



PORT OF MIAMI

Deepening the port will cost \$180 million.

Deep Thoughts

Port of Miami Director Bill Johnson is overseeing major construction programs, including a \$180-million dredging project to bring the harbor to a minimum depth of 50 feet to accommodate "Post-Panamax" ships and a \$1-billion tunnel under Biscayne Bay to directly connect the port — situated on an island — to I-395.

FLORIDA TREND: Why are all these projects so important?

Bill Johnson: We as a state are losing way too much business to ports outside the U.S. Just as important, we're losing business to ports in surrounding areas, whether its Mobile, Houston or Charleston/Savannah. We're one of the largest contributors to the economy of the state. The Port of Miami generated over \$18 billion in economic impact this year, over 176,000 jobs in cargo and cruise. In terms of competitiveness within the U.S., as well as to be able to compete with ports outside the U.S. — potentially Cuba, the Bahamas (and others) — we have to invest in infrastructure.

FT: What is the most important proj-



Johnson

ect going on right now?

Johnson: The deep dredge. It means the port will be able to receive some of the larger cargo vessels coming through the new huge locks at the Panama Canal. We'll be one of three ports authorized by the U.S. Congress on the entire East Coast to be at 50 feet. The only port today is Norfolk, Va. New York today is dredging.

FT: A tunnel under Biscayne Bay seems like

a pretty radical way to get trucks to and from the port. Why is it so important?

Johnson: The Port of Miami over the next 10 years will be doubling the volume of cargo moved. The 1.1-mile tunnel will have two lanes in, two lanes out. It will be a seamless connection from the port to the interstate. There will be no traffic lights.

FT: And the port is doing more than \$400 million of infrastructure upgrades as well?

Johnson: We will continue to strengthen our piers, our bulkheads, to purchase the largest gantry cranes to service these large ships. We will continue to upgrade our cruise terminals.

