

MIAMI



BRIGHTLINE TRAINS ARE PET-FRIENDLY AND EXCEED ADA COMPLIANCE STANDARDS. AUTOMATED RETRACTABLE PLATFORMS OFFER LEVEL BOARDING, WHILE 32-INCH-WIDE INTERIOR AISLES PROVIDE INDIVIDUALS IN WHEELCHAIRS OR PUSHING STROLLERS UNHINDERED MOBILITY. THE RESTROOMS FEATURE A TOUCHLESS ENVIRONMENT, ANOTHER SEAMLESS BLEND OF CONVENIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY.



THE NEW BRIGHTLINE TRAIN SERVICE WILL REVOLUTIONIZE TRANSPORTATION IN SOUTH FLORIDA AND REINVENT THE MIAMI EXPERIENCE

BY MARY MURRAY AND DAPHNE NIKOLOPOULOS

Florida has a long history with train travel. The state's first rail line, the Tallahassee-St. Marks Railroad, was chartered in 1834 and used a mule-drawn coach to move cotton. Robust route construction followed, with the goal of linking Florida's coasts. The Civil War disrupted this progress, but efforts rebounded around the end of the century. By 1912, Henry Flagler's Florida East Coast Railway extended from Jacksonville to Key West, opening up the state to commerce, tourism, and a new generation of residents.

Now, those same tracks are ready for a renaissance. All Aboard Florida is using the FECR corridor that connects West Palm Beach to Miami for its new Brightline express train

service. Beginning this fall, the privately funded Brightline will start operations between West Palm, Fort Lauderdale, and Miami. In the coming years, it will add a stop in Orlando as part of a secondary expansion.

The vision for Brightline began as "a solution to a significant problem for our region, which is traffic congestion and car dependency," explains CEO Dave Howard. "We need to change this behavior. There are some alternative transportation systems, but people here still tend to use their cars even though it can be a stressful experience. Brightline will provide an enjoyable, experiential alternative to road rage-infused car travel."

Brightline estimates its services will take up

to three million vehicles off the road annually, which will have a positive environmental impact. In addition, easier access to key South Florida city centers will spur regional economic development.

"This is a marriage of entrepreneurship, innovation, and vision," says Mark Wilson, the president and CEO of the Florida Chamber of Commerce. "Ultimately, this ... opens up an entire world for commerce and social interaction."

So how's it different than South Florida's commuter rail line, Tri-Rail? Speed, for starters: Where Tri-Rail makes 18 stops over a 70.9-mile-long route, Brightline will make only three. Traveling at a maximum speed of 79 mph, these trains will deliver passengers

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from West Palm to Fort Lauderdale in 30 minutes, and to Miami in another 30. When service extends from West Palm to Orlando, speed will max out at 125 mph.

"We go to the heart of these city centers in express fashion," Howard says. "The other critical difference is the travel experience. It's actually going to be an enjoyable part of whatever you're doing."

This intersection of transportation and hospitality is what Brightline is all about. David Rockwell and the Rockwell Group designed the train interiors with an eye toward comfort, convenience, and premier amenities. Siemens handled the build, operating 100 percent Buy America compliant.

While the trains' exterior colors are different, interiors are identical. Measuring approximately 500 feet long, each can accommodate 240 passengers over four cars. There's one first-class Select coach with 21-inch-wide leather seats and complimentary food and beverages. The other three cars are devoted to Smart class, a designation Howard equates to business class. Here, the seats are 19 inches wide and refreshments are available for purchase. Regardless of class, each seat comes equipped with power and USB outlets, and the train's free Wi-Fi is strong enough to stream video and has a range that extends from the train into the station.

According to Howard, the trains will make 16 round trips every weekday, leaving at

least once an hour during business hours. On weekends and holidays, trains will depart every 90 minutes. Major events in the city centers will also impact the schedule. If, for example, there's a Miami Heat game or a Lady Gaga concert (hint, hint: November 30) taking place at the American Airlines Arena, service hours will be extended. In addition, trains can be chartered for private use. All in all, Brightline will transform how—and how often—Palm Beachers travel to Miami.

Brightline will open up "people's backyards to cultural, entertainment, and dining experiences they might not be considering right now," Howard notes. "This is going to be a game changer for the Palm Beach community."

THE STATIONS



WHILE THE FORT LAUDERDALE AND WEST PALM BEACH STATIONS (OPPOSITE PAGE, CENTER RENDERING) EACH MEASURE 60,000 SQUARE FEET, MIAMICENTRAL (ALL OTHER IMAGES) IS FAR LARGER, WITH OFFICE AND RETAIL SPACE AS WELL AS RESIDENCES. IT WILL OFFER GRAB-AND-GO AND SIT-DOWN FOOD SERVICES AT CENTRALFARE, INCLUDING A SIGNATURE RESTAURANT, MONGER BY THE VOLTAGGIO BROTHERS.

The West Palm Beach station (located on Evernia Street adjacent to CityPlace) and the Fort Lauderdale station (situated near the Broward Center for the Performing Arts on NW 2nd Avenue) both measure 60,000 square feet. After entering through smart turnstiles, you wait in air-conditioned comfort before heading down to the platform to board your super-quiet Brightline train.

Sleek and stylish, these stations do a superior job of harboring passengers. However, the Miami station, dubbed MiamiCentral, is in a category all its own.

Dave Howard describes the massive, mixed-use complex as Miami's Grand Central Station. Covering six city blocks and more than 11 acres, MiamiCentral will include retail and office spaces, a hotel, luxury apartments, and a food hall. It's also a major transit hub; Metrorail, Metromover, and Tri-Rail stops are all housed inside. Access to the city bus as well as bike- and ride-sharing programs have been integrated into the station, too.

Walking is easy thanks to MiamiCentral's prime location. It's nestled downtown on NW 1st Avenue, between NW 3rd and NW 8th streets, a short distance from the American Airlines Arena and the Adrienne Arsht Center.

MiamiCentral's culinary offerings alone are worth a trip to the Magic City. CentralFare is being billed as Miami's first food hall, opening this fall ahead of a slew of similar concepts

currently in development. Comprising 50,000 square feet over two floors, it will feature five restaurants and more than 20 purveyors that capture the spirit of the city's food scene. With everything from sit-down eateries to grab-and-go counters and a marketplace of grocers, there's something to please every palate.

Any trip to MiamiCentral must include a meal at Monger, CentralFare's signature restaurant helmed by the Voltaggio brothers. Michael and Bryan Voltaggio placed first and second, respectively, on season six of *Top Chef*. They've since opened their own eateries, with Michael showcasing his perspicaciously playful take on fine dining at Ink in Los Angeles and Bryan marrying seasonal ingredients with technical prowess at Volt in Frederick, Maryland. They recently teamed up for the first time for the Voltaggio Brothers Steak House at the MGM National Harbor in their native Maryland.

Choosing Miami for their second collaboration was an easy decision, since they have family in Florida and visit frequently. More importantly, the brothers were intrigued by the opportunity to be at the center of the city's changing landscape.

Conceptually, Monger is unlike anything either Voltaggio has tackled before. Three kitchens—representing a fishmonger, a butcher, and a greengrocer—anchor the 10,000-square-foot restaurant. Diners curate their meal, mixing and matching proteins, starches, and vegetables. "Guests don't always want to be told what

they're going to eat," says Bryan. "This creates an experience you can come back to more often because you can try your way through the menu in different ways."

Michael and Bryan sat down with *PBI* to discuss Monger, open kitchens, and culinary influences.

PBI: The Monger concept seems to celebrate all the modest, unfussy aspects of preparing food. How does the restaurant's design enhance this message?

BV: When you walk in, you're going to see all these different kitchens. It's an environment where you feel like there is an abundance and many experiences throughout the space.

MV: It's a full-service restaurant. You sit down at the table and order your food. But each kitchen has a glass case in front of it that's specific to that kitchen. If you want to go up and look at the ingredients we're working with, there's a sneak preview where you can imagine what your meal is going to be like.

Sounds like a twist on an open kitchen.

BV: It's a more open kitchen. You're seeing more of the raw ingredients and the preparation from start to finish. And you've had a hand in how it's all going to be garnished, sauced, and served, which is like the shopping experience. It's inspired by a '50s grocery store, as far as decor is concerned, so you essentially could walk through the restaurant and point and shoot and get what you want.

Is it liberating to give the guests that much control?

BV: Yeah, because having a restaurant is more than just being creative with food. It's also about creating a level of hospitality where people feel welcomed.

MV: It also makes a lot of sense to be a part of something like CentralFare with this concept. CentralFare functions as one big restaurant with a lot of things going on inside. The only way this venture would have made sense would be with a concept like Monger. We're not just tenants in the building; we're partners with the entire project. We want to tell people about the other kiosks and restaurants, and we want the other restaurants and kiosks to tell people about Monger.

How do the cities you live in impact your culinary styles?

BV: I'm in a town more than a city. I live north of D.C., west of Baltimore, and for me it's about mid-Atlantic regional cooking. It's a cuisine I've grown up with. It's really reflective of the ingredients around me and our proximity to the Chesapeake.

MV: Mine is more driven by the different ethnicities in Los Angeles. It's very similar to Miami in the sense that [it's] a large city with many different cultures. The idea of going out to a Mexican restaurant, a Cuban restaurant, a Chinese restaurant, a Japanese restaurant—you can draw influences from all of that [but] you don't have to be labeled as that type of restaurant anymore. We draw influences from all of those cultures and you'll see that in the menu here.

How do your personalities play off one another's in the kitchen?

MV: Bryan has an edit button, and that's important for me because I don't. Bryan's a lot more business minded than I am, too. In most cases, a lot more mature and grown up. I get sort of ADD when it comes to the creative process because I want to try so many different things, and Bryan is very good at streamlining that process and focusing on the good stuff.

BV: We're our best edit. We're our best barometer of whether we're doing something correctly or not. You work in a kitchen a

lot and [often] people are like, "Oh, yes, chef. Your dish is perfect." Well, Michael's not going to tell me that.

MV: We're not afraid to insult each other.

BV: We work on different coasts. We have different upbringings as chefs. We've worked in different areas of the country. Bringing that together is a lot of fun. Once you get us together on a plate, you get a bigger experience. It's a new chapter, a new opportunity for us to be creative.



THE VOLTAGGIOS SHARE MORE INSIGHT INTO THEIR COOKING STYLES AT PALMBEACHILLUSTRATED.COM/VOLTAGGIOBROTHERS