

MIAMI TODAY

February 13, 2020

Circulation: 28,665 / UMW: 32,940

36 Years MIAMI TODAY

WEEK OF THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2020

A Singular Voice in an Evolving City

WWW.MIAMITODAYNEWS.COM \$4.00

SUPER BOWL SOCIAL MEDIA PUT DOWNTOWN MIAMI IN THE GLOBAL SPOTLIGHT, PG. 2



MIA GAINS A MILLION: One million more passengers moved through Miami International Airport (MIA) in 2019 than the year prior, for a total 45.9 million served, statistics from the hub show. Contributing to that growth, according to spokesperson **Greg Chin**, were five new international passenger routes from Norwegian, Royal Air Maroc, LOT Polish Airlines, Corsair and four weekly flights to Cordoba, Argentina, by American Airlines. "Last year was very successful for MIA in terms of passengers and cargo growth, as well as in the expansion of our route network in new markets," said county Aviation Director **Lester Sola**. "A number of our airline partners have announced plans for continued air service expansions in MIA in 2020, which has us very excited about the year ahead." To that end, American, Delta Air Lines and low-cost carrier Frontier Airlines have already announced plans to add further domestic and international flights this year. "As MIA turns the page to a new decade and embarks on a new \$5 billion, airport-wide capital improvement program," said Mayor **Carlos Giménez**, "the future is bright for our county's largest economic engine."

SUPER BOWL FLIGHT BOOM: In related news, Miami International Airport has had two of the busiest days in its 92-year history already this year, an airport release said. On Jan. 5, passengers exceeded 158,000 – a record number. Roughly a month later, on Feb. 4, nearly 80,000 travelers flew home from the airport. That's thanks in no small part to Super Bowl LIV, for which local authorities expected some 200,000 tourists to converge on South Florida. To put that into perspective, that's 15,000 more travelers than the seats in Hard Rock Stadium.

CURTAILING PEAFOWL SPRAWL: Today's (2/13) City of Miami Agenda features the final reading of the peafowl ordinance (peacock for males, peahen for females), which is aimed at mitigating the proliferation of the birds, particularly in northern Coconut Grove. If approved, the city would implement a peafowl management plan to establish rules for trapping and relocating the peafowl. The Legislation is sponsored by **Ken Russell**, whose district includes Coconut Grove.

REGULATING CAR SHARING: Pointing to the complexity of addressing new technologies, a Florida House committee Tuesday approved a bill that would create a regulatory framework for "peer-to-peer" car sharing services. The 11-6 vote by the Ways & Means Committee came after a lengthy discussion about whether the services should be required to collect sales taxes and rental-car surcharges that are imposed on rental-car companies. The services are technology platforms that connect car owners with people who pay to use the vehicles, with the services taking a cut.



Joe Chi
Adding global ties as he heads growing CAMACOL
The profile is on Page 4

Hard Rock tax breaks facing cap

By **JESSE SCHECKNER**

More than \$100 million in taxes to reward privately funded upgrades to Hard Rock Stadium could be capped as Miami-Dade today (2/13) considers barring future additions to the deal. A commission OK would bring a final vote March 3.

Barbara Jordan, who sponsored the 2014 vote that created the pact with the Miami Dolphins and two later amendments, is behind the resolution to make its provisions permanent.

She's also behind a separate proposal to restrict Formula 1 racing at the stadium.

Under the 2014 deal's current terms, the county is to give the Dolphins up to \$5.75 million yearly tax savings through Sept. 30, 2036.

Team owners, in exchange, were to spend \$350 million to modernize the stadium and attract large-scale "marquee" events, including the Super Bowl, World Cup and major college football games.

In a 2017 amendment, commissioners OK'd another \$1 million in breaks for every year the stadium hosts the Miami Open Tennis Tournament, beginning in 2024.

A July 2018 amendment hiked the annual tax breaks value by \$750,000 and required the Dolphins to build a training complex beside the stadium by Sept. 30, 2024. In a July 2018 letter to Mayor Carlos Giménez, Greater Miami Chamber CEO Alfred Sanchez said team owner Stephen Ross agreed to spend \$75 million on the complex and its 100 full-time jobs.

The second amendment added to events eligible for tax breaks any "international soccer match or other sporting event which attracts significant tourists ... with at least \$5,000 paid tickets distributed" and hiked related incentives from \$1.5 million to \$2.25 million yearly.

The program's aim, to reward stadium upgrades that boost the economy, tourism and jobs, is far along and needs no more help, Ms. Jordan's item says: "As such, no further amendments to the Marquee Agreement are necessary or desired, and [it] can simply continue to function until its expiration as originally envisioned."

Parking authority funds downtown Freebee use

By **GABRIEL POBLETE**

Freebee's free-ride service continues to expand as it partners with municipalities and others across the county and beyond – and now it's teaming up with the Miami Parking Authority to service downtown.

The authority's board last week unanimously approved a one-year pilot program with Freebee for three of the company's electric vehicles to provide on-demand rides in Downtown Miami. The authority will pay Freebee \$180,000 for that.

Alejandra Argudin, the authority's chief operations officer, said it took nearly three years of discussions to establish a partnership with Freebee. She said there was interest because the service could help mitigate traffic downtown and provide a last-mile solution – a link between mass transit and passengers' final destinations.

Freebee uses electric vehicles that look like golf carts. Available free of charge, passengers have three ways to access a Freebee car: through the Ride Freebee mobile app, calling a toll-free number or waving down a passing Freebee.

Each vehicle costs \$108,000 a year to operate. However, according to the agreement

with Freebee, \$48,000 of each vehicle will be subsidized by the authority's guaranteed advertising revenue. While the vehicles will sport advertisements, the Freebees will also feature prominent parking authority signage.

CEO Art Noriega said that while the authority considered up to five vehicles, it settled for three for the pilot.

The service area will be bounded roughly by 11th Street on the north and the Miami River on the south, I-95 on the west and Biscayne Bay on the east. Documents show proposed operating hours from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days a week, but those hours could change.

During the meeting, Freebee's Jason Spiegel, co-founder and managing partner, said the company will assume all liability, and the authority will have final say on advertising on the vehicles.

While Freebee was conceived under an advertisement model when it was founded in 2012, it has shifted away from that model by teaming up with municipalities for funding. As a result, it has now become more of a public transportation option.

Though the partnership with the parking

authority is new, Freebee's presence downtown is not. The company currently services downtown, as well as Brickell, Wynwood, Edgewater and the Design District, albeit under the advertisement model, Mr. Spiegel told Miami Today. He emphasized that the partnership with the authority will make the service more reliable downtown, saying that "if we don't have the advertising dollars, I can't put the cars on the roads."

Mr. Spiegel said providing a reliable service downtown will also allow users to park their cars once and move around downtown with ease. He projected the vehicles could roll out in 45 to 60 days.

"It's going to be a game-changer for downtown," he said.

The company also services Miami's Coconut Grove, Coral Gables, Key Biscayne, South Beach and Mid-Beach, and outside the county, including St. Pete Beach and Delray Beach.

The authority, officially known as the Department of Off-Street Parking, manages on-street and off-street parking assets in the City of Miami. The agency is self-sustaining, financed by parking revenues.

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Downtown Super Bowl effort got 950,000 social media impressions

BY CATHERINE LACKNER

Miami's Downtown Development Authority put a big push into this year's Super Bowl and it paid off handsomely for downtown, Kim Hills, authority senior manager for marketing and communications, told a Feb. 5 meeting of the authority's Enterprise Committee.

The authority embarked on a social media, film, and television campaign to highlight not only downtown but the changes that have taken place since 2010, the last time Miami played host to the Super Bowl.

The authority allocated \$5,000 to social media ads targeting selected audiences over a two-week stretch through Super Bowl Sunday. The audiences include South Florida locals; residents of cities whose teams had reached

the AFC/NFC championship games; upper-level executives in those cities; people interested in relocating to Miami; and other affluent individuals.

The ads yielded 765,000 social media impressions, 110,000 video views, and 11,000 click-throughs to the authority's website over the two-week span, an authority document said.

The social media push included posts that informed visitors of where to stay, eat, and play, and three videos that showcased authority programs and the changes they're creating downtown.

One video told the story of a Downtown Enhancement Team member who had found a job and home through the authority program; another detailed the story of a team member who works in the Omni district; and a third explained the Amba-

sador program, which employs local people to walk visitors to their destinations and give them directions. Repurposed from last year's Amazon pitch was "We Are DWNTWN Miami," in which local government and business leaders spoke of Miami's advantages as a multicultural, exciting community.

"The DDA used a variety of content to organically engage with the community, stakeholders and partner organizations through all of their platforms," said an authority document. "The goal of these posts was to drive traffic to the DDA website and to various news articles, videos and content online that showcase the consumer appeal of downtown. The organic/unpaid strategy resulted in 185,000 impressions, 15,000 video plays, and another 10,000 engagements," the document said.