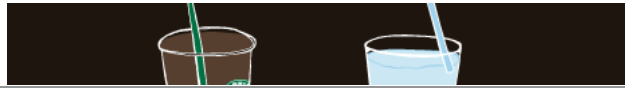


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PORT TUNNEL It will improve quality of life

Posted on Sun, Jun. 29, 2008

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Great cities are built on great vision. Opponents of the much-needed improvement projects for downtown Miami have a narrow-minded view of the city's future. The Miami Downtown Development Authority (DDA) voted to support the downtown elements of the Global Agreement because they are important to the economic growth and livability of downtown Miami. The seaport tunnel is critical for our future for at least three reasons:

- **It's a safety issue:** Unlike most people in Miami-Dade County, I have walked the area around the entrance and exit ramps to I-395. It's a scary proposition. Heavy truck traffic to and from the port chokes downtown streets, damaging the pavement, breaking up curbs and endangering pedestrians. The area around Miami Dade College is teeming with pedestrians and as more residents move into the Park West area, potential conflicts between trucks and pedestrians will increase. It's not much better in a car when you are dwarfed between container loads on huge trucks. As downtown Miami grows, we need to divert 18-wheelers and make streets more pedestrian friendly in order to foster a healthy and vibrant downtown.
- **It's an economic issue:** The Port of Miami contributes \$16 billion annually to the local economy and supports more than 110,000 jobs in our community. Improved access to the port is essential to remain competitive with nearby ports. Without it, the growth of this important economic engine will be severely curtailed.
- **It's the right project:** Traffic flow in and out of the port has been studied for more than two decades. The tunnel has long been identified as the best option. The state has committed to paying two thirds of the funding, and the Florida Department of Transportation will manage the construction.

Cynics and naysayers can easily beat down visionaries. Yet, when the facts are laid out, the vision is clear: It's time to invest in the future, keep the Port of Miami competitive and hold on to local jobs.

ALYCE ROBERTSON, interim executive director, Miami DDA, Miami

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