

Darlene Fernandez: Steers Miami-Dade Expressway Authority

[Gabriela Henriquez Stoikow](#)

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Darlene M. Fernandez started her professional career over 20 years ago as an intern at the Florida Department of Transportation while she was obtaining her civil engineering degree at Florida International University.

After graduation, she joined the private sector and learned everything from designing roadways and traffic signals to traffic engineering studies. In 2010 she went back to the public sector and joined the City of Miami Beach in the Department of Public Works and then was promoted to the Capital Improvement Program group, where she oversaw major infrastructure projects.

After her first son was born in 2013, she went back to the private

sector and joined Atkins and worked there for two years. “I think making that shift was huge for me, because I was okay in the private sector, I was happy; I love government work, I love public service work, but I thought it was my time to be in the private sector. Well, God had different plans for me.”

When former Mayor Carlos Gimenez brought Alice Bravo to the county’s Department of Transportation and Public Works, Ms. Fernandez was approached by the county. In 2015, she became assistant director overseeing Traffic Signals, Signs Division and Traffic Engineering. “We created a new traffic management center, which didn’t exist before at the county, to match what FDOT had,” she said.

In 2021, she was appointed by the county as a board member for MDX and in 2022 she decided to take another step in her career and applied to become executive director of the authority once the position became available. She is now the first woman to hold this position and leads the county’s expressway system that to date has completed four projects: the SR 836 interchange improvements at Eighth Avenue, the SR 874 ramp connector to Southwest 128th Street, the modernization of SR 836, and they are currently completing the double decker I-395/SR 836/I-95 project. She will now oversee the SR 836/turnpike ramp connector project and the 137th Avenue improvements for the county.

This year, Ms. Fernandez was awarded the In the Company of Women Award 2022 – Government & Law Non-Elect from the Miami-Dade County Commission on Women & Parks Department.

She serves as 2022 chairwoman for The American Cancer Society’s “Making Strides against Breast Cancer,” a cause very dear to her heart.

She is joining her FIU alma mater as a board member for the Dean's Leadership Council for the College of Engineering and will work on mentorships, address the disparities of women in the industry, and work on attracting more women to STEM careers.

Ms. Fernandez spoke with Miami Today reporter Gabriela Henriquez Stoikow.