

As airport completes its revamp, new master plan in wings

BY ASHLEY D. TORRES

A new master plan for Miami-Dade County's system of airports, including Miami International Airport, is being formulated with completion due in 2012.

The current airport master plan was initiated in 1991, adopted in 1994 and focused on airport needs from 1990 to 2010. A new plan is needed to fulfill the Federal Aviation Administration's requirement that the county's aviation department have a 20-year plan for capital improvement projects.

The aviation department has commissioned Ricondo & Associates, a full-service aviation consulting firm, for \$4 million to formulate a new master plan.

The firm is also working with URS Corp., which specializes in engineering and construction services.

The master plan is based on forecasts from airport traffic engineers that are then used for planning the future needs of the county's airports.

The performance of the airport at forecasted numbers or better, said Jose Abreu, the aviation department's director, is "key to maintaining your ratings, and so far so good."

The new master plan is to have a strategic outlook from 2015 to 2050 and capital improvement plans from 2015 to 2035.

An airport layout plan, which is a graphical representation of the improve-

ments in the master plan, is also a key component being developed. The aviation department, Mr. Abreu said, has kept its layout plan consistently updated by drawing in any changes. However, the new master plan looks to create a digital layout plan that can be easily updated.

One of the main visions for Miami International Airport is to coordinate its airfield capacity with its terminals.

The airport's airfield capacity with four runways is 70 million passengers annually while its terminal and gate capacity is 50 million annual passengers — a figure that can rise to the equivalent of 55 million passengers during peak hours. This year, the airport's passenger traf-

fic is forecast to reach 35 million.

"This master plan," Mr. Abreu said, "will tell us how we can optimize this awesome capacity that we do have."

We "can land them," he added, "but can't gate them."

Part of maximizing the airport's airfield capacity is being addressed with creation of the linear North Terminal, which allows planes to easily enter and exit gates.

The aviation department's study for the new master plan, Mr. Abreu said, was vetted through the Miami Airport Affairs Committee, which represents the interest of Miami airport's airlines, and presented on Oct. 5 to the county commission.