

Miami River

Freight Improvement Plan

Study Area Context

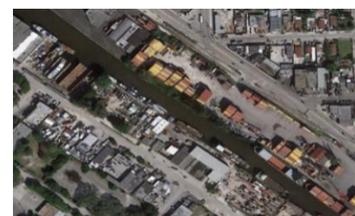
The primary study area encompasses the western third of the navigable section of the Miami River, which per federal regulation extends 5.5 miles inland from Biscayne Bay. The channel was dredged to a depth of -15 feet mean low water in a project ending about 10 years ago. That dredging helped facilitate marine shipping movements by removing accumulated sediment. The larger shippers responded with some larger vessels, whose movements must consider tidal movements in their passage of the river.

The marine shipping industry is mostly situated on the western reach of the federally navigable section of the river, west of NW 27th Avenue, in unincorporated Miami-Dade County. Per the *Miami River Urban Infill Plan*, this western reach is designated with mostly marine industrial land uses; the middle section accommodates numerous boatyards and allows certain mixed-use redevelopment; and the eastern section accommodates the dense, high-rise development of downtown Miami and the Brickell district. The marine industrial land use designation along the river and the industrial uses along the Downtown Lead railroad spur along NW 23rd Street are important to the river shipping interests and industrial tenants, given escalating land values across the county. These development pressures are moving upriver, from the Wynwood district east of I-95, along NW 36th Street, and from the Palmer Lake area on the west side of the river near Miami International Airport. Preservation of the marine industrial land uses is essential to the continued viability of the “working river”.

There are 11 low-level lift bridges and five high-level fixed-span bridges along the navigable river. The US Coast Guard establishes rules for lift bridge operations, and there are morning, noon, and evening restrictions on the opening of the four easterly bridges in the downtown area. Tug boats and vessels under tug boat tow are exempt from these restrictions, although the shippers report they work to avoid the peak traffic periods.

Marine shipping movements are much lower in number than the recreational boat movements on the lower river. At the Brickell Avenue bridge, for those vessel movements requiring bridge lifts, there are an average of 114 (23%) cargo-related movements per month, while there are 380 (73%) recreational vessel movements per month. There is an uncounted number of additional recreational vessels not requiring a bridge lift. At the NW 27th Avenue bridge, cargo vessels account for 42% of the 148 average monthly movements.

With its marine shipping terminals, proximity to western Miami-Dade freight and logistics hubs, and existing railroad access, the study area has future synergistic opportunities in addition to its own organic growth. However, it is confronted by older, smaller, and less modern industrial building stock, and somewhat deteriorated marine and upland infrastructure. Improvements to roadways, rail crossings, and supporting facilities were identified and recommended through the conditions and needs analyses. Improved connectivity to the regional network and preservation of the marine industrial land uses are important ingredients to the continued viability of this freight and logistics asset. This freight plan provides a blueprint for addressing the transportation needs of this Miami River industrial and shipping district, and for capitalizing on the opportunities which lie ahead.



Carlos A. Castro
District Freight Coordinator
Carlos.Castro@dot.state.fl.us



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Freight Improvement Plan Summary

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Public participation is solicited without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability, or family status.



Overview

The Port of Miami River, the name given to the collection of shallow draft shipping firms that have a long history of marine trade with the ports of the Bahamas and the Caribbean, is an important element in the Miami-Dade County freight and logistics setting. The Miami River shipping community was once billed as Florida's fifth largest port, with nearly \$1 billion in goods shipped from nearly 30 terminals. Current shipping volumes are nearly 400,000 tons per year across a much shorter roster of shipping firms, and have been trending up since the Great Recession. The river, with both its marine shipping terminals and recreational boatyards, remains a significant economic engine in South Florida.

The Miami River Freight Improvement Plan was conducted by the Florida Department of Transportation – District 6 with the goal of enhancing freight mobility for the shippers and terminals along the Miami River. Key objectives include inventorying existing and future mobility issues and needs, evaluating the river's capacity, assessing the potential for short sea shipping, mitigating traffic congestion and safety issues, developing a prioritized list of improvement projects, and enhancing the viability of marine logistics on the Miami River.

This freight plan followed these steps in identifying needs and issues and formulating plan recommendations:

- CONDUCT AGENCY, PARTNER AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT
- REVIEW EXISTING PLANS, DATA, AND POLICIES
- INVENTORY EXISTING FREIGHT INFRASTRUCTURE
- EVALUATE EXISTING AND FUTURE CONDITIONS AND NEEDS
- ASSESS MARKET OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDING SHORT SEA SHIPPING
- CONDUCT RIVER CAPACITY ANALYSIS
- DEVELOP PROPOSED IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS
- PRIORITIZE RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS



Carlos A. Castro
District Freight Coordinator
Carlos.Castro@dot.state.fl.us



Map ID #	Ranking	Project Type	Project Name
Short Term (1 - 5 years)			
3	1		Monitor implementation of ongoing "Iron Triangle" Study recommendations by FDOT.
20	2		Conduct transit circulator feasibility study to serve Palmer Lake and western Miami River corridor.
31	3		Improve Miami River navigation channel signing and aids.
13	4		Tunnel PO&E Study for Brickell Avenue Bridge
22	4		NW North River Drive railroad crossings.
24	4		Upgrade private driveway rail crossings on NW North River Drive.
5	7		Monitor NW 36th Street Corridor Planning Study
10	7		Improve signal coordination along NW 27th Avenue.
18	9		Route 36 extension to Dolphin Station.
16	10		Route 27 running time adjustments.
17	10		Route 32 running time adjustments.
12	12		Monitor and manage traffic signal time and coordination with bascule bridge operations along Miami River.
14	12		Install a Port of Miami River wayfinding sign system for NW North River Drive and NW South River Drive.
7	12		NW 27th Avenue/NW North River Drive intersection.
19	12		Route 32 bus benches/shelters and lighting.
1	16		NW South River Drive at NW 36th Street intersection
2	16		NW North River Drive at NW 36th Street intersection
26	18		Investigate potential FTZ warehouse sites or development as private sector lead.
Medium Term (5 - 10 years)			
25	1		Develop truck staging area near NW 37th Avenue.
8	2		Proposed ramps to and from the east on SR 112/Airport Expressway at NW 37th Avenue.
6	3		Reconstruct NW South River Drive.
9	3		NW North River Drive improvement.
4	5		Access management along south frontage of NW North River Drive.
23	6		Railroad crossing closures and repairs on Downtown Lead rail spur.
21	7		Continue implementation of Miami River Greenway corridor.
11	8		Local street improvements in industrial district north of NW North River Drive.
27	8		Develop railroad intermodal ramp.
29	10		Explore development of a short sea shipping concept.
30	11		Investigate bulkhead repair program utilizing SIS and other funds.
Long Term Term (10 or more years)			
28	1		Develop truck travel center.
15	2		Implement programmed bascule bridge maintenance and reconstruction projects.

Miami River

Freight Improvement Plan

Plan Recommendations

The plan identified a wide range of improvement actions to facilitate freight mobility in the study area. Using a set of evaluation factors, these actions were prioritized into three implementation timelines, as described below:

- Short Term (1-5 years)
- Medium Term (5-10 years)
- Long Term (10 or more years)

The table to the left lists the proposed actions, their ranking within implementation categories, the project timeline, and the project name and description. The map identification number refers to the location of the project in the map on the facing page. Besides freight-oriented projects, the list also includes actions oriented toward worker access to the jobs in the study area.

Other Recommendations

The plan also formulated other recommendations that did not involve physical improvements, but which recognized several policy-oriented actions intended to contribute to freight mobility in the Miami River corridor. These include:

- Continue coordination with the Miami River Commission in terms of preserving marine industrial zoning per the *Miami River Urban Infill Plan*.
- Request prioritization of power restoration by Florida Power & Light for lift bridges after storm events.
- Pursue designation of the Miami River as a Marine Highway under US DOT program provisions as administered by the Maritime Administration.
- Preserve rail-served industrial properties along the Downtown Lead rail corridor.
- Conduct an updated economic impact study of Miami River commerce.
- Investigate possible formation of a Community Redevelopment Authority (or a Community Development District) to support implementation of study recommendations.

