



**Florida Department of Transportation-D-6  
Port of Miami Tunnel Study**

**News Clip**

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From: *Miami Herald*, Friday, December 14, 2007  
Subject: **Port tunnel survives a crucial vote**

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BY LARRY LEBOWITZ  
[llebowitz@miamiherald.com](mailto:llebowitz@miamiherald.com)

The gents in the well-cut suits slapped high-fives and thumbed BlackBerry e-mails to their partners back in France: The Port of Miami Tunnel is nearly a done deal.

Miami city commissioners voted 3-2 Thursday to bankroll \$50 million toward the \$914 million tunnel -- days before a deadline that threatened to kill a megaproject discussed for more than two decades and nearly left for dead.

Yet the port tunnel survived, in part, because it was included as one piece in a far-reaching revival plan pitched by Mayor Manny Diaz.

Two other development projects that also had encountered opposition secured funding as pieces of the larger, historic whole: paying off a \$2.5 million yearly debt for Jungle Island and helping underwrite a \$200 million Miami streetcar.

The tunnel, Jungle Island and streetcar contributions are part of a global agreement with Miami-Dade County that would expand the Omni Community Redevelopment Area boundaries to include the tunnel portals on Watson Island.

"We're very pleased. But we still have a lot of work to do," said Paul Boucher, the Toronto-based project director for the global investment bank Babcock & Brown.

The bankers are partnering with the French construction giant Bouygues Travaux Publics and others to finance, design, build, operate and maintain the tunnel over a 35-year period.

The bulk of the tunnel construction money is coming from the state, \$457 million, and Miami-Dade County, \$402 million.

Miami-Dade's approval is needed next.

County commissioners, who ratified their portion of the tunnel financing in August, must now endorse the new CRA boundaries and spending plans.

Johnny Martinez, the state Department of Transportation's Miami chief, said he didn't want to celebrate until county commissioners vote Tuesday.

Yet he and others envision a tunnel that will provide direct access to the port from the expressways and interstates -- instead of choking downtown streets with cargo trucks and buses shuttling cruise passengers.

It is not yet known whether a toll will be placed on the tunnel. Under the county's portion of the plan, the port is responsible for a minimum \$43 million contribution.

Boucher said the tunnel consortium is hoping to hammer out the final contract with the state DOT by early May. Final designs should be completed by spring 2009.

A special tunnel-boring machine will be built and brought to Miami to dig the twin tubes more than 100 feet below the surface of Government Cut. If all goes as planned, the tunnel could open by late 2012.