

5 THINGS TO KNOW IN #MIAMITECH: BRIGHTLINE'S BACK – SOON! PLUS NEWS FROM NOVO, FRIENDSPIRE, MIAMI DADE COLLEGE, PARETO HOLDINGS, BOCA CODE

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By Nancy Dahlberg

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Brightline announces restart date, plus last-mile mobility service

Here's some news #MiamiTech can celebrate: [Brightline](#) today announced its plans to resume its express train service in South Florida in the first half of November and will be adding a last-mile mobility service to get people to and from the stations.

In an update to the media, Brightline President Patrick Goddard detailed the company's reopening schedule. Service between Miami, Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach is set to start in the first half of November. Brightline said it will announce a firm date in the weeks ahead. Fares and schedules will be roughly the same,

Brightline's new mobility as a service platform, through a partnership with software company [lomob](#), is intended to provide guests with full door-to-door travel service, via private cars, shared shuttle services, golf cars and other micro-mobility options. The fleet will be owned and operated by Brightline.

"We are thrilled to be gearing up to welcome guests back aboard Brightline," said Goddard, in a statement. "Over the last few months, we've made upgrades to our guest experience and made significant strides in construction. Our goal remains the same, to take cars off the road while offering the most convenient way to travel in South Florida and a guest-first experience."

Goddard also said Brightline is recruiting for nearly 200 jobs, offering starting wages at \$18 per hour. Of course, as Covid closed down Brightline's service 17 months ago, and the company made massive layoffs.

Here's the update on its stations: The Aventura station is currently under construction, while the Boca Raton station is expected to break ground in the coming months. Construction to Orlando has surpassed the halfway point and is on target to be complete by the end of 2022. Discussions remain underway with local stakeholders regarding expansion to Disney and Tampa.

This will be welcome news for many growing startups in #MiamiTech, as companies [like Papa](#) have planted their headquarters near access to the Brightline. Red 6, a defense tech startup, that recently located its company from California to Miami, is [excited about the Brightline](#) because its tech team will be based not far from the Brightline station in Orlando.

2

Novo expands leadership team amid growth surge

[Novo](#), the digital small business banking platform, has added two to its leadership ranks as it continues scaling to meet demand. In the first half of 2021, Novo surpassed \$2 billion in lifetime transactions, doubling the digital banking platform's lifetime transaction volume in Q2 2021 alone. Novo [opened its new headquarters in Miami](#) in March and announced [\\$40.7M in Series A funding](#) in June.

Dani Lima will be executive vice president of revenue and strategy. Most recently, she was SVP of Strategy for Citigroup Latin America, and previously worked in M&A for HSBC and Evercore, Consumer Banking at Chase, Trade Credit Finance at Zurich, and at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. Peter Martinez will be Lead Software Engineer: Over the last decade, Martinez has built several financial technology compliance SaaS tools, which have serviced tens of thousands of customers. Most recently he was Director of Learning Platforms

for the University of Miami. He is a co-founder of Refresh Miami and has also been an integral part of the South Florida startup community.

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Friendspire raises \$580K seed round

[Friendspire](#), a Miami social tech startup that uses AI to deliver personalized recommendations for movies, books, podcasts and more, has raised \$580K from existing investors and other angels, Founder Markus Straarup said. In the past nine months, Friendspire has grown from 16,000 users to 120,000. In the same time period, the number of reviews on its site has grown from 100,000 to 1.5 million.

“It is cool that so many existing investors could see our vision and reinvested, and at the same time awesome to welcome such an amazing group of investors into the Friendspire family,” Straarup said. “Now it’s time to put our heads down and continue to grow our amazing recommendation community.”

4

Miami Dade College awarded NSF grant for AI courses

Miami Dade College was awarded a grant for nearly \$1 million from the National Science Foundation to fund the development of Artificial Intelligence courses with an interdisciplinary approach and ultimately offer a College Credit Certificate in AI, one of the fastest growing industries right now.

As part of the grant, MDC will provide industry-based professional training for faculty to develop and pilot AI courses, and integrate AI curriculum into existing courses. Additionally, MDC’s School of Engineering and Technology (EnTec) will provide support mechanisms that engage and encourage underrepresented minorities students to study AI. The project will also have support from AI experts from companies including IBM, AWS, and Microsoft.

EnTec is offering the course AI Thinking, starting Sept. 15 at MDC North Campus, where the new AI Center is under construction. Apply for the course [here](#).

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Opportunity knocks

- Pareto Holdings, based in Miami, has seeded more than 100 startups in the last year and there are more to come. Pareto recently announced its [Pre-Seed Program](#), in which it

aims to be the first check in for startups in South Florida and around the world. The Pre-Seed Program aims to get back to founders within 48 hours. [Apply here](#).

- Back in March, Boca Raton-based global tech company, MediaOps, partnered with Boca Code, a local coding school, to sponsor the first-ever "Engineer the Change Scholarship" in the amount of \$10,000. The scholarship is back for the Fall cohort. [Apply here](#).

Got #MiamiTech news? Email me at ndahlbergbiz@gmail.com and follow me on Twitter @ndahlberg.



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I am a writer and editor with extensive media experience and a passion for journalism and serving the community. Most of my career has been spent with the Miami Herald in business news, and my expertise is writing about tech and entrepreneurs. I love hosting this blog for Refresh Miami and we aim to be the go-to site for South Florida startup and tech news, features and views. Have news? Contact me at ndahlbergbiz@gmail.com. Thanks for reading!