

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 15, 2012

The Honorable Ray LaHood
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood:

We write to express our full support for a FY2012 TIGER Discretionary Grant application being submitted by Florida International University (FIU) that seeks to deploy innovative transportation practices, and in turn, spur economic development in South Florida and the Southeast Florida region. We understand that the unique combination of improvements in this proposal offer great promise beyond Miami as they will create completely new models of efficient mobility systems that intentionally and directly support economic development and competitiveness.

Specifically, it is our belief that the UniversityCity Project initiative will foster economic prosperity for residents of the region by integrating the deployment of an internationally recognized, state of the practice Informed Traveler Program (ITP) with a new multimodal transportation hub on the FIU Campus and Express Enhanced Bus Service on State Road-836.

This TIGER grant would also make possible multi-modal improvements, including traffic-calmed streets, transit greenways, and mixed-mode corridors in the City of Sweetwater, Florida, connecting this community with the FIU Maidique Campus. At the same time, by extending these pedestrian-oriented public spaces to the Maidique Campus Green Library, Sweetwater and FIU corridor improvements will help to aggregate SR-836 Express Enhanced Bus Service customers at a new Advanced Transit and Multimodal Station (ATMS) at FIU. The SR-836 Express enhanced Bus Service proposal is a separate Miami-Dade Transit submittal for a FY2012 TIGER award that would provide premium and evolving bus rapid transit service between western Miami-Dade County/FIU and the Miami Intermodal Center.

Both the FIU and Miami-Dade Transit TIGER proposals merit Department of Transportation support and implemented together they can vastly change the socio-economic outcome of South Florida. Working together, they are larger than their respective parts. In the event the Department of Transportation agrees to award TIGER grants to both Miami-Dade and FIU, there will exist a robust, frequent, and very smart transit system operating between multiple east and west Miami-Dade destinations with superior customer acceptance and high use.

The UniversityCity Project emanates from transportation challenges and solutions identified through earlier efforts by FIU, the City of Sweetwater, Miami-Dade Expressway Authority, Florida Department of Transportation District 6 and International Business Machines (IBM) and initial work undertaken by FIU through the efforts of the Lehman Center for Transportation Research, the Metropolitan Center, the School of Architecture, and the Honor College.

Thanks to the innovation and pledged support of IBM, who will provide assets, technologies, and expertise, thousands of Southeast Florida residents will benefit from the ITP. By connecting them to live-data on traffic patterns, actual transit options, and modeled predictions of the optimal routes, alternative trip departure times and related destinations or activities, and modal alternatives, the citizens and visitors to Miami-Dade County will be able to optimize their transportation choices and reduce trip costs, fuel, emissions, and travel time.

Once this UniversityCity and transit/ITP complex is established as a working advanced transit oriented development, FIU will be able with US DOT to determine and quantify if reduced transportation costs, emissions, fuel consumption, and congestion has occurred and whether large numbers of people walking larger than typical distances assess transit in larger than expected numbers and increased passenger revenues for as to diminish the need for operating subsidies. An ITP pilot that supports and provides guidance to the enhanced pedestrain access at UniversityCity linked to the SR-836 Express Enhanced Bus Service via the Advanced Transit and Multimodal Station and that includes the high quality public space that spans eight lanes of highway at US 41, ought to establish a likely basis for higher usage of transit including the very large number of transportation options available at the Miami Intermodal Center via the SR-836 Express Enhanced Bus Service to and from UniversityCity.

FIU serves as a logical lead partner to help bring about this innovative deployment that will connect communities within the region. In addition to attracting and developing internationally savy talent that drives Florida's growing knowledge economy, FIU is one of the 25 largest universities in the US with over 48,000 students and staff. It is also the largest Hispanic serving university and serves as an anchor for the emerging South Florida biotech corridor. Its campuses attract nearly 500,000 visitors annually, making it the academic, social, cultural, athletic, recreational center in western Miami-Dade County.

We are glad to report that the Florida Department of Transportation has been engaged with FIU and Miami-Dade Transit on the larger vision for easing transportatuion problems and has been working with FIU throughout the development of their proposal. It is our understanding that these TIGER grants will allow Miami-Dade and FIU to provide more frequent transport and connectivity between the Miami intermodal Center, UniversityCity, and many significant destinations throughout Miami-Dade County and the region.

As you consider how best to make these critical TIGER investments, we urge, within all applicable rules and regulations, support of this project which will have a significant impact on the Southeast Florida Region and the Nation.

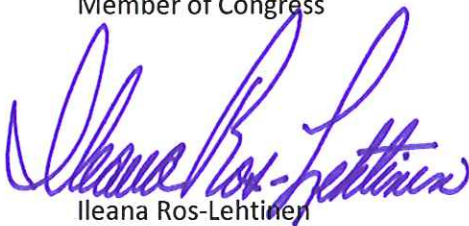
Sincerely,



Mario Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress



Frederica Wilson
Member of Congress



Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



David Rivera
Member of Congress