



Executive Summary

Feasibility of Implementing Tech Centers in Miami-Dade County



Miami-Dade Metropolitan Planning Organization

This research was conducted pursuant to an interlocal agreement between the Miami-Dade Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Center for Urban Transportation Research

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The Miami-Dade Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is responsible for the development of the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) in the Miami-Dade metropolitan area. The existing and approved plan recommends a variety of capital and service transportation improvements to alleviate traffic congestion, including highway and transit projects.

In this context, transportation demand management (TDM) initiatives have been promoted to induce changes in the behavior of solo drivers and attract them to other transportation modes, such as carpooling, vanpooling and bicycling, among others. Across the country, TDM initiatives have also been effective in affecting where and when people work. The extent of efficacy strictly depends on the geographical as well as socio-economic characteristics of the study area in conjunction with the strategy being evaluated.

The objective of this study was to assess the feasibility of implementing technology centers to alleviate traffic congestion as an alternative means of maximizing the efficient use and capacity of limited transportation recourses¹.

At request of the MPO, the Center for Urban Transportation (CUTR) conducted an analysis of the Miami-Dade county areas potentially suitable for telework centers implementation. The analysis focused on the SR836 (Dolphin Expressway) corridor, as it represents one of the most congested network areas of the county.

The analysis showed that there exist residential clusters potentially suitable for the implementation of a telework center, at the conceptual level. These clusters are

¹ In this report, the definitions of telework center and telecenter are used to define the same transportation demand management (TDM) strategy. Satellite or technology centers are comprised within these acronyms.



located in the areas stretching from the southwest end of SR836, east of Florida Turnpike SR 821 through the Palmetto Expressway, North of 8th Street (Tamiami Trail), and immediately adjacent to SR 836 (highlighted in green).

The analysis concluded that, although the study area has all the feasibility elements that are necessary before a telecenter can be established, other factors must be taken into consideration and analyzed before considering implementing a telecenter.

This study uncovered that, to date, telecommuting centers have found only limited success. The majority of centers opened in the 1990's have ceased to exist or evolved into more competitive concepts (such as urban executive office suites), due to lack of subsidized public and private funding, rising competition from alternative telecommuting strategies, employer resistance, and changes in telecommunication technology.

At present, the majority of the operating telework centers are federally sponsored and used solely by federal workers. These centers are also facing constant scrutiny and funding constraints owing to persistent low usage levels.

The shift has been toward home-based telecommuting, as an inexpensive, productive, alternative. The challenge faced by telework centers is that routine telecommuters still represent a relatively small percentage of the workforce. These individuals tend to prefer making arrangements with the employer to conduct home-based telecommuting, further reducing to a small percentage the potential niche of telecenter users. In addition, telecenters established for reducing commute lengths typically target populations that travel long distances to work. While residents living in the study area work all over the county, the major center for employment remains the central business district (CBD), which is roughly 13 miles away from these areas. Although there are advantages for the



telecenter, employers might not find it feasible to relocate some of their employees to such nearby locations. Further, only a small percentage of workers in the CBD actually reside in the selected southwest clusters. Hence, attempting to reduce commute distances for such a small percentage of employees seems irrelevant, especially if the commute distances for employees residing in other areas are left out of the context.

SR 836 is extremely congested during peak hours. If congestion alleviation is deemed to be the main goal of the telecenter, then simply by establishing a telecenter for housing a few employees will not solve the problem. To achieve this goal, other TDM strategies, such as home-based telecommuting promotion/implementation, must be employed in conjunction with the proposed telecenter feasibility analysis.

While public funding may represent an option to cover some of the required start-up costs, private partnership is considered as essential in successfully operating centers in the long run. Substantial marketing and recruiting efforts are required to target this telecommuters' niche market, with a cost that could offset the benefits provided by the telecenter itself.

Based on the results of this analysis, CUTR does not recommend the implementation of telecenters, rather the pursuit of other TDM strategies, such as home-based telecommuting and flexible working hours.

Currently, there are vanpool groups serving Miami-Dade County that use the SR-836 and adjacent corridors to access the Miami Civic Center and downtown areas. CUTR recommends continuing the promotional effort of such programs.

