

Public Involvement Overview

February 2010

	Month
Hotline Calls*	10
Comment Sense Submissions/Inquiries**	25
FOIA requests	0
Speakers Bureau	
Presentations/ Coffee Hours/ Community Displays & Events	17
Neighborhood Boards	10
Community Updates/Mayor's Town Meetings/ RTD Workshops	1
TV/Radio Appearances	10

*Calls directly to the hotline 808.566.2299

** Includes all comments/inquiries via Project website from the end of the official DEIS comment period on February 6, 2009 to the end of the month.

February 2010 website and hotline comments

Submission Date	Submission Content/Notes
02/01/2010	Cannot attend workshop but wanted to voice his opinion. He is worried about traffic congestion at the H1/H2 merge & Middle Street merge. Rail will not fix this congestions; however, these areas should be first priority.
02/01/2010	Hi, I am wondering if branding and logo design has already been taken care of for Honolulu Rail. We are interested in assisting in the branding of the Rail and would appreciate an opportunity to present you with ideas. Our design company is called Saedesign (you can see our work at www.saedesign.com). Please let me know who to contact regarding branding. Thank you. Ashley Takitani Account Executive Saedesign
02/01/2010	2008 Annual Report Transit Map Information Pack
02/02/2010	Please tell me if it is ABSOLUTELY SURE that the rail transit system WILL BE ELECTRIC! I read earleir that it would run on fossil fuels, and now that nit MAY be aelectric. What is the truth about this?
02/02/2010	I would like to know the size of the stations to be built at Pearl Highland and Pearlridge. What criteria used to determine the size? What is the estimated traffic/volume on each station during peak hours and non-peak hours
02/02/2010	Good Afternoon, My name is Joanna Eder and I am a senior at Moanalua High school. I am currently enrolled in a Senior Project class where I am encouraged to continue learning outside of the classroom. My goal in this class is to learn more about our Hawaii government and their decision making processes. I plan to achieve my goal by first learning more about the upcoming rail project and how the government plans to follow through with it. I would really enjoy volunteering and interacting with your organization to learn more about the project and its opponents. Thank you so much for this opportunity and I hope to hear from you soon. Sincerely, Joanna Eder Moanalua High School Senior
02/04/2010	When is the the final EIS coming out? Is it legal to bid out any construction contracts for the light rail without the final EIS? I read in the newspapers last year that the City will start the construction of the light rail in the later part of 2009. What is going on in this rail project. Is it costing the tax payers big bucks to fund the EIS? Eleven (11) millions dollars? Are we going in a circle?Best wishes. Retired Engineer- TK Chun.
02/05/2010	Would like a detailed map of the Kakaako area so that he can tell where the station is going.
02/05/2010	Where do we find a schedule for future workshops? How do we RSVP?
02/10/2010	please i woruld like to knowing abouting the hawaii rail maped when

Submission Date	Submission Content/Notes
	to building please 5 years our 10 years i need a inforamtion be send to the michael sears i what to know please aloha to mahalo happy smile happy nice a day
02/12/2010	Do you have a more detailed map showing the exact streets and where the transit stations will be, especially in Waipahu.
02/12/2010	Emergencies handled on the bus/vehicle is to contact the police, ambulance and fire. How will an emergency be handled on the rail if all rail is above the level of the road?
02/14/2010	we must proceed
02/15/2010	I would like to speak with someone regarding the Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project(i.e IFP, RFQ, RFP). Thank you for your help, Joseph Morelli
02/16/2010	Is a masters student at UNC. He is writing his thesis on rail referendums across the country & would like to talk to someone on the project.
02/16/2010	Can I still receive a copy of the tender for the LRV project?
02/23/2010	Rail is a good idea and is about time to get this going. We've been waiting for this since Mayor Frank Fasi was in office. Stop whining about the traffic and do something about it. Plus it would generate funds and jobs so it is a "win-win" situation. If the problem is \$\$\$\$ we will never get there...Get into action and get rolling.
02/24/2010	Intelect is a manufacturer of communications equipment. I would like to know who a can talk to in your organization regarding the rail corridor build about the signaling and communications requirements. Thank you
02/26/2010	Where can I find a map of the locations for the transit stations and the exact street locations for the rail. The map you have available is not clearly designated and too broad. I am most interested in the urban areas of kalihi, cbd, kapiolani areas.
02/27/2010	I was wondering who I could contact to assist with any training design, presentation design or leadership, communications or customer care programs. I've designed four programs for Canada Line (the new Vancouver airport - downtown Vancouver light rail transit system) this past year helping them with opening and huge success during the 2010 Olympics. I've also worked with Vancouver airport for the past 2 years designing programs for airport vendors and employees in preparation to WELCOME the World for the Olympic & Paralympic Games. I own two condos in Honolulu (currently rentals, however work in the US via contracts) and visit HNL frequently. I will be arriving March 25-Apr 5 and was wondering if I might have a name of someone I could approach to see if I could help with this very exciting project. My website is: www.elaineallison.com I know it may be some time in the future, but was hoping to make an early connection. I can provide referrals from ProTrans BC (and SNC Lavalin) Kind Regards, Elaine Allison Elaine Allison Consulting Group (DBA Positive Presentations Plus

Submission Date	Submission Content/Notes
	Inc). 2241 Stafford Ave Port Coquitlam, BC V3C 4X5
02/27/2010	We are a supplier of Treated Wood products that include Railroad Ties, Timbers and Wood Poles. We are the current supplier for Hawaiian Electric Co., Hawaii Electric Light Co. and Maui Electric. If you have need for wood treated products mentioned, please feel free to contact Stella-Jones or visit our website: www.stella-jones.com . Thank you.
02/27/2010	hi. there doesn't appear to be a link to the transit station maps from within the web page. http://www.honolulutransit.org/imap/stationapplication.html

* Submission Content / Notes have not been edited for spelling grammar. They appear as written.



February 1, 2010

Pointless rail spat wastes public resources

The only way the mayor and the governor seem to communicate these days is through dueling media gatherings. You'd think Punchbowl Street was as wide as the Pacific for all the actual face-to-face meetings these two chief executives have.

If it weren't about something as important as the rail project, it would be easy to write the whole thing off as election-year melodrama. But there are real jobs, real economic issues in play here, and that makes watching the Linda Lingle and Mufi Hannemann wrestling match an unnerving ordeal.

Isn't there anyone — at the Federal Transit Administration, perhaps — who can make these people sit down and talk to each other?

To sum up: Gov. Lingle has signaled that she won't sign off on the environmental impact statement for the city's rail project until she commissions an independent analysis of tax revenue projections for the project, revenues that have slowed during the economic downturn.

She points to FTA documents in which the feds tell city officials that they'll have to refine their financial plan to pass muster during a later phase of development that has stricter fiscal rules.

"Some elements of the current financial plan may not fare well in the stress tests that FTA will apply to evaluate robustness" once the project begins final design, wrote Leslie Rogers, regional FTA administrator.

Mayor Hannemann knows all this — he said as much during one of the press conferences — and rightly points out that the city is already preparing to refine that plan with projected savings from lower contract bids. When jobs are scarce, contractors are ready to deal.

Large transit projects routinely involve checking and rechecking of the financial plan. Lingle has not made a compelling case that it's her role to do one at this stage, or that it serves anyone's purpose to take her time at it, as she's also vowed to do.

Meanwhile, politics is deeply entwined with the whole mess. The right venue to resolve this is not in a mayoral press conference, or during an informal Q&A with the governor at a national GOP convention in town.

It would be in face-to-face meetings or conference calls with one objective: to settle their differences for the good of the taxpayer and to restore the public's confidence in their ability to oversee this massive project.

The public has the right to expect no less from two of Hawai'i's top public executives.



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February 1, 2010

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BREAKING NEWS

Obama, Biden Announce Recipients of \$7.9 Billion in ARRA Funds for High-Speed Rail

President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden announced the recipients of \$7.9 billion of the \$8 billion in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding for the creation of high-speed intercity passenger rail service during a Jan. 28 town hall meeting in Tampa, FL.

Under the program, high-speed rail projects in the West Region will receive almost \$3 billion, of which \$2.25 billion will go to California high-speed rail; Midwest Region, \$2.6 billion, led by \$1.1 billion for the Chicago-St. Louis route; Southeast Region, \$1.9 billion, of which \$1.25 billion will go to the Tampa-Orlando corridor; Northeast Region, \$485 million, including \$112 million for the Northeast Corridor between Boston and Washington; and \$26.7 million in additional awards for Iowa and Fort Worth, TX.

"Through the Recovery Act, we are making the largest investment in infrastructure since the Interstate Highway System was created, putting Americans to work rebuilding our roads, bridges, and waterways for the future," Obama said. "That investment is how we can break ground across the country, putting people to work building high-speed rail lines, because there's no reason why Europe or China should have the fastest trains when we can build them right here in America."

"By investing in high speed rail, we're doing so many good things for our country at the same time," Biden added. "We're creating good construction and manufacturing jobs in the near-term; we're spurring economic development in the future; we're making our communities more livable—and we're doing it all while decreasing America's environmental impact and increasing America's ability to compete in the world."

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February 1, 2010

Letters to the Editor

Rail project

Cutting corners can lead to headaches

Beware of politicians whose claim is "I can get it for you cheaper."

I think that Gov. Linda Lingle is doing a good job, but her last-minute comments on the rail system could sink the whole project.

In the 12 years that I was director of civil service under Mayor Frank Fasi, there are two examples of this that I can think of. When Mayor Fasi proposed building the Honolulu Municipal Building, the council went into the money-saving mode and insisted on a smaller building than Fasi wanted.

When it was finished, the building was too small to house all of the city offices, so we had to rent space around town for those departments that were left out.

The same thing happened with the Blaisdell Center arena. To save a few dollars, it was built too small to house a regulation-size hockey rink. The result was that when the Ice Capades came to town, they had to downsize the show because it required a regulation-sized hockey rink or larger for the full show.

It would be a shame if these mistakes were repeated in building the rail system. It would be a shame if it got dumped for reasons that are obviously political.

HARRY BORANIAN | Lihue, Kauai

Letters to the Editor

For Monday, February 1, 2010

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Feb 01, 2010

Changes confuse city's rail project

As a resident who supports the city rail project, I am quite frustrated by the continuing changes to date.

- 1) The original budget was \$3.6 billion; now it's \$5.2 billion.
- 2) Voters voted for an elevated rail that might now be at ground level.
- 3) The route was through Salt Lake, but that was deleted and will now run through the airport.
- 4) The mayor said the start date was November 2009, and now it's April 1.
- 5) The environmental impact statement is completed -- but only now is it being completed.
- 6) The delay will raise the price by \$200 million, yet we save \$90 million-plus on the first bid.
- 7) The transit tax revenue is down so we will borrow \$300 million from the bus fund.
What will we ride until the rail is built?

Speculation, changes, misinformation and blaming others must end if rail is to proceed. The public is not ignorant, and our leaders should learn from the residents of Massachusetts.

Mark Inoshita
Honolulu

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Letters to the Editor

For Monday, February 1, 2010

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Feb 01, 2010

Environment law halting progress

To use our environmental law to require a realistic financial plan to stop rail is wrong -- just as using that law to kill the Superferry was wrong. Can we not agree that our environmental law should be rescinded or at least revised? The only other alternative is a continuation of the ridiculous stopping of any growth.

I believe the Superferry was good for our economy, but that the rail is not the best solution for west-end traffic congestion. Still, I believe our environmental law is being abused and not currently used in our best interest. Am I alone?

Steve Heywood
Kailua

February 2, 2010

'Ewa residents praise new route to Kapolei

Mayor dedicates last section of 'long overdue' parkway

*By Gordon Y.K. Pang
Advertiser Staff Writer*

Mayor Mufi Hannemann yesterday dedicated the final 0.7-mile section of the six-lane Kapolei Parkway, which will connect 'Ewa and Kapolei, as well as H-1 Freeway.

There's one small caveat. The section can't open until Feb. 11, when the state dedicates and connects its final section of North-South Road to the parkway.

Long-suffering 'Ewa Beach residents who showed up at yesterday's dedication ceremony said they didn't mind the additional wait.

Dave Bauer, an Ocean Pointe resident the last seven years, said he's been "praying" for the connection to open. The new route will allow him to avoid Fort Weaver Road when he wants to get on H-1 Freeway to drive to work as a communications specialist at Schofield Barracks.

"This would help immensely," said Bauer, 47, an Army sergeant first class.

'Ewa Neighborhood Board member Sandi Arakaki said the road will save her time and distance when she goes shopping and visits friends who live in Kapolei and Makakilo.

"It's a long overdue and welcome alternative way of driving to Kapolei," Arakaki said.

Kapolei Parkway, on the 'Ewa end, runs from Pāpipi Road in old 'Ewa Beach to Renton Road in 'Ewa Villages. On the Kapolei side, it runs from Fort Barrette Road to North-South Road. The segment dedicated yesterday brings the two sections together. Eventually, the parkway will cut through downtown Kapolei and connect with Ko Olina.

"This is all about connecting 'Ewa with Kapolei," Hannemann said.

The project began in March and substantial work was completed by late spring, city officials said. But the city held off opening it as it awaited approval from the state end, officials said.

The project cost \$15.5 million, \$12.4 million of which came from federal sources.

February 2, 2010

FTA commits \$1.55 billion to pay for Honolulu rail system

*By Sean Hao
Advertiser Staff Writer*

The Federal Transit Administration this morning said it plans to sign an agreement before October 2011 that will provide \$1.55 billion in federal funds to pay for Honolulu's elevated commuter rail project.

The first installment of \$55 million was included in the FTA's proposed fiscal 2011 budget announced this week. FTA Administrator Peter Rogoff today acknowledged concerns remain with the viability of the financial plan for Honolulu's \$5.35 billion project. However, he said those concerns aren't expected prevent the grant agreement from being signed by a Sept. 30, 2011 deadline.

"We would not have included funding in the president's budget for this project if we thought it was falling off the rails," Rogoff said from Washington, D.C., in a conference call with news media this morning. "We expect to continue to work with the city and county to continue to strengthen their financial plan and we will be evaluating a new financial plan when they make an application to go into final design."

Rogoff said he was "perplexed" by Gov. Linda Lingle's concerns that city officials did not adequately study street-level alternatives to an elevated train.

Lingle last week also said she could not approve Honolulu's rail line based on current information about the funding for the project. She also announced plans to conduct an independent analysis of city tax revenue forecasts that are the basis of the project's financial plan.

Lingle based much of her concern on a recently disclosed memo from the Federal Transit Administration to the city that raised questions about the city's ability to pay for the train. The Oct. 7 memo also warned the city that its financial plan may not be sufficient to allow the project to proceed into the final engineering phase early this year.

"The governor has an important role to play in this project in the approval of this project especially as it relates to state environmental law and I do not begrudge the governor having an independent look at the financing of this project," Rogoff said. "But please know that the FTA also takes an independent look at the finances of this project and we will do so again when they submit a financial plan to get into final design."

Groundbreaking on the elevated commuter rail was supposed to take place in December, but has been indefinitely delayed by an ongoing federal review of the project's final environmental impact statement. That statement, once it's released, will need to be approved by Lingle before the city can break ground.

The city wants Lingle's approval to come relatively fast. However, Lingle has said she'll conduct a thorough analysis to ensure that the project's financial plan is feasible and that alternatives were adequately considered.

Mayor Mufi Hannemann has scheduled a news conference this morning to comment on the FTA's decision.

February 2, 2010

Letters to the Editor

Rail Project

Governor playing too much politics

I voted for both George W. Bush and Linda Lingle but their actions have made me switch my allegiance from the GOP. Both of them started out strong and then made disastrous mistakes, which have hurt or will hurt our nation or state.

Bush started the Afghanistan war and did not finish it before attacking Iraq under misinformation. Gov. Lingle got the Superferry up and running but did not follow procedures, which caused it to shut down and cost more than 200 people their jobs. President Obama has said that we need to have nationwide rapid transit projects to provide jobs. Lingle now wants to delay the rail project, which would provide these jobs.

She is doing it to make the mayor look bad and to push Duke Aiona on us as governor. Anything that is suggested by a Democrat from president to mayor is wrong. If these politicians were Republicans, she would be supporting the cause. It is so political that the rotten smell is worse than the vog.

BARBARA F. BONNARDEL | Kailua

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Federal agency pledges first \$55 million for Honolulu rail system

By [Gary Kubota](#)

POSTED: 12:01 p.m. HST, Feb 02, 2010

The Federal Transit Administration says President Barack Obama's fiscal 2011 budget includes \$55 million toward the planned Honolulu rail system.

FTA head Peter Rogoff broke the news during a news media teleconference from Washington, D.C., today as he also announced annual new project starts. The proposed \$55 million would be the first installment of the \$1.55 billion in federal money applied toward the cost of the project.

He signaled the FTA's support for the \$5.35 billion rail transit between East Kapolei and Ala Moana. His comments come after Gov. Linda Lingle recently raised questions about the financial viability of the rail system.

Mayor Mufi Hannemann said later today that the \$55 million was the first time the FTA has included the Honolulu rail system in its budget and reflects its confidence in the project.

"I really believe now more than ever, we need to move forward on this," he said.

Hannemann said he hoped Rogoff's announcement would help to persuade Lingle to support the proposed rail project and sign off on the environmental impact statement when it is completed and reaches her desk.

The Hannemann administration has said the project will generate 10,000 direct and indirect jobs and would help a slumping Hawaii economy during a recession.

"We need to help to put people back to work," Hannemann said. "They've been suffering."

Find this article at:

<http://www.starbulletin.com/news/breaking/83382747.html>

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Feds award \$55 million for rail

Posted: Feb 02, 2010 12:39 PM HST
Updated: Feb 02, 2010 7:13 PM HST

By Jim Mendoza - [bio](#) | [email](#)

HONOLULU (HawaiiNewsNow) - "Do you know how many states would love to hear what we heard today? This is unbelievable," Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann said.



Mayor Mufi Hannemann

The source of his excitement is the Federal Transit Administration's pledge of \$55 million to help build Honolulu's rail project.

President Obama okayed the funds as part of his Fiscal Year 2011 budget. The money was included in the FTA's New Starts funding.

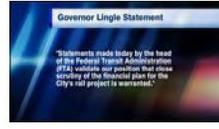


"This is the first time the administration is initiating funding for Honolulu and this is significant," Hannemann said.

The \$55 million is a first installment in the federal government's \$1.55 billion agreement to help pay for construction of the elevated commuter train set to run between East Kapolei and Ala Moana. The FTA said the agreement could be signed by October 2011.



"Today's show of financial support validates the financial analysis, the evaluations that have been put forward for many years," Hannemann said.



But Gov. Linda Lingle has questioned the city's financial plan, saying it could hurt the state's finances if it fails.

Hannemann said she needs to get on board.

"We really would hope that she would start sending some positive messages and signals," he said.

But along with the promise of funding, FTA administrator Peter Rogoff said concerns remain at his level over the viability of the rail financial plan.

In a written statement, Lingle said Rogoff's comment validates her position that "close scrutiny of the financial plan for the City's rail project is warranted." She vowed to move ahead with an independent review.

Hannemann insists the project is good to go, saying the funding award proves the city's plan is solid.

"They know that this is an excellent project," he said. "If they didn't believe that was so, if they believed that it was shaky, they would not have approved what they have approved and announced today."

The \$55 million in New Starts funding needs the approval of Congress before it can be released.

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Feds award \$55 million for rail

Posted: Feb 02, 2010 12:39 PM HST
Updated: Feb 02, 2010 12:41 PM HST

By Jim Mendoza - [bio](#) | [email](#)

HONOLULU (HawaiiNewsNow) -- Calling it a "great day for the city of Honolulu," Mayor Mufi Hannemann announced the Federal Transit Administration has awarded \$55 million in New Starts funding for the rail transit project.

The money was included in the FTA's proposed fiscal 2011 budget.

Hannemann said it's significant because the Obama administration is "initiating funding for Honolulu. "

The money is the first installment of \$1.55 billion in federal funds that could help pay for construction of the 20-mile rail line.

The complete story tonight on Hawaii News Now.

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Feds Expect To Give \$1.55 Billion For Rail

Reported by: Andrew Pereira

Email: apereira@khon2.com

Last Update: 2/02 7:32 pm

STORY SUMMARY>>>

Rail supporters got an unexpected jolt of positive news Tuesday morning from Federal Transit Administrator Peter Rogoff, who said Honolulu should expect \$1.55 billion from the federal government to help build a \$5.3 billion train from East Kapolei to Ala Moana.

"While we don't necessarily finalize the federal contribution to the project until the project enters final design, our expectation is that the final contribution will be \$1.55 billion," said Rogoff.

The announcement came as the Federal Transit Administration highlighted which transit projects would receive "new starts" and "small starts" funding under President Barack Obama's FY-2011 budget.

If approved by Congress Honolulu is set to receive \$55 million toward the Full Funding Grant Agreement that Rogoff expects the FTA to sign by September 30 of next year.

"It's the first time we've included the Honolulu project in the president's budget and it expresses our expectation to sign an FFGA before the end of fiscal year 2011," he said.

After the conference call Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann was quick to seize on Rogoff's comments, saying they validated the project's sound financial footing, which Gov. Linda Lingle has publicly disputed.

"So that validates the fact that they know that we're doing a good job," said the mayor. "We've brought it to this point that they're willing to go out and say \$1.5 billion."

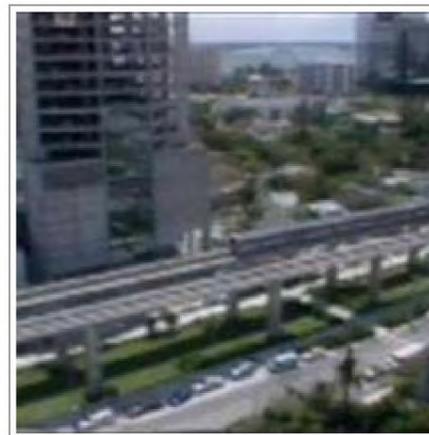
Rogoff said the half percent general excise tax increase approved by voters and collected by the city since January of 2007 puts Honolulu on a better footing than most cities hoping to build a rail line. As of November of last year the city had accumulated \$428.9 million in rail tax revenues. An updated figure is expected later this week.

"Because of the excise tax revenues the Honolulu project has more money already committed to this project than a great many other projects would dream of having at this stage," said Rogoff.

"Through the act of the voters to levy that excise tax and start putting money in the bank, there is some considerable financial strength to this project."

In the past several weeks Lingle has questioned whether a portion of the 20-mile long elevated train should be built at ground level to save taxpayers' money and whether the city's financial plan is realistic.

While acknowledging the governor's role in the environmental review process Rogoff said he found Lingle's objections "somewhat perplexing," since five state agencies had a role in deciding the locally preferred alternative and the FTA constantly scrutinizes the city's financial plan.



"I did not begrudge the governor having an independent look at the financing of this project," said Rogoff, "but please do know that the FTA also takes an independent look at the finances of this project."

"We would not have included funding in the president's budget for this project if we thought it was falling off the rails," he added.

LINGLE PUSHING FORWARD WITH FINANCIAL REVIEW

In a written statement Gov. Lingle said Rogoff's comments validated her position that close scrutiny of the city's financial plan for rail is warranted.

"We are pleased that FTA Administrator Peter Rogoff confirmed the federal government is continuing to work with the city to strengthen the financial plan and that they will evaluate a new financial plan when the city submits its application for the final design," the governor wrote.

Lingle added that she's committed to moving forward with "an independent review to ensure the financial viability of the project."

The governor has repeatedly pointed to a letter sent to the city last October in which the FTA outlined its concerns about the project's financial plan and ability to sustain the rail line in the long-term.

Like Rogoff, Hannemann noted the city is audited every step of the way in route to a Full Funding Grant Agreement as well as approval for final design. He called on the governor to put aside her concerns for the good of the state.

"Whatever it is that's holding her back, cast it aside for the good of the people," Hannemann said. "This is not Mufi's train - this is the train that will bring about economic benefits for the people for years, for decades and generations to come."

Lingle must sign off on the project's final environmental impact statement before construction can begin. The report must be approved by the FTA and various state and federal agencies before it reaches the governor's desk

Have a news tip? Contact Andrew Pereira at 368-7273.

Rail Transit Project Will Receive Another 5 Million Towards Preliminary Engineering

Last Update: 2/01 7:18 pm

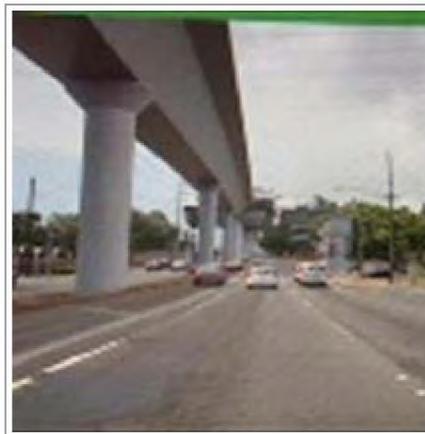
Tomorrow the federal government will announce funding recommendations for new and existing transit projects across the country.

A source tells KHON2 Honolulu's rail transit project will receive another 55 million dollars toward preliminary engineering.

"But here is a really strong statement that's going to come from FTA and the Department of Transportation validating our project because now the money originates from the administration side so its all good and its just a great testament of this project," said Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann.

Hannemann says Governor Lingle's concern about the financial viability of the project is outdated.

The city expects the federal government to pay for one-third of the 5.4 billion dollar rail line.



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Letters to the Editor

For Tuesday, February 2, 2010

Hawaii's roads in bad shape

During the past weeks, I've seen a great deal about same-sex marriage and or civil union. That's well and good, but as far as I'm concerned, I really don't give a damn who marries whom or where the ceremony is performed. What I think the people of this illustrious state should be doing is worrying about the deplorable condition of the roads.

I've traveled somewhat more throughout the world than the average citizen, and I'd have to say that Hawaii may be the Third World in most respects, but I think we're batting for the Fourth World honors in the road department. It seems strange to me that our one-sided politicians in D.C. can get all sorts of "pork" for their pet projects and heavy supporters, yet the roads here in Aloha Land look somewhat like those we see in the Middle East after a roadside blast.

Maybe there should be an organization set up (nongovernment) to make collections for pothole filling and road work repair. Possibly someone could ask for a donation from the Bill Gates charity foundation to help us out; this way the money collected would not slip into the pockets of the politicians and the roads would not be left wanting.

Robert E. Lansing
Honolulu

U.S. DOT Names the Transit Projects Set for Federal Funding

Posted By [Elana Schor](#) On February 2, 2010 @ 10:10 am In [Streetsblog Capitol Hill](#), [Transit](#), [Transportation Policy](#), [U.S. DOT](#) | [No Comments](#)

The Obama administration last night revealed the names of local transit projects getting recommendations for federal aid under the U.S. DOT's New and Small Starts programs, which are set to receive \$1.8 billion during fiscal year 2011.



Federal Transit Administration (FTA) chief Peter Rogoff, in hard hat at the groundbreaking of New Jersey's rail tunnel. (Photo: [WaPo](#) [1])

The list includes some familiar urban projects -- New York's Second Avenue Subway, for instance, already had a full funding grant agreement (FFGA) with Washington and is poised to get \$197 million in the 2011 White House budget -- and some newbie entrants, including bus rapid transit in the East Bay [of Oakland](#) [2] and connecting New Britain with [Hartford, Connecticut](#) [3].

Federal Transit Administrator Peter Rogoff said today that support from the Connecticut congressional delegation played a pivotal role in bringing the New Britain-Hartford BRT to the funding list.

"A lot of the communities [that Connecticut's proposed BRT line] would pass through are depressed and would benefit not only from the connectivity but from the jobs," Rogoff told reporters.

Even as the transit project list hit the streets, members of Congress were already touting their value of their local projects to job creation and congestion mitigation.

"We have worked hard on the federal level to ensure a strong commitment to this project and the thousands of local jobs it will create in the short term and permanently," Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ) said in a joint statement with fellow Democratic Sen. Frank Lautenberg (NJ) that celebrated the White House's award of \$200 million to the Access to the Region's Core (ARC) tunnel plan.

Rogoff also couched the New and Small Starts investments as part of the administration's overall transport agenda, focusing on environmental sustainability and economic growth. New transit "will give our citizens a way out of punishing traffic jams and improve their quality of life," he said.

Asked about the [continuing uncertainty](#) [4] that surrounds the next long-term federal transportation bill, which led the U.S. DOT to submit placeholder estimates for future highway and transit spending, Rogoff pointed to the \$8.4 billion in transit grants that were a part of last year's stimulus law.

"This agency's budget spiked up 80 percent as a result of the Recovery Act," Rogoff said. "Another jobs bill ... could [potentially elevate](#) our levels. I'd say that's a lot of budget dynamism."

The ARC tunnel, which aims to provide a new connection between New York City and the New Jersey suburbs, was recommended for an FFGA last year, making its inclusion in this year's New Starts list something of a foregone conclusion -- despite [reported concerns](#) [5] that eminent domain battles could delay the project.

Still, the ARC tunnel's grant recommendation dwarfed all other urban transit proposals, save for the

New York area's Long Island Railroad East Side Access project (slated to get \$215 million in FY 2011).

In addition to the two BRT projects in Oakland and Connecticut, winners of new FFGAs from the U.S. DOT included San Francisco's Central Subway (\$20 million in FY 2011), Honolulu's rail transit project (\$55 million in FY 2011), the Central Corridor light rail in Minnesota's Twin Cities (\$45 million in FY 2011), and Denver's East Corridor and Gold Line transit networks (\$40 million each in FY 2011).

BRT was well-represented in the budget, with projects in three California cities -- San Bernardino, Riverside, and San Francisco -- getting nods in addition to two in Colorado's Roaring Fork Valley and the city of Fort Collins. New York City's Nostrand Avenue BRT is set to receive \$28 million next year, with Austin's MetroRapid getting \$24 million and new BRT for West Seattle snagging a \$21 million recommendation.

Referring to the Nostrand Avenue BRT project, Rogoff singled out New York City Transportation Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan for praise, crediting her for "leadership on this and other related projects."

(ed. note. This post was updated from an earlier edition to add new information.)

Article printed from Streetsblog Capitol Hill: <http://dc.streetsblog.org>

URL to article: <http://dc.streetsblog.org/2010/02/02/u-s-dot-names-the-transit-projects-set-for-federal-funding/>

URLs in this post:

[1] WaPo: <http://www.daylife.com/photo/08NX8bYeLK301>

[2] of Oakland: <http://sf.streetsblog.org/2010/01/07/community-meeting-oakland-brt-bus-rapid-transit-4/>

[3] Hartford, Connecticut: <http://www.ctrapidtransit.com/>

[4] continuing uncertainty: <http://dc.streetsblog.org/2009/10/28/transportation-policy-becomes-the-proverbial-tree-falling-in-the-forest/>

[5] reported concerns: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/28/nyregion/28tunnel.html>

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February 3, 2010

Aesthetics must still be part of rail debate

By Jerry Burris

Has the train finally left the station?

That has to be the question now that Uncle Sam has formally announced its intention to offer up some \$1.55 billion in support for the transit system supported by Mayor Mufi Hannemann and his administration.

No matter how you cut it, that's a lot of bucks. Not enough to cover the nearly \$6 billion cost of the project, but big enough to make this a juggernaut difficult to stop.

Or is it?

In recent days, Gov. Linda Lingle has demonstrated remarkably cold feet about the entire project. This matters because while it is a city effort, it requires state approval in the form of an environmental impact statement to proceed.

Lingle has not said specifically what she will do, but she has raised questions about both the financial viability of the system as well as its design and aesthetic impact on the city of Honolulu.

The financial argument has now lost ground, since the federal government seems inclined to support the project and commit vitally needed transit funds to its construction. This doesn't completely wipe out the money argument, of course, since a big chunk of the financing will come out of local taxes.

And, as everyone well knows, this source of bucks is far from a sure thing. The last time a transit project almost got approved, it was based on assumptions of tax collections that turned out to be severely optimistic.

Now, it is no one's fault that events such as the oil crisis or 9/11 came along to carve a big hole in local tax collection projections. But these things do happen and could happen again.

Still, the job of government planners is to make their best guess and then move ahead. If every project was held until the last penny was in hand, nothing would get done.

But if the money issue is moving toward resolution, the aesthetic issue remains troublesome. Many local architects have questioned — albeit at a fairly late date in the going — about the wisdom of building an elevated rail transit line through the heart of Honolulu.

Outside of urban Honolulu, a sleek 21st century elevated line might be acceptable — even thrilling in some areas. But it is worth debating, even at this late date, whether an elevated skyway makes good urban planning sense in the dense and environmentally fragile urban core.

San Francisco, for instance, learned this lesson the hard way. To improve traffic flow, the state built the massive Embarcadero Freeway along the waterfront. Traffic moved a bit better, but the city was cut off from its historic and beautiful waterfront.

In 1989, Mother Nature intervened with an earthquake that damaged the freeway almost beyond repair. It was torn down and a vibrant revitalization of the waterfront followed. Uncounted millions of dollars in property values were captured when the connection between land and the sea was once again established.

Now, Honolulu's connection between the city and the harbor is far from perfect. Nimitz Highway and an ugly string of industrial facilities ensure that. But there are possibilities.

Now that the money appears to be flowing, it might be time for the city to look closely at the aesthetic issue and consider whether there is an alternative that would move people and at the same time improve the historical bond between town and harbor that is so special.

February 3, 2010

Honolulu rail plan gets \$55M in Federal Transit Authority budget

Hannemann says \$55M should ease Lingle's concerns

*By Sean Hao
Advertiser Staff Writer*

The Federal Transit Administration gave Honolulu a \$55 million vote of confidence yesterday in the city's planned commuter rail line from East Kapolei to Ala Moana.

The support helps build momentum for the rail project just days after Gov. Linda Lingle raised concerns about whether the city could afford the estimated \$5.35 billion price tag.

City officials have been hoping the FTA will contribute \$1.55 billion toward building the line, and yesterday FTA Administrator Peter Rogoff said they can count on it. The FTA plans to sign an agreement before October 2011 to provide the money, Rogoff said.

The first installment of \$55 million was included in the FTA's proposed fiscal 2011 budget announced this week.

"We would not have included funding in the president's budget for this project if we thought it was falling off the rails," Rogoff said in a conference call with news media yesterday. "We expect to continue to work with the city and county to continue to strengthen their financial plan and we will be evaluating a new financial plan when they make an application to go into final design."

Rogoff acknowledged that concerns remain with the viability of the financial plan for the project. However, he said those concerns aren't expected to prevent the grant agreement from being signed by a Sept. 30, 2011, deadline.

"It's a great day for the city of Honolulu," said Mayor Mufi Hannemann during a news conference at Honolulu Hale. "Certainly it couldn't have come at a better time, especially when the chief executive of the state is expressing strong concerns and reservations about going forward."

Hannemann said he hopes the FTA announcement will spur Lingle to expeditiously approve the project's environmental impact statement, once it's released by the federal government. The city wants Lingle's approval to come relatively fast. However, Lingle has said she'll conduct a thorough analysis to ensure that the project's financial plan is feasible and that alternatives were adequately considered.

"We would really hope that she would start sending some positive messages and signals," Hannemann said. "Whatever it is that's holding her back, cast it aside for the good of the people."

"This is a train that will bring economic benefits for people for years and decades and generations to come."

Groundbreaking on the elevated commuter rail was supposed to take place in December, but has been indefinitely delayed by an ongoing federal review of the project's final environmental impact statement.

The delay could be extended by Lingle's plan to conduct an independent analysis of city tax revenue forecasts that are the basis of the project's financial plan. Her concern is that the project could hurt the state's finances if it fails.

Lingle based much of her concern on an Oct. 7 memo from the FTA to the city warning that the city's financial plan may not be sufficient to allow the project to proceed into the final engineering phase this year.

Standard message

The FTA's Rogoff yesterday said that warning is often given to cities seeking federal transit funds. Basically, it means that federal scrutiny rises as a project proceeds through the federal funding process, he said.

Rogoff also said he was perplexed by Lingle's concerns that city officials did not adequately study street-level alternatives to an elevated train. Numerous state agencies failed to raise that concern when provided an opportunity to examine the project's environmental impacts, he said.

Lingle has suggested the city consider building the rail partially at street level to cut cost, given tax collections for the rail have been less than anticipated.

"The governor has an important role to play in the approval of this project, especially as it relates to state environmental law and I do not begrudge the governor having an independent look at the financing of this project," Rogoff said. "But please know that the FTA also takes an independent look at the finances of this project and we will do so again when they submit a financial plan to get into final design."

Lingle yesterday said she plans to move forward with an independent review of the project's finances.

"We are pleased that FTA Administrator Peter Rogoff confirmed the federal government is continuing to work with the city to strengthen the financial plan and that they will evaluate a new financial plan when the city submits its application for the final design," Lingle said in a written statement. "We are also pleased that Administrator Rogoff recognizes my role in the approval process and understands why I will move forward on an independent review to ensure the financial viability of the project."

U.S. budget includes rail funds

Hannemann says the FTA's first pledge of \$55 million validates Honolulu's transit plan

By [Gary T. Kubota](#)

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Feb 03, 2010

The Federal Transit Administration has included funding for the Honolulu rail system in President Barack Obama's fiscal 2011 budget, in anticipation of the rail plan's clearing environmental review.

Agency Administrator Peter Rogoff's announcement yesterday in Washington, D.C., signaled the Obama administration's commitment to fund the \$5.35 billion rail transit between East Kapolei and Ala Moana—when Gov. Linda Lingle has raised questions about the financial viability of the rail system.

Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann said the \$55 million included in the 2011 budget was the first time federal transportation officials have included the Honolulu rail system in their budget and reflects their confidence in the project.

He said the funding was also the largest allocation for a new rail transit project in the 2011 budget.

"Today's financial support validates our financial analysis. ... They know this is an excellent project," Hannemann said yesterday. "I really believe now more than ever, we need to move forward on this."

Hannemann said he hoped Rogoff's speech would help to persuade the governor to send some positive messages about the project.

"Don't be so negative. Keep positive. This is great news," Hannemann said.

Lingle said statements made by Rogoff yesterday support her administration's position that close scrutiny of the financial plan for the city's rail project is warranted.

"We are pleased that FTA Administrator Peter Rogoff confirmed the federal government is continuing to work with the city to strengthen the financial plan and that they will evaluate a new financial plan when the city submits its application for final design," Lingle said. "We're also pleased that Administrator Rogoff recognizes my role in the approval process and understands why I will move forward on an independent review to ensure the financial viability of the project."

The proposed \$55 million would be part of the \$1.55 billion in federal money applied toward the cost of the project.

The Hannemann administration has said the project will generate 10,000 jobs.



Peter Rogoff:
The FTA administrator says 13 state agencies have commented on the rail transit plan



Rogoff said financing for the proposed Honolulu rail system was in better shape than many proposals by other cities.

Lingle has also said she is reviewing whether the elevated rail could be lowered to street level in portions of Honolulu.

The Hannemann administration has said exploring the at-grade option would effectively kill the proposed project by requiring a new environmental impact statement.

Rogoff said no fewer than 13 state agencies under Lingle already have participated and provided comments as part of the environmental review process for the elevated rail system.

He said he was somewhat confused by Lingle's statements. "I have to be honest. We're finding the process of involving the governor to be somewhat perplexing," Rogoff said.

Rogoff said while he does not begrudge the governor having an independent financial look at the project, the Federal Transit Administration also takes an independent look at the financing proposed by Honolulu city officials.

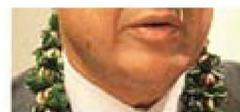
"We will do so again when they present a financial plan at final design," he said.

The project has received \$65 million for studies, including preliminary engineering, through congressional requests.

Hannemann said the financial plan for rail continues to rely mainly on obtaining revenues through a 0.5 percent general excise tax imposed on Oahu residents.

He said the environmental impact statement is 99 percent complete.

Once the final environmental impact statement is released, the public will have a month to comment on it, before it can be signed by the governor.



Mufi Hannemann:
A \$55 million pledge shows the FTA knows "this is an excellent project"

Find this article at:

http://www.starbulletin.com/news/20100203_US_budget_includes_rail_funds.html



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High Speed Rail

The Rail Professionals' Information Source

Federal Funding 2/3/2010

FTA: Proposed FY2011 federal budget would fund 27 major transit projects

Yesterday, the [Federal Transit Administration \(FTA\)](#) announced the Obama Administration's proposed fiscal-year 2011 transportation budget would include \$1.8 billion for 27 major transit projects.

Those under Full Funding Grant Agreements include MTA Long Island Rail Road's East Side Access project; MTA New York City Transit's Second Avenue Subway; the Dulles Corridor Metrorail project; the Regional Transportation District of Denver's West Corridor light-rail extension; and Sound Transit's University Link light-rail extension.

Projects in the final design phase include the Oakland Airport Connector; San Francisco's Central Subway; the initial segment of central Florida's commuter-rail line; the Access to the Region's Core program in New Jersey; and light-rail lines in Houston.

Projects undergoing preliminary engineering include Denver's East Corridor and Gold Line; Honolulu's light-rail system; the Twin Cities' Central Corridor light-rail line; Charlotte's Northeast Corridor light-rail line; Houston's University Corridor light-rail line; and Salt Lake City's light-rail project.

The proposed budget also would appropriate \$834.6 million for 19 new transit projects, 10 of which would be new funding recommendations. The remainder had been recommended for funding in previous years, but still are awaiting construction grant agreements. In addition, the budget would include \$924.6 million to continue funding eight projects under construction in New York City, Dallas, Denver, Salt Lake City, Seattle and northern Virginia.

"Projects like these are at the very heart of President Obama's agenda to clean up our environment, reduce our dependence on oil from overseas and put people back to work," said FTA Administrator Peter Rogoff in a prepared statement.

Comments

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LETTERS

I choo-choo-choose you

FEB 3, 2010 | [SHARE](#) 

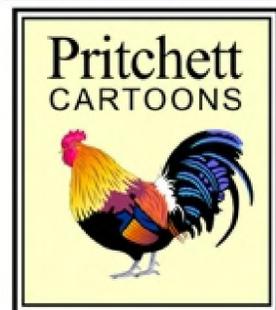
“We’re lost but we’re making good time.” An old pilot’s joke that perfectly describes today’s transit proposal. It has the wrong compass heading and it will make a forced landing. Hidden agendas may have unconsciously driven its conception, possibly with preconceived ideas. The result is that it forgets the main goal—to solve the massive and growing car gridlock. It cuts residential neighborhoods in half. No wonder the AIA doesn’t like it. It has the wrong route. It should be built over the existing H-1 corridor. The best world-class structural engineers in Hawaii say it’s feasible. Built over H-1 it will easily accommodate a 20 foot high elevated structure. Nobody’s views are hurt and no neighborhoods are cut in half. No eminent domain issues—we own the 120 foot wide right-of-way already. It is simply the best route.

First proposed by us to the city administration in 2008, complete with a

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large-scale architectural model, faint hearts have rejected this out of hand as not feasible. But trust the professionals, it is. Span the highway with pre-cast, pre-stressed structure. Work from the top while traffic still moves as usual on the ground. As soon as one mile is completed it can immediately be used by traffic with ramps up and down every mile.

Rapid-transit rail can ride on the elevated lanes as soon as the first ten miles are complete. Built 10 lanes wide, there will be room for both cars and trains on top with no conflicts. Photovoltaic panels on each side of the structure will face the wonderful Hawaiian sun to donate power to move electric trains free to all riders, with valuable energy to spare and pay us.

It's not too late to alter our flight plan. Happy landings!

Art Hansen

AIA, Architect



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MidWeek

Mufi Doth Protest Lingle Too Much

February 03, 2010

By Rick Hamada

I can appreciate the passion Mayor Mufi Hannemann exhibits for the rail project. He is an ardent supporter and defender of rail and is undeterred in his pursuit of its completion.

Conversely, detractors (like myself) share several concerns that lead us to oppose the rail project. Chiefly among them include the exorbitant cost of its construction/maintenance, and the fact that the rail system will not alleviate traffic congestion.

But recent statements by the mayor seem to muddy an issue that appeared to be fairly clear among opponents and proponents.

In a recent television appearance, Hannemann lambasted Gov. Linda Lingle and the rail debate, which until now was peppered with barbs among the front-line soldiers, but has turned decidedly personal and snarky.

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It's one thing to be critical of the governor for her recent actions regarding rail. She has said she will not rubber stamp the multibillion-dollar project. I would hope not. The city seems to have forgotten that the governor's signature is required in order for the project to move forward. It seems the city would be a bit more magnanimous by supporting the governor in her pursuit of information.

Lingle believes the community should have ample time to discern whether or not they are willing to support the largest public works project in the state's history. She wants to consider all alternatives before ground is broken.

I know, the city will tell you there were already ample opportunities for contribution and education. But if you recall the alternatives analysis and subsequent public indoctrin ... uh, public information campaign you funded, there was little room left for a substantive debate.

Now, with all that said, exactly where do we read that the governor is *opposed* to rail?

"She's become rapidly, in my mind, an anti-railer," says Hannemann.

Huh?

It was Lingle who, in the early days of her administration, expressed support for a mass transit system. She was the one who, according to the mayor himself, served as the impetus for the rail project. In August 2005, the governor allowed HB1309, the enabling legislation for the City and County of Honolulu to increase and collect the GET surcharge to fund the project, without her signature. She could have easily vetoed the measure, but she didn't. And during the entire debate regarding rail, including the opportunity to campaign against the project leading up to the 2008 vote, the governor remained neutral. I suppose the mayor's logic here is if you are not completely in support of his agenda, even if you are in the middle, then you must be the enemy.

Too extreme?

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"Do you want to be remembered as the governor who blew Superferry, threw the educational system into disarray and now threw away the best economic project this state has going for itself?" the mayor asked. "My answer would be no, no, no."

Invoking Superferry (which was not the governor's fault), the recent education debacle (which can mainly be attributed to the HSTA leadership) and now accusing her of rejecting rail can only be interpreted as Hamlet's mother Gertrude said: "Methinks thou doth protest too much."

It seems a bit much to launch such an unsavory personal attack when there is no real justification. The governor is exhibiting a responsible, mature and meticulous approach in considering her signature on a \$5.5 billion commitment. The public appreciates the governor's stewardship of their resources and, as troubling details emerge about the city's version of the project, Hannemann won't have Lingle to blame for its possible demise.

He may want to look a little closer to home.

Find this article at: http://www.midweek.com/content/columns/ace_article/mufi_doth_protest_lingle_too_much/

Letters to the Editor

For Wednesday, February 3, 2010

Openness added to isle's rail recipe

Recipe for mixing pineapples and macadamia nuts of Hawaii nei:

» Gather 10 tons of Hawaii pineapples and 10 tons of Hawaii macadamia nuts grown in the football-size fields of open sunshine in Hawaii Nei.

» Cut pineapples into clear segments proportionate to logic and reason.

» Saw shiny, polished nuts to get to the meat beyond the glossy shell.

» Layer the sunshine-grown sweet pineapple segments with the opened nuts.

» Blend a meringue of truth, fiscal responsibility, affordability and environmental quality as the final topping over the substantive pineapple and macadamia nut meat of the issue, poured over the crusty cold political promotion and propaganda.

Suddenly we have the Governor's Sunshine-Grown Pineapple, Macadamia Nut and Truth Meringue pie molded in the light of open government. How sweet it is.

Michelle S. Matson
Honolulu

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EDITORIAL

Feds' rail boost reassuring

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Feb 04, 2010

The city's plans for building an elevated rail transit line from Kapolei to Ala Moana have received a major boost by the Obama administration's initial funding. The Federal Transit Administration's director says he expects the project eventually will gain final approval, which should give Gov. Linda Lingle pause in casting a cloud over it.

The governor raised questions about the plan's financial viability, citing an Oct. 7 memorandum by the FTA's regional office, which said that "financial issues may pose difficulties sufficient to put at risk" the city's final design. However, agency Administrator Peter Rogoff this week suggested to reporters that he was puzzled by Lingle's skepticism, since no fewer than 13 state agencies under Lingle have participated in the project.

The plan's environmental impact statement needs Lingle's signature to go forward.

"I have to be honest," Rogoff told reporters. "We're finding the process of involving the governor to be somewhat perplexing."

He said his agency "takes an independent look" at the financing of such a project and "will do so again when they present a financial plan at final design."

Mayor Mufi Hannemann can optimistically regard the agency's commitment of \$55 million and Rogoff's own confidence in future funding — the city is asking for an additional \$1 billion — as providing significant momentum to the \$5.35 billion project.

"We would not have included funding in the president's budget for this project if we thought it was falling off the rails," Rogoff said.

In a brief response, the Republican governor said she was "pleased" that Rogoff confirmed the administration's ongoing work with the city on the project, including further evaluation of the finances. Lingle said she also "will move forward on an independent review to ensure the financial viability of the project."

Financing of the rail system should be of concern, but predicting cost and revenue amounts for the rest of this decade is impossible.

As the October memo notes, revenue from the general excise tax 0.5 percent surcharge has not been as large as predicted before the recession. At the same time, it adds, contract bids during the recession have been 10 percent to 25 percent below the city engineer's estimates.

Lingle also has complained that the elevated rail would not be "aesthetically pleasing," reopening debate for a street-level system favored by some architects.

City officials say exploring such an option would effectively kill the proposal by requiring a new environmental statement, leaving H-1 between Kapolei and downtown in gridlock.

Find this article at:

http://www.starbulletin.com/editorials/20100204_Feds_rail_boost_reassuring.html

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February 4, 2010

Rail

Lingle's motives on transit are suspect

As Maui's mayor, Linda Lingle championed the principle of decentralizing state power by increasing home rule for the counties. As governor, she long championed the principle of decentralization to reform the public school system.

Now, she is invoking centralized state government power to derail a badly needed city-county project (rail), a goal she once supported, despite the fact that it: (1) is funded by a tax the county voted itself to levy and (2) was voted for by a majority of Oahu's voters.

This is all in a transparent attempt to make Mufi Hannemann look bad, and to try to enhance Duke Aiona's prospects of succeeding her in Washington Place.

Some principles are apparently expendable.

GERRY KEIR | Honolulu

Fasi remembered as rail champion

Posted: Feb 04, 2010 6:07 PM HST
Updated: Feb 05, 2010 11:59 AM HST

By Tim Sakahara - [bio](#) | [email](#)

HONOLULU (Hawaii News Now) - Even as Mayor Hannemann pushes forward with rail transit today he's following in Frank Fasi's steps. Fasi was one of the first supporters of rail more than 40 years ago.

The Honolulu rail idea is not new. It began with Mayor Neal Blaisdell back in 1968. But it was Fasi who became a champion of the idea shortly after he became mayor.

His plan called for a 29 mile route between Pearl City and Hawaii Kai. He called it the "Honolulu Area Rail Rapid Transit" or "HART" project. It died in 1981 when Mayor Eileen Anderson said it would cost too much. But when Fasi won re-election in 1984, he brought the idea back.

State Representative Joe Souki told the story how Fasi used the "art of politics" to persuade him and other politicians to vote for rail funding.

"I was the finance chairman at that time and Yamasaki was the senate ways and means chairman and we were both giving Frank a hard time about rail. So Frank, to appease us, came with model train which I still have in my office and he named it "Soukiyama," recalled Rep. Souki.

Despite the gesture that proposal ultimately died in 1992 after the city council voted against it.

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Former Honolulu Mayor Frank Fasi



The "Soukiyama" Express Rail Car



Joe Souki

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City wants to educate students about rail

Posted: Feb 03, 2010 8:35 PM HST
Updated: Feb 04, 2010 12:05 AM HST

HONOLULU (HawaiiNewsNow) -- City officials say they will use an upcoming Furlough Friday as a chance to educate children about rail transit.

They're calling it the "SMART" Youth Summit 2010.

The acronym "SMART" stands for "Save Money And Ride Transit."

It'll be held on Friday, February 12th.

The city is inviting high school and college students, as well as teachers and professors, to attend.

They'll learn about rail, the city says, through high-tech presentations and hands-on workshops.

You need to register to attend.

To find out how, [click here](#).



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High Speed Rail

The Rail Professionals' Information Source

Project Update 2/4/2010

Honolulu light-rail system set to receive \$55 million in feds' FY2011 budget

Count Honolulu's light-rail system among the transit projects chosen to obtain federal funding in the Obama Administration's proposed fiscal-year 2011 transportation budget. The Hawaiian capital would receive \$55 million for the project.

The [Federal Transit Administration \(FTA\)](#) plans to provide a total of \$1.55 billion for the light-rail system through the New Starts program, Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann said in a prepared statement. The FTA expects to arrange a Full Funding Grant Agreement with the city by the end of FY2011, he said.

The [Honolulu Rail Transit](#) project calls for building a 20-mile elevated light-rail line between East Kapolei and Ala Moana by 2019. The city expects to launch service on the first leg of the route between Kapolei and Pearl Highlands in 2012. The project also includes the construction of a train storage and maintenance facility in Waipahu.

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Pacific Business News (Honolulu) - February 4, 2010
[/pacific/stories/2010/02/01/daily36.html](#)

PACIFIC BUSINESS NEWS

Thursday, February 4, 2010, 12:50pm HAST

Downtown Honolulu office market stays flat

Pacific Business News (Honolulu)

Demand for office space in downtown Honolulu is expected to remain flat or negative this year, with business possibly picking up in 2011.

The weak demand for space will be magnified by several large blocks of office space that will become vacant, according to the Honolulu office market report for the fourth quarter of 2009 by [Hawaii Commercial Real Estate](#).

The vacancy rate for Class A downtown space was 11.5 percent at the end of the year. When sublease space is factored in, the rate was 12 percent, the report said.

The report noted that the relocation of one large tenant, [Morgan Stanley](#), to Pacific Guardian Center will create a domino effect. AECOM will move to Bishop Square to fill Morgan Stanley's former office space, leaving 32,000 square feet vacant in Davies Pacific Center.

The report also noted that several other businesses will close their downtown offices, including [Metlife Home Loans](#), which has a 12,000-square-foot space at Alii Place, and [Pacific Health Research Institute](#), which has 11,500 square feet at Topa Financial Center.

Most demand for office space from new tenants is associated with Honolulu's rail project and with the federal government, whose spending ranges from military work in Hawaii and Guam to relocating agencies during a renovation of the federal courthouse building and general federal services, the report said. Demand from businesses associated with tourism and real estate remains weak, the report said.

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February 5, 2010

City to hold 'SMART' Youth Summit 2010 to discuss rail transit with students

*Honolulu Rail Transit Project
Reader Submitted*

The City & County of Honolulu will hold a SMART Youth Summit 2010 at Leeward Community College on Friday, February 12, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. to discuss the Honolulu Rail Transit Project.

The acronym "SMART" stands for "Save Money And Ride Transit." The youth summit is free and will be held on a Furlough Friday.

High school and college students across Oahu are encouraged to attend the free event. Teachers, instructors, professors and other educators are also invited to participate.

Attendees will learn about rail transit through high-tech presentations, youth-produced videos, award-winning artwork by students, and hands-on workshops from recent graduates. Augie T will emcee the event and Mayor Mufi Hannemann will deliver the keynote address. There will also be a youth concert featuring Kolohe Kai.

"This is a great opportunity for our young people to educate themselves on rail transit and how rail will promote sustainability of our island and benefit future generations," Hannemann said. "This youth summit promises to be fun, interactive, informative and educational."

All participants will receive a complimentary lunch. Students will also receive a certificate of completion for their attendance, and can be used in the event professors or instructors want to offer extra credit for participating in the SMART Youth Summit.

To reserve a spot at Youth Summit 2010, students and educators can register online at <http://www.MovingUsForward.net/archives/512>. For more details, e-mail the rail transit team at info@honolulutransit.org or visit their youth site at www.MovingUsForward.org.

February 5, 2010

Letters to the Editor

Former mayor did much for the city

Frank Fasi did great things for Honolulu: satellite city halls, the Blaisdell Center complex and TheBus (we called it "Uncle Frank's Taxi"). However, one thing stood out in my mind was never done, but it showed me the foresight of the mayor.

As a sophomore in 1975, a spokesman from the Fasi administration came to our high school and gave a lecture.

It was the planned construction of a rapid transit system that would stretch from Ewa to Hawaii Kai with feeder lines to Wahiawā and Waikīkī. The spokesman went on to say it was important for the future of Hono-lulu. How prophetic. Thirty-five years later, we could use that system now.

Aloha, Mr. Mayor. Thanks for the memories.

ROBERT K. SOBERANO | Honolulu

February 5, 2010

Letters to the Editor

Rail

Project will be costly for our keiki

So the Federal Transit Administration proposes to spend \$55 million next year (assuming Congress approves and appropriates the funds) on Honolulu's risky rail scheme. In the hands of The Advertiser, this somehow morphs into the city receiving its first payment. Talk about counting your chickens. Columnist Jerry Burris is a little more circumspect, writing that "the federal government seems inclined to support the project." Inclinations is not money in the bank.

Meanwhile, it has been reported that the Obama administration will have to borrow on the order of \$1.8 trillion dollars to pay for its proposed budget, much of it coming from oil sheiks and China. I guess when we have to borrow that much, what's another measly \$55 million, right?

I just feel sorry for our keiki who will be saddled with all this debt in the future, not to mention the ongoing operating expense of rail.

SCOTT SMART | Mililani

February 6, 2010

Letters to the Editor

RAIL

Other ideas were constantly ignored

Thank you, Jerry Burris, for pointing out that "Aesthetics must still be part of rail debate" (Feb. 3). Like many others, you say the architects questioned, "albeit at a fairly late date," the wisdom of the all-elevated rail project.

Many times at the Jan. 15 forum, the architects said all attempts to present their ideas about rail were always met with "You're too early. You'll get a chance later." This was immediately followed by, "You're too late."

There never was a time when any ideas other than heavy rail on elevated tracks were listened to.

PEARL JOHNSON | Pālolo

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Letters to the Editor

For Saturday, February 6, 2010

Lingle should endorse rail now

Gov. Linda Lingle should consider how thoroughly rail has been examined over the past four years. Elevated rail has been approved by the City Council. The environmental impact statement is being reviewed by the federal agencies. And most important, the people of Oahu voted for rail. Even the antirail politicians have said that they will follow the will of the people and push to implement rail.

Gov. Lingle should not delay in accepting the EIS and endorsing it.

L.C. Morris
Kaneohe

Letters to the Editor

For Saturday, February 6, 2010

Where is money to pay for review?

Federal Transit Administrator Peter Rogoff said that funding for the Honolulu rail project is included in the administration's 2011 budget, and that he finds "the process of involving the governor to be somewhat perplexing." Indeed. Gov. Linda Lingle's acknowledgment of his statement -- "We are pleased that Administrator Rogoff recognizes my role in the approval process and understands why I will move forward on an independent review to ensure the financial viability of the project" -- is bizarre.

Funding an independent review as an additional expense when the state deficit has already led to Furlough Fridays, the slashing of social services and cuts for the university system at a time when enrollments are soaring?

What magical pocket is that coming out of? For what purpose other than more of the usual political games?

Yi Ching
Hawaii Kai

February 8, 2010

Hawaii charges ahead with electric vehicles

Hawai'i Tax Foundation leader urges more study on economic impacts

*By Sean Hao
Advertiser Staff Writer*

The state is driving the adoption of electric and alternate vehicles through a variety of mandates and grants, but the push could add to costs at government agencies and businesses already grappling with the worst economy in decades.

Starting this month, state and county agencies buying new vehicles are required to give priority to electric vehicles, alternative-fuel vehicles and hybrids. And by the end of next year, government and private parking lots open to the public must have at least one space for electric vehicles and a vehicle charger for every 100 parking spaces.

To offset the costs of electric cars and special parking, the state plans to spend \$4.25 million in federal stimulus money by an April 2012 deadline on chargers and grants.

Vehicles that run on electricity rather than gasoline emit less pollution and are expected to be cheaper per mile to operate. They're under development by every major car maker, and certain models are scheduled to be available in limited quantities on the Mainland by year's end.

However, it's unclear when the vehicles will be available to Hawai'i residents, and how quickly they will adopt the cars, which need to be regularly charged with electricity. There are also questions about the durability, reliability and serviceability of this new breed of vehicles.

The state's push to spur the adoption of electric cars could be premature, said Lowell Kalapa, president of the nonprofit Tax Foundation of Hawaii.

"It's well-intended, but not completely thought out on the economic side," he said. "Not only does it cost us taxpayers additional money to purchase those types of vehicles, but then we're going to have to build in these facilities for the electric vehicles.

"I think a lot more research needs to be done before we buy into a lot of these things, and the electric cars is one of them."

According to the state, there's expected to be 1,000 to 3,000 electric vehicles in Hawai'i in 2014.

So far, the private-sector interest in electric vehicles and chargers remains relatively small. In January, there were 179 registered electric vehicles statewide, according to the state Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism. Those are mainly test vehicles, expensive high-end models, mini-cars and scooters.

Last month, green building and energy product retailer Green Energy Outlet installed the state's first public electric vehicle charger at its Kaka'ako store. GEO President Frank Rogers is banking on a rapid adoption of electric vehicles as they become commercially available.

"We're ahead of the curve, there's no doubt, but somebody has to jump in the pool first," Rogers said. "I really do think that you get that right car and you're going to have a hard time filling demand for it — it's going to be really flying off the shelf."

Among the most anticipated electric vehicles coming to market are the Nissan Leaf and the Chevy Volt. The \$25,000 to \$33,000 Leaf is expected to launch in December. The Volt is scheduled to launch in November, though no price has been announced yet.

Neither vehicle is expected to be widely available for a while. That's because General Motors expects to only produce about 10,000 Volts the first year, or about 200 vehicles per state.

The Leaf initially will be deployed in Arizona, California, Oregon, Tennessee and Washington state, where 11,210 charging stations are being installed under a \$99.8 million grant from the U.S. Department of Energy.

hawai'i interested

Hawai'i hopes to join those states that will get these vehicles first, said Maria Tome, renewable energy coordinator at DBEDT. Hawai'i's small geography and warm weather make it an ideal environment for battery-driven electric vehicles.

In turn, these vehicles could reduce petroleum consumption, Tome said. The charging could take place during off-peak night hours to prevent strain on the electric grid, she added.

"The problem is there was a delay in what the automakers were doing on the cars and on the chargers," she said. "Everybody was promising 2010, and now they've all flipped that to 2011, although some are still saying late 2010."

Those launch delays could jeopardize a state plan to use \$4.25 in federal stimulus money to drive adoption by, among other things, providing about 625 grants of \$5,000 each to those buying electric vehicles. Half a million dollars would go to state agencies to help meet electric and alternative-fuel vehicle purchasing mandates.

Under the stimulus program, that grant money must be obligated by the end of September and spent by April 30, 2012. DBEDT plans to distribute the grants via a contractor agreement signed before October of this year.

"That does make it really complicated with the deadlines that are in," Tome said. "So we're discussing if we need to modify that."

Separately, Gov. Linda Lingle has proposed the state provide a general excise tax rebate to those buying or leasing an electric vehicle or installing an electric vehicle charging system.

Even without the proposed state grants and tax rebates, electric vehicle purchases may be eligible for a federal income tax credit of up to \$7,500.

The state wants to ensure that people who buy electric vehicles have parking spaces and charging outlets by mandating that parking lots with 100 or more spaces dedicate 1 percent of those spaces for electric vehicles. At least one charger must be installed in each eligible lot. Under the law passed last year, that figure jumps to 2 percent of spaces once the number of registered electric vehicles statewide tops 5,000.

It's unknown how many electric vehicle spaces the law will create. However, the figure could be in the thousands. For example, Ala Moana Center — which has the biggest parking lot in the Islands, has about 9,800 parking spaces. That means the shopping center will need to set aside 98 parking spaces for electric vehicles by the end of next year. Electric vehicle chargers can cost \$2,000 or more, depending on features.

Dave Rolf, executive director of the Hawaii Automobile Dealers Association, said the group supports efforts to reduce petroleum dependency. However, the electric vehicle parking mandate that takes effect at the end of next year is "too soon (and) too optimistic, based on what we know of production runs and what we know of the ability to adopt the product," he said.

Adoption of electric vehicles will depend on vehicle availability, prices and the difference in the price of electricity and gasoline , Rolf said.

"There are a whole lot of issues relating to electric vehicles that are just beginning to be addressed," he said. "Those (parking) stalls are going to be empty for several years."

February 8, 2010

Letters to the Editor

RAIL

We should get it right the first time

Building a street-level commuter train through Downtown, as AIA Honolulu and others suggest, would doom fixed-rail transit to failure before ground is even broken.

Successful commuter train systems worldwide use the same common sense formula. For less congested areas surrounding a city, feeder lines are built at ground level to save money. Main lines through a city's populated areas are built either below ground or elevated to prevent auto gridlock and insure sufficient train speed on the main corridor.

Many cities not using this formula are now paying a heavy price. Setagaya, Japan, where I lived and commuted, is a good example. As Setagaya developed, train congestion has forced the operator to rebuild much of the original ground level main line to a combination of elevated and underground lines.

This process is taking decades, costing billions, and is an engineering nightmare because the existing line must continue running during construction.

Ultimately, success of Honolulu's fixed rail rapid transit will depend on building sufficient scale. Putting the main line at street-level is a Catch-22: As feeder lines are added and ridership increases, it will choke the rest of Honolulu's transportation network.

So for success, we need an elevated system.

Benjamin Bystrom | Honolulu



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OUR ISLAND

\$1 million plan aims at pedestrian safety

Upgraded walkways and educational programs are among the options

[By Rob Shikina](#)

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Feb 09, 2010

The state is working on a \$1 million pedestrian master plan to reduce traffic casualties.

The plan is being developed after Oahu had four pedestrian fatalities this year and the AARP, in 2008, ranked the state the most dangerous for pedestrians age 65 and over. AARP also says the state's senior citizen population will grow 40 percent by 2030.

State traffic engineers say the master plan will improve pedestrian safety by shifting the transportation emphasis from moving freight and passengers to providing places for people to walk, said Ken Tatsuguchi, engineering planning manager with the Transportation Department.

He said the plan will help the agency prioritize \$7 billion in needed state roadway repairs and increase the continuity of pedestrian walkways.

He said the study will measure the density of foot traffic to find where people are going and prioritize needed improvements.

Transportation Director Brennon Morioka said the pedestrian plan could call for infrastructure upgrades to sidewalks, pavement markings and curb ramps, but also for educational public awareness programs such as Walk Wise Hawaii.

Another element of the plan is hooking up pedestrian walkways with transit centers and population centers such as shopping malls, he said.

In October the Department of Transportation hired a contractor to create the plan, with a draft expected to be ready next year. The federal government is paying for about 80 percent of the plan, he said.

University of Hawaii civil engineering professor Panos Prevedouros said one of the most important parameters in a pedestrian plan is continuous paths that eliminate circuitous routes and discourage jaywalking.

A key part of the plan is getting accurate pedestrian counts to identify walkers' needs, such as adding or removing a crosswalk or a traffic light, he said.

The plan should also include a sidewalk quality assessment, determining whether sidewalks are too bumpy or incomplete, he said.

While Hawaii has adequate pedestrian facilities, it faces growing pedestrian safety issues because of the aging population and heavier foot traffic than in other large cities such as Houston, he said.

"It's a matter of exposure," Prevedouros said. "This is a pedestrian-busy community, so as a result you will have conflict and occasional accidents."

He said an additional citywide plan would be helpful since many pedestrian walkways are actually along city roads.

Tammy Mori, spokeswoman for the Transportation Department, said the plan comes as there is a drop in Hawaii's pedestrian fatalities since 2005, when 36 pedestrians died.

In 2009 pedestrian deaths fell to 16 from 21 the year before.

Mori said the drop in fatalities is attributable to a combination of factors, including police enforcement of traffic laws, educating the public about pedestrian safety, and actual improvements such as countdown crosswalk signals and pavement markings.

Find this article at:

http://www.starbulletin.com/news/hawaii/news/20100209_1_million_plan_aims_at_pedestrian_safety.html



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February 10, 2010

Hawaii representatives urge governor to accept final EIS for rail project

Thirty-nine state representatives today sent a letter to Gov. Linda Lingle urging her to promptly review and accept the final environmental impact statement for the city's rail project.

The city needs Lingle's approval before it can proceed with construction of the \$5.3 billion train. The environmental study was expected to be given to Lingle in December, but has been delayed by an extended federal review.

Once it's released, the city wants Lingle's approval to come relatively fast. However, Lingle has said she'll conduct a thorough analysis to ensure that the project's financial plan is feasible and that alternatives were adequately considered.

Lawmakers and mayor urge governor to sign off on Oahu rail project

Posted: Feb 10, 2010 1:41 PM
Updated: Feb 10, 2010 8:45 PM

HONOLULU (HawaiiNewsNow) - More than three dozen state lawmakers are urging Governor Linda Lingle to sign off on the final environmental impact statement for Honolulu's rail project. A letter was sent to the governor's office with signatures of 38 house Democrats and one house Republican.

The letter states:

The project is the biggest economic stimulus project on the horizon - that will provide thousands of jobs and create tax revenue for our state and county governments to fund essential services.

Along with that Honolulu mayor Mufi Hannemann held a public conference for hundreds this afternoon at the state capitol where he described the latest progress and reaffirmed the potential job creation.

"In the next few years, we anticipate rail construction will provide about 8,000 jobs in 2011, 11,000 jobs in 2012, 17,000 jobs in 2013 and 15,00 jobs in 2014" said Honolulu mayor Mufi Hannemann.

Mayor Hannemann also pointed out that the federal government is set to give more than a billion and half dollars to help with construction costs. But Governor Lingle says she's concerned about the rail's \$5.5 billion cost and the aesthetics of an elevated concrete transportation system across the island skyline.

City officials say right now, the governor has 99% of the final environmental impact statement report with the rest being sent in the coming weeks.

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Mufi Hannemann



Governor Linda Lingle



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Lawmakers Urge Governor To Sign-Off On Rail EIS

Reported by: Gina Mangieri
Email: gmangieri@khon2.com

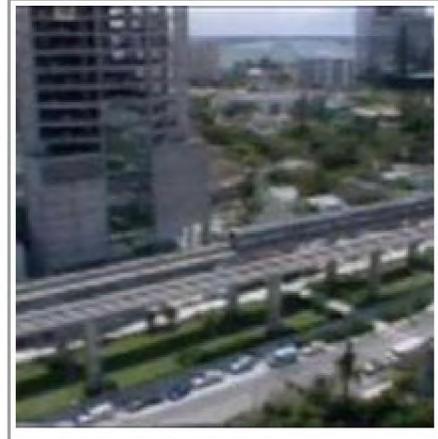
Last Update: 2/10 7:06 pm

Dozens of lawmakers are getting on-board the city's push for a quick sign-off by the governor of the environmental impact statement for rail.

The city hosted a symposium on Wednesday to say its transit plan is well vetted and financially sound.

Last month the governor put on an informational briefing at the capitol with architects calling for a redesign of rail at ground-level as opposed to the elevated train.

Wednesday it was the city's turn, a symposium aimed at clearing up what they say are misconceptions from the governor's event, her public doubts about rail's financial stability, and her intent to spend as long as she needs to review the EIS once the feds release the final version.



"They already went out on a limb and say they don't see anything getting in the way to preclude a final full grant agreement that's going to give us 1.55 billion," said Mayor Hannemann.

There's that substantial thumbs up from a recent federal transit authority press conference, and

"This is truly our time but make no mistake, if Honolulu blinks again, those dollars will evaporate," said Jennifer Goto Sabas, Sen. Inouye's Hawaii Chief of Staff.

At the end of the session dozens of lawmakers presented a letter they'd given the governor asking her for a prompt sign off of the final environmental impact statement once she gets it.

"We want the governor to know that we want to work with her and we want her along with us to leave a legacy for our children and our children's children," said Rep. Mark Takai, Pearl City.

The governor's position appears unchanged so far after receiving the letter signed off by 39 of 51 state house members. Her spokesperson said she "...Will conduct a thorough review, as required by law, to ensure the final EIS satisfactorily describes all impacts."

And that - "Her review will also include a complete analysis of the project's financial plan."

The city said two issues are being ironed out for the fed's final EIS, one involving airport runway alignment, the other over boundaries with navy property. They say the latest quarterly financial plan revisions for november should be done soon.

Senator Dan Inouye seeing no major roadblocks from his vantage point as head of the appropriations committee, arguably the most powerful senate seat.

KITV.com

Lawmakers, Hannemann Push For Transit

State Lawmakers Urge Lingle To Sign Transit EIS

POSTED: 5:00 pm HST February 10, 2010

HONOLULU -- State lawmakers listened to Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann make a push for the rail transit while House representatives rallied around the project.

Members of the public were briefed on the latest developments with the project. In addition to money and financing for the train, there was a lot of talk about jobs.

Hannemann said he believes rail could create 4,000 jobs this year and about 15,000 rail-related jobs by 2014.

There is concern the multibillion-dollar project could get held up at the governor's office. So, a majority of House lawmakers sent her a letter urging her to hurry.

"We support rail but more importantly we encourage the Gov to accept the final EIS when it hits her desk. This is too important of an opportunity for us to miss," Rep. Mark Takai said.

The letter was delivered to the governor's office on Wednesday morning.

Thirty-nine of the House's 51 representatives signed the letter. **Read the letter.**

Lingle has a copy of the FEIS, which is 99 percent of the final document, Rep. Sharon Har said.

Local companies that could play a big part in the rail project spent the afternoon talking with college engineering students and recent graduates who could be in line for some of those jobs the train system could create.

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STATE OF HAWAII
STATE CAPITOL
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 10, 2010

Contacts: Rep. K. Mark Takai 330-6275
Rep. Sharon Har 258-0313

Legislators Urge Governor to Accept Final EIS for Honolulu's Rail Project *39 State Representatives Sign Letter to Governor*

(HONOLULU) – Thirty-nine members of the Hawaii House of Representatives signed a letter to Governor Linda Lingle urging her to promptly review and accept the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Honolulu Rail Transit Project as soon as it is released.

“Governor Lingle needs to move forward on this project without any additional meetings, studies or delays,” said Rep. K. Mark Takai (D-34), who initiated the letter, which was hand-delivered to the Governor’s Executive Chamber this morning.

“The Federal Transit Authority (FTA) acknowledges that 13 State agencies have been providing comments to the City to finalize the FEIS. Additionally, City officials have noted that they provided Governor Lingle with a copy of the administrative draft of the FEIS, which is 99 percent of the final document,” said Rep. Sharon Har (D-40), who also signed the letter.

“The Federal Transit Authority Head Peter Rogoff also stated that resolution of the remaining issues is not expected to alter FTA’s support for the project,” Takai added.

“President Obama and the Federal Transit Administration have said that more than \$1.55 billion will be provided for the construction of Honolulu Rail Project,” Takai continued. “We cannot afford to turn our backs on this federal support. This is our very last opportunity to make rail a reality for Honolulu.”

“The people of West Oahu have waited far too long for meaningful traffic relief,” Har said. “The only way to alleviate traffic is to get people out of their cars. Rail provides residents with that alternative. Moreover, during this unprecedented economic downturn, rail will provide us with the kind of economic growth we need to help our economy rebound.”

The 39 members of the House signing the letter represent more than three-fourths of the 51-member House of Representatives.

The copy of the letter is attached.

###



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STATE OF HAWAII
STATE CAPITOL
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

February 10, 2010

The Honorable Linda Lingle
Governor
State of Hawaii
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Governor Lingle:

We, the undersigned members of the Hawaii House of Representatives, strongly request that you review and accept the final Environmental Impact Statement for the Honolulu Rail Transit Project in a timely manner once the document is released by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

Along with dealing with our transportation woes, the Honolulu rail transit project is the biggest economic stimulus project on the horizon that will provide thousands of jobs and create tax revenue for our state and county governments to fund essential services currently being cut.

The Obama Administration, in its budget submission to Congress, earlier this month gave the Honolulu rail project a vote of confidence by requesting \$55 million in federal funds for rail in FY 2011. Peter Rogoff, head of the Federal Transit Administration, told the local media his agency will sign an agreement by next year to provide another \$1.55 billion in construction funds.

The Legislature voted in 2005 to allow the City and County of Honolulu to assess the half-percent GET surcharge to provide the local share of the Honolulu rail project funding. You allowed this measure to become law without your signature.

Our own Legislative Construction Industry Task Force released a report last month that shows how essential the Honolulu Rail Transit Project is to the health of the state's construction industry. Rail can help during a time when the construction cycle is still in the midst of a projected seven- to eight-year downturn. The number of jobs that rail will bring can help "smooth out" the construction activity decline.

Most importantly, the legislative task force report stated:

“One overarching consensus was the need to support the Honolulu Rail Transit Project. While other plans for construction in both the public and private sectors will be helpful, no other project on the horizon has the same potential for generating jobs, assisting local business and contributing to Hawaii’s overall economy.”

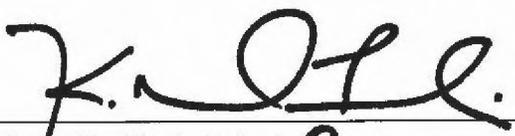
The construction task force report also stated that, “With commitments of federal funding, the rail project will also have the effect of monies from outside the State being infused into our economy.”

The FTA informed the city that if any decision is made to change the rail system from elevated to at-grade, the FTA would have to start the environmental review process again. Our rail project has gone through five years of extensive planning and environmental review. As the FTA stated, making changes to the project now would put it back to square one and possibly halt the project indefinitely.

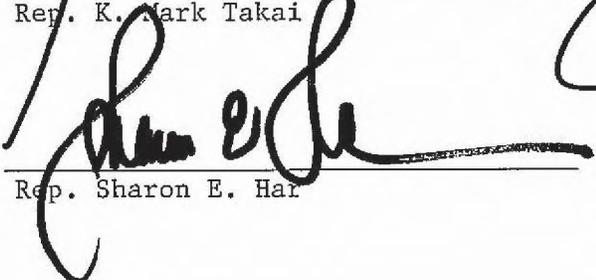
The bottom-line is that the FTA and the U.S. Department of Transportation see nothing at this point to stop Honolulu’s rail transit project from continuing to go forward and are committed to continue working with the city to help make rail transit a reality for Honolulu.

Ultimately, Oahu residents in November 2008 voted in support of the rail project. The people have spoken. There is no major construction project other than rail that is shovel-ready. The longer you delay Oahu’s and our state’s economic recovery, the longer you will leave our workers unemployed and struggling during this economic recession. We, the undersigned, therefore request that you act expeditiously in accepting the final Environmental Impact Statement once it is released by the Federal Transit Administration.

Sincerely,



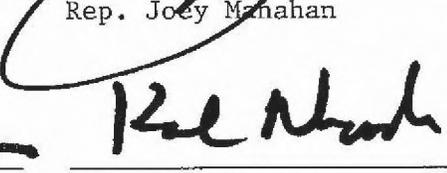
Rep. K. Mark Takai



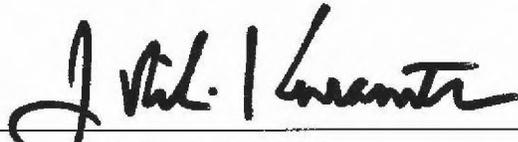
Rep. Sharon E. Har



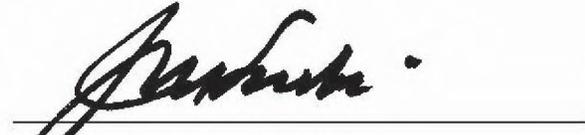
Rep. Joey Manahan



Rep. Karl Rhoads



Rep. Jon Riki Karamatsu



Rep. Joseph M. Souki



Rep. Karen Leinani Awana



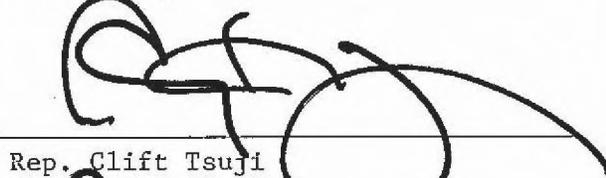
Rep. Henry J. C. Aquino



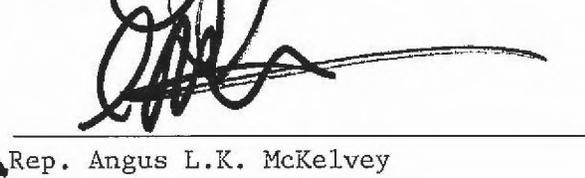
Rep. Faye J. Hanohano



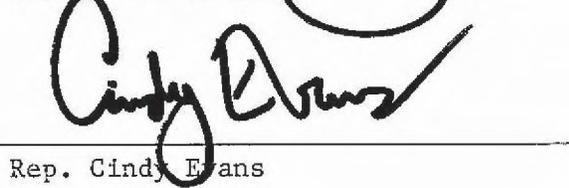
Rep. Glenn Wakai



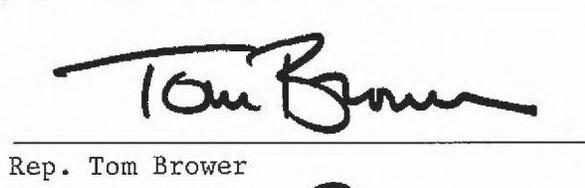
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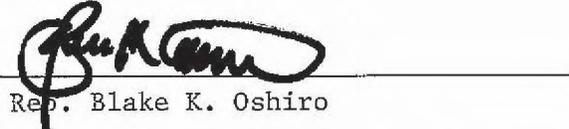
Rep. Angus L.K. McKelvey



Rep. Cindy Evans



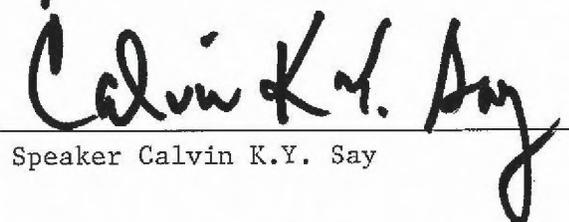
Rep. Tom Brower



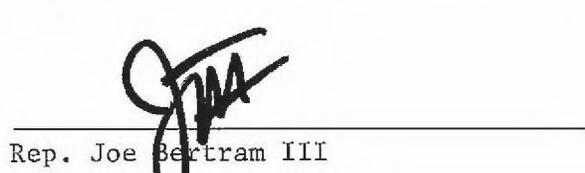
Rep. Blake K. Oshiro



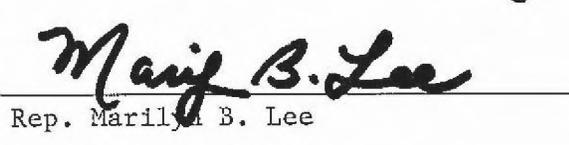
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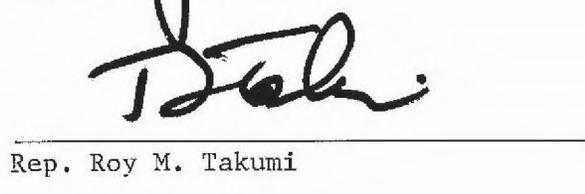
Speaker Calvin K.Y. Say



Rep. Joe Bertram III



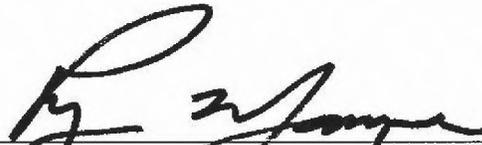
Rep. Marilyn B. Lee



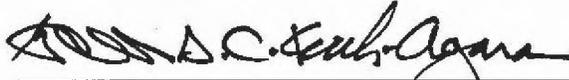
Rep. Roy M. Takumi



Rep. Pono Chong



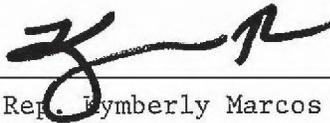
Rep. Ryan I. Yamate



Rep. Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran



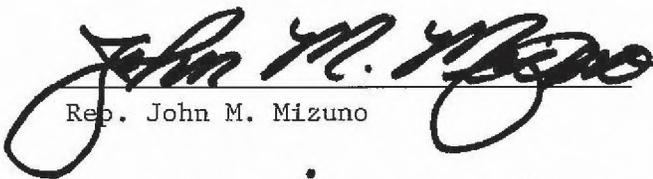
Rep. Ken Ito



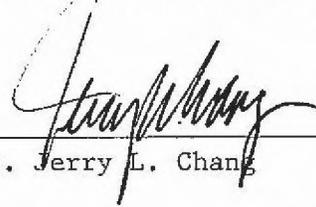
Rep. Kimberly Marcos Pine



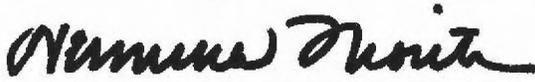
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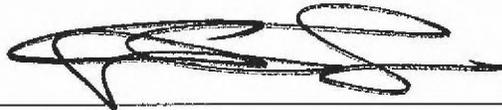
Rep. John M. Mizuno



Rep. Jerry L. Chang



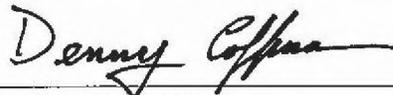
Rep. Hermina M. Morita



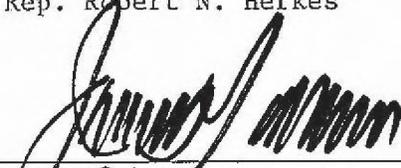
Rep. Sylvia Luke



Rep. Robert N. Herkes



Rep. Denny Coffman



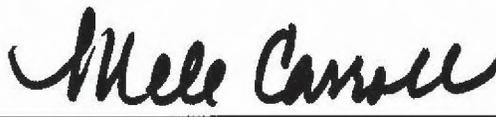
Rep. James Kunane Tokioka



Rep. Maile S.L. Shimabukuro



Rep. Roland D. Sagum III



Rep. Mele Carroll

Governor Linda Lingle

February 10, 2010

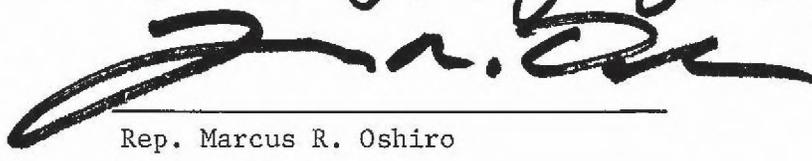
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Rep. Michael Y. Magaoay



Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita



Rep. Marcus R. Oshiro

Hawaii News Now

Mayor Hannemann talks rail

Posted: Feb 10, 2010 1:41 PM HST Wednesday, February 10, 2010 6:41 PM EST Updated: Feb 10, 2010 1:42 PM HST Wednesday, February 10, 2010 6:42 PM EST

By Jim Mendoza - [bio](#) | [email](#)

HONOLULU (HawaiiNewsNow) - Hundreds packed into the State Capitol auditorium to hear Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann give an update on the Rail Transit Project Hannemann called it the "best source of new jobs in the state and the best economic engine we have during this recession. "

Hannemann estimates rail construction would create 4,000 jobs in the first year and increase annually.

State Rep. K. Mark Takai told the audience that 39 representatives signed a letter to Gov. Linda Lingle urging her to expedite her review of the final Environmental Impact Statement when it reaches her desk.

The talk included a question-and-answer session.

The complete story tonight on Hawaii news Now.

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Midweek

February 10, 2010

Lingle is anti-rail

It's no surprise that Rick Hamada follows the Lingle-Aiona party line on Honolulu's Rail Transit Project.

The governor's record doesn't support Hamada's statement that she is pro-rail. Although the governor supported an elevated rail system and tax increase to pay for it in 2003, she quickly changed her position when her Republican colleagues pushed back on the idea.

How can she be pro-rail when she signed the "Stop Rail Now" petition? She even voted in the minority against the rail ballot measure in the 2008 election.

"Let the voters decide," she declared. And decide the voters did. Now, however, she seems to be interfering with the will of the people of Honolulu by overstepping her bounds.

The governor does have a role to play in the approval of the project as it relates to state environmental law. She does not need to revisit the financial plan, as that is the authority of the Federal Transit Administration. She does not need to provide a forum at taxpayer expense so that a self-interest group at this late date can put on a show about a debatable alternative to the plan already on the books and moving through the federal process.

The city has meticulously followed the environmental review process every step of the way. That's one reason the head of the FTA recently told reporters that it plans to sign a full funding grant agreement and invest \$1.5 billion in the Honolulu rail project. The FTA went so far as to include \$55 million in the Obama administration budget for the next fiscal year for Honolulu rail, the single largest sum for any city with a new project in its New Starts program.

The federal agency also stated that the city has demonstrated the technical, legal and financial capacity to implement the project.

The Lingle-Aiona administration decided that the Hawaii Superferry did not need to do an environmental impact statement. And because of that decision, the Superferry no longer sails our state's waters. The courts confirmed that, in fact, an EIS was required.

So it is fair for Mayor Hannemann to question Gov. Lingle's statements and motives. FTA administrator Peter Rogoff told reporters he found her recent involvement "perplexing."

If the governor truly is pro-rail, and that's debatable, she certainly has a funny way of showing it.

*Bill Brennan City & County of Honolulu
Spokesperson, Mayor's Office*

Letters to the Editor

For Wednesday, February 10, 2010

Best rail route would be above H-1 freeway

"We're lost but we're making good time." That's an old pilot's joke that perfectly describes today's transit proposal. It has the wrong compass heading and it will have to make a forced landing. Hidden agendas may have unconsciously driven its conception, possibly with preconceived ideas. The result is that it forgets the main goal: to solve the massive and growing car gridlock. It also cuts residential neighborhoods in half. No wonder the American Institute of Architects doesn't like it. It has the wrong route.

It should be built over the existing H-1 corridor. The best world-class structural engineers in Hawaii say it's very feasible. Built over H-1, it could easily accommodate a 20-foot-high elevated structure. Nobody's views would be hurt and no neighborhoods would be cut in half. No eminent domain issues—we own the 120-foot-wide right-of-way already. It is simply the best route.

Faint hearts have rejected this as not feasible. But trust the professionals: It is. Span the highway with pre-cast, pre-stressed structure. Work from the top while traffic still moves as usual on the ground. As soon as one mile is completed, it can immediately be used by traffic with ramps up and down every mile.

Rapid transit rail can ride on the elevated lanes as soon as the first 10 miles are complete. Built 10 lanes wide, there would be room for both cars and trains, with no conflicts. Photovoltaic panels on each side of the structure would face the wonderful Hawaiian sun to donate power to move electric trains, with valuable energy to spare.

It's not too late to alter our flight plan.

Art Hansen
Architect, AIA, Hawaii Kai

Letters to the Editor

For Wednesday, February 10, 2010

Let's at least design the rail correctly

I understand that commuting from the Leeward side into town has been getting worse every day. But is this rail system that the mayor is trying to shove down our throats the best way to fix the congestion? The federal government is giving Hawaii a tiny fraction of the money needed for the rail system. Where is the rest coming from—us? Yep!

I believe in a democratic state, so if the majority of voters says we should build this rail, then I concede. But shouldn't the work be done correctly? Starting the rail system in Kapolei makes no sense. I've asked rail representatives at one of the "Made in Hawaii" shows why they chose to start the rail in Kapolei. Their answer was that Kapolei is the planned "Second City" and commuters will need access to Kapolei. Does that make sense? Wouldn't it make sense that if you live in the Second City you would work in the Second City?

Wouldn't it make more sense to start the rail system at the airport? That way, when the city realizes that it doesn't have enough money to finish this ridiculous project, whatever has already been installed could still be used.

Last, what about our roads? How can we build or afford an elevated rail system when we can't even fix the Third-World-condition roads we drive on everyday?

Wyman Chang
Honolulu



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Most House members want Lingle to expedite review of rail EIS

By Star-Bulletin staff

POSTED: 11:32 a.m. HST, Feb 10, 2010

State House members are encouraging Gov. Linda Lingle to promptly review and accept the final Environmental Impact Statement for the Honolulu Rail Transit Project as soon as it is released.

"Gov. Lingle needs to move forward on this project without any additional meetings, studies or delays," said Rep. K. Mark Takai, D-Pearl City.

Lingle has said she plans a thorough review of the EIS and has questioned the planned financing for the project.

The letter, signed by 39 of the 51 House members, was delivered to the governor's office this morning.

"President Obama and the Federal Transit Administration have said that more than \$1.55 billion will be provided for the construction of Honolulu Rail Project," Takai continued. "We cannot afford to turn our backs on this federal support. This is our very last opportunity to make rail a reality for Honolulu."

Find this article at:

<http://www.starbulletin.com/news/breaking/84049132.html>

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Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

February 11, 2010

At last, some road relief for drivers on 'Ewa Plain

*By Will Hoover
Advertiser Staff Writer*

Today, following the opening of the North-South Road between Kapolei and 'Ewa, road-weary Honolulu-bound motorists from the 'Ewa plain will at long last experience something they haven't known before:

Route options.

Previously, the choice was limited to taking a congested Fort Weaver Road to H-1 Freeway. Now commuters can tool along a less-crowded Fort Weaver Road to the freeway. Or, they can skip Fort Weaver altogether and take Kapolei Parkway to either the freeway or Farrington Highway. "It's really a momentous event," said Tammy Mori, spokeswoman for the state Department of Transportation. "It is a road that we've been talking about for many, many years, and the community has been waiting for it for many, many years."

After more than four years of construction and \$155 million in costs, the three-phase project to build the North-South Road connecting Farrington Highway and Kapolei Parkway has been completed. Frustrated south 'Ewa drivers who have resorted to taking back roads west to Kapolei to get to H-1 and shave precious minutes off their commute time to the east now can luxuriate in simply taking a direct route to work.

"This is the big event," said Maeda Timson, chairwoman of the Kapolei/Ma kakilo/Honokai Hale Neighborhood Board. "I can't believe it's finally happening. It's been like, how many years?"

DOT director Brennon Morioka said the state expects the new thoroughfare to slash 10 minutes off the typically one-hour commute time for residents in the Kapolei region heading into town.

Equally important, it is expected to ease what has ranked among the island's worst congestion and improve traffic flow for drivers in the Kapolei, Makakilo and 'Ewa communities — one of the fastest-growing areas in the state.

"This road also represents the state's commitment to improving the quality of life for residents of West O'ahu," Morioka said. "We just completed the Fort Weaver widening project. Combined with the North-South Road, we have provided drivers with an additional six lanes going in and out of the 'Ewa region this year."

New Name on way

The opening of the road will be marked by a dedication ceremony at 10 a.m. today at the intersection of the new North-South Road and the future East-West Connector Road that will link North-South Road and Fort Weaver Road.

Not only will the new thoroughfare be unveiled, so will its real name.

"North-South Road was basically just a construction name ... once the road was ready to open, the true name would be unveiled at the ceremony," Mori said. "That's the exciting part."

The four-lane project was done in three phases beginning in 2005. The first phase, completed in 2007, was a 0.8-mile segment between Farrington Highway and Kapolei Parkway. Phase 2, completed last year, connected a new H-1 interchange to Farrington Highway.

Early this month, the city dedicated a 0.7-mile stretch of city-owned Kapolei Parkway, which would eventually allow motorists from 'Ewa to connect with North-South Road once it was completed.

The final state phase of the project was the completion this month of the 2.3-mile segment connecting Kapolei Parkway and Farrington Highway.

'It's all a positive'

The North-South Road is scheduled to officially open at 4 p.m. today, some six hours after the dedication ceremony. But even before the ceremony, area residents were singing praises to the road's potential for progress in the region.

Kurt Fevella, chairman of the 'Ewa Neighborhood Board, said connecting Kapolei Parkway to Farrington Highway and H-1 would not only be the beginning of better driving, but it will usher in other improvements to the area.

"The best part of all this

is going to come into play when we ... start getting our rail started. It's going to help people going to school at the University of Hawai'i-West O'ahu campus. We'll be able to go straight down Kapolei Parkway and utilize the facilities in the (proposed) new shopping mall."

Fevella said residents will now have easy access to the \$130 million Salvation Army Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center, which is expected to open in 2011 on 15 acres adjacent to the North-South and East-West road intersection.

"This is going to help our community in every avenue," he said. "For me there's no downside. It's all a positive."

Additional Facts

By the numbers

4

years of construction

\$155 million

cost of project

10

minutes saved on what has been a one-hour commute to Honolulu

February 11, 2010

Lingle urged to sign off on rail

Hannemann, 39 state lawmakers call for speedy approval of EIS

*By Sean Hao
Advertiser Staff Writer*

Mayor Mufi Hannemann and a majority of state representatives yesterday pressured Gov. Linda Lingle to expeditiously review and approve the environmental impact statement for the city's planned \$5.3 billion rail transit project.

The city has yet to give the document to Lingle. However, the mayor and 39 of 51 representatives expressed concern about the governor's intent to conduct a thorough review of the project's financial plan and to look into whether alternatives were adequately considered.

Hannemann, during a briefing on the project at the Capitol yesterday, urged a full auditorium to pressure Lingle to quickly review and approve the rail project's environmental impact statement once it's eventually delivered to her.

The 20-mile elevated commuter rail project is the only major "shovel ready" project in the state and will create 4,000 jobs this year, followed by 8,000 jobs next year, 11,000 in 2012 and 17,000 jobs in 2013, Hannemann said.

"Please let our governor know that this is something that we need to do now," Hannemann said. "I have not heard of an alternative project that will bring about the traffic relief or that will create the kind of jobs that we need now. Believe you me, it does not exist. This economy needs it now more than ever."

Yesterday's presentation included remarks from several pro-rail speakers, including Jennifer Goto-Sabas, Sen. Daniel K. Inouye's chief of staff; Don Horner, First Hawaiian Bank board chairman and Hawai'i Business Roundtable executive committee member; and Shaun Ushijima, American Institute of Architects member.

Separately yesterday, 39 state representatives signed a letter to Lingle urging her to promptly review and accept the final environmental impact statement for the rail project. The city needs Lingle's approval before it can proceed with construction of the train project.

The final version of that environmental study was expected to be given to Lingle in December, but has been delayed by an extended federal review. The city has provided Lingle a draft of the study.

Late last month, Lingle said she plans to conduct an independent analysis of the city tax revenue forecasts that are the basis of the project's financial plan. Such an independent review was urged by the Federal Transit Administration in a letter to the city late last year. Last week, however, the FTA downplayed those concerns and pledged \$1.55 billion to help pay for the train.

Lingle has said her decision to have the city's forecasts analyzed was prompted in part by lower-than-anticipated tax revenues, which are needed to pay the city's portion of the project's costs.

Lingle spokesman Russell Pang said yesterday that the governor still plans to conduct a thorough analysis of the project.

"As the governor has said, when she does receive it, she will conduct a thorough review, as required by law, to ensure the final (environmental impact statement) satisfactorily describes all impacts on the environment, economic and social welfare, and cultural practices; incorporates an objective review of opposing alternatives; and responds to each substantive comment received during the draft EIS review process," Pang said in a written statement.

"Her review will also include a complete analysis of the project's financial plan."

Additional Facts

pushing for a speedy decision

These are the 39 state representatives who signed a letter urging Gov. Linda Lingle to move quickly on an environmental report for the city's rail transit project:

Henry Aquino, Karen Awana, Joe Bertram III, Tom Brower, Rida Cabanilla, Mele Carroll, Jerry Chang, Pono Chong, Denny Coffman, Cindy Evans, Faye Hanohano, Sharon Har, Bob Herkes, Ken Ito, Jon Riki Karamatsu, Gil Keith-Agaran, Marilyn Lee, Sylvia Luke, Michael Magaoay, Joey Manahan, Angus McKelvey, John Mizuno, Hermina Morita, Mark Nakashima, Blake Oshiro, Marcus Oshiro, Kymberly Pine, Karl Rhoads, Roland Sagum III, Calvin Say, Maile Shimabukuro, Joe Souki, K. Mark Takai, Roy Takumi, James Tokioka, Clift Tsuji, Glenn Wakai, Ryan Yamane, Kyle Yamashita.

Mayor challenges Lingle on rail EIS

State House members join Hannemann in pushing the project in a forum at the Capitol

By [B.J. Reyes](#)

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Feb 11, 2010

Mayor Mufi Hannemann took his message across the street yesterday, staging a forum at the state Capitol to update the public on the status of the city's rail transit project and again urge Gov. Linda Lingle to expeditiously sign off on the project.

Hannemann's call was echoed by 39 of 51 members of the state House, who signed a letter to the governor requesting the same -- that she review and accept the project's final environmental impact statement in a timely manner.

"There's no reason, in our minds, the governor should hold this up anymore," said Rep. K. Mark Takai (D, Newtown-Pearl City), who led the effort. "This is too important an issue -- too important an opportunity -- to miss."

The letter was signed by 38 Democrats and one Republican, Rep. Kym Pine (Ewa Beach-Iroquois Point).

 Companies hope rail transit will create jobs



Light at the end of the unemployment tunnel, may come from rail.

[[Watch](#)]

Lingle did not immediately comment, nor did she attend Hannemann's forum.

Her office said the governor had not yet received the final EIS from the Federal Transit Administration.

"When she does receive it, she will conduct a thorough review, as required by law, to ensure the final EIS satisfactorily describes all impacts on the environment, economic and social welfare, and cultural practices; incorporates an objective review of opposing alternatives; and responds to each substantive comment received during the draft EIS review process," spokesman Russell Pang said in an e-mail. "Her review will also include a complete analysis of the project's financial plan."

Lingle held a forum last month at the Capitol auditorium featuring a Honolulu architects' group seeking to change the rail plan from an elevated route to one that includes both elevated and ground-level sections.

Lingle said later she felt the city's plan was based on risky financial assumptions and that she felt more study was needed before she could sign off on the final EIS.

Hannemann trotted out his own panel yesterday to rebut the governor's assertion that the rail's finances are suspect.

They included Don Horner of the Hawaii Business Roundtable and Jennifer Goto-Sabas, U.S. Sen. Dan Inouye's chief of staff, who warned against repeating mistakes of the past that cost the city huge sums of federal transit dollars.

"Make no mistake: If Honolulu blinks again, those dollars will evaporate," she said.

Hannemann said the project would create 4,000 jobs in 2010 alone and noted the Obama administration included \$55 million for the rail project in its current budget, with a total of \$1.55 billion promised from the FTA.

He cited comments from FTA Administrator Peter Rogoff stating that the money would not have been included in the president's budget if the agency lacked confidence in the project.

Hannemann said he brought his message to the Capitol because it was where Lingle, in 2005, said she wanted to work with the new city administration on a mass transit project for Honolulu.

"I took her up on it because this is where it all began," he said. "She can't forget that. That's part of her history.

"She's been a rail supporter in the past -- don't make this personal."



"There's no reason, in our minds, the governor should hold this up anymore."

K. Mark Takai
State representative

Find this article at:

http://www.starbulletin.com/news/20100211_mayor_challenges_Lingle_on_rail_eis.html

Students debate rail issues

Posted: Feb 12, 2010 6:07 PM
 Updated: Feb 12, 2010 7:10 PM

By Duane Shimogawa - [bio](#) | [email](#)

PEARL CITY (HawaiiNewsNow) - The Honolulu Rail Transit debate continues, but this time students weighed in.

Some say they liked the project, while other say it's just too expensive. On this Furlough Friday, hundreds of students still managed to get in some learning.

The subject was rail transit.

"I've just been hearing about it and I wanted to learn about advantages, disadvantages, pros and cons of it and it seems like a good idea," Kapolei High School senior Aryanne Curcio said.

Another student already knew the issue like the back of her hand.

"I actually wrote a paper on it in English, I wrote about why people don't like it, so I wanted to come here today to learn why it's good, 'cuz I only knew why it was bad," Kapolei High School senior Jo-Ann Payongayong said.

Even though the \$5.5-billion project is moving ahead, some students still don't think it's the answer to Honolulu's traffic headaches.

"We've come up with our own solutions, many different things, many different transportation options that won't be a drain on the economy, will address certain issues," Leeward Community College student Zuri Aki said.

Students like Aki and Kaimana Namihira held a booth opposing rail.

"I highly suggest an investigation into bus routes, look into that, look at different forms of transportation, not just rail that would cost \$5.5-billion at the least," Namihira said.

Top anti-rail advocates like Panos Prevedourous agree with Mayor Mufi Hannemann's idea of educating students at Friday's Youth Rail Summit, but he feels the mayor left out one big issue of how much of a burden it'll make on student's wallets.

"As an engineer, I want to build a system that's affordable now and for the future generations, with respect for the land and for our project because we too have to survive, so our children survive and have a good lifestyle," Prevedourous said.

City and County of Honolulu officials say it's time to move on and focus on the future.

"This rail system, we're going to be building over the next 10 years is really going to benefit them, by then they'll be working or have families, but it's also about their children and grandchildren," Honolulu managing director Kirk Caldwell said.

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Aryanne Curcio



Jo-Ann Payongayong



Zuri Aki



Kaimana Namihira



Panos Prevedourous

20 Piece Bucket of Chicken for \$19.99 Tuesdays Only! Proud to support KHNL NBC's local broadcast of the Vancouver Olympic Winter Games



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Students Take Furlough Friday to Learn About Rail

Reported by: Gina Mangieri
Email: gmangieri@khon2.com

Last Update: 2/12 6:18 pm

Honolulu's rail project moved toward a younger audience today, as high school and college students learned more about the pro's and con's.

This isn't your average furlough Friday party.

It's the mayor's youth summit at Leeward Community College to bring the younger generations up to speed on the city's 5.3 billion dollar rail project.

"On a furlough Friday, they could be home sleeping, you know how teenagers are, or they could be at a beach or a shopping mall. They came here to learn about rail," said city managing director, Kirk Caldwell.

Learning included seminars, a look at poster contest entries, and even a virtual ride on the rails.



"I travel into town a lot for my volunteer work at Queens, so sometimes I get stuck in traffic 4 and it's not really good so I would like to ride the rail a lot," said Kapolei High School senior, Frances Munoz.

But critics of the elevated train made a showing as a group called D-rail

"We'd really like to get our voices out there, let them know the facts, let them know that there are people who are resisting Mufi's proposed rail," said Leeward Community College student, Zuri Aki. "It's part of our belief that rail will not really address this traffic issue."

"This is outstanding, these folks organizing themselves by themselves, they came to my office for information, I was very willing to tell them my side of the story of course which is I believe that the rail is not going to be a solution for congestion," said Panos Prevedouros who intends to run for mayor of Honolulu.

In all, about 250 kids from 25 schools attended and even the opponents were able to find at least something in common with the proponents at a free concert emceed by Augie T.

"I think the kids here, they understand a lot of things, and this is a great way to get them informed and educated about rail so 20 years from now they don't have to be me, all salty, driving in traffic," said Augie T.

Pacific Business News (Honolulu) - February 15, 2010
[/pacific/stories/2010/02/15/story3.html?b=1266210000%5E2881871](#)

PACIFIC BUSINESS NEWS

Friday, February 12, 2010

Construction incentives aim to get people back to work

Pacific Business News (Honolulu) - by [Janis L. Magin](#) Pacific Business News

A package of bills before the state Legislature has the potential to generate hundreds of millions of dollars in construction spending and millions of dollars in tax revenue, but the proposals have made little traction with lawmakers so far.

The measures came out of the recommendations from the state Construction Industry Task Force, which the Legislature created last year to figure out ways to jump-start the state's stalled construction industry and get thousands of skilled and unskilled laborers off the unemployment rolls.

"What we need to do is find ways to put people to work, because that's what's driving a good portion of the downturn," said task force member Harry Saunders, president of **Castle & Cooke Homes Hawaii**. "If you look at the last recession, one of the things that helped bring us out of it was the increase in construction."

The task force was comprised of more than a dozen business and labor leaders appointed by House Speaker Calvin Say and Senate President Colleen Hanabusa. It also included **Grove Farm** President and CEO and **Maui Land & Pineapple** Chairman and interim CEO Warren Haruki, developers Stanford Carr and Jeff Stone and **First Hawaiian Bank** Chairman and CEO Don Horner.

After meeting several times through the fall, the group presented its findings and recommendations last month to Say and Hanabusa, who each sponsored 10 bills aimed at making it easier and less costly for builders and developers to move ahead with projects.

Two bills were passed by committees and two were awaiting decisions as of PBN's press time Wednesday, but six had not had a hearing scheduled or have been deferred in committee. The Legislature has a Feb. 26 deadline to get bills through the hearing process.

The task force's top issue, however, did not generate any legislation — supporting the Honolulu rail transit project. The largest project in the state, it has the potential to generate 10,000 jobs over many, many years, said Haruki, the group's chairman.

The other findings resulted in the proposed bills, which could have a more immediate impact on the industry by providing tax incentives, by making it easier and more attractive to build affordable housing and by streamlining the state and county government processes, such as permitting, that can add to the cost of projects.

"In the government sector, a lot of it dealt with timing," Haruki said. "We felt that many developments, many construction projects, are bogged down months, if not years, because of government reviews."

The bills that address government include placing time limits on the permit and procurement processes, allowing third-party review in the permitting process and exempting state airport and highway projects from the county review process.

Another bill would reduce county affordable or work-force housing percentages for four years by 40 percent. County affordable-housing requirements — the percentage of affordable units a developer is required to provide as part of a project — vary from 30 percent to 50 percent depending on the county.

As the percentage of work-force housing has increased, builders have had to profit from a smaller share of market-priced homes. The result in the past few years has been a significant reduction in new-home construction, both market-priced and affordable, Haruki told the House committees on **Housing and Water, Land & Ocean Resources**.

Another incentive would create a tax credit of up to \$6,000 for buyers of new residential construction, which would pick up where the federal first-time homebuyer tax credit leaves off when it expires on June 30.

"We've seen other states put it in and it's really helped," said Saunders, whose own firm is currently constructing several affordable-housing projects in Kapolei in partnership with the **Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corp.** but has put on hold a 700-unit market-priced subdivision on the Big Island because of the economy. "It's basically revenue neutral."

The largest tax incentive on the table is a 10 percent refundable tax credit for hotel and resort construction and renovations until Dec. 31, 2015. It could help stalled or planned projects worth hundreds of millions of dollars get off the ground and generate millions in income, general excise and transient accommodation taxes. It also could help developers secure financing by lowering the projects' costs.

"That sector will generate the biggest multiplier effect on the economy," said task force member Ray Kamikawa, a tax attorney who headed the committee that came up with the tax incentives. "You have the added multiplier when you target construction activity in the tourism sector because that attracts ongoing revenue in the tourism operations, bringing tourists in — that has a greater multiplier effect."



The state previously had in place a 4 percent tax credit for hotel construction and renovation, which was bumped up to 10 percent after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. It expired in 2003.

The new proposal, however, has competition from two similar bills, including one proposed by Gov. Linda Lingle's administration, which would cap the credit at \$50 million per year and would sunset on Dec. 31, 2012.

Status of task force legislation

The Legislature is considering 10 proposals by the state Construction Industry Task Force to stimulate Hawaii's construction industry and create jobs. During the task force's meetings last fall, the two overarching issues were making government processes such as permitting go more quickly and creating tax incentives to help ease the costs of projects going forward. All of the bills have been introduced in both the House and the Senate.

Here are the bills at a glance and their status as of PBN's press time Wednesday:

TAX INCENTIVES

• House Bill 2432 / Senate Bill 2630

Would amend the definition of an eligible business activity under the state enterprise zones law and increase the number of areas in each county that may be designated as an enterprise zone.

Status: No hearings scheduled for either bill

• House Bill 2439 / Senate Bill 2637

Would create a 10 percent refundable tax credit for construction or renovation costs incurred on a qualified hotel facility before Dec. 31, 2015.

Status: House bill heard this week by committees on Tourism, Culture & International Affairs and Economic Revitalization, Business & Military Affairs. No hearing scheduled for Senate bill.

• House Bill 2440 / Senate Bill 2638

Would establish a refundable residential housing income tax credit of up to \$6,000 for qualified taxpayers that purchase a new-construction principal residence on or after April 1, 2010, and before Jan. 1, 2012, that is payable to the qualified taxpayer in two equal installments over the immediately following two taxable years.

Status: No hearings scheduled.

SPEEDING GOVERNMENT PROCESS

• House Bill 2433 / Senate Bill 2631

Would exempt from county approval state Department of Transportation development and construction of highways and airports.

Status: House bill passed second reading, then deferred. No hearing scheduled for Senate bill.

• House Bill 2434 / Senate Bill 2632

Would establish a maximum time period that an application for permit, license or approval shall be deemed granted if not acted upon by the designated agency; authorizes each county to contract with a third-party reviewer to streamline the processing of applications; clarifies that previously approved projects that do not impact historic properties are not subject to subsequent reviews by the state Historic Preservation Division.

Status: House bill passed Committee on Economic Revitalization, Business & Military Affairs unamended; no hearing scheduled for Senate bill.

• House Bill 2435 / Senate Bill 2633

Would grant temporary relief from county housing requirements to stimulate housing construction statewide.

Status: House bill passed committees on Housing and Water, Land & Ocean Resources; Senate bill heard by Committee on Education and Housing this week.

• House Bill 2438 / Senate Bill 2636

Would clarify requirements for adequate public notice of an invitation for bids and request for proposals.

Status: House bill deferred; no hearing scheduled for Senate bill.

• House Bill 2441 / Senate Bill 2639

Would require contracts awarded to projects of the departments of Hawaiian Home Lands and Transportation; county boards of water supply; and county departments of housing, planning and permitting, and transportation to be awarded within 30 days of the bid opening date.

Status: House bill scheduled to be heard by Committee on Economic Revitalization, Business & Military Affairs this week; no hearing scheduled for Senate bill.

• House Bill 2442 / Senate Bill 2640

Would establish a program for granting low-income housing tax credit loans in lieu of low-income housing tax credits administered by the Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corp., and would authorize issuance of general obligation bonds to fund loans.

Status: No hearings scheduled.

• House Bill 2443 / Senate Bill 2641

Would impose a 60-day period in which to certify contracts after award of contract of procurement.

Status: House bill deferred; no hearing scheduled for Senate bill.

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4 members of Council plan D.C. trip for rail study

By [B.J. Reyes](#)

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Feb 12, 2010

The City Council's Transportation Committee has approved the use of up to \$8,000 in city transit funds to pay for four Council members to visit Washington, D.C., next month on a fact-finding mission on Honolulu's rail transit project.

Council Members Todd Apo, Ikaika Anderson, Romy Cachola and Ann Kobayashi plan to travel March 6-10 to meet with officials from the Federal Transit Administration.

The trip comes after Apo and Anderson say Gov. Linda Lingle denied their request to accompany her when she travels to Washington for a similar update with FTA Administrator Peter Rogoff. The Governor's Office said the Council members should have asked to be included in Mayor Mufi Hannemann's meetings with FTA officials in January.

Council members say they want answers because of conflicting statements by the political leaders over federal backing of the \$5.5 billion rail project.

Lingle says federal officials are wary of the financial plan for Oahu's proposed rail system, while Mayor Mufi Hannemann says it is on track.

"This is a very, very important endeavor, and I think it's one that needs to take place," Anderson said. "This expenditure will prove to be very well spent."

Resolution 10-37 advanced by the Transportation Committee approves the use of funds from \$50,000 set aside in the Council's budget for hiring a transit analyst. Each Council member would be limited to \$2,000 for airfare, meals, transportation and up to two nights of hotel accommodations.

Councilman Charles Djou objected to the use of using city transit funds for what he called a "junket to D.C."

"Any member of this Council can go up and investigate what's going on with this rail project on their own," Djou said, adding that members should instead use funds from the \$16,000 budgeted to each for miscellaneous expenses.

Cachola took issue with Djou's characterization of the trip.

"Our trip is not a junket," he said. "I want to hear from FTA how we can possibly do it without further burdening our taxpayers."

The resolution still must be approved by the full Council, likely at its Feb. 24 meeting.

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HAWAII'S **Complete** SOURCE

OPINION

Posted on: Friday, February 12, 2010

Oahu needs rail — for jobs, for family and for economy

Idea first proposed almost 40 years ago; this may be last try

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By Bob Nakata

Many of us have become concerned that the Honolulu rail project is grinding to a halt.

It is worth remembering why many of us wanted rail in the first place. It has been almost 40 years since rail was first proposed — a political lifetime. In the early 1970s, some of us tried to transfer H-3 funds into mass transit. Over those years, our island has gone through an inexorable sprawling pattern to development.

In recent years, we have found ourselves increasingly fighting defensive battles like the efforts to save Kukui Gardens or preserve Kawela Bay.

It seems like people of my generation are looking in a rear-view mirror at an ever-receding local style of the good life. So much of the work of our public life these days is spent trying to hold on to this or that remnant of that lost good life. The rail project is one of the few things that show real promise for being more than a defensive struggle, of being more than a nostalgic effort.

Most people can agree that the public process simply hasn't been handled as smoothly as it might have been, and the result is that what's at stake gets lost in favor of arguments about this fund or that tax, or even this or that individual politician or contractor.

Building the public will on this was left out of Mayor Mufi Hanneman's planning, for better or worse. But that argument can await another day. What is important now is that we all remember why the rail is so important.

First, rail — and mass transit in general — tends to limit sprawl. It does this by channeling and attracting capital investment to areas near the stops. City planners have known this for decades, and Portland or San Francisco are great examples.

On an island like ours this is of enormous benefit because it will channel the investment driving real estate development back into the city, and away from the shrinking pristine places like the North Shore.

Second, it is the biggest redevelopment project in Honolulu's recent history. As such it will help to

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recast neighborhoods and gives us a chance to tackle our deep affordable housing crisis. Transit-oriented development and transit villages have the potential to solve many of O'ahu's longstanding housing problems.

Third, for many of us it is the best public jobs program in our lifetime. No one can argue that we remain in a deep recession with many families out of work and struggling to make ends meet.

Rail puts people back to work, and that's what you are supposed to do in a recession. Even archconservative Milton Friedman admitted that transit was an appropriate place for government spending. Arguments against the rail on the grounds that it raised taxes, or is a giveaway to unions are troglodyte economics. We need to be smarter than that about our future.

Finally, and perhaps most important, it will make for a more livable city. This is a vital truth too often left out of the discussion; for families living from Pearl City on, the traffic has an enormous corrosive effect on their lives.

The extra hours lost each week is time stolen from families who live in 'Ewa and Leeward O'ahu.

People my age have waited a long time for an opportunity to get the kind of transit system that truly great cities have. If we miss the chance this time, we might never get another.

We will never again have the kind of political power in Washington, D.C., to bring the federal dollars that are needed to fund and operate one system. I hope we can put aside the momentary politics and move forward quickly.

Bob Nakata is president of Faith Action for Community Equity in Honolulu.

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EDITORIAL

Pressure on Gov. Lingle to OK rail is premature

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Feb 13, 2010

State legislators and Mayor Mufi Hannemann are urging Gov. Linda Lingle to act with speed in giving her needed approval of the environmental impact statement on the city's planned rail transit, even though the final version of document has not yet reached her desk. The governor should ignore the pleas and provide an objective assessment of the project after she receives it.

The rail transit between Ala Moana and Kapolei is similar to the elevated rail system Lingle proposed in 2003 along with an elevated two-lane Nimitz Highway "fly-over," so the governor's aesthetic preference now for a ground-level rail line lacks substance. Architects disagree about the line's appearance.

Lingle has indicated her evaluation instead will focus on the project's "financial viability," although she has issued a written statement that she also will review the project's environmental, economic, social welfare and cultural effects, along with "opposing alternatives."

Thirty-nine of the 51 members of the state House signed a letter to Lingle this week requesting that she promptly review and accept the environmental appraisal.

"There's no reason, in our minds, the governor should hold this up anymore," said Rep. K. Mark Takai (D, Newtown-Pearl City).

We question whether Lingle has held up the project at all. The city has yet to receive the final statement and cannot begin its review until completion of the ongoing review by the Federal Transit Administration.

Lingle has based her skepticism about the project's finances on an October memorandum by the FTA's regional office about "financial issues" that could put the project "at risk." However, Peter Rogoff, the agency's administrator, indicated this month that such cautions are commonplace and the FTA would not have made a commitment of \$55 million for the Honolulu project "if we thought it was falling off the rails."

The Lingle administration has received a draft of the environmental statement and, according to Rogoff, at least 13 state agencies have participated with input. It is not as if the state's review of the final statement will begin from scratch.

Determining the project's financial viability may be difficult if not impossible in today's economy. While revenue from the state's general excise tax surcharge has been lower than expected, the recession has resulted in lower-than-expected contract bids for work on the transit project.

Lingle's clock to complete her analysis of the project will begin running when she receives the final environmental statement. Politicians blowing the whistle on the governor before then are overly impulsive -- and baffling.

Find this article at:

http://www.starbulletin.com/editorials/20100213_pressure_on_gov_lingle_to_ok_rail_is_premature.html

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Letters to the Editor

For Saturday, February 13, 2010

Gov. Lingle right to scrutinize rail

To paraphrase: Never have so many paid so much to enrich so few.

It was courageous of Gov. Linda Lingle to say the obvious about the "shaky" rail finances, but it will take one final act of courage for her to save the people one last time before she leaves office. She should reject the rail proposal any way she can.

It makes no sense to tax billions out of Hawaii employers and working people through the rail tax -- thereby killing jobs -- and then calling the rail an economic stimulus package. For example, if you tax hundreds of millions of tax dollars out of Hawaii's people to build rail, you are not going to have that money to pay teachers to end Furlough Fridays. But of course, in 20 years you then could have your undereducated kids ride rail to the unemployment line.

Instead of rail, why not two urban job centers: the one we already call "downtown" and one on the Leeward coast (probably in Kapolei)? This proposal beats rail in almost all aspects and is actually common sense. Instead of moving the ever-increasing thousands of people twice a day between the Leeward coast and downtown, move and create jobs where the people already are and are moving to.

Leighton Loo
Mililani

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Posted on: Sunday, February 14, 2010

Council panel OKs trip that uses transit funds

4 members plan to meet with FTA officials in March

By **Sean Hao**
Advertiser Staff Writer

The Honolulu City Council's Transportation Committee voted 4-1 last week to spend \$8,000 to send four members to Washington, D.C., next month to discuss transit issues with federal officials.

The money was raised via a transit tax surcharge aimed at paying for the \$5.3 billion elevated commuter train running from East Kapolei to Ala Moana. The \$8,000 is coming out of \$50,000 already set aside by the council to hire a transit analyst. The council no longer expects to fill that job.

Instead, a portion of that money will be used to send council members Todd Apo, Romy Cachola, Nestor Garcia and Ann Kobayashi to the nation's capital to discuss transit matters with the Federal Transit Administration.

Cachola, Garcia, Rod Tam and Gary Okino voted for the measure and Charles Djou voted against.

Djou argued that council members should pay for such a trip out of their office budgets rather than with transit money.

"It is incredibly ironic that when we're having discussions worrying about whether or not there's sufficient funding for the rail-transit project that you're going to take monies from this project to go on this junket to D.C.," Djou said during Wednesday's hearing.

Separately, the committee voted to put the four members traveling to Washington into a so-called permitted interaction group. That allows the members to meet outside of a council meeting without violating the state Sunshine Law.

Both resolutions still need full council approval.

Council member Cachola denied that the March trip is a junket.

"The reason why I accepted the appointment to go there is because of my concern about the shortage of the amount of money to fund it and I want to hear from FTA how we can possibly do it without further burdening our taxpayers, not just now but in the future," Cachola said.

Reach Sean Hao at shao@honoluluadvertiser.com

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Posted on: Sunday, February 14, 2010

DOT will get \$5.7M for new off-ramp

Advertiser Staff

The state Department of Transportation will get \$5.7 million to help pay for a new Kína'u Street off-ramp on H-1 Freeway near Lusitania Street, U.S. Sens. Daniel K. Inouye and Daniel Akaka announced yesterday.

The new off-ramp is intended to provide motorists more direct access to Lusitania Street in the direction of The Queen's Medical Center. The project has been awarded to a contractor and is in the final permitting process.

Maui facing \$13.9M deficit, mayor says

WAILUKU, Maui — Maui County is facing a \$13.9 million budget shortfall this year, according to a letter sent by Mayor Charmaine Tavares to the Maui County Council on Thursday.

For months, finance officials have been warning that the county could face a decline in revenues by \$50 million or more in the 2011 fiscal year, but Tavares said it appears that the economic downturn has struck county finances sooner than anticipated, The Maui News reported.

Tavares said the administration "has already undertaken steps to curtail expenditures and expenses."

Tavares' warning came on top of other bad news for the county budget.

County Finance Director Kalbert Young said Friday that property tax assessments for the 2011 fiscal year look like they will be worse than forecast.

Young now predicts valuations will decline by 13 percent, with additional declines forecast for

2012 and 2013.

That means property tax revenues will be cut by the same amount, unless the county increases rates to compensate, he said.

E-waste recycling takes hit on Big Isle

HILO, Hawai'i — E-waste recycling centers on the Big Island are no longer accepting old computers, TVs, microwaves and printers.

Hawai'i County's agreement with a recycling contractor expired Dec. 31, and government officials are looking for money to pay for a new contract extension.

The county spent \$320,000 last year subsidizing residential e-waste recycling.

The contractor, Recycle Hawaii, stopped accepting e-waste last week because its warehouses are full and it can't afford to ship the excess to the Mainland.

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Posted on: Monday, February 15, 2010

Cheaper gas, fewer jobs reduce Hawaii's public transit ridership

Honolulu's decline in last half of '09 better than national average

By **Sean Hao**
Advertiser Staff Writer

Rising unemployment and gasoline prices below \$4 a gallon are taking a toll on public transit ridership in Honolulu and nationally.

From July to September, bus and heavy-rail ridership nationwide fell nearly 8 percent and 4 percent respectively, according to the American Public Transit Association. In Honolulu, the number of riders on TheBus was down about 2 percent since July, according to the agency that operates the system.

The popularity of public transit increased in the summer and fall of 2008 when gasoline prices locally and nationally soared above \$4 a gallon. At the time, the question was whether increased mass-transit ridership signaled a new era when a significant number of residents shift from driving alone to work to riding a bus or train.

Ridership declines suggest that may not be occurring .

Roger Morton, president and chief executive of Oahu Transit Services, which operates TheBus, said bus ridership dipped slightly in the last half of 2009.

Factors that could be contributing to lower bus ridership include a drop in gasoline prices,

increased unemployment and a 25-cent fare increase on July 1 to \$2.25. TheBus fares are scheduled to rise another 25 cents this July.

Morton said he's encouraged that ridership declines haven't been worse.

"Our ridership numbers are down a little bit, like in the 2 percent range or something, less than the national" figures, he said. "Most people who ride a bus --- 60 percent of our ridership --- are people that are going to work. So obviously if there aren't as many people in Waikiki working in hotels, if there aren't as many people visiting because arrivals are down, if we raise fares, I think all of those things would be contributing factors."

Overall, Honolulu has had relatively high bus ridership. In 2008, 5.6 percent of Hawai'i commuters used public transportation, while 66.8 percent drove to work alone, according to U. S. Census Bureau figures. Nationally, 4.9 percent of commuters used public transportation while 75.8 percent drove to work alone.

However, Honolulu's ridership has not kept pace with population increases.

Founded in 1971, TheBus experienced robust growth during the 1970s oil crunch. Ridership growth tapered off in the 1980s and peaked in 1994 with 77.3 million annual passengers,

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according to the Hawai'i Data Book.

Reach Sean Hao at shao@honoluluadvertiser.com

Honolulu's planned rail line from East Kapolei to Ala Moana is expected to boost public transit use by about 1 percentage point by offering faster, more reliable service than buses.

...

On the Mainland, commuter rail lines have experienced ridership declines in recent months, according to the American Public Transit Association.

Among recently opened train systems, ridership on the Charlotte, N.C., light-rail system dipped 2.5 percent through September while light-rail ridership in Salt Lake City fell nearly 7 percent. Light rail in Charlotte and Phoenix are still outstripping initial forecasts.

Honolulu Transportation Director Wayne Yoshioka said city officials aren't concerned about declining public transit nationwide .

"We don't care what the Mainland is doing," he said. "The point is that we have extremely high transit ridership on a per-capita basis. We're worrying about what we're doing here, not what the Mainland is doing in terms of transit ridership."

Panos Prevedouros, a University of Hawai'i transportation engineering professor who is at the forefront of opposition to Honolulu's rail project, said recent declines in public transit ridership are part of a predictable pattern where ridership spikes following fuel price increases, only to fall back when prices decline.

"The ridership decline is significant (because) they have so many factors going for them with the energy prices and even the decrease in income due to unemployment, and apparently, they (commuters) don't stick" with public transit, Prevedouros said. "Time and again we notice in the oil crisis and all, there is a little uptick (in ridership), Congress rushes to support mass transit systems, and essentially the (ridership) bubble disappears ."

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Posted on: Monday, February 15, 2010

Pedestrian plan advances safety goals

The weather here makes it easy for people to get around on foot, but almost everything else conspires against it.

Patchy networks of sidewalks and unlit crosswalks fail to inspire confidence that walking along any roadside is safe. Sadly, the state's dismal record of fatalities confirms that fear.

Last year's enactment of the Complete Streets set of standards led to better planning for new developments, to include more bikeways and walkways.

But safety in established communities lags far behind. The fact that a Kailua woman took it upon herself to place pedestrian safety flags by dangerous crosswalks on the Pali Highway shows how little residents trust that government has a handle on the problem. That's why the Department of Transportation's launch of a pedestrian master plan is an important, though belated, step toward creating a more walkable state.

Correcting safety shortcomings on state roads will be the focus of this plan. Identifying places where improvements are most needed can help push projects that retrofit roadways for safety more quickly. But coordination with counties also should be a goal. For example, the year's first pedestrian fatality occurred on the Pali Highway, a state road, but there are city fixes that could begin sooner.

For example, the city should review its bus stops here and in other hazardous areas where pedestrians often cross the highway unsafely to

catch a bus. Officials should relocate stops that are too distant from lighted, signalled intersections.

The Honolulu Police Department has begun cracking down on enforcement at crosswalks around O'ahu, citing inattentive drivers who failed to observe state law. Attention also should be turned to careless pedestrians, who own part of the problem, too.

The state has invited people who want to shape the pedestrian plan to sign up for an advisory committee by March 1. See <http://tinyurl.com/pedestrianplan> for details.

Hawaii's population has doubled since statehood, but provisions for people to walk safely through urban hazards haven't kept pace. It should be a pleasure to walk here, not a risk, and this is our chance to push for needed changes.

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Posted on: Monday, February 15, 2010

Rail inevitably will become financial burden

Cost overruns on both construction and operations are big risk

By Cliff Slater

The city's rail project is not merely the largest public works project in Hawai'i. It will be the fourth most expensive of any post-1950 metro area rail system in the nation, exceeded only by Washington, San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Since we would also be the most lightly populated metro area in the country with rail transit, our rail cost per capita would be far higher than any other metro area. That is why our taxpayers are at far greater financial risk than taxpayers elsewhere.

Further, excluding only the New York's metro area, which carries 61 percent of all rail transit in the U.S., the projected federal contribution to our rail project is the highest of any of the 24 projects on the Federal Transit Administration's project list.

What are our risks?

First is the probability of construction cost overruns: We are told that \$5.35 billion is the final environmental impact statement projection of cost, including contingencies. According to the FTA's own surveys, the average cost overrun between the final EIS projection and the final built cost for heavy and light rail lines averages 18 percent. If the Honolulu project was 18 percent over projection, that would amount to just under \$1 billion, if double that, just under \$2 billion.

Second is the potential for operating cost overruns and its effect on the city budget. The FTA wrote last week that, "Assumptions regarding state operating subsidies and growth in rail unit operating costs and bus and paratransit operating costs are optimistic compared to historical experience."

One is reminded that Mayor Frank Fasi, at the time he socialized our bus system, promised that it would continue to run at a profit. Its subsidy this year will total about \$127 million.

Third, general excise tax revenue shortfalls should be expected. The FTA wrote last week that, "Assumptions regarding growth in GE [Tax] revenues and Section 5309 bus discretionary funds are optimistic compared to historical experience. Financing costs appear to be understated."

Fourth, the city plans on using \$300 million to build the rail line using federal funds originally anticipated for buses. It means that to keep the bus system intact, future mayors will have to hit the city's general fund.

Fifth, federal funding may be less than the \$1.55 billion projected. Outside of the New York metro area, no one is getting even \$1 billion even though they all have much larger populations than we do.

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Overall, this week's FTA release said, "The financial plan shows the city has little ability to address funding shortfalls or cost increases ... The GE [Tax] surcharge revenues that will be applied to project-related debt service provide very slim coverage."

A real fiscal danger is that the city will apply for, and get, permission to build the first rail segment from East Kapolei to Waipahu using only city funds before actually receiving any federal funds. If that happens we will start construction before knowing the final amount the government will pay.

If we then get halfway through the project and significant cost overruns and tax revenue shortfalls occur, then the city will have to turn to the state to help. The state will have no choice since, if the full project is not completed, the city must return all federal funds it has received.

In short, the rail project could turn into a total financial nightmare. Gov. Linda Lingle will not want to visit this on the next governor, if only to avoid such a stain on her legacy.

Cliff Slater is chairman of <http://www.Honolulutraffic.com>, a group that opposes the Honolulu rail project.

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Posted on: Monday, February 15, 2010

Letters to the Editor

Transit EIS

Do Democrats want Lingle to read EIS?

Let me see if I have this correct 39 state legislators want the governor (whenever she receives the final environmental impact statement) to take the large document for Honolulu rail and sign off "quickly."

Does that mean that the governor should not read the document? Since all Democrats signed the request for "speed," maybe this illustrates that our local Democratic legislators want to match the national Democrats by voting or getting approval of bills without reading them.

Paul E. Smith
Honolulu

Posted on: Monday, February 15, 2010

Letters to the Editor

Transit EIS

Review should not be done in haste

I am shocked at the 39 state representatives who have signed a letter asking Gov. Lingle to rubber-stamp the city's still-uncompleted EIS for rail transit.

Surely these state officials must understand that the largest public works project in the history of Hawai'i — which will cost each taxpayer more than \$4,500 and will be the most expensive rail system per capita in the United States — should receive careful and thoughtful review.

Perhaps they think she should act with the same reckless abandon as they did when they passed the 12 percent increase to the general excise tax that has taken away more than half a billion dollars in economic activity to build the yet-to-be-approved rail-transit system.

Have they not gotten the news that the state government is facing a \$1.2 billion deficit and the money going to rail could go to restoring state services instead of to out-of-state construction firms and engineers?

The lone Republican to sign the letter, Rep. Kym Pine, is surely out of touch with her district and the governor. Fortunately the governor will not be bullied by either the state representatives or the mayor, and will continue her review of the EIS.

*Pam Smith
'Ewa Beach*

Letters to the Editor

For Monday, February 15, 2010

Speed reading on rail wrong

Let me see if I have this correct: Thirty-nine state House legislators want the governor, whenever she receives it, to take the large final environmental impact study document for Honolulu rail and sign off "quickly."

Does that mean that the governor should not read the document? Since the Democrats signed the request for "speed," maybe this illustrates that our local Democratic legislators want to match the national Democrats by voting or getting approval of bills without reading them.

Paul E. Smith
Honolulu



ISLAND COMMENTARY

Rail route, agenda scrutinized

By Kioni Dudley, Ph.D.

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Feb 15, 2010

If you think the reason for building the rail is to solve the traffic problems on the West side, think again.

The train starts in what is now wide open land planned for a future huge shopping center and hotel. There will be 900 stalls for rail commuters.

The second stop is also in open fields where University of Hawaii-West Oahu will rise. Just blocks from the freeway, it has the potential to draw thousands of commuters, but with just 1,000 park-and-ride stalls, its effect will go unnoticed by the other 142,000 townbound cars on the freeway during rush hour.

The third stop is in the middle of the world's highest-producing 1,555 acres of farmland, which must be saved for our future survival. This station has been planned as the keystone for the huge "transit-oriented" development, Ho'opili.

The fourth stop finally reaches civilization. It is just a block inside of Waipahu from Fort Weaver Road, and is situated perfectly to take traffic from Village Park and Royal Kunia, and to receive drivers coming up Fort Weaver Road from Ewa and Ewa Beach, saving them another hour's travel to the city. But this stop does not have even one stall for them to park in. And they will all have to just pass it by.

Let's get it straight, then. This rail is not being built to solve current traffic problems. It actually is not even for us. It is being built to benefit developers.

The traffic problems it will solve are future problems, yet to be caused by people yet to move into homes yet to be built.

We voted for rail. We are paying for it every time we make a purchase. And we have been misled.

There are other secrets. The rail, as planned, will destroy Waipahu. For decades Waipahu missed out on the money and care spent on other parts of Oahu. A few years back, Sen. Cal Kawa-moto and others got money to beautify it. The transformation has been amazing.

When the Ho'opili station was put into the rail plan, the most direct open path from that station to the city was through the main street of Waipahu, Pearl City and Aiea. Now, even before the many new trees and the yellow hibiscus lining the main street reach full growth, all of the beauty will be torn out.

A massive, overhead cement span will have stations the size of football fields covering the entire road at each end of town.

The same will happen to Pearl City and Aiea. All three towns, now choked with afternoon traffic, will experience debilitating traffic and business bankruptcies along their primary road, due to construction.

But none of this has to happen. Use of the old Oahu Railway and Land (OR&L) right-of-way can solve everything. If the rail follows the OR&L route, it can run at surface level at least to the stadium, still using the "steel wheels on steel rails" that we voted for, but using light rail.

The right-of-way runs along the water, providing a beautiful ride; can accommodate a bikeway alongside; encounters only a few cross roads; is already cleared of 'iwi; is government-owned; and could be built for about one-fourth the money in one-fourth the time.

Headed in the other direction, the right-of-way extends through Kapolei to Ko Olina, and up the coast to Waianae, and can become the much-needed second way in and out.

If the rail began at UH-West Oahu, but instead headed makai to the old OR&L line, it could serve H-1 and Kapolei. The OR&L line then runs just below Ewa. A park-and-ride at Fort Weaver Road would give rail service to Ewa and Ewa Beach. Next stop, Depot Road in Waipahu, then up behind Leeward Community College, through Pearl City, to the stadium and Pearl Harbor.

Why was the OR&L route never seriously considered? Because it didn't run through Ho'opili. But Ho'opili has recently had a perhaps lethal setback at the Land Use Commission. And polls show 87 percent of the people want that land kept in agriculture.

Now is the time for change. Write Gov. Linda Lingle at governor.lingle@hawaii.gov and urge her to withhold her signature until these problems are solved.

We need the rail. But it must be done right.

Kioni Dudley, a retired educator, is president of the Friends of Makakilo. He can be reached at DrKioniDudley@hawaii.rr.com.

Find this article at:

http://www.starbulletin.com/editorials/20100215_rail_route_agenda_scrutinized.html

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

Hit on gov hurts rail, Abercrombie says

By [Richard Borreca](#)

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Feb 16, 2010

Mayor Mufi Hannemann's personal attacks on Gov. Linda Lingle are hurting the city's plans for rail transit, according to rail supporter and candidate for governor U.S. Rep. Neil Abercrombie.

In an interview yesterday, Abercrombie said Hannemann's antagonistic position is unrealistic and political. The mayor is likely to oppose Abercrombie in the Democratic gubernatorial race.

"You would think the approach would be an invitation for Lingle to participate, not calling her names and threatening her and trying to push her around, sign something you never saw before," Abercrombie said.

Lingle said earlier this year that she had concerns about financing for the \$5 billion transit plan and would not sign the required environmental impact statement until she had a clear picture of the city's finances. She also held a forum at the state Capitol to allow local architects to explain alternatives to the city's plan.

"The problem goes back to the mayor saying, 'If you are not for me and what I say is rail, then you are against rail.' That is factually and demonstrably not so. That is why I find it dispiriting and destructive for the mayor to make this adverse position with the governor."

Hannemann declined to respond yesterday.

Last month, at a news conference, he said about Lingle, "Every step along the way, she has been presenting roadblocks."

"I believe she's anti-rail, and anti-rail meaning she's anti-jobs. I'm sorry, I call it like it is because the evidence is compelling."

Hannemann then held his own Capitol forum saying it was there that Lingle, in 2005, said she wanted to work with the new city administration on a mass transit project for Honolulu.

"I took her up on it because this is where it all began," he said. "She can't forget that. That's part of her history."

Abercrombie said yesterday that Hannemann has let the situation "devolve."

"Rail is too important to have to be the victim of a personal political agenda.



Mufi Hannemann:
The mayor has called Lingle anti-rail, meaning anti-jobs



"You can't blame the governor for wanting to actually see the EIS before committing to it," he said.

Abercrombie has said he would resign his congressional seat this month to campaign for governor.

Hannemann has started his own campaign for governor but has not officially declared his candidacy. He has raised more than \$2 million and is staging rallies across the state.

Abercrombie was also critical yesterday of Hannemann's repeated description of rail being a job creation project.

"This isn't about jobs; it is about community," he said. "The whole idea of rail is what kind of a life are we going to have, what kind of community—how will we connect housing, transportation, education and the quality of life?"

Abercrombie said that because Lingle saw her hoped-for Hawaii Superferry fail because of an EIS problem, she would not make a mistake with rail.

"It is unreasonable ... to think the governor is not going to take a thorough look at it and the finances," Abercrombie said.

Find this article at:

http://www.starbulletin.com/news/20100216_Hit_on_gov_hurts_rail_Abercrombie_says.html

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.



ISLAND COMMENTARY

Jobs created by rail project would help whole state

By Glenn Nohara

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Feb 16, 2010

The mayor's Feb. 10 update on the rail project and how it affects jobs, the economy and our island's future hit on several key points that are important not only to our industry, but for future generations of our people.

Our organization, the General Contractors Association, was founded in 1932 to assist its members in providing quality people and quality projects using skill, responsibility and integrity. We have never seen a recession of this magnitude and its devastating effect on the industry and its work force. We see firsthand how it hurts families, hurts their dependents and places entire households in jeopardy. The solution is job creation of such a magnitude that it would put the greatest number of our people back to work in the shortest time.

The Honolulu Rail Transit Project is the biggest immediate job stimulus spark plug available in the state of Hawaii today. It would put thousands of our people back to work starting this year, and they will then put this money back into our economy. We have a local funding mechanism in place as well as commitments from the Federal Transit Administration.

The greater and more important reason for starting the rail project now is that it is the right thing to do for improving the quality of life for our future generations and for the long term protection of our environment. It can provide the greatest shift away from our overdependence on imported crude oil and the emissions of millions of tons of carbon dioxide. The state has a strategic energy plan that will start reducing our dependence on imported crude oil by 2020. The rail project will offer the quickest, easiest and biggest transition of all our transportation systems toward the use of clean renewable energy sources, whether it is solar, wind, geothermal, ocean, biofuels or any combination thereof that would produce clean electricity.

Rail is transportation infrastructure necessary for our island's quality, growth and prosperity. But a significant side benefit is the economic stimulus effect it would bring to our entire state now. Simply put, rail means jobs.

Glenn Nohara is national director for the General Contractors Association of Hawaii.

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Posted on: Wednesday, February 17, 2010

Transit tax down 14% in Jan.

Advertiser Staff

Tax collections to pay for Honolulu's planned \$5.3 billion rail-transit system fell 14 percent in January to \$11 million, based on figures released by the state Department of Taxation.

That was down from \$12.8 million in January 2009 and below city expectations of about \$13.7 million a month from the surcharge implemented in January 2007. Through the first seven months of the fiscal year, transit-tax collections are down 1.5 percent to \$91.7 million compared with the same period a year earlier.

Through the first seven months of this fiscal year, collections are averaging about \$13.1 million a month. That means the city may not raise a revised transit tax target of \$164 million during fiscal 2010, which ends June 30.

The city had initially projected raising \$198 million during the current fiscal year; however, that forecast was reduced last year when the slowing economy took a toll on transit-tax collections.

State tax collections overall have fallen amid declining visitor arrivals and rising unemployment. However, city officials have said they expect lower transit-tax collections to be offset by lower construction costs and a future economic rebound.

Construction on the transit system was supposed to start last month, but has been delayed by an ongoing review by federal agencies.

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FEATURES

Development orientation

INTERVIEW BY ADRIENNE LAFRANCE
FEB 17, 2010 | [SHARE](#) [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [LinkedIn](#) [Google+](#)



IMAGE: TERRANCE WARE

TERRANCE WARE / Terrance Ware took his post as Honolulu’s manager of transit-oriented development in September. Ware brings decades of experience in the field—a field that’s getting a lot of attention both locally and nationally these days—from his time in cities all over the country. Honolulu Weekly sat down with him last week.

It seems “transit-oriented development” is kind of a buzz phrase these days, but you’ve worked in the industry for decades.

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When I came out of college, the big thing was sustainability. I mean, talk about coming full cycle. That was because of the gas crisis in the '70s. It was all about solar, aquaculture, recycling, that's what I spent four years working on. Then no one wanted to talk about it, so I had to find something else to be employable with.

Was that because of the political shift of the 1980s?

Well, people have short memories, really. So when the gas crisis kind of eased away, people just went on with their lives... The only thing that really changed was the boom in smaller, more fuel-efficient Japanese cars. Now, the Chinese are kicking our butts. And that's because when the government there says, 'We're all going right,' they all turn right. Here, it's, 'Oh, I don't know. How far right? Should we go left?'

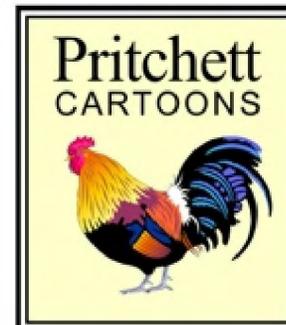
Almost nothing happens because we want to debate every alternative... [but] not all ideas are equal! Sarah Palin is not in the same category as Obama. I don't care what your politics are, people have to be able to see that. We struggle so much to move in any one direction because we're afraid it's going to piss somebody off or somebody will be left behind. China's moved on! They have jumped into the green industry, they're building high-speed rail and they are kicking our butts.

Of course this calls to mind the local rail debate.

You know, when he interviewed me for this position, the mayor asked me my thoughts about at-grade, above-grade, whatever. I said, it depends. You have to be very clear about what your goals and objectives are. If your primary goal is to relieve traffic congestion, not everything else is equal. If that's going to be the number one thing, then you're gonna make a choice to do that at the expense of doing something else.

And you can see that in the debate between at-grade and elevated. From the architects' perspective, it appears there are two things that they—at least publicly—have talked about: one is cost. Is your goal to build the least costly system? If yes, then put it at-grade. But unlike Denver, Phoenix and some of the other areas that have light rail, you don't have a grid system that you can disperse traffic on. Any one street you take up

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with rail means you've pushed traffic somewhere else. And that's OK, unless your primary goal is to remove traffic congestion... I would prefer to put the system below ground but then you've quadrupled your cost, particularly because of the geography and the geology of the area.

In what other ways must Honolulu's approach to transit-oriented development be unique?

Here, you have a mature urban environment and you don't have the sort of historic land-development pattern with an industrial area that's lined along the ports. So it makes it more challenging to determine where you put a rail system... Then, in connecting people between home and work, there's a land-use component that looks at where the employment centers are, but also, you need to build more affordable housing... It's difficult from both a financial perspective and from a social perspective: if you get mixed-income housing and I'm a market-rate buyer, why would I move there? That's where you need the amenities like parks, schools, nightlife. All these strings that you're trying to tie together—the economy, jobs, housing, culture, social equity issues—and it becomes extremely challenging.

Here—how can I say this nicely?—it doesn't seem like there's been a lot of thought, with rail aside, about some of those challenges. You know, my mom moved out here to stay with me for a while, and her observation, as soon as she got off the plane was, 'Gee, all these buildings look like they were built at the same time.' And they were. The '70s. Everything has kind of stopped at that point. And whatever the broader sort of direction or thought from government, that continuing re-investment in a planned way, it doesn't seem to have taken place...

Here, there seems to be a sort of laissez-faire, 'Oh, we've got tourism and it will pay its own way.' Yeah, the resorts will continue to invest in themselves, but what does that mean for the island, for the state, as a whole?

But your job is to assess development opportunities dependent on rail, is that right?

I was hired to focus on the potential for development adjacent to the transit stations. You know, really, you have to understand what's happening in the marketplace because transit is icing on the cake. What you're really doing with rail is manipulating what's already there.

If you look at Atlanta, most of the development that's occurred related to the transit system was going on anyway, so transit just enhanced the development. But it didn't change it. If you go to South Atlanta, and the poor black neighborhoods south of I-20, they're just as undeveloped and blighted as they ever have been...

I focus on all these factors: the availability of credit, the marketplace, where development is going, what development demand is, what's driving the economy, where the economic forces are occurring on the island. It really has to be a holistic approach... Innovation for the future comes from young people who are looking to create the next big thing. And you have to enhance where those people would live and hang out. You know, what Chinatown could be.

My office is near Chinatown, so we talk about this frequently at the *Weekly*.

The challenge in Chinatown is you've got landowners who are not developers. I was reading your article about new lofts that are \$800 to \$2,000 a month?! For a loft? If you're a starving artist? I mean, that's a lot of money... If you're a private developer, let's be honest about it, you're doing it because they can make a profit. So let's leap beyond the whole capitalist discussion of whether it's right to make a profit and assume that it is, because it's an investment question. Unless there's some way for government to bite off a chunk of that value, basically absorb it because we're in it for the long term, then I don't know how you cut costs.

I know development is complex everywhere. Does it seem more complex here?

Yes. It really does. For me, the big thing that I am challenged by is, what are the economic drivers? Cities like Atlanta, San Francisco and L.A., they're connected to the global marketplace. Those are major global

cities. When you talk about mixed-use around transit, for example, you think residential and office. But there's virtually no office work here. And why would there be?

It's interesting you mention global cities because I think people locally would argue that Honolulu is a global city, though maybe due to its diverse population or proximity to the East.

Honolulu is not a global city. It's a second-tier city. There are local banks here. I thought we were part of the U.S., and there's no Wells Fargo here. You've got local banks and that's a good thing relative to lending, but they're not really connected to the global financial network. So if tourism is what makes you, from my perspective, you need to be the best...

Well, it's certainly an exciting time to watch things play out, politically and economically, on a global scale.

Yeah, as long as you've got a life preserver. When I was teaching martial arts, getting your black belt wasn't the end, getting your black belt was the beginning. We're looking for perfection in an imperfect world. You have to have transparency in government but at the end of the day, you have to make a decision about where you're gonna go. And not making a decision is a decision. I mean, if you do nothing, it ain't gonna get any better.

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Letters to the Editor

For Wednesday, February 17, 2010

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Feb 17, 2010

Old rail route rightly rejected

When I heard Kioni Dudley call for shifting the Kapolei-Ala Moana rail line to the former Oahu Railway route at the Kapolei Neighborhood Board meeting last month, I sat in stunned disbelief. Now that he has expressed his position in a Star-Bulletin commentary, I must explain why the old railway route was rejected.

The first is that the Oahu Railway & Land route does not pass by many concentrations of housing or shopping. The OR&L was a freight-hauler; much adjoining land was and is industrial, which would depress ridership.

Ironically, the second reason is that the route passes many houses near Pearl Harbor. The situation would be like the one before the proposed Exposition light rail line in Los Angeles, where the strongest opposition is from an expensive neighborhood built around a railroad closed 20 years ago.

Third, the Oahu Railway has already been re-used: It's a bikeway. It also borders five parks from Kapolei to Aiea. Therefore, under federal law, the city would have to prove there is no "feasible and prudent alternative" to using the railroad.

However, there obviously is an alternative: the elevated line nearly ready for construction. This is why the Oahu Railway route was rejected in 2006, and why we are fortunate the federal government is willing to pay for 29 percent of the new line.

Hannah Miyamoto
Honolulu Transit Passengers Union

Letters to the Editor

For Wednesday, February 17, 2010

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Feb 17, 2010

Who owns land along rail route?

Thank you, Dr. Kioni Dudley, for the excellent piece on the rail route ("Rail route, agenda scrutinized," Island Commentary, Star-Bulletin, Feb. 15). Two recent letters also had excellent ideas: (1) Building the rail over the existing H-1 freeway, and (2) starting construction from the airport so that part of rail could be in operation if at some later time funds run out for the complete route.

The Star-Bulletin published an article when rail was first approved. In it, a person owning property along the approved route commented that he was just waiting for an offer to be made on his property. That is among the reasons why none of the good ideas will be adopted. Those property owners can count on their elected representatives to ensure that they get their take from the first allocation of federal funds.

Has anyone ever investigated who owns the properties that will be bought under eminent domain?

Ron Wong
Honolulu

Thursday, February 18, 2010

Future shock: Oil won't stay this cheap

Watching public-transit ridership rise and fall with the price of oil is an interesting exercise, but not very helpful for long-range transportation planning.

Figures from the American Public Transportation Association show that between July and September last year — the most current figures released — bus ridership nationally dropped 8 percent. That was predictable, given that gas prices fell and the recession cost so many commuters their jobs.

But this shouldn't influence plans or weaken support for the city's \$5.3 billion fixed-rail system, which is designed for the needs of O'ahu residents a decade from now and beyond.

Even in the short term, statistics provided by Oahu Transit Services, operators of TheBus, show riders here are pretty loyal customers. Job losses and cheap gas notwithstanding, ridership dropped only 2 percent in the last half of 2009.

And looking ahead, which is where transit planners have to look, only a fool would bet on gas remaining relatively cheap well into the future. (And have we conceded that \$3.30 gas is cheap?) China and India are slurping oil at a furious pace, just when global supplies appear to be waning.

The latest warning on this front came this month from a British task force on energy security. In its report, "The Oil Crunch," the business group warns that supplies may start a serious decline in as little as five years.

That, as well as the potential for recession-fueled inflation, will keep gas prices trending up — just when Honolulu's rail system could be nearing completion.

So we need to keep our eyes on the prize: building a reliable transportation system that will serve the needs of our children and grandchildren.

Thursday, February 18, 2010

Letters to the Editor

RAILTRANSIT

More housing means more traffic

"This is a vital truth too often left out of the discussion; for families living from Pearl City on, the traffic has an enormous corrosive effect on their lives." (Island Voices, Feb. 12).

Bob Nakata's Island Voices column on the need for rail is indefensible, yet in the very same issue of The Advertiser there is an article about a proposal to build three high-rise residential towers and a retail complex next to Pearlridge Center.

It's "proposed" because it will require zoning changes, and as any O'ahu resident knows, zoning changes involve backing from developers and unions who will throw their financial and voting support behind the deal, which in turn elevates some politicians' chances for reelection, which inevitably makes it a slam dunk with little or no regard for the well-being of the general public. Talk about corrosive!

This is not always the case but it is more times than not, and it is a key reason why people don't trust the government and its ability to build an efficient and cost-effective rail system. My question: Why make more traffic when you are trying so desperately to alleviate it?

*Pat Kelly
Honolulu*

Thursday, February 18, 2010

Letters to the Editor

RAILTRANSIT

Staggered shifts can fix traffic problem

Cliff Slater and others raise valid points about the city's plans for what could be an \$8 billion railway.

Aside from the cost burden, there are documented reasons to believe it will not achieve projected ridership or relieve traffic significantly on the H-1. What amazes me is that no one is talking about staggered hours as a solution, or at least a partial solution.

The H-1 does not have a capacity problem. It has a timing problem. The obvious example of this is when there is a government holiday. You can drive the H-1 from one end to the other during rush hour, hardly ever slowing down. Doesn't that tell you that if government staggered its hours, there would be instant traffic relief?

It's an easy experiment not needing much debate (and no money). Add to that incentives for businesses to voluntarily stagger hours and you have a huge reduction in cars on the road at the critical times.

Deal with the commute problem by changing the commute, not by building a rail system that will strangle us financially and go mostly unused.

*Brian Barbata
Kailua*



Abercrombie calls planning for rail system 'messed up'

By [Richard Borreca](#)

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Feb 19, 2010

U.S. Rep. Neil Abercrombie, a candidate for governor, is stepping up his criticism of Mayor Mufi Hannemann's planning for rail, calling it "messed up" and "an invitation to lawsuits."

Hannemann is an all-but-announced candidate for governor. The two would face each other in the Democratic primary election.

In a meeting with Star-Bulletin editors and reporters yesterday, Abercrombie said he has "serious concerns" about how the \$5 billion, 20-mile rail project is being handled.

The city's plan is Hannemann's most ambitious project and is largely financed by a special excise tax on Oahu taxpayers and federal assistance.

Abercrombie says Hannemann should have appointed a transit authority before planning the route, to take politics out of the process. The mayor also should have planned and coordinated the businesses interested in the rail stops before establishing the route, he said.

"The routing should be a function of your transit authority and your transit-oriented development coming forward with a plan. Instead we have a route and everyone has to adjust themselves to it," Abercrombie said.

In an speech last October, Hannemann said the city will establish a "semiautonomous transit authority to manage the construction and operation of the system."

Voters in the 2010 election will have to approve the creation of the transit authority by amending the City Charter. In 2008 the Council rejected Hannemann's proposed Charter amendment.

Hannemann's office did not respond to requests for comment yesterday.

Abercrombie, who has been a strong supporter of the city's initial proposal, says he now sees problems.

"I have serious concerns that it is going to be challenged, and if it is, we may have to come up with some alternative to this," Abercrombie said.

The rail plan, largely favored in the heavy commuter areas of West Oahu and opposed in East and Windward Oahu, needs a big "community buy-in," says Abercrombie, and that has not happened

because Hannemann has not provided the development plans along the rail corridor.

"My observation is it is an invitation for lawsuits, to conflict and confrontation as opposed to buying in. You have to get the community to buy in," Abercrombie said.

The 20-year veteran congressman, who says he will resign Feb. 28 to campaign full time for governor, said he doubts the city's current plan will meet environment qualifications.

"The mayor says it meets all the environmental criteria," said Abercrombie. "We will see. That doesn't mean it is a good system.

"The (Federal) Transit Administration doesn't say this is a good idea. They say have you met all the environmental criteria. I don't think it does, but I don't have the final draft yet," said Abercrombie.

The final EIS has not yet been produced. It must then be approved by both the state administration and the federal government. Gov. Linda Lingle has said she would not sign the plan as now drawn because of concerns about paying for the system.

Find this article at:

http://www.starbulletin.com/news/20100219_Abercrombie_calls_planning_for_rail_system_messed_up.html

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

Letters to the Editor

For Friday, February 19, 2010

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Feb 19, 2010

Gov. Lingle right to not rush rail

Gov. Linda Lingle is correct in saying that she will not be railroaded into signing off on the environmental impact statement for Honolulu's rail project until she has fully vetted it. The New York Times reported that on Feb. 16 the Federal Transit Administration pulled \$70 million in stimulus money from a planned expansion of commuter rail service in San Francisco because the rail agency did not properly study the project's impact. Better we do it right the first time than risk having funds yanked later.

Lynne Matusow
Honolulu

Mayor Hannemann Outlines Honolulu's Future

Reported by: Brianne Randle

Email: brandle@khon2.com

Last Update: 2/21 9:41 pm

Honolulu's budget, jobs and rail are all issues that will likely take center stage Monday as Mayor Mufi Hannemann outlines the city's future.

And depending on his future in politics, this could be his last State of the City address.

A spokesman for Hannemann says his speech will be a five-year report card outlining the city's progress and challenges that still lie ahead.

When Hannemann takes the podium Monday, it will be with a budget shortfall much larger than the city faced last year.

"There's about a \$140 million shortfall for the city so you know it's gonna have to be made up in some way," said Ann Kobayashi with the Honolulu City Council.

In his 2009 State of the City, Hannemann said he would make up the deficit by taking a pay cut for himself and cabinet members, and if necessary, eliminating Theboat. This year, Hannemann may have more ideas to help pull the city out of a slump.

"I assume he'll be able to talk about they're proposing looking at the tax rates and what's gonna need to be pushed up from a tax standpoint," said Todd Apo with the Honolulu City Council.

"People are having a hard time now and we can't be raising property tax but it looks like we may have to do that," said Kobayashi.

Of course, it wouldn't be a Hannemann speech without a mention of rail transit.

"Rail is the big project for us, in a number of ways it's developed into being so important for overall future land use, deal with population and growth," said Hannemann.

A spokesman for Hannemann says he will also address the environment, ongoing partnerships between the county mayors and the upcoming APEC summit to be held in Hawaii in 2011.

Still, there's a laundry list of city concerns Hannemann could take to task.

"We want to return the parks to our residents so they can use it. Where are we gonna put the homeless?" said Kobayashi.

"Timing of speech gonna allow us to have an idea of where he wants to go and get into discussions right away about where our future is going for our economy," said Apo.

You can watch Mayor Hannemann's speech live on KHON2 Monday night.

We will have live coverage of the address starting at 6 p.m.



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Mayor hails rail as economic engine

Hannemann delivers his sixth State of the City address

By B.I. Reyes

POSTED: 06:36 p.m. HST, Feb 22, 2010

Mayor Mufi Hannemann delivered his sixth State of the City address tonight by again touting the benefits of rail transit as a stimulus for the local economy as the city faces tough economic times.

The city is facing a budget deficit of about \$140 million in the new fiscal year that begins July 1, but Hannemann said he will submit a balanced budget to the City Council come Monday.

On rail, Hannemann repeated his past assurances that the city is in line to receive \$1.5 billion in federal funding for the rail project, which has seen its groundbreaking delayed as the city awaits approval of the final environmental impact statement.

"There is no other shovel-ready project anywhere in this state that will create as many jobs, in as short a time, as rail," he said.

He said the project would create an average of 10,000 jobs a year while pumping \$300 million into our local economy.

Hannemann's address came two days after Gov. Linda Lingle said she spoke with federal transportation official to inform them that she would have the state conduct an independent analysis of the project's finances before giving final approval to the project.

Without naming the governor, Hannemann said "there are still some out there who are trying to pooh-pooh, un-do, and delay five years of hard work and the will of the voters."

In addition to the rail project, Hannemann announced plans to move on 100 capital improvement projects over the next six months, valued at \$220 million.

But the boost to the economy won't do enough to prevent the city from taking steps already taken by the state, which include two furlough days a month for city employees starting in July.

The furloughs also will lead to the closure of the Fasi Municipal Building and Kapolei Hale on public school furlough days -- saving the city about 4.5 percent in payroll costs, Hannemann said.

Meanwhile, 5 percent salary reductions for members of his Cabinet will continue in the new fiscal year, Hannemann said.

Hannemann also outlined efforts being undertaken by his administration to address homelessness, touting the maintenance of public parks as well as the development of the Sea Winds long-term and transitional housing project in Waianae.

He also referred to the proposed development of a similar project in the River Street area of Chinatown, that has been opposed by local residents.

"It's unconscionable that some want Waianae to continue to be the answer to all of our homelessness problems. Folks, if we're not willing to step forward, homelessness will continue to plague us."

Hannemann delivered his speech on the grounds of the Fasi Civic Center grounds on the Diamond Head side of the Mission Memorial Building before a supportive crowd of about 200 people.

To download the full text of the mayor's State of the City address, please click [here](#).

Find this article at:

http://www.starbulletin.com/news/bulletin/Mayor_hails_rail_as_economic_engine.html

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Mayor Hannemann speech focuses on finances

Posted: Feb 22, 2010 11:02 PM
Updated: Feb 23, 2010 12:01 AM

By Tim Sakahara [bio](#) | [email](#)

HONOLULU - (HawaiiNewsNow) In a first for Mayor Mufi Hannemann he held his state of the city address outside and at night. It's just one sign of change to come.

The mayor stepped up to the mic and spoke for nearly an hour announcing \$220 million worth of construction projects in the next six months. He also plans to continue work on sewers and take curbside recycling island wide. And of course there's rail, announcing the second bid from contractors came in lower than expected.

"You see we're going to continue to save tens of millions of dollars, demonstrating that contractors will bid low during an economic downturn. That's just another reason we need to move quickly on rail," said Mayor Hannemann during the speech.

Then there is the economy and the \$140 million budget shortfall. To help fill it the nearly 8,000 city employees will be furloughed or have their pay cut five percent.

"We will be implementing two furlough days a month to city employees and closing the Fasi Municipal Building and Kapolei Hale on public school furlough days beginning this July," said Mayor Hannemann.

But there was no mention of plans to raise property taxes another option that's been discussed to stop the budget bleeding.

"It was an articulate speech but it really didn't break any new ground in terms of laying out anything really new for the city," said Charles Djou, Honolulu City Council Member.

"Next week Monday we'll go into specific details. I think we'll have good news for taxpayers when we unveil that budget," said Mayor Hannemann right after the speech.

"I think we're all sort of waiting to see where the proposals are going to be in terms of tax rates and as the mayor said he'll talk about that next week Monday when the budget comes out," said Todd Apo, Honolulu City Council Chair.

The mayor never mentioned a potential run for governor, only acknowledging the fact he has until mid July to announce his intentions.

The mayor will travel to Washington D.C. tonight for the U.S Conference of Mayors winter meeting. He'll return late Friday in time to announce his budget details to the city council next Monday.



Mayor Mufi Hannemann



Charles Djou



Todd Apo



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State of the City

Reported by: Marisa Yamane
Email: myamane@khon2.com

Last Update: 2/22 10:38 pm

Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann began his sixth State of the City address by giving a progress report of the last five years but then went on to talk about the city's future, including furloughs and the rail project.

Hannemann focused on more of the positives rather than the doom and gloom during his 45-minute speech.

The City however is facing a \$140M shortfall.

Mayor Hannemann plans to save the details of his budget plan for next Monday when he unveils it to the City Council.

But he did speak about furloughs during his State of the City address.

"We will be implementing two furlough days a month for City employees and closing the Fasi Municipal Building and Kapolei Hale on public school furlough days beginning this July that will amount to a 4.5% reduction in payroll costs," said Hannemann.

Monday afternoon, the four county Mayors announced they've reached an agreement with the UPW union for a new collective bargaining pact for this fiscal year and the next.

Hannemann said certain appointees not covered under collective bargaining will take a 5% pay cut.

And the Mayor and his cabinet will continue taking a 5% pay cut which was implemented last July.

"It's not a huge amount of savings so the furlough days alone will not solve the \$140M deficit but we've done some other things that we will reveal next week," said Hannemann.

"He painted the broad strokes. I think in the State of the City address you always do that and don't share details and that will come on Monday. As the Chair of Budget Committee I'm interested in the details," said Honolulu City Councilman Nestor Garcia.

Hannemann also addressed the City's \$5.5B rail transit project.

"And this just in: We just received a great bit of news with the second set of design-build proposals to construct the maintenance facility and purchase track for the entire 20-mile length. The proposals indicate we'll enjoy substantial savings," said Hannemann.

The second segment of the track runs from Pearl City to the Airport.

Hannemann said the rail project's groundbreaking could happen this year -- if they get Governor Lingle's approval.

"All we're asking for is an expeditious review once the EIS hits her desk and we're working hard to get the EIS out of Washington to her desk and I remain open to meeting with her," said Hannemann.

Hannemann leaves for Washington, D.C. tonight for the annual Mayors meeting.



While he's there, he also plans to meet with the Federal Transit Administration to discuss Honolulu's rail project.

Hannemann also spoke about the City's homeless problem during his State of the City address.

He said it's been a struggle to find the right mix of measures to deal with homelessness.

"Some believe the problem will disappear if the homeless are ordered to move elsewhere but that's a myopic point of view. To be clear, the City is responsible for maintaining parks, sidewalks, and other public areas," said Hannemann.

Hannemann said the City has worked with developers and non-profit organizations to build 360 transitional and affordable housing units.

There are currently 1,300 additional units in development.

KITV.com

Lingle Discusses Oahu Transit In Washington

Governor Considers Independent Study On Rail Plan

POSTED: 9:33 am HST February 22, 2010

HONOLULU -- Gov. Linda Lingle on Sunday met with Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood about plans for Hawaii's future, including the planned rail transit on Oahu.

Lingle is in Washington for the 2010 National Governor's Association Annual Winter Meeting.

Lingle expressed the state's interest in doing an independent financial study for the city's \$5.5 billion proposed rail transit plan.

She also called for federal and state agencies to share their cost assessments.

"They agreed that its important to the public to have really one set of numbers that they're looking at so that when people want to judge whether it can be afforded over the long term," Lingle said.

Mayor Mufi Hannemann will be in Washington next week for a meeting with the Federal Transit Authority.

Hannemann has been critical of Lingle's public assessment of the project's financial plan as "shaky."

The mayor has cited the FTA's recent commitment of more than \$1.5 billion toward the system as proof it is viable.

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Posted on: Tuesday, February 23, 2010

Honolulu mayor touts optimism, collaboration in annual address

By **Gordon Y.K. Pang**
Advertiser Staff Writer

Mayor Mufi Hannemann last night promised to deliver to the City Council a balanced operating budget, but offered few details about how he intends to address an estimated \$140 million shortfall.

During his sixth, and possibly last, State of the City address, Hannemann listed a slew of accomplishments and spoke of several new initiatives.

Major themes of the speech included collaboration and optimism in the midst of a tough economic period, and doing what's right even if it's controversial.

"A leader has to have the courage of his convictions and the commitment to champion causes that may not always be popular, but which are ultimately the right things to do," Hannemann said in closing his speech before breaking into a personalized rendition of the song, "I Am Hawaii."

Hannemann spoke of fiscal accountability, and reiterated that the city will be instituting two-day-a-month furloughs for city employees. The shutdown of the Frank F. Fasi Municipal Building and Kapolei Hale on those days will reduce the city's payroll costs by about 4.5 percent, he said. Excluded managerial employees will join Hannemann's Cabinet this coming year in taking 5 percent pay cuts, the mayor said.

Hannemann said he will offer other details about how he will meet the budget challenge when he unveils his plan to the council on Monday.

He chastised Gov. Linda Lingle and state legislators for proposing to take away the city's share of hotel room tax revenues, which would cost the city about \$45 million, and the one-half percent excise tax that the electorate agreed to allow the city to use for its upcoming \$5.5 billion transit project.

"A few of our co-leaders in (state) government ... seem to believe that because we have a balanced budget without yet implementing furloughs, that we're flush with cash," Hannemann said.

What state officials neglect to mention is that he and the council took "the necessary, I daresay courageous, step" of raising property taxes and fees to meet the city's budget obligations, the mayor said.

Hannemann reiterated that the mass-transit project will not only provide travel alternatives, but provide an economic boost. "Once we get the go-ahead to begin construction, we'll be pumping \$330 million into our local economy," he said.

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big savings for city

The mayor said proposals for construction of the second phase of the project have just come in and will result in "substantial savings" from what had been projected. The city will save tens of millions of dollars because "contractors will bid low during an economic downturn," Hannemann said.

A symposium will be held in April on the issue of transit-oriented development along the major hubs for the rail line, the mayor said. Experts will discuss "how we can create sustainable communities with rail as the catalyst."

The city will embark on 100 capital improvement projects totaling \$220 million over the next six months, he said. Those projects will range from work on roads and sewers to firehouse repairs and park improvements, he said.

The state and federal governments joined the city and the private sector in developing a transitional and long-term affordable rental housing project that broke ground in December, Hannemann said. Now the city wants to push forward with a similar project in Downtown Honolulu, although that project has met with some resistance from the community.

Among other partnerships Hannemann outlined:

- Taking over from Kapolei Property Development responsibility for building the last section of Kapolei Parkway in exchange for the landowner giving the city valuable parcels along the parkway.
- Working with Kamehameha Schools to allow for a Board of Water Supply base yard in East Honolulu. That plan would free up space at the water board's Beretania Street site for "higher and better use for that prime piece of Downtown real estate."
- Talking to Kaua'i County about the possibility

of accepting its solid waste at the city's H-Power waste-to-energy facility .

- Allowing the state and the other counties to implement a new human resources and payroll system developed by the city.

City Council members who attended the address said they were pleased by it and willing to wait until Monday to hear more details about the budget.

"There were some good, long-range answers about what we can do from an investment side in our city," said council Chairman Todd Apo. "I would've liked to have heard a little bit more about property tax issues for this upcoming budget but he'll talk about that Monday."

While Hannemann did not say much about property taxes last night, Managing Director Kirk Caldwell last week told a legislative committee that the administration is considering not increasing taxes on owner-occupied dwellings, but only on those that are investment or second-home properties.

Councilman Ikaika Anderson said the speech was optimistic, and applauded the mayor's plan to provide more wastewater plant upgrades in his Windward council district.

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'plenty of work'

Hannemann supporters have formed a campaign committee that has raised \$2 million in preparation for a potential run for governor.

If he does run, Hannemann must resign by the July 25 candidate filing deadline, but he made no mention of it during his speech.

Afterward, Hannemann was asked by reporters if he would be around to see through completion the initiatives he outlined .

"I've always said ... leave this place better than you found it. Everything I said tonight, I intend to at least get it started irrespective of what my final decision will be," he said.

Asked if he had a deadline for making a decision, Hannemann said, "The only thing I know is that the third week of July is the filing deadline, and I've still got plenty of work to do."

Reach Gordon Y.K. Pang at gpang@honoluluadvertiser.com.

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Lingle: Rail line would be costliest in history

By Associated Press

POSTED: 09:10 a.m. HST, Feb 23, 2010

Gov. Linda Lingle is telling the nation's top transportation official that Honolulu's planned rail line is the most expensive transit project per capita in America's history.

Lingle said yesterday she told Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood that no other transit project has ever cost so much per person.

She says LaHood didn't respond or challenge her assertion.

The federal government still has not completed its environmental and financial analysis of the rail project, and Lingle said they're still a ways away.

Even after it's completed, Lingle said she will do her own assessment of whether the \$5.3 billion rail line is economically feasible.

Find this article at:

<http://www.starbulletin.com/news/breaking/85066692.html>

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STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

Hannemann talks up rail and jobs but says city workers face furloughs

By [B.J. Reyes](#)

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Feb 23, 2010

In delivering his sixth State of the City address, Mayor Mufi Hannemann outlined a vision for Honolulu that included his \$5.5 billion rail transit project, transit-oriented development, thousands of new jobs, new construction and other initiatives to stimulate the economy.

But he left open-ended the question of whether he would be in office through the end of his term in 2012 to see it all through.

"I've always said my overall maxim is, Leave this place better than you found it," Hannemann said last night after delivering his 50-minute speech.

"I think we've made excellent strides and progress in that area, and everything I said tonight, I intend to at least get it started—irrespective of what my final decision is."

That final decision would be whether to leave City Hall for the state Capitol. Hannemann has been raising money and is widely expected to leave office early to run for governor.

The speech focused on the upcoming fiscal year and Hannemann's plan to stimulate the economy while facing a \$140 million budget shortfall.

The mayor said he expects to unveil his full plan next week, when he delivers his fiscal year 2011 budget to the City Council.

 No Major Surprises In Mayor's Sixth State Of The City Address



Hannemann says while the city faces a shortfall going into this year he plans to deliver a balanced budget to the ...

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KEY POINTS

"I think we're going to have some good news for the taxpayers when we unveil that budget," he said. "I think you'll be surprised when you see what we come up with next week."

As expected, Hannemann touted the benefits of rail as a major piece to solving the city's financial problems.

"There is no other shovel-ready project anywhere in this state that will create as many jobs, in as short a time, as rail," he said, contending it would create an average of 10,000 jobs a year while pumping \$300 million into the economy.

He repeated assurances that the city is in line to receive \$1.55 billion in federal funding for the project, which has seen groundbreaking delayed as the city awaits approval of a final environmental impact statement.

During the weekend, Gov. Linda Lingle said she spoke with federal transportation officials in Washington to inform them that she would have the state conduct an independent analysis of the project's finances before giving final approval to it.

"From what I've heard, what she said is nothing new," Hannemann said. "I haven't heard anything that says the rail system of Honolulu is falling off the tracks or the federal government is going to pull back.

"All we're asking for is expeditious review once the EIS gets to her."

In addition to the rail project, Hannemann announced plans to move in the next six months on 100 capital improvement projects valued at \$220 million.

But the boost to the economy will not do enough to prevent the city from taking steps already taken by the state, which include two furlough days a month for employees, starting in July.

Furloughs also will lead to closing the Fasi Municipal Building and Kapolei Hale on public school furlough days, saving the city about 4.5 percent in payroll, Hannemann said.

Meanwhile, 5 percent salary reductions for members of his Cabinet will continue in the next fiscal year and be extended to other nonunion executive management positions, the mayor said.

City Council members in the audience said they are anxious to see the mayor's budget proposal next

week.

"I think it was a very optimistic outlook for the city," said Councilman Ikaika Anderson.

"I was hoping to hear a little bit more about his proposal for real property taxes and whether or not he will have two separate rates being proposed for residential properties."

Under legislation approved last year, the mayor may propose separate property tax rates for owner-occupants and for owners who do not live on their properties.

Councilman Charles Djou, a frequent critic of the Hannemann administration's spending and a possible Republican candidate for U.S. Congress, likened the speech to a bathing suit.

"The mayor's speech was like a bikini: What he said was interesting, but what he hid is what's important," Djou said.

"The mayor delivered a good speech, but he failed to say if this would be his last State of the City address, if he's planning to raise taxes or what programs he plans to cut."

To download the full text of the mayor's State of the City address, please click [here](#).

Find this article at:

http://www.starbulletin.com/news/20100223_Hannemann_talks_up_rail_and_jobs_but_says_city_workers_face_furloughs.html

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

Letters to the Editor

Tuesday, February 23, 2010

MASS transit

Can Honolulu really afford rail system?

They want to raise taxes and now they also want to pressure the governor to just sign the EIS for the rail project without analyzing its fiscal consequences. Are they serious?

This is the type of action that has brought our economy to its knees.

This is why there is such an enormous amount of foreclosures, bank failures and borrowing by city and state from the federal government — spending was made without checking on the ability to repay.

Can the people of Hawai'i afford the rail? Mayor Hannemann and 39 representatives say yes, while Gov. Lingle says "let me verify."

The city itself is working on a review to present to the Federal Transit Administration.

Voters demand that spending be responsible and not political.

H-3 took years to work out an acceptable EIS and yet it still got built and now serves the people of Hawai'i.

The rail will be built, but let us do it right.

*John Guzman
Honolulu*

Letters to the Editor

For Tuesday, February 23, 2010

City can't even take care of our roads

Why should we believe that Mayor Mufi Hannemann and the City & County of Honolulu will be able to maintain the rail if it is built? They are unable to maintain the roads, which are, and will remain, the main infrastructure for the vast majority of travelers. The roads are ranked as some of the worst in the U.S., even though we probably have fewer roads to maintain than any other state. The just-opened Fort Weaver Road opened with three lanes, each done at a different time, and none blended together—forming an already poor road condition in need of repaving. Typical.

What's to prevent the rail system from becoming another TheBoat? At least when TheBoat was canceled, it left no eyesore behind. That won't be true for the rail—which really means they couldn't afford to let the rail die, so we'll be stuck throwing money into that hole forever. Feel your taxes going up yet?

Gary Stark
Honolulu

Pacific Business News (Honolulu) - February 23, 2010
[/pacific/stories/2010/02/22/daily19.html](#)

PACIFIC BUSINESS NEWS

Tuesday, February 23, 2010, 2:12pm HAST

Honolulu has nation's 38th worst traffic

Pacific Business News (Honolulu)

Honolulu had the 38th worst traffic congestion last year, according to a study of the 100 most-congested U.S. cities.

That marked a relative improvement from 33rd worst in 2008.

The study was conducted by Inrix, based in Kirkland, Wash., which provides traffic information to customers such as MapQuest and Microsoft Corp.

Inrix said traffic and commute times are on the way up nationally.

Los Angeles remains the most-congested U.S. city, according to Inrix, followed by New York, Chicago, Washington, D.C., and Dallas.

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Posted on: Wednesday, February 24, 2010

Mayor delivers confident message

In what might have been his last State of the City address, Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann channeled FDR, exuding optimism and the political idea that brighter days are ahead of us.

What else could he do?

Unlike others running for governor, Hannemann has to answer directly for what lies before us. His Democratic opponent, Neil Abercrombie, can point to bills introduced and accomplishments achieved. But at the end of the day, no one places the state of the nation on Abercrombie's plate. His vote is only one of hundreds in the Congress.

His Republican opponent, Duke Aiona, can rest on the fact that very little the state has or has not done can be tagged to him personally. It is instructive that Hannemann made more than one reference to the lame duck governor, Linda Lingle, but nothing about her No. 2.

So, effectively, the message was: Hey, everything's OK, I'm in charge and pushing ahead with the people's business. To his credit, Hannemann put on the table the dangerous third rail of politics: taxes. He acknowledged that his administration had made the politically unpopular decision of raising property taxes and fees. Now that's a way to get elected!

Hannemann also made a virtue of his support for what has become a controversial municipal project, the multibillion-dollar rail transit project. "A leader has to have the courage of his convictions and the commitment to champion causes that may not always be popular but which are ultimately the right things to do," Hannemann said.

What you end up with is a win-win, but also lose-lose proposition for Hannemann as he plots his political future. He is the big boss of the biggest city in what is, let's face it, a fairly small state. The buck stops at his desk on more decisions on a daily basis than anyone, the governor excluded.

Since the governor is not running, Hannemann carries the burden and the obligation of being the one in charge. Taken that way, you could look at his State of the City address as less of a look at where Honolulu is going and more of a view of where the entire state is headed.

That's a heavy burden for any political speech. In the weeks and months to come, this talk will be measured by that standard.

Reach Jerry Burris at jryburris@yahoo.com.

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Bad times, quicker commutes

A national traffic study credits Hawaii's poor economy with easing roadway congestion

[By Rosemarie Bernardo](#)

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Feb 24, 2010

A dip in tourism and a spike in unemployment translate to less traffic congestion on Honolulu's roadways, according to a recent study.

In the 2009 INRIX National Traffic Scorecard Annual Report, Honolulu dropped to 38th from 33rd in its ranking of the top 100 metro areas across the country with the worst traffic congestion. INRIX officials cited Honolulu's high unemployment rate, sluggish tourism and fewer conventions held on Oahu as factors contributing to a decrease in traffic.

"That doesn't surprise me in the least," said state Tourism Liaison Marsha Wienert.

While Honolulu's traffic congestion ranking dropped, the city remained the second highest behind Los Angeles when it comes to travel times motorists spend on the roadways during peak traffic hours. Washington, D.C.; San Francisco; and Austin, Texas, followed Los Angeles and Honolulu.

In 2007 and 2008, Honolulu ranked the highest for having the longest travel time during peak traffic.

Honolulu's unemployment rate rose from 2.7 percent in January 2008 to 6.1 percent last May before dropping to 5.3 percent in December, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The recent study indicated the worst day and hour to travel in Honolulu is on Thursday between 4 and 5 p.m. Friday between 5 and 6 p.m. remained America's most congested hour.

In Honolulu the worst place and time to be in traffic is on the town-bound lanes of the H-1 freeway near Farrington High School on Thursdays between 5 and 6 p.m., when motorists inch along at 8 mph.

Taxis, airport shuttles, service delivery vans, long-haul trucks and consumer vehicles equipped with GPS devices were used to collect information for the study.

 [Honolulu tops list for worst traffic](#)



Report lists the top 100 cities with the worst traffic congestion. Hawaii is ranked second to Los Angeles.

[[Watch](#)]



But Wayne Yoshioka, city transportation services director, saw some potential problems with that methodology. Reports from "GPS-enabled probed vehicles" might have difficulty discerning which roads they are reading in Honolulu, Yoshioka said, because of the numerous streets that run parallel.

"It doesn't know if it's on the H-1 or Kamehameha Highway," said Yoshioka.

State transportation officials have made the traffic problem a priority, implementing programs such as the Freeway Service Patrol and tackling highway projects that include the recent opening of Kualakai Parkway, formerly known as North South Road, according to Brennon Morioka, state transportation director.

The INRIX report was based on 2008 census figures to identify the top 100 cities. The complete study is available at inrix.com/scorecard.

NATIONAL RANK		ROAD/DIRECTION	SEGMENT/INTERCHANGE	LENGTH (MILES)	AVERAGE SPEED WHEN CONGESTED (MPH)
2009	2008				
1.	204	Lunalilo Freeway (eastbound)	H-78/Middle St.	0.69	13.3
2.	213	Lunalilo Freeway (eastbound)	Palama St./Okomea St.	0.57	15.9
3.	233	Lunalilo Freeway (eastbound)	Houghtailing St.	0.08	14.5
4.	235	Lunalilo Freeway (eastbound)	Liliha St.	0.48	15.6
5.	237	Lunalilo Freeway (eastbound)	Kalihi St.	0.64	14.7

Find this article at:

http://www.starbulletin.com/news/20100224_Bad_times_quicker_commutes.html

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.



EDITORIAL

Hannemann's glass half full

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Feb 24, 2010

Mayor Mufi Hannemann raised Oahu taxpayers' hopes and expectations with an optimistic, reassuring State of the City address that sure sounded like an exclamation point to his City Hall tenure, even if the mayor has not officially entered the governor's race.

In his sixth, and potentially last such address, the mayor promised tens of thousands of new jobs created by the \$5.5 billion rail transit project that is his key initiative, vowed to work with all interested parties to solve deep-rooted problems such as homelessness, and pledged to deliver to the City Council next week a balanced 2011 operating budget.

The mayor reiterated that city workers would be furloughed two days a month starting in July because of the fiscal crisis but emphasized their resilience and productivity despite such economic hardships.

And although he failed to specify exactly how he would address an expected \$140 million budget shortfall, the mayor gave a strong indication that it would not be on the backs of Honolulu taxpayers.

"I think we're going to have some good news for the taxpayers when we unveil that budget," the mayor told Star-Bulletin reporter B.J. Reyes after the speech. "I think you'll be surprised when you see what we come up with next week."

What the mayor has done is whetted appetites for a palatable strategy—leadership that is reasonable and focused, especially given the recent backdrop of fiscal gloom and political stagnation.

He took some knocks afterward for failing to say once and for all whether he will leave City Hall to run for governor and for the lack of budget specifics.

City Councilman Charles Djou, a Republican who is likely to run for Congress, likened Hannemann's speech to a bikini, saying "What he said was interesting, but what he hid is what's important."

Besides raising eyebrows, Djou misses the point.

While it's true that Hannemann didn't say in his speech whether he's planning to raise property taxes or other fees or cut programs, that information won't be concealed for long. His plans will be in full view next week, in the budget proposal he presents to the City Council.

It's highly unlikely that the mayor—especially if he is planning to run for governor as expected—would

raise Oahu taxpayers' hopes and expectations only to dash them a few days later.

Find this article at:

http://www.starbulletin.com/editorials/20100224_Hannemanns_glass_half_full.html

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

Wednesday, February 24, 2010

Letters to the Editor

Bus arrival times available online

I would like to praise TheBus's estimated arrival Web site, hea.thebus.org, which O'ahu Transit Services put out quietly.

This Web site offers real-time bus arrival and departure information, and is fairly accurate with its on-board GPS systems. Now I always check the Web site before leaving work to catch the bus.

It would be even better if the transit service could set up electronic boards at the bus stops to show the arrival information, or if somehow people would be allowed to subscribe to the information through their cell phone.

Honglong Li
Honolulu

Honolulu Weekly

Like, whatever

Feb 24, 2010 | 

Gee, Ms. LaFrance, Rail Editor-in-Chief, Terrance Ware sounds like such a neat guy (“Development orientation,” 2/17)! Such a breath of fresh air in the middle of the stale rail debate! What a neat conversation you had with him! So neat I didn’t even need to know who he is or what, exactly, city taxpayers are paying him for! “Development Orientations”? Whatever!

But it was so cool of Mayor Hannemann’s PR people—who’ve spent \$5.6 million of taxpayer money so far on elevated-rail propaganda—to let you talk to him!

He’s so smart and hip and everything, and he says such cool stuff, like Honolulu isn’t a grid-based city (uh, neither is your average bustling European city with LRT), and “Almost nothing happens because we want to debate every alternative...but not all ideas are equal!” Gosh, I guess the city already sorted out the alternatives in the Alternatives Analysis (no, it didn’t), so can we just end this stupid debate and talk about cool stuff like Chinatown?! That Gov. Lingle, those architects, that Kamehameha Schools, that Gov. Ben Cayetano and those other Gloomy Guses—they’re such un-cool people, not like Terrance and me here, breezily shooting the bull...

Oh yeah, transit-oriented development, or whatever. Your BFF Terrance Ware sez, “I was hired to focus on the potential for development adjacent to the transit stations.” Yeah, okay, ’nuff said, and screw the city blocks in between... but hey, let’s move on cuz we’re so chatty and stuff, and like, Terrance does martial arts, it’s decisive, and Honolulu’s gotta make decisions, cuz if you do nothing, it’s all or nothing! And, like, Chinatown is cool, and this guy’s so hip that he read your article on CHINATOWN LOFTS, fergawdsake! How awesome is that?! Talk about trivializing the future of Honolulu!

Curt Sanburn
San Francisco

MidWeek

Letters To The Editor

February 24, 2010
By Midweek Staff

Be like BART

The planned Honolulu mass transit system serves the area and people from Ewa to the university. While all of Honolulu county will pay, they will receive no benefit. By all accounts, the traffic lessening and shorter commute times will only affect the areas getting transit.

Other metropolitan areas in the country had the foresight to establish transit districts based on ZIP codes - such as the BART system in the San Francisco area. The transit districts were set up to assure that those within a county who would not be served by the transit system would not have to help pay for it. Anyone beyond 15 miles of a proposed station was excluded from the district. As BART grew and stations were added, the district grew to include some of these areas that were excluded earlier.

This would be particularly applicable for a large county such as Honolulu. Why should Kaneohe, Kailua, Hawaii Kai and other areas not served pay for a transit that only benefits others?

Paul Miller
Kaneohe

MidWeek

Letters To The Editor

February 24, 2010
By Midweek Staff

Poor city planning

In response to Bill Brennan's letter, Mayor Mufi's regime has lacked transparency from the very beginning, and he continues to stand on his soapbox proclaiming to know what is best for all people. The records show how much he has spent of the taxpayers' money to push his propaganda to convince the FTA and Hawaii that we need, must have and should not wait to have this financial burden strapped on our shoulders forever.

Our governor is not anti-rail, Mr. Brennan, she is realistic about the conditions we are living in and is looking out for the welfare of the majority. I appreciate that and applaud her courage to speak out on our behalf. I'm sorry for the people who live in West Oahu, but the blame falls squarely on the shoulders of our city government for poor planning and uncontrolled over development. As the discussion on traffic continues, so does the development of more homes. It appears contradictory to talk about fixing a problem with one hand and feeding it with the other.

As the smoke screen clears, the truth is beginning to show. It is time we demand honest government free of self-serving individuals and special interest groups.

Leona Pereza, MSW
Kailua

MidWeek

The Border Dividing Two Honolulu

February 24, 2010

By Dan Boylan

Prepare yourself, dear reader, for a screed. Actually, prepare for a double-barreled screed on the same subject.

They come from a 34-year resident of Pearl City. Those of you who are among my beloved 11 regular readers in good standing have heard them before, but the time is right for repetition.

We will hear much from politicians this election year about the City of Honolulu. But we are, in fact, two Honolulu - East and West. The borderline is Red Hill.

In talking about the two Honolulu, allow me to start with a subject dear to my heart: higher education in Hawaii. This past fall, Leeward Community College completed construction on a new wooden temporary building to serve its nursing program. It is, by my reckoning, the first new construction for higher education west of Red Hill in the past 40 years - save for three smaller, wooden temps built for my employer, the University of Hawaii-West Oahu.

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To be sure, a dozen years ago university leaders dragged 24 old temps out to LCC for UH-West Oahu's use. They had been freed up by the completion of a brand-new, beautiful Kapiolani Community College campus on the slopes of Diamond Head - securely located, obviously, in East Honolulu.

That is not, of course, where most of Oahu's budding scholars reside. The largest high schools, intermediate schools and elementary schools are to be found - with an exception or two - west of Red Hill, the only place where most couples of child-bearing age have been able to purchase homes.

Meanwhile, an architecture building, a science building, a huge library addition and more have been built at the Manoa campus. So too have beautiful new buildings been built at the aforementioned Kapiolani Community College, Maui Community College and UH-Hilo - everywhere except where most of the state's future taxpayers reside: Leeward Oahu. Now when it appears it's finally West Oahu's turn, loud moans can be heard from Manoa about their buildings being in disrepair. In their telling, of course, their buildings must be repaired before a dime should be spent on a campus in Kapolei.

Barrel two of my screed is aimed at Honolulu's proposed new transit system. Gov. Linda Lingle says that she will look carefully at the system's environmental impact statement - as she must. Opponents of the system, unwilling to accept the Oahu electorate's 53-47 percent vote in favor of rail, threaten lawsuits to stop it.

Among the governor's concerns are whether Hawaii's slumping economy can afford to build the system. How can Oahu afford not to build it? Every day those who live west of Red Hill face gridlock. All it takes is a traffic accident, some days a stalled car or two, will halt traffic. And gridlock stops Honolulu's only other form of mass transit: TheBus.

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Members of the Hawaii chapter of the American Institute of Architects make another argument. They contend that any mass transit for Honolulu should be “at grade” in order not to defile the city’s view planes.

Such an argument assumes that the undistinguished office towers of downtown Honolulu and hotels of Waikiki haven’t already sufficiently defiled the city’s view planes - or that eight or nine lanes of gridlock twice a day constitutes a beautiful urban landscape.

No, there’s something else going on here. Simply put, the majority of East Honolulu’s residents don’t give a rip about their fellow citizens residing west of Red Hill. They don’t care about their access to higher education and they don’t care how long they have to sit in traffic in order to get to work - or to their university campus.

Find this article at: http://www.midweek.com/content/columns/mostlypolitics_article/the_border_dividing_two_honolulu/

honoluluadvertiser.com

Posted on: Thursday, February 25, 2010

Just fix the lights already

The recession has ushered in a dark period, but who knew it would be quite this dark?

The state Department of Transportation has decided to let long stretches of the H-1 and H-2 freeway corridors in Central and Leeward O'ahu go unlit at night until \$3 million can be found to fix the lights vandalized by copper thieves.

What is this, Bolivia?

The ringleader of the gang that was stripping the lights is now in jail, and officials had pledged to replace the lights once the bad guys were caught.

They need to fulfill that promise as soon as possible.

The word from the department is that officials are scouting about for federal dollars. If the feds have grant money lying around, fine, but it's ultimately the state's responsibility to get this problem fixed.

Officials say the 15.3 affected miles qualify as "rural" freeways for which lighting isn't required. It's appalling that they would trot that out as an excuse. Anyone who's had car trouble on these "country roads" at night can tell them otherwise.

With a \$240 million operating budget and a commitment to core services like public safety, the highways division should be able to move around some projects to get the lights fixed. It will be cheaper than settling the inevitable civil lawsuit after a midnight car wreck.

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Your daughter insists on wearing her princess costume to the grocery store. Allow it or not?

YES, at least she's dressed!

NO, I have some rules!

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Thursday, February 25, 2010

Letters to the Editor

Governor correctin fully vetting EIS

Gov. Lingle is correct in saying that she will not be "railroaded" into signing off on the environmental impact statement for the rail project until she has fully vetted it.

The New York Times reported on Feb. 17 that the Federal Transit Administration pulled \$70 million in stimulus money from a planned expansion of commuter rail service in San Francisco because the rail agency did not properly study the project's impact.

Better we do it right the first time than risk having funds yanked later.

*Lynne Matusow
Honolulu*

KITV.com

Honolulu Council Chairman In Rail Discussions in D.C.

Chair Todd Apo Joins Mayor For Mass Transit Meeting With FTA

POSTED: 2:13 pm HST February 25, 2010

UPDATED: 2:58 pm HST February 25, 2010

HONOLULU -- Honolulu Council Chairman Todd Apo will be in Washington, on Friday to meet with the Federal Transit Administration for discussions on Honolulu's High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project.

Apo also plans to meet with the Senate appropriations staff to discuss the project's funding, including the recent \$1.55 billion appropriated for Honolulu.

"The main goal is to obtain information directly from those making decisions about our project. I want to understand their perspective on the Environmental Impact Statement, including what is needed to finalize it," Apo said. "This information will prove helpful for the Council as we move into our budget process, and to our residents, who have heard conflicting accounts of the FTA's position."

Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann invited Apo to attend this week's meetings, which were scheduled in conjunction with the mayor's trip to the Capitol.

"Our rail project remains vital to Honolulu. For today's jobs, tomorrow's future in transportation and land use and our overall continued growth. Providing opportunities for today's youth to have a home and a job in Hawaii remains a goal for all of us," Apo said.

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Council approves \$8,000 for Washington rail trip

By [B.J. Reyes](#)

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Feb 25, 2010

The City Council gave final approval yesterday to the use of up to \$8,000 in city transit funds to pay for four Council members to visit Washington, D.C., next month on a fact-finding mission on Honolulu's rail transit project.

Council members Todd Apo, Ikaika Anderson, Romy Cachola and Ann Kobayashi plan to visit March 6 to 10 to meet with officials from the Federal Transit Administration.

The measure was opposed by Councilman Charles Djou, who previously characterized the trip as a "junket," saying members should use funds from the \$16,000 budgeted to each for miscellaneous expenses.

"I know \$8,000 isn't a huge amount of money, but if we're wasting just \$1 of taxpayer money, it's far too much," Djou said yesterday.

Council members say the trip and meetings with FTA officials are needed because of conflicting statements by political leaders over federal backing of the \$5.5 billion rail project.

Gov. Linda Lingle says federal officials are wary of the financial plan for Oahu's proposed rail system, while Mayor Mufi Hannemann says it is on track.

Resolution 10-37 approves the use of funds from \$50,000 set aside in the Council's budget for hiring a transit analyst.

Each Council member would be limited to \$2,000 for airfare, meals, transportation and up to two nights of hotel accommodations.

In other business, the Council gave preliminary approval to bills banning unpermitted camping-style tents and shopping carts in public parks. Opponents, including the American Civil Liberties Union of Hawaii, argued the bills target homeless and that the Council should spend more time examining solutions to homelessness.

The Council also approved a bill to assess hefty fines for improperly disposing of bulky waste items. The measure currently has an unspecified amount for the fine; lawmakers are hoping to solicit more public input on the bill.

The bills now go back to the Executive Matters and Legal Affairs Committee for further vetting.

Find this article at:

http://www.starbulletin.com/news/20100225_council_approves_8000_for_washington_rail_trip.html

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.



ISLAND COMMENTARY

Using old OR&L path for rail not practical

By Wayne Yoshioka

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Feb 25, 2010

Kioni Dudley, apparently without having done any significant research or due diligence, proposes using the old Oahu Railway & Land (OR&L) right-of-way for the Honolulu rail transit route ("Rail route, agenda scrutinized," Star-Bulletin, Island Commentary, Feb. 15).

Perhaps Mr. Dudley should ask the residents living in the Ewa Plain what they think about his proposal, since it would put a major construction project on their doorstep. It would displace dozens of families and businesses in that area to construct stations, park-and-ride lots, and other facilities needed for the project.

This is one of the many drawbacks the city discovered when, in response to community comments, we studied building the rail line along the former OR&L right-of-way.

Other issues included conflicts with the utility corridor underneath the OR&L right-of-way, as well as federal law that prevents the use of recreational and historic resources for transportation purposes. The old OR&L line travels through the Ewa historic district that has many restrictions as to what can be built or developed there. For example, those restrictions forced the state to realign the North-South Road away from the historic Ewa Villages area. There is also the question of access to the rail. Putting the rail route along the Waipahu shoreline, as Mr. Dudley suggests, would make the system less accessible to all development mauka of Farrington and Kamehameha highways and squander an opportunity for connections between cars, buses and the rail.

Mr. Dudley also criticized what he called "inadequate" park-and-rides at rail stations along the west end of the rail route. The project will provide thousands of park-and-ride spaces, but, more important, city bus service will be revamped once the rail service is in place. Instead of the buses being used for long commutes between West Oahu and town, they will be reassigned to shorter shuttle runs at each community rail station.

His claim that rail will deface Waipahu flies in the face of the Waipahu neighborhood board, which has made rail and transit-oriented development its priority issue, and has endorsed the city's plan.

Mr. Dudley's claim of 142,000 cars from West Oahu to town on the H-1 freeway during rush hour is ridiculous. It is physically impossible because it would require 70 lanes of traffic.

Finally, for Mr. Dudley to say that rail won't ease traffic congestion and won't help commuters shows a profound lack of understanding. One of the main goals of this project is, and always has been, to

increase mobility for west side commuters. Rail will reduce travel times, take 30,000 cars off the roads and save commuters money on gas and vehicles maintenance.

Wayne Yoshioka is director of the city's Department of Transportation Services.

Find this article at:

http://www.starbulletin.com/editorials/20100225_using_old_orl_path_for_rail_not_practical.html

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Letters to the Editor

For Thursday, February 25, 2010

Rail will provide no net benefit

It should behoove our unions and legislators who are loudly clamoring for a start on rail transit to hire some economists rather than political agitators. Why?

First, we know that neither our city nor our state has the money to pay for it. So, they suggest taking money out of my and my neighbors' pockets to fill their members' pockets. They call that taxation. Really, they should call it pick-pocketing, or possibly even thievery. But let's look at their misguided logic.

Even an entry-level economist will tell them the following: By taking money out of my and my neighbors' pockets, we can't buy an aloha shirt, thus having a seamstress lose her job. We can't get our car repaired, thus having a mechanic lose his job. We can't go to the movies, thus having the ticket sales gal lose her job. In terms of economic advancement we have accomplished nothing.

Now they claim the feds will contribute a good chunk. But the feds don't have that money either.

Did we achieve any economic benefit? None whatsoever. Let's stop it before we drown in further debt.

Gerhard C. Hamm
Waialae Iki

Pacific Business News (Honolulu) - February 25, 2010
</pacific/stories/2010/02/22/daily34.html>

PACIFIC BUSINESS NEWS

Thursday, February 25, 2010, 1:00pm HAST

Hawaii gas prices remain stable

Pacific Business News (Honolulu)

Hawaii gas prices showed little change over the past week, according to [AAA Hawaii](#).

The average gas price rose by a cent a gallon statewide since a week ago, averaging \$3.44 a gallon.

The average gas price in Honolulu, \$3.33 per gallon for regular unleaded, was unchanged from last week, but 96 cents higher than a year ago.

The average gas price in Hilo on the Big Island was \$3.50 a gallon, three cents less than last week and 96 cents more than the same time last year.

Meanwhile, the average price in Wailuku on Maui was \$3.80 a gallon, a penny more than last week and \$1.20 more than last year.

“Low interest rates, weak employment and moderate improvements in manufacturing have convinced policymakers that the economy is still on shaky footing, depressing the U.S. dollar and keeping oil prices elevated,” said Chris Olvera, AAA’s acting branch manager in Hawaii.

AAA Hawaii Weekend Gas Watch is a weekly snapshot of gas prices statewide. Prices are calculated from fleet vehicle credit card transactions at more than 100,000 stations around the country, including Hawaii.

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Letters to the Editor

For Friday, February 26, 2010

No reason Lingle should delay rail

After reading about the mayor's update on the rail project, I'm more convinced than ever that the time is right to move forward with an elevated rail system as currently proposed.

The federal government says Honolulu is in line to receive substantial financial support. The Honolulu Business Roundtable says the financial plan is sound. The record shows an elevated train would be much safer than at-grade transit. Polling of the community has reflected consistent support for the project. Thousands of our citizens would have good paying construction jobs spread over the next several years.

Furthermore — and this is perhaps most important from a funding perspective — U.S. Sen. Dan Inouye, who chairs the United States Senate Appropriations Committee has expressed his wholehearted support.

So under what pretense could the governor refuse to accept the project's final EIS?

J. M. Comcowich
Kailua

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Posted on: Saturday, February 27, 2010

Resolution on rail issues near

Federal transit official trying to reach deal so final EIS can be released

Advertiser Staff

The Federal Transit Administration expects to resolve issues holding up the release of the final environmental impact statement for the city's rail project soon, according to Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann and City Council Chairman Todd Apo, who met yesterday with FTA Administrator Peter Rogoff.

During the meeting in Washington, D.C., Rogoff told the two that he "is working quickly and aggressively with the Federal Aviation Administration to reach a resolution on the rail alignment through the airport," according to a news release issued by the city yesterday.

The FAA is reviewing the project's impact on runway protection zones among other issues. The city had expected to start construction on the planned \$5.3 billion East Kapolei to Ala Moana route in December, however, that date has been delayed by a prolonged federal review.

The city recently notified visitors to the rail project's Internet site that construction was expected to start in "late 2010." The city now says that the update was erroneous. Construction is scheduled to begin sometime this year, the city said without being more specific.

Whenever a final environmental impact statement is released, it will go to Gov. Linda Lingle for her review. At that point, Lingle plans to conduct an independent analysis of city tax

revenue forecasts that are the basis of the project's financial plan. Her concern is that the project could hurt the state's finances if it fails.

Lingle has suggested the city consider building the rail partially at street level to cut costs, given tax collections for the rail have been less than anticipated. Hannemann has said that a review of street-level rail would delay the project by one to two years. Delays are expected to cost \$100 million a year, Hannemann has said.

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NO, I have some rules!

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Letters to the Editor

For Saturday, February 27, 2010

Governor right about rail delay

The governor's stock has gone up with me with her insistence on revisiting the rail idea. In these depressed financial times, it's the more sensible way to go, as well as not as intrusive on our landscape. A land rail will still create a lot of construction jobs. Has the maintenance issue been something the elevated rail supporters have dodged? Other questions for the mayor:

- » Does the land idea negate so many jobs, or is that a lame argument for elevated rail?
- » Does the maintenance issue not concern you?
- » Doesn't the elevated rail budget made in much better times concern you, or are you saying "Full speed ahead, forget the future financial problems"?

Palani Luke
Honolulu

Letters to the Editor

For Sunday, February 28, 2010

Does anyone believe we can afford rail?

With all the talk of rail, does anyone believe that the City & County government can pull this off without going way over budget and running the project way late?

There have been numerous nickel-and-dime projects in comparison to the \$5.3 billion rail project that have run way late and very much over budget, such as the police shooting range in Waipahu, the sewer project throughout Kailua and the renovations at the Honolulu Hale complex.

I am worried that, down the road, we as property owners and residents alike will pay through higher property taxes and any other way that government sees fit.

Edwin Anderson
Kailua

Letters to the Editor

For Sunday, February 28, 2010

Rail spending needs oversight

How can the taxpayers on Oahu get through the PR firewall that surrounds the Hannemann administration's rail project?

What has caused the delay in the final environmental impact statement? Why will it take months to finish the final EIS?

How much money is needed to fix the problem or problems? Did the city make early mistakes that now have to be corrected?

There is no oversight built into the laws that allowed the Hannemann administration to tax us for 15 years. My family and yours will pay approximately \$400 per year in transit excise tax for 12 more years. The city has spent more than \$100 million on rail. Was the money well spent?

Can't some government agency force the mayor to tell us how he is spending our taxes?

John Brizdle
Palolo Valley

Honolulu Rail Transit Project



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- **When will trains run?**

- From 4 a.m. to midnight
- Every 3 minutes at morning and afternoon rush hour
- 6 minutes at mid-day
- 10 minutes at night

- **How fast will trains travel?**

- Over 55 mph top speed;
30 mph average with stops



Operating Details

- **How much will a ride cost?**
 - Same as TheBus; one-way transfers valid on both
- **How do I get to a rail station?**
 - Every station will have bus stops, bike paths and walking paths
 - Four park-and-rides totaling 4,100 parking spaces



Hawaii's economy

- Worst economy since Great Depression
- Absence of major shovel-ready projects

Posted on: Tuesday, February 16, 2010

Hawaii hotel industry had dismal year in '09

New report cites revenue losses last year at \$741M, lowest rate of occupancy since at least 1987



Rail Transit

- State's best economic stimulus
- 2010 impact: 4,000 jobs
- Congressman Oberstar: "Honolulu's rail program is the #1 transportation project in America."

FTA leader Peter Rogoff

- “there is some considerable financial strength to this project”
- “our expectation is that the final contribution will be \$1.55 billion”
- “we would not have included funding in the President’s budget for this project if we thought it was falling off the rails”

Finances On Track

- Reviewed by consultants hired by FTA
 - Booz Allen Hamilton
 - Jacobs Engineering
 - Porter & Associates
- Independently reviewed by local business leaders
 - Hawaii Business Roundtable
- GET surcharge revenue 99.5% of projections
- Costs have been lower than projected: saved \$90 million

Final EIS Status

- Final EIS is complete
- 13 State agencies have been consulted
- Two issues remain: Navy and FAA
- Admin draft of Final EIS transmitted to Governor via OEQC in December

At-Grade is Not An Option

- Won't provide service Honolulu needs
- Revising EIS for at-grade will take far longer than 6 months
- FTA: it would put us back at square one
- Cost of delay is large:
 - 1 year: about \$200 million
 - 2 years: \$ 400 million

At-Grade Takes Traffic Lanes



Houston

At-grade trains can take up to 3 traffic lanes from cars and trucks

At-Grade Affects Underground Utilities



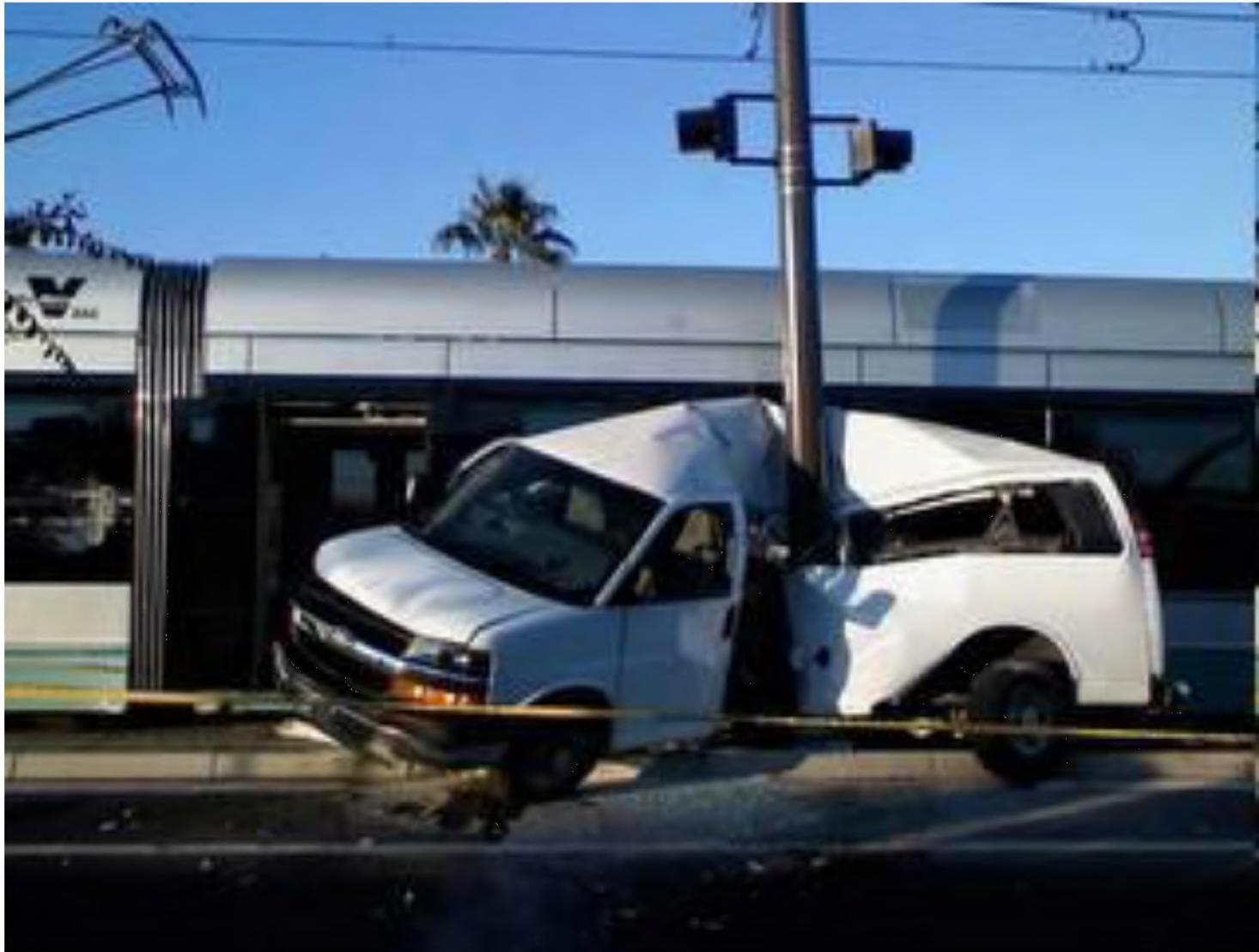
At-rail rail requires relocating all underground utilities

At-Grade More Likely to Impact Iwi



At-grade rail requires excavating a trench for trains

Phoenix: 52 car-train collisions in 2009



Houston: Feb. 8, 2010

Officials: 9 injured after Metro bus collides with light rail train



What Could Elevated Rail Look Like in Honolulu?

Kamehameha Highway at Ka'ahumanu Street



Kamehameha Highway near Radford Drive



SIMULATION

Crossing Nuʻuanu Stream



Halekauwila Street at Mother Waldron Park



Honolulu Rail Transit Station Designs

MAKAI | *Entry View – East Kapolei Station*



MAUKA | *Entry View – UH West O‘ahu Station*



Waipahu Transit Center Station



West Loch Station



LCC Station



Pearlridge Station



Canopy Design for Stations



Canopy Design for Stations



Rail Transit Resources

- Monthly newsletter
- www.honolulustransit.org
- Twitter.com/HNL_RT D (@HNL_RT D)
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Pearl Highlands

Rail Station Community Workshop

February 4, 2010

Pearl Highlands Intermedia School



RAIL STATIONS COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

Agenda

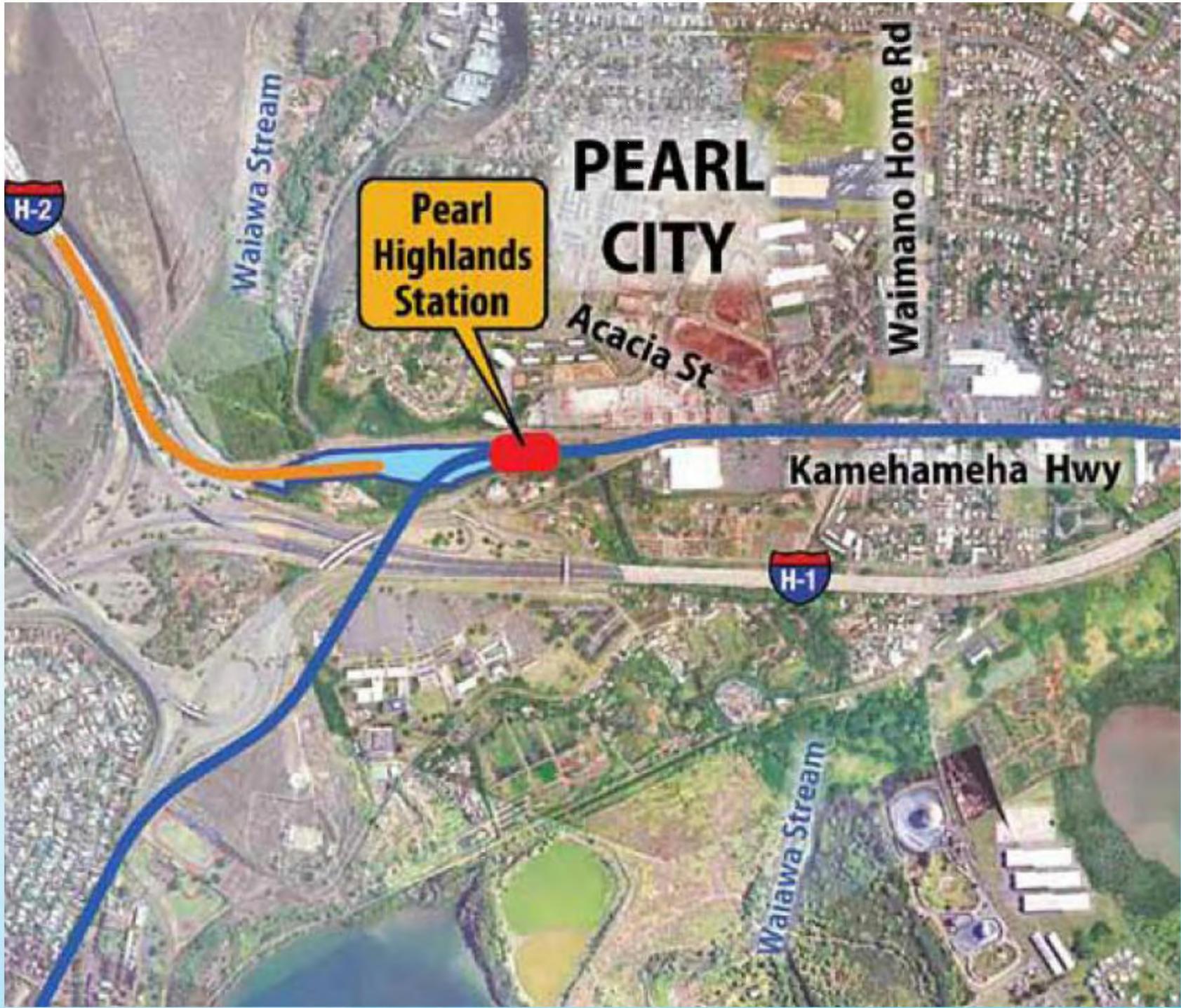
- Project Overview & Schedule
- Pearl Highlands Station
- Community Ideas & Breakout Sessions
- Summary of Breakout Sessions
- Next Steps – Future Meetings



HONOLULU RAIL TRANSIT



RAIL STATIONS COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS



R A I L S T A T I O N S C O M M U N I T Y W O R K S H O P S

Travel Times from Pearl Highlands

Destination	Travel Time
Kapolei	16 minutes
Leeward Community College	6 minutes
Airport	12 minutes
Downtown	24 minutes
Ala Moana Center	24 minutes



Final EIS Update

- 99% done
- 13 State agencies consulted
- Resolving issues with Programmatic Agreement
- State OECQ hearings: 90% positive on EIS
- Administrative EIS delivered to Governor via OECQ in Dec. 2009



Project Schedule

- 2010: Final EIS accepted
- 2010: Groundbreaking in Kapolei
- 2011: Construction begins on Kamehameha Highway
- 2012: Limited service between LCC and Waipahu
- 2012: Start Pearl Highlands station construction



Project Schedule

- 2014: Station opens
- 2014: Service starts from Pearl Highlands to Kapolei
- 2019: Entire 20-mile route opens



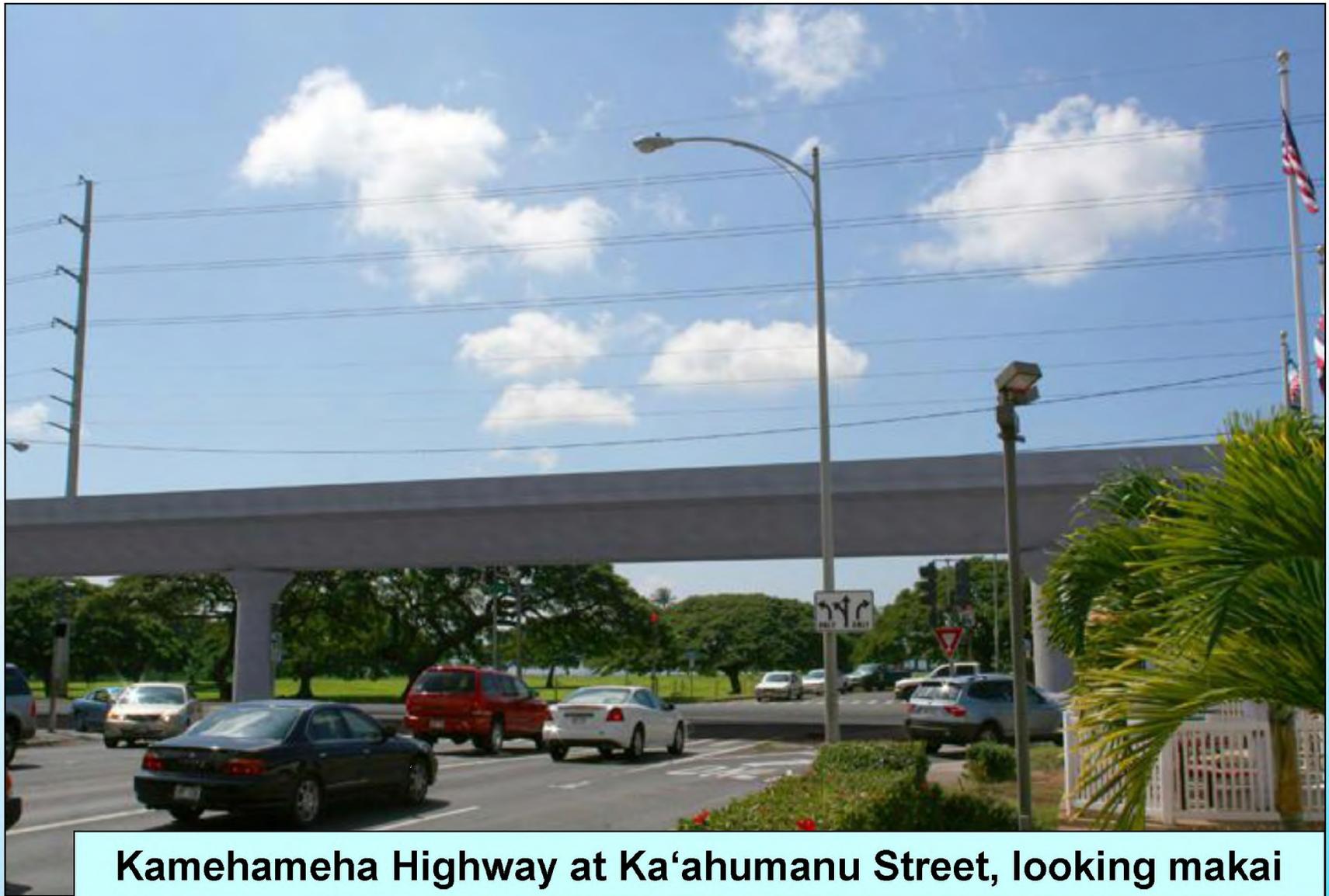
Elevated Guideway Simulation



Kamehameha Highway at Kaonohi Street, looking makai



Elevated Guideway Simulation



Kamehameha Highway at Ka'ahumanu Street, looking makai



RAIL STATIONS COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

Pearl Highlands Station



RAIL STATIONS COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

Regional Transit Center

- Hub for Pearl City and central O'ahu commuters
- Access from major traffic arteries
- All transportation modes
- Will reduce traffic congestion



Transit Center Features

- Parking garage: 1,600 spaces
- Bus transit: 15 bus routes
- Rail ridership: 22,000 a day
- New H-2 freeway on- and off-ramps
- New bike paths and bike racks



Transit Center Features

- Pedestrian bridge
- 36 drop off spaces
- Internal access: 5 elevators, 3 escalators, 7 stairways
- Station attendant, rest room, ticket vending machines
- ADA compliant, assistant phones, security cameras



Regional Access



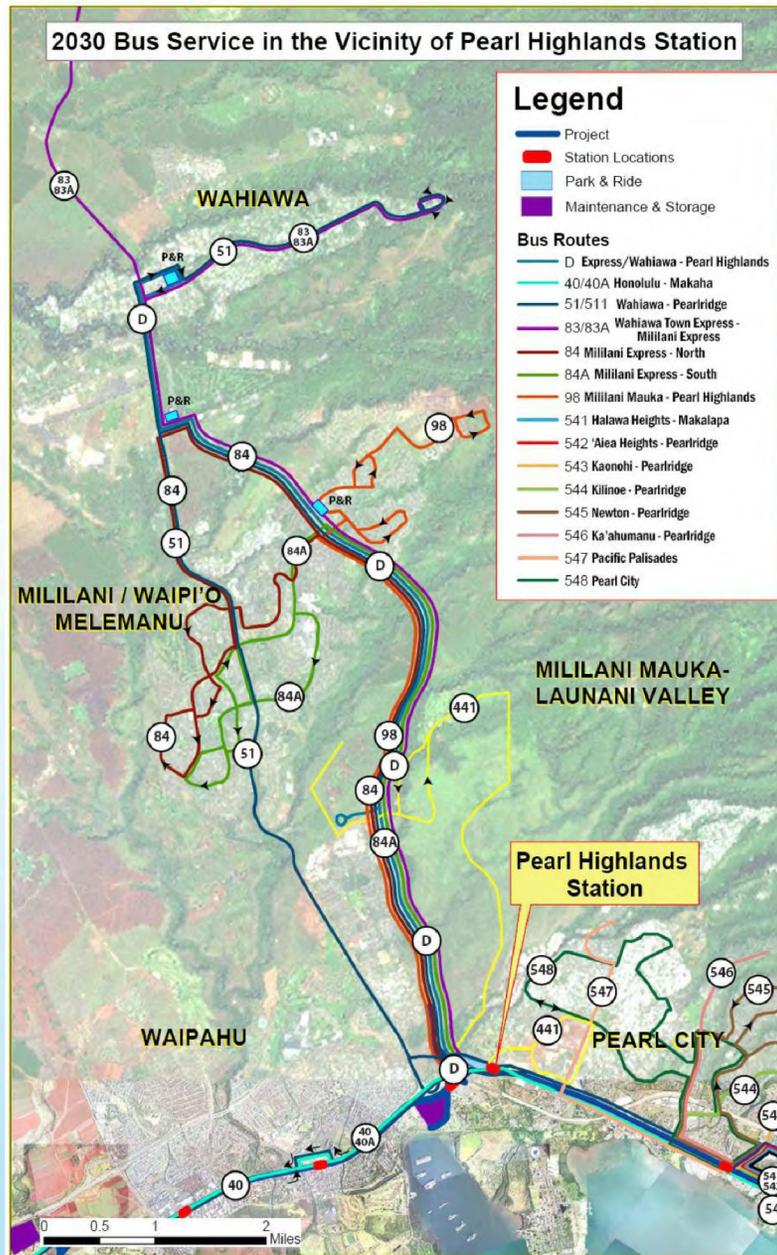
R A I L S T A T I O N S C O M M U N I T Y W O R K S H O P S

Average Transit Travel Times to Downtown

From:	Current Rush Hour	With Rail in Future
Pearl Highlands	71 minutes	39 minutes
Mililani	105 minutes	57 minutes
Waipio	78 minutes	47 minutes
Wahiawa	85 minutes	56 minutes

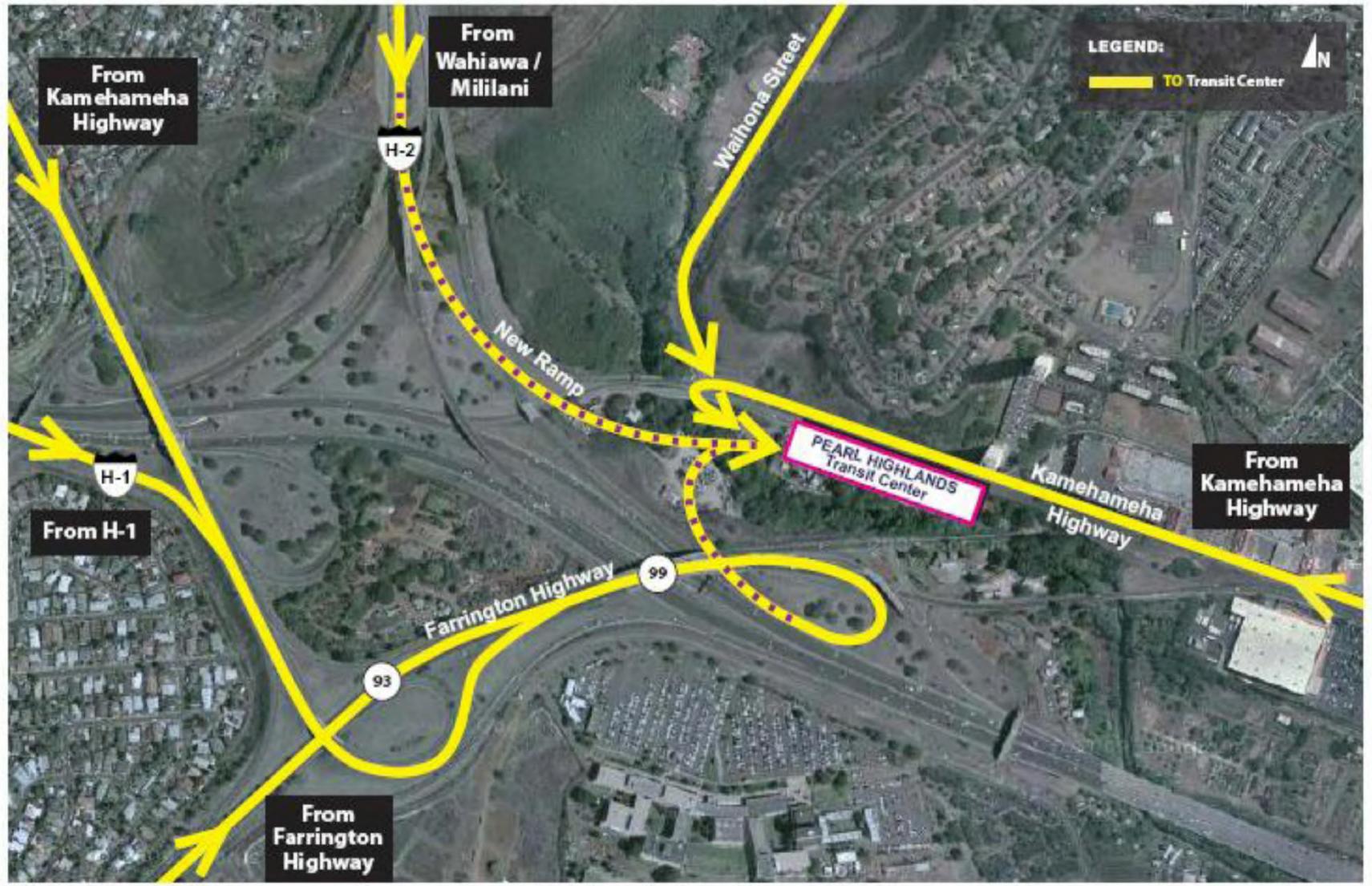


Connecting Bus Routes

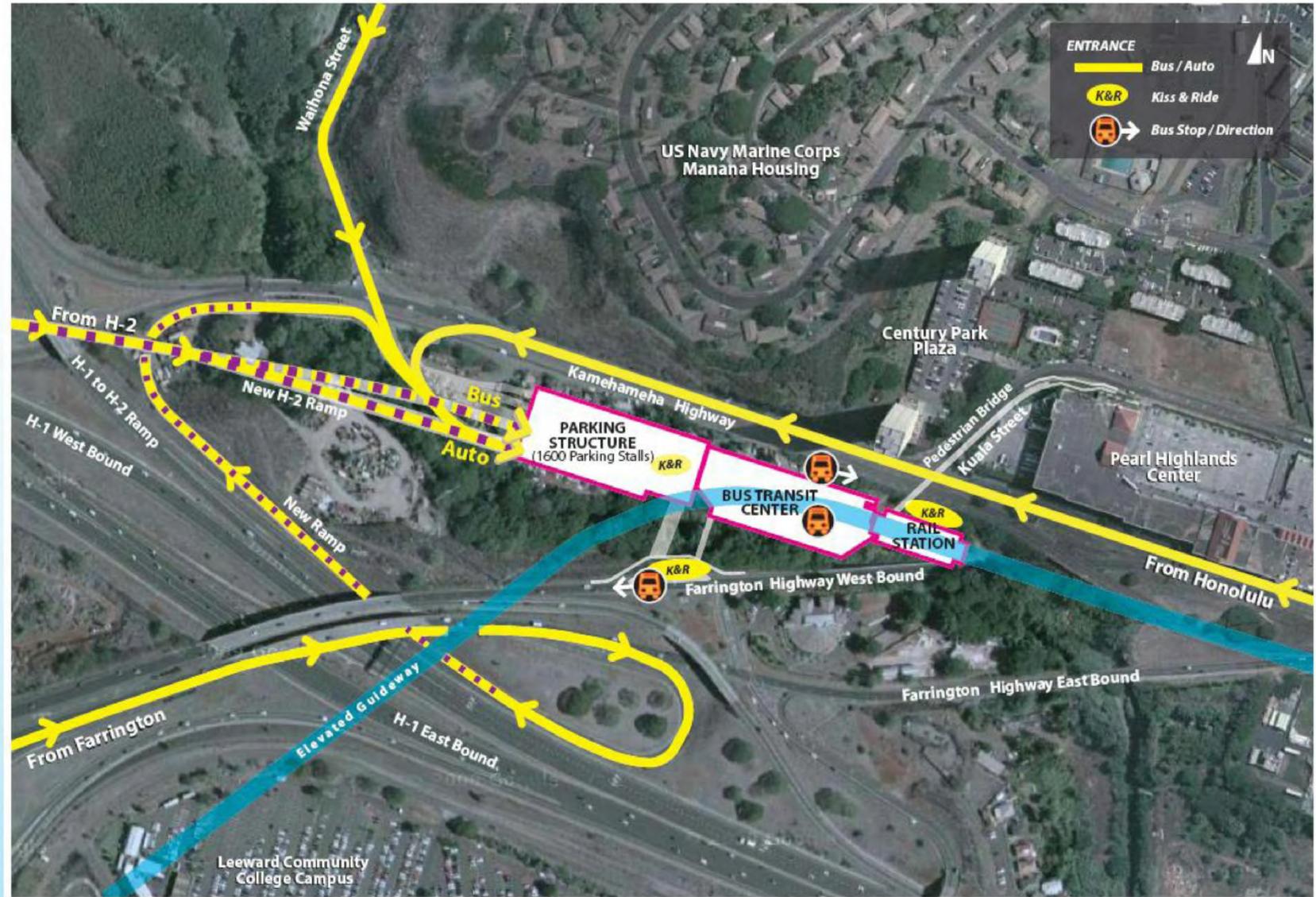


R A I L S T A T I O N S C O M M U N I T Y W O R K S H O P S

Ramp & Roadway Access

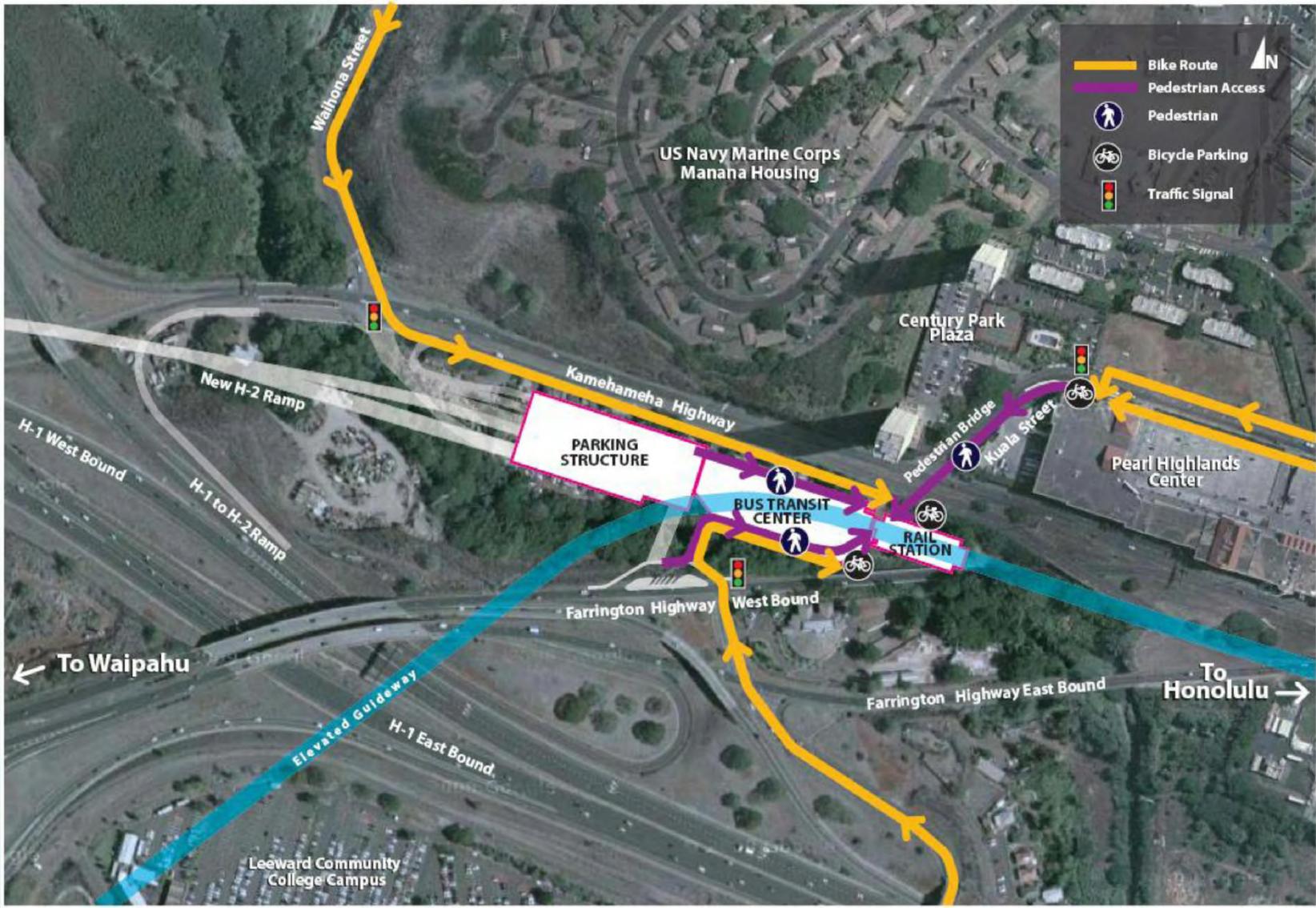


Bus & Auto Access

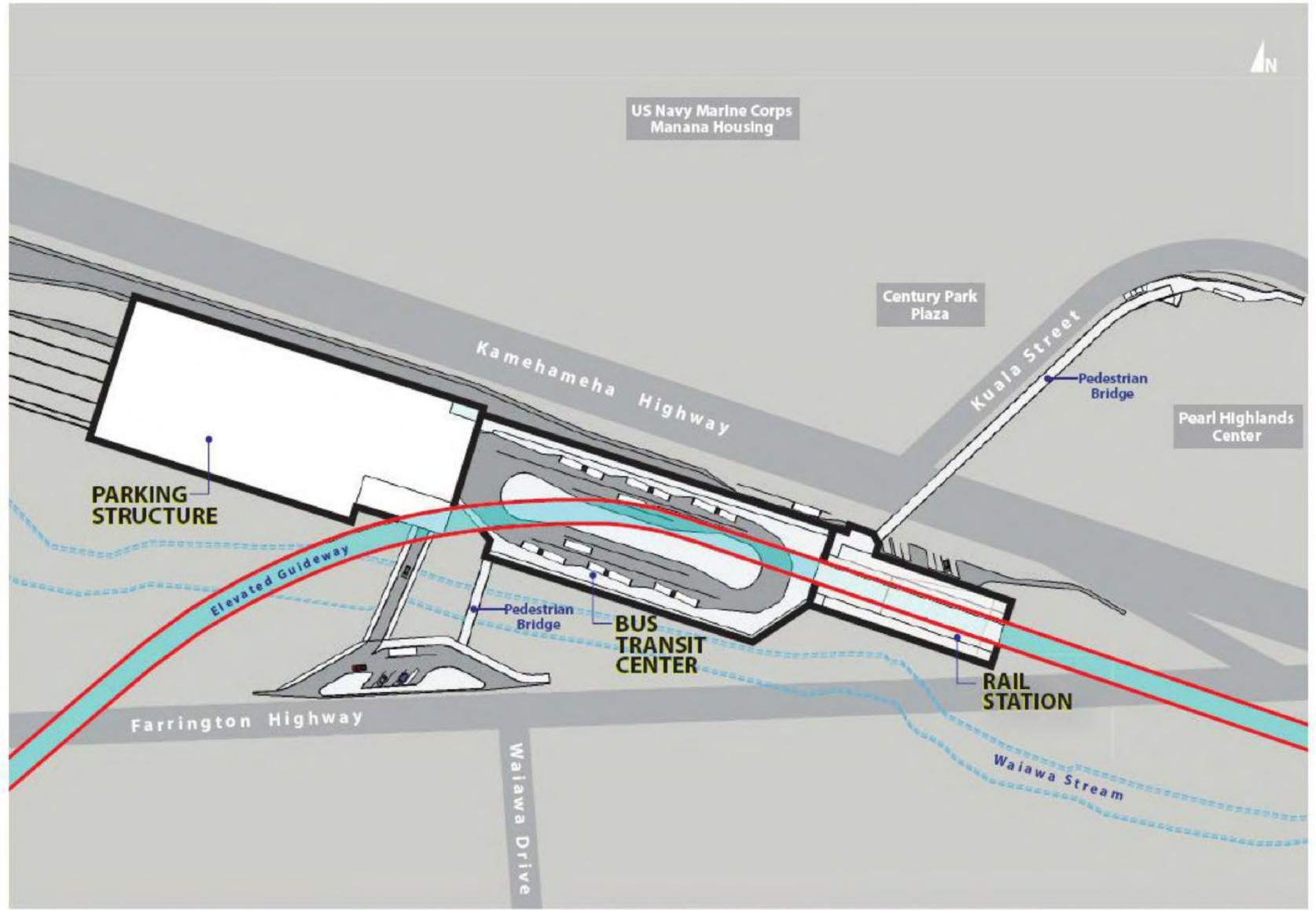


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Bike & Pedestrian Access

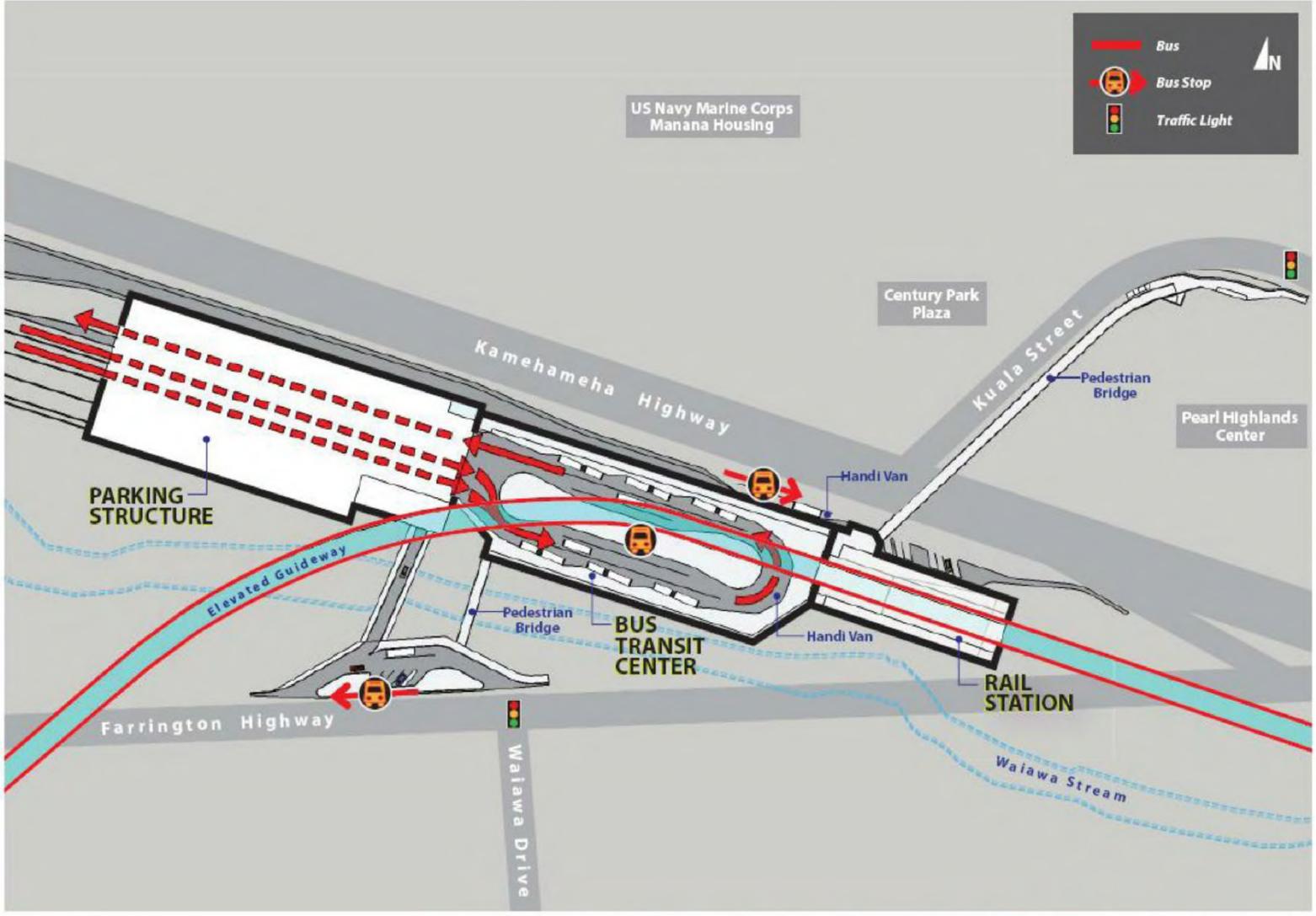


Station Plan

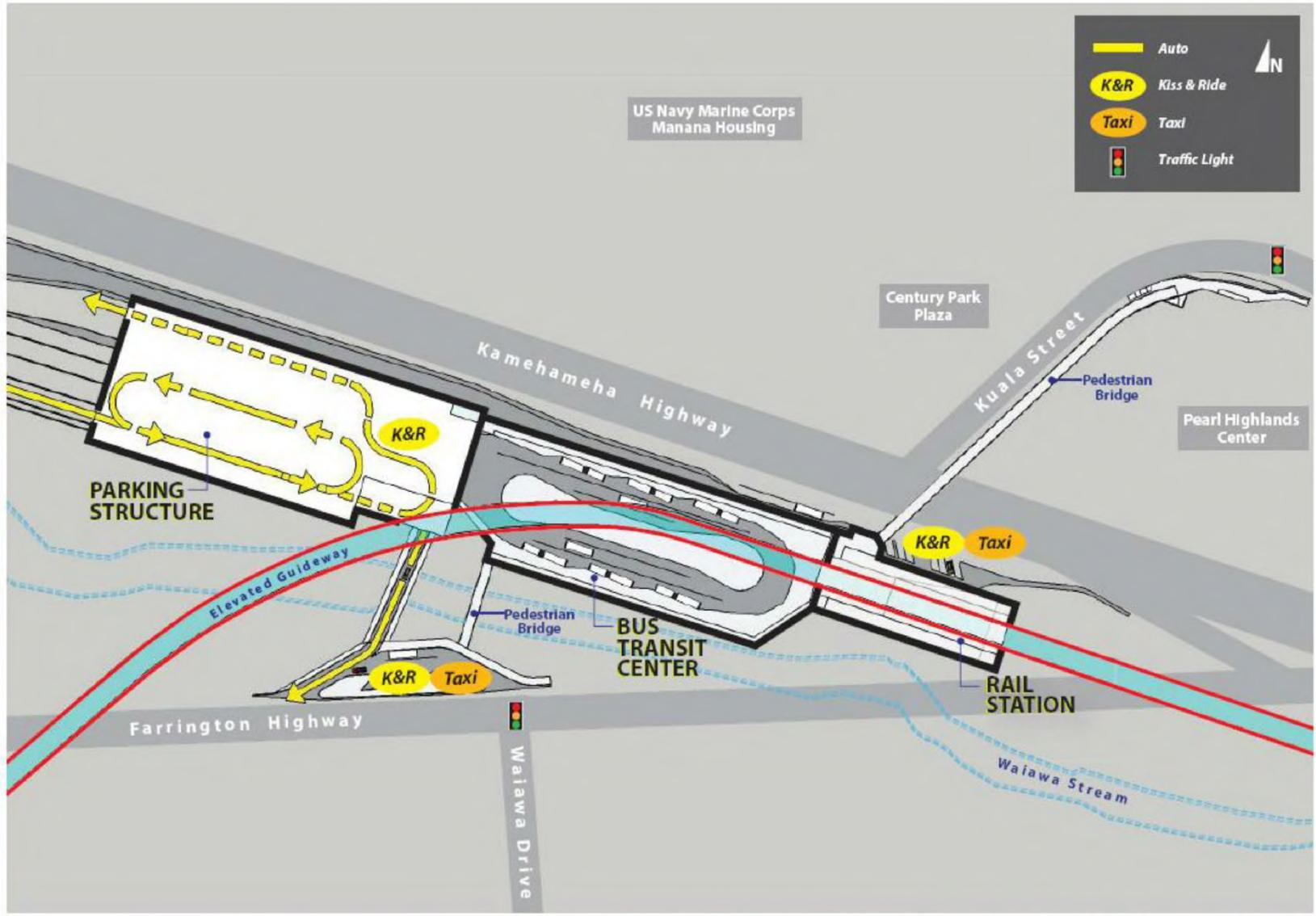


RAIL STATIONS COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

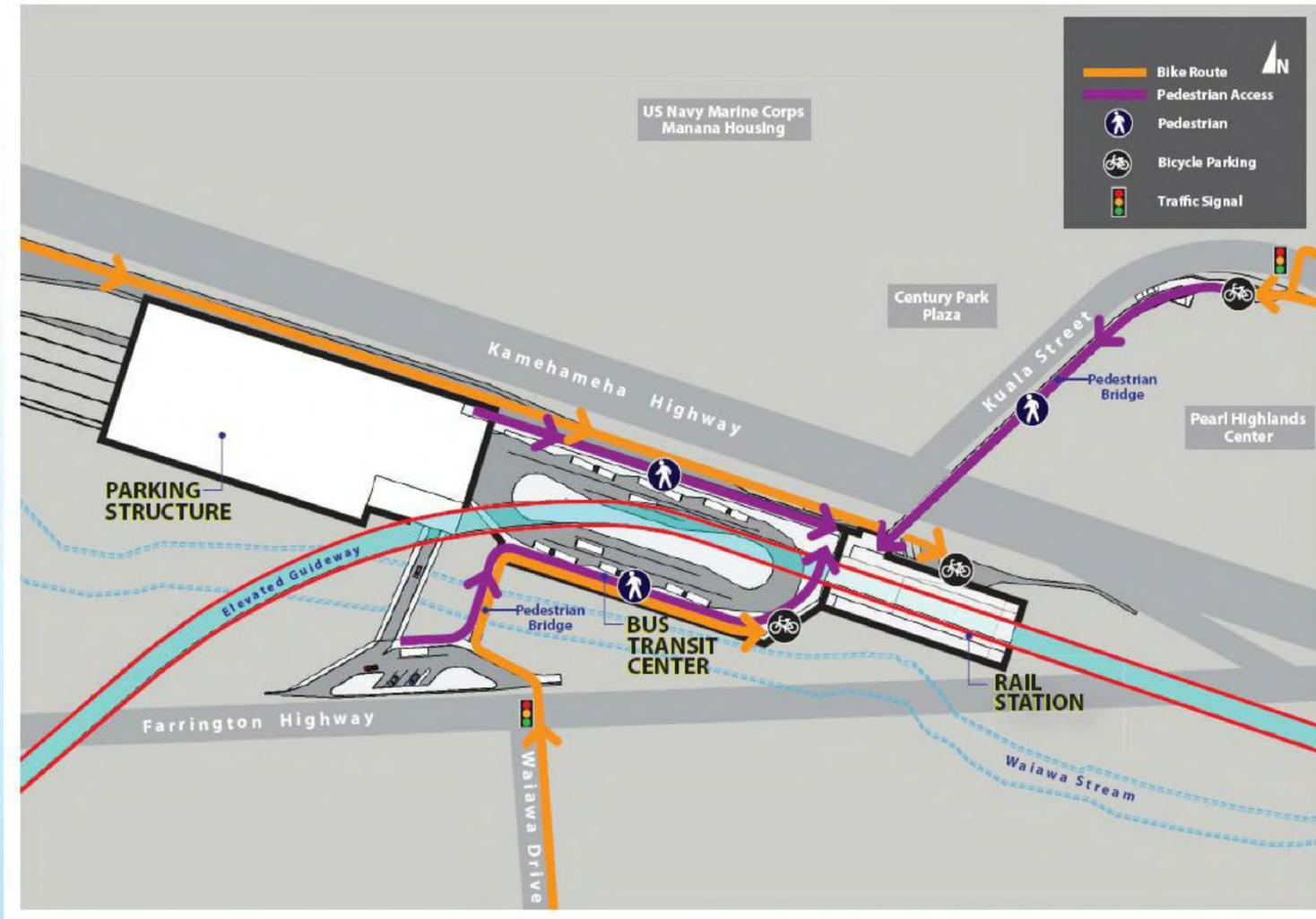
Bus Stop Locations



Parking, Kiss & Rides, Taxi

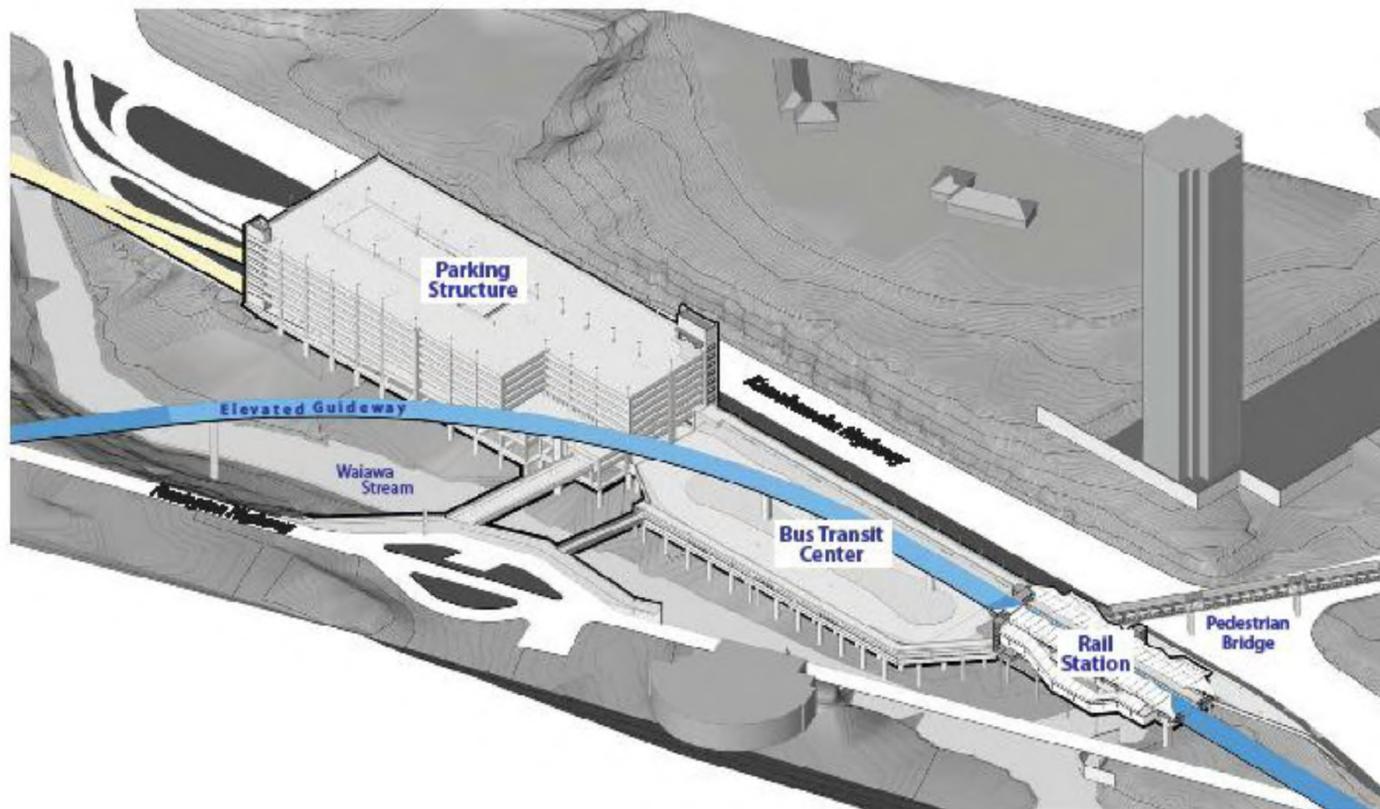


Bike & Pedestrian Paths



RAIL STATIONS COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

Station Detail



HONOLULU HIGH-CAPACITY TRANSIT CORRIDOR PROJECT

06 3D Perspective

PEARL HIGHLANDS Station Workshop

February 4, 2010



RAIL STATIONS COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

Canopy Design for Stations: Inspiration



Credit: Painted by Herb Kawainui Kane



RAIL STATIONS COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

Canopy Design for Stations



R A I L S T A T I O N S C O M M U N I T Y W O R K S H O P S

Canopy Design for Stations



R A I L S T A T I O N S C O M M U N I T Y W O R K S H O P S

Canopy Design for Stations



RAIL STATIONS COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

Breakout Sessions



RAIL STATIONS COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

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info@honolulustransit.org



RAIL STATIONS COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

Breakout Summaries



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Next Steps

**Pearl Highlands Intermediate School
Cafeteria
March 18**

6:30 to 9 p.m.



RAIL STATIONS COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS