FTA Sample Letter of Invitation

U.S. Department
of Transportation
Federal Transit
Administration

[Insert Date]

Mr. Abraham Wong, Division Administrator
Federal Highway Administration, Hawaii Division
U.S. Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 50206
Honolulu, Hawaii 96850

Re: Invitation to Participate in the Environmental Review Process for the Honolulu-High Capacity Transit Corridor Project, Honolulu, Hawaii

Dear Mr. Wong:

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA), in cooperation with the City and County of Honolulu Department of Transportation Services (DTS), is initiating the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project. The proposed project is to implement transit improvements that potentially include high-capacity transit service in a 25-mile travel corridor between Kapolei and the University of Hawaii at Manoa (UH Manoa) and Waikiki. The purpose of the project, as currently defined, is to provide improved person-mobility in the highly congested east-west corridor along Oahu's south shore. The project would provide faster, more reliable public transportation services than those services currently operating in mixed-flow traffic. The project would support the goals of the regional transportation plan by serving areas designated for urban growth. The project would also provide an alternative to private automobile travel and improve linkages between Kapolei, Honolulu's urban center, UH Manoa, Waikiki and the urban area in between. The enclosed scoping information packet that was prepared for scoping meetings held on December 12 and 13, 2005 provides more details.

Work on an Alternatives Analysis (AA) that is evaluating the following four project alternatives is currently ongoing:

- No-Build
- Transportation System Management
- Managed Lanes
- Fixed Guideway

The results of the AA are to be transmitted to the City Council by November 1, 2006. On the basis of the AA and the public and agency comments received, the City Council will select the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for further analysis in the draft EIS. Subsequent to the selection of the LPA, EIS scoping meetings will be held. A coordination plan and schedule will be prepared at that time.

Section 6002 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users establishes an enhanced environmental review process for certain FTA projects, increasing the transparency of the process, as well as opportunities for participation. The

requirements of section 6002 apply to the project that is the subject of this memorandum. As part of the environmental review process for this project, the lead agencies must identify, as early as practicable, any other Federal and non-Federal agencies that may have an interest in the project, and invite such agencies to become participating agencies in the environmental review process.[1] Your agency has been identified preliminarily as one that may have an interest in this project, because of your responsibility for resources that may be affected by potential project alternatives; accordingly, you are being extended this invitation to become actively involved as a participating agency in the environmental review process for the project.

As a participating agency, you will be afforded the opportunity, together with the public, to be involved in defining the purpose of and need for the project, as well as in determining the range of alternatives to be considered for the project. In addition, you will be asked to:

- Provide input on the impact assessment methodologies and level of detail in your agency's area of expertise;
- Participate in coordination meetings, conference calls, and joint field reviews, as appropriate; and
- Review and comment on sections of the pre-draft or pre-final environmental documents to communicate any concerns of your agency on the adequacy of the document, the alternatives considered, and the anticipated impacts and mitigation.

Clarification of your position on the following two issues would require your direct involvement:

1. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Funding of Managed Lanes facility

   The Managed Lane Alternative would include the construction of a two-lane grade separated viaduct or roadway between Waipahu and Downtown Honolulu. One of the operational scenarios includes the facility being used by buses, high-occupancy vehicles and toll-paying single-occupant vehicles. We have determined that this scenario would not be eligible for federal transit funding. Therefore, we would like to explore the possible FHWA funding for the design and construction of this facility.

2. Design Exceptions

   Proposed modifications to the H-1 and H-2 corridors include elements that may not meet current design criteria and standards found in the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), A Policy on Geometric Design of Highway and Streets, 1994. Some of the modifications proposed that may require design exceptions include new auxiliary lanes and realignment of existing freeway lanes to accommodate construction of managed lane columns and access ramps. Where deviations become necessary, we would need acceptance of design exceptions and confirmation that the proposed design exceptions would not preclude the project from being eligible for federal funding.

Your agency does not have to accept this invitation. If, however, you elect not to become a participating agency, you must decline this invitation in writing, indicating that your agency has no jurisdiction or authority with respect to the project, no expertise or information relevant to the project, and does not intend to submit comments on the project. The declination may be transmitted electronically to [insert e-mail address]; please include the title of the official responding. In order to give Federal agencies adequate opportunity to weigh the relevance of

[1] Designation as a "participation agency" does not imply that the participating agency supports the proposed project or has any jurisdiction over, or special expertise concerning the proposed project or its potential impacts. A "participating agency" differs from a "cooperating agency," which is defined in regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act as "any Federal agency other than a lead agency which has jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental impact involved in a proposal (or a reasonable alternative) for legislation or other major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment." 40 C.F.R. § 1508.5.

their participation in this environmental review process, written responses to this invitation are not due until after the close of the scoping process. You may use the attached Participating Agency Designation form to accept or decline this invitation.

Additional information will be forthcoming during the public scoping process, notification of which will be provided in the near future. If you have questions regarding this invitation, please contact [insert name and telephone number].

Sincerely,

[Insert FTA Regional Planning Director]

Enclosures: Participating Agency Designation Form
Scoping Information Packet

cc: Mr. Kenneth Hamayasu
City and County of Honolulu Department of Transportation Services

FTA Sample Letter of Invitation

U.S. Department
of Transportation
Federal Transit
Administration

[Insert Date]

Mr. Rodney Haraga, Director
Department of Transportation
State of Hawaii
869 Punchbowl Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Re: Invitation to Participate in the Environmental Review Process for the Honolulu-High Capacity Transit Corridor Project, Honolulu, Hawaii

Dear Mr. Haraga:

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA), in cooperation with the City and County of Honolulu Department of Transportation Services (DTS), is initiating the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project. The proposed project is to implement transit improvements that potentially include high-capacity transit service in a 25-mile travel corridor between Kapolei and the University of Hawaii at Manoa (UH Manoa) and Waikiki. The purpose of the project, as currently defined, is to provide improved person-mobility in the highly congested east-west corridor along Oahu's south shore. The project would provide faster, more reliable public transportation services than those services currently operating in mixed-flow traffic. The project would support the goals of the regional transportation plan by serving areas designated for urban growth. The project would also provide an alternative to private automobile travel and improve linkages between Kapolei, Honolulu's urban center, UH Manoa, Waikiki and the urban area in between. The enclosed scoping information packet that was prepared for scoping meetings held on December 12 and 13, 2005 provides more details.

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requirements of section 6002 apply to the project that is the subject of this memorandum. As part of the environmental review process for this project, the lead agencies must identify, as early as practicable, any other Federal and non-Federal agencies that may have an interest in the project, and invite such agencies to become participating agencies in the environmental review process.[2] Your agency has been identified preliminarily as one that may have an interest in this project, because of your responsibility for resources that may be affected by potential project alternatives; accordingly, you are being extended this invitation to become actively involved as a participating agency in the environmental review process for the project.

As a participating agency, you will be afforded the opportunity, together with the public, to be involved in defining the purpose of and need for the project, as well as in determining the range of alternatives to be considered for the project. In addition, you will be asked to:

- Provide input on the impact assessment methodologies and level of detail in your agency's area of expertise;
- Participate in coordination meetings, conference calls, and joint field reviews, as appropriate; and
- Review and comment on sections of the pre-draft or pre-final environmental documents to communicate any concerns of your agency on the adequacy of the document, the alternatives considered, and the anticipated impacts and mitigation.

Clarification of your position on proposed modifications to existing State facilities would require your direct involvement. Modifications to H-1, H-2 and other existing State facilities are being proposed as part of the Managed Lanes and Fixed Guideway Alternatives. These proposed modifications include elements that may not meet current design criteria and standards found in the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), A Policy on Geometric Design of Highway and Streets, 1994. Some of the modifications proposed that may require design exceptions include new auxiliary lanes and realignment of existing freeway lanes to accommodate construction of managed lane columns and access ramps. Where deviations become necessary, we would need acceptance of design exceptions.

Your agency does not have to accept this invitation. You may use the attached Participating Agency Designation form to accept or decline this invitation.

Additional information will be forthcoming during the public scoping process, notification of which will be provided in the near future. If you have questions regarding this invitation, please contact [insert name and telephone number].

Sincerely,

[Insert FTA Regional Planning Director]

Enclosures: Participating Agency Designation Form
Scoping Information Packet

cc: Mr. Kenneth Hamayasu
City and County of Honolulu Department of Transportation Services

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