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COLUMBIA-U.S. TRADE
Two years later, trade deal holds some bitter lessons

ROCKETS — When the United States and Colombia signed a free-trade deal last year, it was supposed to be a win-win agreement. But now, the deal has turned into a bitter lesson for the U.S. auto industry. The deal was intended to open up the Colombian market to U.S. auto parts, but it also opened the door to a flood of cheap, low-quality auto parts from Colombia. The U.S. auto industry is now struggling to compete with these parts, and many jobs have been lost. Congress is expected to take action on the deal in the coming weeks.

THE CLINCHER



MIAMI MAYOR TOMÁS REGALADO (left) and Miami-Dade Mayor Carlos Gimenez (right) at the opening ceremony of the new stadium. Photo by [unreadable]

A public vote is likely for stadium

SOCCER IN MIAMI
The mayors of Miami-Dade and Miami said they favor a voter referendum on a potential stadium — and David Beckham's group appears to agree.

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SOCCER IN MIAMI

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The longer David Beckham and his investors spend scouting publicly owned sites for a potential Major League Soccer stadium in Miami, the more it looks like the group will have to go to at least some voters for eventual approval.

Miami Mayor Tomás Regalado said the city will require a referendum if Beckham's group settles on filling and then building on a city-owned deep-water basin, known as the Florida East Coast Railway slip, along Biscayne Boulevard.

And, in a new wrinkle, Miami-Dade Mayor Carlos Gimenez said Wednesday that the county could also seek voter ap-

proval if Miami Beckham United asks to build on Port-Miami's southwest corner — even though a referendum would not be required for the county-owned property.

"I know that there are a lot of commissioners that would like that," Gimenez told the Miami Herald. "I think that, at the end, the people's voice should be heard."

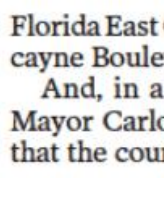
A ballot question would push back the deadline set by Beckham's group, which had hoped to have a stadium plan in place this summer to present to MLS. The earliest a referendum would take place is in August, with November a more likely possibility, Gimenez and Regalado said.

Despite the delay, Beckham's group — perhaps resigned to South Florida's prickly stadium politics — appears warm to the referendum idea.

"The ultimate decision to build a stadium in downtown Miami should rest with voters," John Alschuler, Beckham's real-estate adviser, said in a statement. "If Miami Beckham United selects the FEC slip as the preferred stadium site, we will seek and fully support a voter referendum."



REGALADO



GIMENEZ

SOCCER IN MIAMI

Referendum could be in August or November

The same would be true if Gimenez calls for a county referendum for the port location, added Tadd Schwartz, a spokesman recently hired by Beckham's group. Schwartz's firm also represents Miami's Downtown Development Authority, which has endorsed a port stadium.

The Miami Dolphins paid the county last year to hold a special election, which was ultimately never completed, asking voters to approve a Sun Life Stadium renovation partly funded by county dollars. No special election has been discussed for soccer.

Given the tight MLS timeline, Beckham's group would probably prefer going on the August primary ballot than on the one for the November general election, but Gimenez and Regalado called that unrealistic.

In a Miami visit last week, Beckham and business partner Simon Fuller said they want a groundswell of support for a professional soccer team.

"I have always said that I want my club to be the 'people's club,'" Beckham said in a statement Wednesday. "All over the world it can be seen how great sports teams and iconic stadiums can enhance a city. Together with the people of Miami, I want to build something that will unite and entertain this amazing city for generations to come."

One of the reasons the investors dismissed a potential stadium location next to Marlins Park in Little Havana is because, as Fuller put it, they view that site as "spiritually tainted" by the unpopular public financing that largely paid for the ballpark. The deal contributed to the recalls of former County Mayor Carlos Alvarez and Commissioner Natacha Seijas.

Miami requires voter approval over plans for waterfront city property, but even if Beckham's group were considering land elsewhere, Regalado said he would push for a referendum, "be-

cause the ghost of the Marlins is hovering around all these stadiums."

"We should not lose Beckham and his project — everybody agrees on that," Regalado said.

Beckham and his investors, including Miami-based telecommunications billionaire Marcelo Claure, intend to privately fund construction of a 25,000-seat stadium, which they estimate could cost about \$250 million at the port. They plan to apply for a state subsidy and are seeking public land to build on, though they have said they would be willing to pay the county rent.

On county property, a stadium wouldn't have to pay property taxes. On city property, however, it might, depending on who owns the building.

Regalado said he told Beckham and Fuller last week that he would not favor turning over a city-owned site, such as the FEC slip, to the county. Miami



PUSHING HIS CAUSE: David Beckham arrives at the County Hall to talk to the county commission regarding the soccer stadium site May 7.

would also like to be reimbursed for the nearly \$12 million it has spent upgrading the slip, according to the mayor.

"If you're going to go to a referendum, you have to tell the people that there will be something for them," he said. "If you want to use those property taxes to enhance Museum Park, that's a political decision that the county and city commissions should take."

Building a stadium on the water basin would encroach on the neighboring Museum Park, which is owned by the city. The recently inaugu-

rated Pérez Art Museum and under-construction Patricia and Phillip Frost Museum of Science are both funded in part by the county.

Gimenez has asked Beckham's group to let him know next week if the slip would be a feasible stadium location. The group is still running the numbers, but Alschuler's statement said if that were the ultimate site, "Miami Beckham United will actively partner with Museum Park, the City and County to enhance Downtown Miami's rise as a global cultural and entertainment destination."

Gimenez said other, undisclosed locations could still pop up. Regalado, however, said governments should not "extend this agony" for Beckham's group by continuing to propose new sites.

"We need to be fair with them," he said.