



May 22, 2017

Honorable Mayor Carlos A. Gimenez
Miami-Dade County
Stephen P. Clark Center
111 NW 1 Street, 29 Floor
Miami, FL 33128

RE: Light Rail Extension to South Miami-Dade Communities

Dear Mayor Gimenez:

We write this letter to express our disagreement with your new direction to replace the highly-needed light rail extension to Florida City with autonomous vehicles.

On May 15, 2017, you requested a meeting and extended an invitation to the Mayors of the Village of Pincrest, Town of Cutler Bay, City of Florida City, and the Village of Palmetto Bay, along with County Commissioner Dennis Moss, and Ms. Alice Bravo, Director of Transportation and Public Works. During said meeting, you announced that, despite your support for light rail during your re-election campaign, you no longer support the light rail project and are now advocating for autonomous vehicles instead.

Your position, as stated, is that you have recently concluded that light rail technology is antiquated, and that the best alternative at this time to relieve traffic congestion is to expand bus rapid transit in the shorter term, followed by autonomous vehicle technology in the future. We strongly disagree with your position and will continue to advocate for light rail as a true, long-term solution to drastically reducing traffic congestion, especially along US 1, and cutting down on commuting time for South Dade residents.

Over the past year, transit ridership throughout the county decreased by 6%, yet ridership for the South Dade transit increased by 30% during the same period. This increase is expected to continue considering the growth that has been forecasted for the South Dade area. Commute times for our residents are already among the longest county-wide, and the lack of mass transit coupled by the anticipated population increase will exacerbate an already dire situation, and only your administration has the ability to appropriately address this.

We steadfastly maintain that light rail (one seat ride) is the best alternative for South Dade and eagerly await the results of the NEPA study. We also believe that costs for the construction for the South Dade rail are the lowest compared to the other corridors since the ROW is already available and no acquisition of such is necessary.



We implore you to reconsider your position and provide the communities of South Dade the attention and economic impetus needed to improve our quality of life. The ½ penny sales tax was a solemn promise to residents by the County, that should not be forsaken nor replaced with alternate systems that are not in the best interest of the community.

We also request that you initiate discussions on funding mechanisms for the six SMART plan corridors and start an earnest discussion on potential local funding choices. Again, we are spending hundreds of thousands of tax dollars on studies, and as Commissioner Esteban Bovo has indicated, if we are serious about establishing Miami-Dade County as a world class region, the time to act on mass transit is NOW.

If the county's plan is to abandon what has been promised by way of the SMART plan, then it is only fair that we let the residents know now, particularly those in our communities that have been anticipating the light rail project. However, we want to make it clear that our position has not changed and that we feel that the County is breaking another promise made to the residents which will undoubtedly shake the trust of its constituency.

Finally, we were not made aware whether your position only relates to the South Dade corridor or whether it applies to all of the corridors identified in the TPO's SMART plan. We therefore request that you please make that clarification.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our position and for allowing us to learn about the possible change in policy. We encourage you to hold public forums to discuss your vision and your reasons for the new course of action. An open public discussion and the ability to hear your plan and provide their feedback is what the residents this county deserves.

Sincerely,

Eugene Flinn
Mayor
Village of Palmetto Bay

Peggy R. Bell
Mayor
Town of Cutler Bay