Commission gives nod to vital bonds to start awaited UM life sciences park

Leaders turn desires to port dredging as needed tie-in with tunnels’ impact

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Provided by: Marie Denise Simmons, Communikatz, Inc. msimmons@communikatz.com

By Zachary S. Fagenson

Leaders turn desires to port dredging as needed tie-in with tunnels’ impact

With construction on key federal tunnels to the Port of Miami underway, local leaders have turned their attention to dredging, another project crucial to Miami’s future as a major port — and one that could require just as much collective public advocacy and federal funding.

Deepening the channel to the port is going to make for larger and potentially double-deck cargo ships, as the holistic plan developed by the Miami-Dade County port authority in 2007, along with Oceana’s goal of gaining $15 million in federal money, failed for federal funding.

Soport leaders and others have consistently fought to get that federal grant, and we’ve been told that’s not going to happen without federal funding.

Meanwhile, it was the subject of intense discussion at the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee’s hearing in February, where, among other participants, the project was a main concern during the Government Affairs Committee.

The congressional approval of $1.2 billion for Miami-Dade’s “most important project” in federal funding was a victory, said Okorn, who helped to push the project forward.

But, the project must be completed to be eligible to receive the grant, and it will only be able to receive funds if the project is approved by the full commission, he said.

And the project, if approved by the full commission, will be matched and sold by investors’ risk.

The projects are still set to go forward, but they will likely require additional funding from the state, local, and federal governments.

Westport and the university aren’t the only ones looking to the future.

Miami Dade County, founder of developer Deearak Group, along with the Public Health Trust sought the bond to build an administration building for the health education system at the City Colleges of Miami. At a meeting of the Industrial Development Authority, the first agency responsible for approving of the bond, there was a consensus to proceed with the $100 million bond.

“[It’s] a great development for the community,” said the university’s president.

According to Fagenson, the project is in the early stages of development and is expected to be completed by 2013.

The total cost of the project is expected to be about $15 million.

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