
From: Fisher, Ronald <FTA>
To: Griffo, Paul <FTA>
CC: Rogers, Leslie <FTA>; Sukys, Raymond <FTA>; Matley, Ted <FTA>; Barr, James <FTA>; Luu, Catherine <FTA>; Nguyen, Kim <FTA>; Tahir, Nadeem <FTA>; Carranza, Edward <FTA>; Day, Elizabeth <FTA>; Borinsky, Susan <FTA>
Sent: 10/8/2008 11:15:20 AM
Subject: RE: Honolulu residents will find out how much commuter train might cost to build, operate and maintain soon [Honolulu Advertiser article]

Paul et all,
Below is the email I sent to the project manager on this subject:

Toru,
I want to clarify our position that is stated in the last few lines of the story below. The lines are:

Meanwhile, the city will not disclose any updated information contained in the draft environmental impact statement without FTA approval.

The FTA said it discourages city government officials from prematurely disclosing details of a draft environmental impact statement.

"It wouldn't be the most prudent thing to do because it's a working document," said FTA spokesman Griffo.

While we do not allow any parts of the document released before we approve it, we have told the Honolulu staff that they can share with the public information that is in the document, but they should not reference the DEIS as the source because the document has not been issued.

Frequently project sponsors have shared with the public much of the project information that eventually is documented in the DEIS. That is a normal part of the public involvement process. What we do not allow is sharing chapters ("details" as quoted in the article) or even pages of text prior to DEIS issuance.

I think we all need to understand there has been some criticism that that the City withholds project information, and continuing to do so when a vote is imminent can be perceived as withholding information that may have a negative impact on the public's perception of the project. The City can counter that possibility by putting out summary information prior to the vote to inform voters of the latest ridership, alignment costs, etc. This could be a newsletter, press release of some other document for the public.

Let me know if you have any questions on this.

Ron

From: Griffo, Paul <FTA>
Sent: Wednesday, October 08, 2008 5:11 PM
To: Fisher, Ronald <FTA>
Cc: Rogers, Leslie <FTA>; Sukys, Raymond <FTA>; Matley, Ted <FTA>; Barr, James <FTA>; Luu, Catherine <FTA>; Nguyen, Kim <FTA>; Tahir, Nadeem <FTA>; Carranza, Edward <FTA>; Day, Elizabeth <FTA>; Borinsky, Susan <FTA>
Subject: RE: Honolulu residents will find out how much commuter train might cost to build, operate and maintain soon [Honolulu Advertiser article]

Ron,
Thanks for the clarification. I will make it a point to use more precise language next time this comes up.

I did say during the interview (but it wasn't included in the story) that much of the information contained in the DEIS has been shared in various public forums, but that Honolulu officials should not disclose what is actually in the document.

Thanks for your input.

Paul

From: Fisher, Ronald <FTA>

Sent: Wednesday, October 08, 2008 4:30 PM

To: Griffo, Paul <FTA>

Cc: Rogers, Leslie <FTA>; Sukys, Raymond <FTA>; Matley, Ted <FTA>; Barr, James <FTA>; Luu, Catherine <FTA>; Nguyen, Kim <FTA>; Tahir, Nadeem <FTA>; Carranza, Edward <FTA>; Day, Elizabeth <FTA>; Borinsky, Susan <FTA>
Subject: FW: Honolulu residents will find out how much commuter train might cost to build, operate and maintain soon [Honolulu Advertiser article]

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Frequently project sponsors have shared with the public much of the project information that eventually is documented in the DEIS. That is a normal part of the public involvement process. What we do not allow is sharing chapters ("details" as you were quoted) or even pages of text prior to DEIS issuance.

I think we all need to understand there has been some criticism that the project sponsor withholds project information, and continuing to do so when a vote is imminent can be perceived as withholding information that may have a negative impact on the public's perception of the project. I believe it is important that the project sponsors put out summary information prior to the vote to inform voters of the latest ridership, alignment costs, etc.

-----Original Message-----

From: Nejako, Henry <FTA>

Sent: Wednesday, October 08, 2008 10:34 AM

To: Anderson, Mary <FTA>; Boenau, Ronald <FTA>; Chen, Roy Wei-Shun <FTA>; Chipman, Peter <FTA>; Eckmann, Alex <FTA>; Fisher, Ronald <FTA>; Herre, Susan <FTA>; Munoz-Raskin, Ramon <FTA>; Pindiprolu, Venkat <FTA>; Riklin, Sherry <FTA>; Steinitz, Timothy <FTA>; Stoltzfus, Jarrett <FTA>; Williams, Terrell <FTA>

Subject: FW: Honolulu residents will find out how much commuter train might cost to build, operate and maintain soon [Honolulu Advertiser article]

Update on Hawaii rail cost may not come in time to help voters
Cost update, impact on environment reports may miss Nov. 4 vote
By Sean Hao
Honolulu Advertiser
10/5/08

Residents soon will find out how much Honolulu's planned 20-mile elevated commuter train from East Kapolei to Ala Moana could cost to build, operate and maintain.

The question is, will they get that updated information before a Nov. 4 vote on a charter amendment authorizing the establishment of a steel wheel on steel rail transit system. An updated version of the 2006 financial plan for the train will be

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included in an upcoming draft environmental impact statement. That document is targeted for release late this month and will include updates on the number of potentially affected properties, noise and visual impacts, and potential impacts on archaeological sites, among other things.

According to the city's 2006 Alternatives Analysis, the first 20-mile segment is expected to cost \$3.7 billion to build. Those costs are expected to increase in the draft environmental impact statement to account for recent rises in inflation and construction costs.

However, residents may not have access to those details before a Nov. 4 vote on whether to build the train. That's because the document, which was originally scheduled to be finished in the spring, is still being vetted by the federal government.

Rounds of discussion

The Federal Transit Administration and the city of Honolulu are in the first of what could be several rounds of back-and-forth discussion over the document's contents. The city is in the process of responding to the agency's comments on the first administrative draft of the draft environmental impact statement, said Mark Scheibe, deputy project manager for Parsons Brinckerhoff.

If everything goes well, the updated environmental impact document should be released before the election, he said.

"We're trying to get our responses to them as quickly as we can," Scheibe said. "If they're happy with it, and we can turn it around, then we'll have it out later (this) month."

However, "If we have to go through another iteration of comments, this is probably not going to happen" in time for the election, he said.

FTA spokesman Paul Griffo said the agency is aware of Honolulu's Nov. 4 vote on the rail system. However, that date will not dictate the release of the project's draft environmental statement. The FTA won't know when the statement will be released until after it receives and assesses the city's first round of responses.

Often, the FTA and a local community go through several rounds of comments before releasing a draft environmental impact statement, Griffo said.

"Much of the time, there's more than just one round of comments," he said. "There's a process that needs to take place and that needs to play out regardless of local considerations."

Delays in release

Despite delays in the release of the draft environmental impact statement, city officials maintain the \$3.7 billion project is still on track to break ground in December 2009 and begin partial operations by the end of 2012. The city plans to complete the full 20-mile, 19-station elevated commuter line in about a decade. It will be the largest public works project in state history and will have major environmental, social and economic impacts.

New cost estimates

Among the most anticipated updates contained in the draft environmental impact statement are new capital and operating cost estimates.

According to the city's 2006 alternatives analysis, the train is expected to cost about \$5 billion when adjusted for inflation. That's the price for a route that passes Honolulu International Airport, but excludes spurs to West Kapolei, Waikiki and the University of Hawai'i-Manoa.

The current route now goes through the Salt Lake area with a shortened 2.1-mile, \$350 million airport spur. That spur would bypass Pearl Harbor and Hickam Air Force Base, though service to those areas could be added at a later date.

In addition to those capital costs, the train will cost an inflation-adjusted \$1 billion to operate and maintain from 2019 to 2030. What's still undisclosed is how much the train will cost to operate between 2012 and 2019.

The draft environmental impact statement will include those details as well as updated transit tax revenues forecasts. Those forecasts are expected to take into account the state's current economic slowdown.

City officials hope to raise an inflation-adjusted \$4 billion between 2007 and 2022 to pay for the 20-mile version of the system. That, coupled with \$925 million in anticipated federal funds, is expected to pay the \$5 billion in capital costs associated with rail, according to the city's financial plan. That financial plan is based on outdated tax-revenue forecasts generated in September 2006, when more robust economic growth was anticipated.

updated plan

The city and Parsons Brinckerhoff contend the draft environmental impact statement won't be radically different from information that's been previously released to the public.

"I don't think people are going to look at it, perhaps except for the costs, and feel that there's been a quantum change," Scheibe said. "It's not like the (draft environmental impact statement) will contain all of this incredibly new information. We'll have an updated financial plan. We'll have costs expressed in later-year dollars."

But, "the cost isn't going to be doubled. It's going to be what you can expect from two years of inflation," Scheibe said.

Rail project critics contend the draft environmental impact statement contains information voters should have before voting on the train. However, the city has no incentive to release that statement before Nov. 4, said outspoken rail critic Cliff Slater.

"There's no way that things are going to look better" after the draft environmental impact statement is released, Slater said. "There's fundamentally no good that can come of it from their standpoint. It'll give ammunition to us."

The city and the FTA won't rush the release of the draft environmental impact statement, Scheibe said.

The "FTA and the city, from a defensive point of view, want to make sure that the (draft environmental impact statement) is as bulletproof as it can be when it goes out," he said.

"We're not going to rush something out because the election is coming."

Meanwhile, the city will not disclose any updated information contained in the draft environmental impact statement without FTA approval.

The FTA said it discourages city government officials from prematurely disclosing details of a draft environmental impact statement.

"It wouldn't be the most prudent thing to do because it's a working document," said FTA spokesman Griffio.

-----Original Message-----

From: Luden, Hymie <FTA>

Sent: Monday, October 06, 2008 11:05 AM

Subject: FTA article: Honolulu residents will find out how much commuter train might cost to build, operate and maintain soon