.

"We're keeping our prices in



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Irene Hegedus

line with current multi-modal connectivity," Mr. Silva replied. While safe capacity will be allowed to increase after Covid-19, he continued, with the high frequency of boat trips planned the projected occupancy will still probably be only a fraction of the maximum.

An early plan before Covid-19, he said, had involved offering cruises Friday and Saturday nights that would leave from the Hyatt downtown and not Miami Beach. The reasoning, he said, was to provide additional revenue to support the service and allow it to operate at rates as low as \$3.

Once Poseidon has all necessary permits, Mr. Lee said, the authority could address it again and consider approval.

River Landing shops to open one after other

BY ABRAHAM GALIAN

Battling through the pandemic, River Landing Shops & Residences is set to open with a select number of retailers.

Consisting of retail, residential and office space, the waterfront mixed-use development at 1400 NE North River Dr. plans to open Hobby Lobby and Burlington Stores this week. Publix Super Market is to open Sept. 17, Chase Bank on Sept. 21, Five Below on Sept. 28, and AT&T on Oct. 1, with Ross Dress for Less and Planet Fitness later this fall.

Developers have created a live-work-play urban lifestyle center, helping unlock the city's riverfront culture as it will feature a landscaped riverwalk, greenspace, culture events, and boat docks for both residents and visitors, said Andrew Hellingner, Urban-X Group's principal.

"You will never have the need to leave the property. You can buy your groceries from Publix, shop and have various restaurants to choose from," he said. "Over the next months, retailers will open with different schedules and policies due to pandemic. It's more of a staggering of the opening of stores, which was something we didn't plan for, but we are making it work."

The opening of its first group of tenants represents the next phase for the \$452 million, 8.14-acre mixed-use project. The site consists of about 345,000 square feet of retail/commercial space, 135,000 square feet of offices, 528 market-rate apartments, more than 2,000 parking spaces and the 25-foot-wide riverwalk. A 25,500-square-foot restaurant space can be divided into seven concept restaurants.

"I believe there's something for everybody in this property, but we are attracting a lot of health professionals looking to lease and those who don't want to drive in congested areas of downtown and Brickell," Mr. Hellingner said of River Landing, which is near the Health District, with units available for occupancy in October. The apartments will be operated and leased by Lantower Residential, a subsidiary of H&R.

The multi-use development was initially bought back in 2011 and closed in 2014. Construction of over the \$400 million development broke ground in 2016 and now, it's ready to be experienced by the public, Mr. Hellingner said. "We built a city within a city... it's a rebirth of the submarket of the city."

Package of sister seaports, airports on runway

BY JESSE SCHECKNER

One of Miami-Dade's longest serving lawmakers wants to strengthen the county's trade and tourism ties in Latin America through a package of sister city, seaport and airport agreements with seven countries.

Commissioners today (9/10) are to vote preliminarily on a resolution by Javier Souto that would direct Mayor Carlos Gimenez's office to negotiate and execute the agreements.

Existing agreements have resulted in "great benefits in trade, tourism, cooperation, and understanding," said the resolution, which is tentatively scheduled for a final vote Oct. 6 and would require the mayor to report within 60 days on the status of the agreements.

The item calls for a new sister city agreement with Manaus, Brazil. If approved, it would mark the county's 30th active sister city agreement and its second with Brazil (the other being Sao Paulo), online records show.

"The program has developed innovative projects, further international cooperation and understanding between the county and our respective sister cities and helped to promote the county's position as the Gateway to the Americas," said a memo from the office of Mr. Souto, who has represented the county's 10th district uninterrupted since 1993.

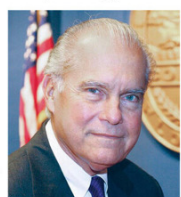
The county website says the sister city program "promotes citizen diplomacy, international cultural understanding and trade and commerce by receiving foreign missions, leading missions to partner communities abroad and developing local projects that foster interest in world affairs."

Mr. Souto's item further directs county staff to seek sister seaport agreements with the ports of Manaus; Asuncion, Paraguay; Pucallpa, Peru; Paranaguá, Brazil; Porto Velho, Brazil; Corumbá, Brazil; Puerto Rosario, Argentina; Guayaquil, Ecuador; and Leticia Colombia Cruise Port, Colombia.

PortMiami's website lists 88 sister ports across Africa, Asia, Europe, South America and North America.

The non-binding sister seaport agreements, which Miami-Dade commissioners created in 1998, "provide collaborating seaports with the opportunity to exchange information pertaining to port operations, statistics [and] infrastructure developments, among other topics," PortMiami spokesperson Andria Muniz-Amador said by email. "These accords create a platform for the sharing of experience while fostering the prospects of developing trade and commercial opportunities between the signatory entities."

Prior to the pandemic, she said, the agreements led PortMiami to host events and workshops center-



Javier Souto seeks strong ties.

ing on best practices topics, including joint marketing, cybersecurity and disaster management.

"During Covid-19, we've participated in webinars, online events and association forums which have included some of PortMiami's sister seaports," she said.

The resolution also calls for sister airport agreements between Miami International Airport (MIA) and Manaus International Airport, Afonso International Airport and Cesaar Bombonato Airport in Brazil; Coronel Fap Francisco Secada International Airport and Asuncion Silvio Petrossi International Airport in Peru; Islas Malvinas International Airport in Argentina; and Viru International Airport in Bolivia.

Those agreements would join several existing ones and two others MIA is now working to establish with Asuncion, Paraguay, and the autonomous historic

region of Spain called Galicia for direct passenger and cargo service, MIA spokesman Greg Chin said by email.

In the late 1980s, about half a decade after Miami-Dade commissioners founded the county's sister cities program, MIA entered into a sister airport agreement and technical assistance program with Las Americas International Airport in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, so that the county could provide "technical assistance to their fire department," he said.

Between then and now, he continued, the county entered into additional sister airport agreements with VC Bird International Airport in Antigua and Barbuda; Jorge Chavez International Airport in Lima, Peru; Haitian International Airport System in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti; and South Region and Guarulhos International Airport in Sao Paulo.

The 2006 agreement with Brazil planted the first seeds for what last year became Compra Fora, a cargo preclearance arrangement MIA inked with its largest Latin American trade partner that shortens the delivery window for e-commerce purchases by Brazilian consumers from months and weeks to mere days.

Mr. Chin said: "Today, MIA is the only airport in the US allowed to pre-clear cargo with the government of Brazil."

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