

## Public Involvement Overview

May 2009

	Month
Hotline Calls*	45
Comment Sense Submissions/Inquiries**	45
FOIA requests	0
Speakers Bureau	32
Presentation/Events	19
Neighborhood Boards	12
TAC	0
Community meetings	1

\*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.

## May 2009 Website/Hotline Submissions\*

Submission Date	Submission Content/Notes
05/03/2009	Two questions: What is the estimated ridership of Honolulu's rail transit? What are the revenue projections? What are the sources of revenue? Thank you!
05/05/2009	We are a subcontractor for Kinkisharyo Intl. We are currently certified as a DBE with various transit agencies/authorities. We would like information on becoming DBE certified with Honolulu Rail Transit. Thank you for your attention.
05/06/2009	I shall start by saying I cannot wait for rail to be completed! Why are you sending out informational pieces on glossy paper which cannot be recycled in our own city? Thanks
05/06/2009	Will the maintenance of rolling stock, rail and facility's be done by a City work force, or will the work be done by a contractor supervised by the City using City workers. I see that 44 jobs will be put up soon will any of these be in the management of maintenance, or system safety. Mahalo.
05/06/2009	Has a supplier for the rolling stock been picked yet? I know that you will be using a wheel on rail system.
05/08/2009	Re: Rail I suppose train stations have to be large. I guess if a train is going to be thirty feet above the deck then the station has to be that high. At the floor. There is no roof in the drawing, so I assume the roof will be another thirty or so feet to the peak. That's sixty feet high for a structure the size of a football field. Pretty impressive. Pretty massive and potentially pretty ugly. Painted with graffiti it should look great. Running trains at one hundred fifty decibels and nobody should miss it. That's what Honolulu has been missing, a massive, noisy eyesore. The train system will be the latest attraction for tourism, as it will be impossible to miss seeing it, being twenty miles long. Certainly we should be able to market it as the newest truly Hawaiian attraction, along with our beautiful beaches and pristine reefs. Sincerely Grant Merritt Honolulu
05/08/2009	As a property owner in Waipahu I would like to know if eminent domain is going to be exercised. I've not seen anything on the subject and would like to know the status.
05/08/2009	1. How will businesses, that cannot stay in their present location due to the fixed guideway or train stops, be compensated for having to move their business, either permanently or temporarily? I spoke informally to Councilman Bainum regarding this since he raised the question on Kakaako. Is there a government program available for these businesses to apply to for such funding? thank you,
05/11/2009	You really should stop singing the praises of mainland light rail projects inferring that the Honolulu system will be similar. The latest example that you cite is Houston which is LIGHT RAIL at grade nothing remotely similar to your

Submission Date	Submission Content/Notes
	project. The stations are simple canopy roofs at street level. The Portland Light rail project with a metropolitan population of 2.265 million was built for 1.643 billion dollars for a cost per capita of 725 dollars. Your proposed system serving a metropolitan population of 940 million, costing 5.4 billion dollars works out to a cost per capita of well over 5,000 dollars Please explain to the people of Oahu in your newsletter how you can justify these costs. Sincerely Geoffrey Paterson
05/11/2009	From my address, you can see that I live in 'Ewa. I was wondering if there would ever be an extension of the rail going into the Ewa by Gentry area? See, I'm a prospective undergrad student for UH-Manoa starting Fall 2009 and I really support the rail. If an extension would not be possible, would you guys work together with TheBus so that there is a bus route that goes conveniently all around Ewa and Ewa Beach to the nearest East Kapolei station? I think that would help with the Ewa residents since Ewa already has worse vehicle traffic than that in Honolulu.
05/12/2009	Any future plans for rail to go to Mililani or Waikēle?
05/14/2009	Congratulations on the Rail transit Project! Please provide parking to facilitate everyone using the rail. Roving Security would deter car thefts. Also, have it well lighted in early morning and evening. Please also provide trash and recycle receptacles at every station. Make provisions for handicapped riders to have access as well as a designated place to wait on the landing so that the train operator can assist with lowering the step and securing the wheelchair. Good Luck. I hope someday to be able to ride from Kapolei to Ala Moana!
05/14/2009	when will the project go out for shop equipment bidding?
05/14/2009	At what speed of travel will the trains be going? Also, will we be able to take our bikes with us on the train like we currently do on the city bus?
05/17/2009	
05/18/2009	I'd like to know how I can get a schedule of the community involvement process for the station areas. I'm interested in getting our volunteers to attend but need to know ahead of time for planning purposes. Thanks!
05/18/2009	aloha, is there a document for proposed route and the affect streets? thank you for your assistance in this matter, mahalo, clark
05/19/2009	Dear whom it may concern : I am in charge of business development of contactless card, called FeliCa, for Hawaii region at Sony Corporation, Japan. As you might know, FeliCa is Sony's proprietary contactless smart card technology which is technological infrastructure of Suica and PASMO contactless tickets. Primarily, FeliCa-based reusable transit card has been adopted for a train ticket for single journey, round journey, periodical commute pass and fare stored ticket. Additionally, the same transit card is also used for e-money for merchant in the station or outside station which brings about additional revenue source to transit operators. Currently, over 30 millions of FeliCa based transit cards are

Submission Date	Submission Content/Notes
	actually used across in Japan. I recently came across the Honolulu Rail Transit project. I would like to obtain available information on the Transit project and study further if we can contribute to the project with our FeliCa contactless smart cards. I would highly appreciate it if you could reply to me where or whom I can contact further. Sincerely, Keita Yamada FeliCa Business Development Sony Corporation
05/21/2009	Would you please email me a copy of your report titled: Honolulu High Capacity Transit Corridor Project Neighborhood and Communities Technical Report, 2008? I would like to review it in preparation for a similar document that we are proposing. Thanks!
05/21/2009	Where can I find information about where specifically the stations will be?
05/22/2009	One of my client's property is located where one of the stations will be built. Is there information about the City's process to take over property located at such sites. My client is considering selling before the project gets closer.
05/26/2009	Please put me on you mailing list & please provide a list of contacts info regarding project design consultants.
05/27/2009	When was it decided that the rail route be changed to the ocean side of Farrington highway in Waipahu? Also why is there no information on the website that shows this change? please advise. Thank you
05/28/2009	I am unable to attend "community workshop #2". The meeting notice has a "draft sketch" of a station. Please protect the stations from sun and rain. Please have separate entrances and exits (so the two lines don't cross paths). Thanks.

\* Excludes mailing list requests, Station Workshop RSVP's, request for RPF information, right-of-way information.

## Letters to the Editor

For Friday, May 1, 2009

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, May 01, 2009

### **Stifle the squabbles, build the rail already**

Honestly, this squabbling over rail technology caused by Duke Bainum is ridiculous. I am no transportation planner and I doubt Duke Bainum is either, so I have no idea why he is sticking his nose into this.

I know the city has been working on rail for at least two years and we voted for rail last election. We have talked enough about rail. Let's get busy building it.

Blake Miyasaki  
Hawaii Kai

May 2, 2009

## City to release rail comments

### Hundreds collected as environmental review continues

*By Sean Hao*

*Advertiser Staff Writer*

The city plans to release more than 600 comments and concerns lodged in connection with plans to build a \$5.4 billion elevated commuter railway from East Kapolei to Ala Moana.

Those responses were submitted to the city and the Federal Transit Administration as part of an ongoing federal environmental review. The comments, some of which have criticized the city's plans, have trickled out to the public in recent weeks when they were released by their authors. But the city so far has declined to release all the comments.

That will change soon. City Councilman Duke Bainum recently introduced a resolution asking for the release of the comments. And last week, Councilman Gary Okino asked the city to provide the council with copies of all comments that were submitted by a February deadline.

Those comments were released to council members yesterday and are likely to be made public Monday, Okino said.

"It's coming very soon," he said. "I don't think there's anything to hide."

Okino said the comments are contained on more than 1,300 pages of documents.

City Transportation Director Wayne Yoshioka didn't return a message from The Advertiser.

So far, the city has decided not to release the more than 200 comments that were submitted in response to the draft environmental impact study that was released late last year. As a result, most of those comments probably will not become publicly available until later this year.

Some agencies such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have voluntarily released their comments, while others such as Ala Moana Center owner General Growth Properties have refused to release them.

The EPA has urged Honolulu officials to alter the train's route to avoid displacing a small Waiawa neighborhood. The agency also has asked the city to justify why alternatives to an elevated rail line, such as light rail at street level and bus rapid transit, weren't evaluated in the project's environmental impact study.

The EPA isn't the only agency that's asking the city to explain why the environmental impact statement didn't analyze the potential impacts of various ground-level transit alternatives. Major landowner Kamehameha Schools, the American Institute of Architects and other groups have urged the city to build

a ground-level train that would cost less and create less visual blight.

The city is responding to those comments, which cover a range of concerns about noise, aesthetics, archaeological conservation, energy use and more.

The environmental study is a major hurdle in the city's effort to obtain \$1.4 billion in federal money to build the train system.

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## EDITORIAL

# Rail system should continue as planned

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, May 02, 2009

CITY Councilman Duke Bainum has questioned the city's choice of an elevated rail system for the transit line from Kapolei to Ala Moana, but similar arguments made during Bainum's absence from Hawaii were rejected more than a year ago with good reason. The city has rightly rejected his protest as late and inaccurate.

In [a commentary column in the Star-Bulletin Monday](#), Bainum maintained that the city will spend more than twice as much for an elevated rail system than it would cost for a rail system at street level that could be built in less than half the time of the nine years projected for construction of the elevated rail. Those arguments were made by a group of local architects in December 2007 and were rejected.

Mayor Mufi Hannemann had explained in a letter to the Honolulu chapter of the American Institute of Architects why the proposed street-level rail would be impractical, and why the architects' estimate of construction costs failed to consider various factors. Wayne Yoshioka, director of the city Department of Transportation Services, reiterated those reasons in a column published Thursday.

Yoshioka explained that street-level trains take up to three traffic lanes, and that would create havoc in urban areas such as Kalihi, Kakaako, Ala Moana and downtown by contributing to traffic congestion. He added that elevated trains go 50 percent faster than trains at street level, which travel at about the same speed as buses.

Bainum suggested the cost of the street-level system would be \$2.5 billion, compared with at least \$5.3 billion for the elevated rail. That might be true if the street-level system were to be built on existing or abandoned rail corridors or other rights-of-way, as in other cities where it has been built, Yoshioka responded.

Otherwise, the city would have to buy property to create the right-of-way.

In the Seattle area, that meant displacing nearly 300 businesses and homes along a five-mile stretch to create the right-of-way, Yoshioka pointed out. Honolulu's guideway would require fewer than 40 property acquisitions.

A five-expert panel chose the technology for the rail system in February 2008 with one dissent — University of Hawaii engineering professor Panos Prevedouros, who pushed for a rubber-tired bus system and then unsuccessfully challenged Hannemann's mayoral re-election. The City Council gave its approval of the steel rail system.

Bainum, who was defeated by Hannemann in the 2004 election, suggests that what he regards as the Hannemann administration's failure to consider his favorite system may create "a Superferry-like legal limbo." The fact that Bainum was absent from the islands when the city went forward with environmental studies required by law should not put the system in jeopardy.

May 3, 2009

## Move sought for rail station

### City's plan affects Kamehameha Schools' development project

*By Sean Hao*

*Advertiser Staff Writer*

Honolulu's planned elevated commuter train is expected to spur land values and real estate development for those who own property around train stations. That's because the train's estimated 95,310 daily riders are expected to generate opportunities for housing, business and employment.

However, some landowners are balking at the opportunity to host the \$5.4 billion train from East Kapolei to Ala Moana. Kamehameha Schools is asking the city to move a planned station from its property at the intersection of Halekauwila and South streets to Mother Waldron Park, which is about 300 yards in the diamondhead direction. And last year, the UH-West O'ahu campus declined to have the guideway run across its future East Kapolei campus next to its library. The university cited aesthetic and noise concerns.

Kamehameha, in documents recently filed with the state, has expressed concerns about the size of the elevated train stations, which will be 50 feet wide by up to 300 feet long. The 21 planned stations also will be three stories high or higher.

"Given that the planned stations are elevated concrete structures approximating the size of narrow football fields, while they provide a service, they also provide unique and substantial challenges," Kamehameha Schools wrote in a March addendum to a master plan for the Kaka'ako area.

Kamehameha Schools is seeking to remake 29 acres of its Kaka'ako holdings into a dense, largely residential community. Those plans include building a high-rise tower on the property bordered by South, Halekauwila and Pohukaina streets. Kamehameha Schools has said its master plan is very conceptual, but if approved could lead to detailed designs and initial construction in the area as soon as late 2010.

Kamehameha Schools spokeswoman Ann Botticelli said integrating the elevated station with the landowner's development plans could be a challenge.

"It's elevated," she said. "And it is going to be big so what we have to do is work with the city to make sure that the size of it and everything is integrated into our master plan."

According to Kamehameha Schools, moving the station to Mother Waldron Park would:

- Increase ridership by moving it closer to residential buildings near the park.
- Potentially increase business for businesses near the park.

- Provide an opportunity for riders to relax before and after riding the train.

In addition, placing the station at Mother Waldron Park would provide a better park-to-park connection with Gateway Park, Botticelli said. Kamehameha Schools is proposing creating a pedestrian-friendly thoroughfare along Cooke Street between the two parks.

Placing a train station in the midst of a public park is not what the city has in mind. Rather, the city has identified train stations as prime spots for medium- to high-density housing as well as mixed-use development that could spur redevelopment and curb urban sprawl.

City Council chairman Todd Apo said he was disappointed that Kamehameha Schools isn't embracing plans to put a train station on its property.

"I obviously would like them to sort of jump on board but I also understand the realities of development," he said. "While I understand it's difficult for them to put all these pieces together, a mass transit system like this is such a great opportunity. As much as there's disappointment right now, I really hope that they come around and really embrace it and incorporate it within their master plan."

Kamehameha Schools' current plans for its Kaka'ako property don't include integration with the proposed train station. That's because it's still uncertain whether the route may be switched from Halekauwila Street to Queen Street, according to Kamehameha Schools. Three federal agencies have asked the city to alter the train's route to avoid the Prince Kuhio Federal Building for security reasons.

Botticelli downplayed the landowner's concerns about hosting the station.

"It has to do with what we envision happening in Kaka'ako," she said. But, "it's not a big deal to us. If they don't do it, they can leave the station where they want to."

Separately, Kamehameha Schools also has raised concerns about the visual impact the elevated track system will have on Honolulu's scenery and about the high costs of building the 20-mile route entirely above ground.

"We're not saying we're anti-elevated (train), we're just asking if there's a study to see if it can be a mixed system — (an) at grade as well as elevated system," Botticelli said.

May 3, 2009

## New Hawaii petroleum tax hike likely to raise gas prices

### Increase could generate \$31M annually for clean energy, food programs

By *DERRICK DePLEDGE*  
*Advertiser Government Writer*

Looking for money to finance renewable energy and food security, state lawmakers have agreed to increase a per barrel tax on petroleum products sold by distributors, which could cost consumers a few cents more per gallon of gasoline but eventually help wean the state off fossil fuel.

The barrel tax, which is now collected to help the state respond to oil spills, would increase from 5 cents per barrel product to \$1.05. The \$1 hike could generate \$31 million a year to help the state explore alternative energy and protect local agriculture.

Depending on how the barrel tax is passed on to consumers, the price per gallon of gasoline could increase by 2 to 3 cents.

"It's a tax that really could be called an investment and viewed as an economic stimulus for us, because it puts money where we need it most, in our energy and food infrastructure," said state Rep. Hermina Morita, D-14th (Hanalei, Anahola, Kapa'a). "One of our biggest problems right now, especially in a down economy and with the general fund, is that both food and energy are long-term strategies to lessen our dependence on imports.

"In order to make this kind of transformation, we need dedicated funding."

The bill would create a Hawai'i Economic Development Task Force to back public and private renewable energy and food security programs, including Gov. Linda Lingle's clean energy initiative, which has set a goal of having 70 percent of the state's energy produced by renewable sources by 2030.

Clean energy is one of the governor's priorities, but the Lingle administration has opposed the barrel tax increase because it would be passed on to consumers during a recession. The administration has also questioned the need for a task force, since there is already consensus that the state has to move toward alternative energy.

Linda Smith, the governor's senior policy adviser, told lawmakers in testimony last month that the administration "opposes any measure that increases the cost of living for Hawai'i residents."

## For environment

The environmental response tax, known commonly as the barrel tax, was established in 1993 and applies to petroleum products sold by distributors to retail dealers and end users other than refiners.

The money collected from the tax can be used by the state for oil-spill prevention, county used-oil

recycling programs and energy security. The money can also be directed toward environmental protection, including issues related to air and water quality and global warming.

Under the bill, the tax would be renamed the environmental response, energy and food security tax, to reflect its expanded scope.

The Tax Foundation of Hawai'i, in testimony to lawmakers, said there was a nexus between oil importers and the possibility of oil spills which may have justified the initial tax, but that lawmakers have already expanded the scope to include environmental and natural resource protection.

The foundation described the bill as "a classic effort of getting one's foot in the door with a palatable and acceptable" tax for oil spills and then increasing it for broader purposes.

Several business and environmental interests have urged lawmakers to pass the bill.

"I am so proud of our legislators. I am extremely proud of the work that they did," Pono Shim, kahu and vice president of Enterprise Honolulu, said of the conference committee negotiations that produced an agreement just before midnight Friday. "This is Hawai'i's economic stimulus. That's what we see.

"There are companies — and we can't mention them — that are in the queue right now that have wanted to come into Hawai'i. What this is is a response from Hawai'i that says, 'We're ready.' "

## **new task force**

Robert Harris, director of the Sierra Club's Hawai'i chapter, said that among the wide-ranging benefits of the barrel tax increase would be providing money for a new climate change task force.

"First, it's a great economic stimulus, really trying to invest in green power now. Second, it's something we can identify as a source of problems in Hawai'i," he said of the reliance on imported oil.

"It's the idea of taxing your problem in order to create money for our solution. It seems like an ingenious way of proceeding."

State Rep. Jessica Wooley, D-47th (La'ie, Hau'ula, Punalu'u), said the bill would create a new special fund for agricultural development and food security that could help protect and expand local agriculture.

The bill, for example, would provide money for pest inspection to help contain threats such as the varroa mite, which attacks honey bees, along with money for food safety, livestock revitalization and water pipelines for agriculture.

"It's a source of revenue that's going to provide at least a small incentive for people to find alternatives to oil," Wooley said. "As you increase the price for oil, you're putting a little pressure on that market to find alternatives as well as to decrease use, which fits in very nicely with our big-picture policy."

State Rep. Isaac Choy, D-24th (Manoa), an accountant and former chairman of the state's Tax Review Commission, said consumers would only face a few cents per gallon in higher gas prices in return for the potential development of renewable energy and food security programs.

"I think that's a great deal," he said. "It's well worth it."

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May 3, 2009

## Transit tax collections still short of projections

\$25 million lag possible by end of fiscal year; \$337.3M raised so far

*By Sean Hao*

*Advertiser Staff Writer*

Tax collections needed to fund Honolulu's planned commuter rail system continued to lag behind expectations in March.

During March, net transit tax collections fell 19 percent to \$13.4 million, versus the \$16.5 million collected in March 2008, according to the state Department of Taxation. Overall tax collections remain below projections because of the state's flagging economy.

City officials expect to raise \$188 million, or an average of \$15.7 million a month, during the fiscal year ending June 30. However, through the first nine months of the fiscal year, monthly collections are averaging about \$13.6 million.

If that trend continues, the city could be short about \$25 million in transit funds by June 30. In the fiscal year starting July 1, the city's rail plan anticipates transit tax revenue growing to an inflation-adjusted \$198 million, or \$16.5 million a month.

City officials hope to use the tax to raise nearly \$4.1 billion, on an inflation-adjusted basis, from 2007 through 2022 to pay for the 20-mile rail system linking East Kapolei to Ala Moana. That, coupled with about \$1.4 billion in anticipated federal money, is expected to pay the estimated \$5.4 billion in capital costs associated with rail, according to the city's financial plan.

City officials maintain that any near-term revenue shortfall should be offset by an economic rebound in future years.

The state began collecting a half-percentage point general excise tax surcharge for transit in January 2007. The tax is scheduled to expire in 2022. Overall, the tax has raised \$337.3 million during the first 27 months.

That figure, and all figures in this story, do not include the 10 percent the state takes off the top to pay for administering the tax.

During the first nine months of the current fiscal year, the transit tax generated \$122.7 million for the city, which is down 2 percent from the \$125.2 million raised during the first nine months of the prior fiscal year.

Officials want to begin construction in December, contingent on federal approval, and launch service between 2013 and 2019.

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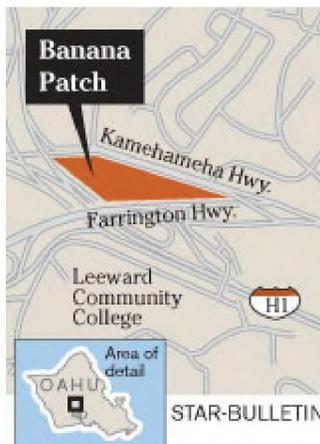
## 'We're losing our lifestyle'

Waiawa residents displaced by the city's rail-transit system wait for compensation

By [Gary T. Kubota](#)

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, May 03, 2009

Eddie Solmirin said he will miss the family parties near a stream that meanders through avocado, calamungai, lychee, sour sap and noni trees in Waiawa — part of an area to be demolished to make way for a 20-mile rail transit system between Kapolei and Ala Moana.



"We're losing our lifestyle," he said. "How is the city going to treat us fairly? My mother planted those trees."

As Honolulu city officials move forward with plans to purchase properties in an area known as "Banana Patch," residents living in a cluster of 10 houses are hoping they'll be adequately compensated for the loss of their enclave.

Mayor Mufi Hannemann said city officials were in discussion with residents about relocation.

"It's our part, our responsibility, to let them know that the city will take care of them,"

Hannemann said at a recent news conference.

Surveyors visited the area last month to determine boundary lines prior to estimating the value of the parcels, residents said.

The city plans to use the land between Pearl City and Waipahu as a park-and-ride facility for the transit corridor.

The 11-acre slice of land, at Farrington and Kamehameha highways, includes an equipment storage area and a patch of green where several families live in a duplex and a cluster of homes, some built more than 50 years ago.

While the Waiawa community has survived development until now, there is the constant sound of cars rushing by on the nearby freeway and multi-lane highways between Pearl City and Waipahu.

The nearest neighbors are about a half-mile away.

"In the old days, you could fire a gun for practice in the back yard," Solmirin said.

The family still draws its drinking water from a pump connected to an artesian well.

Six of the 10 houses on a 1-acre parcel are owned by families related to Solmirin, and they have frequent parties on the weekends to celebrate birthdays, anniversaries and graduations, sometimes roasting a pig on a spit.

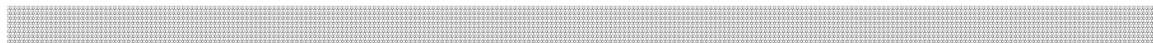
The residents are aware that with the deepening recession, property prices have been dropping and they may face depressed valuations for their parcels.

Solmirin's uncle, Sam Alipio, a landowner in the Waiawa area designated for relocation, said the city hasn't made any offers yet.

Alipio said he just wants to make sure he's adequately compensated.

Solmirin agrees.

"It's how fair they're going to be for us," Solmirin said.



May 4, 2009

## Worry arises with rail on fast track

*By Sean Hao*

*Advertiser Staff Writer*

Major steps will come swiftly over the next few months as the city moves closer to breaking ground on the \$5.4 billion mass transit project in December, assuming the project won't encounter any environmental hurdles.

The circumstances surrounding the Hawaii Superferry and Honolulu's elevated commuter train are vastly different, but there are similarities in the potential for pitfalls.

Unlike the Superferry, the city has done an environmental impact study. However, the formalities of an environmental impact study can sink a project — even one that has public and political backing.

Under the city's timeline, federal approval of the project's environmental impact statement is expected in late August.

Also ahead, the city is searching for firms to build the elevated guideway and install and operate the trains that will traverse the 20-mile route from East Kapolei to Ala Moana Center. And during the next year, plans are to sell nearly \$1 billion in bonds and hire 44 more people to support the mass transit project.

It's a timetable that assumes the massive public works project will clear any environmental hurdles.

### 'What's the Rush?'

However, there are concerns the city is moving too quickly without final approval of its environmental impact study.

"It's disappointing and I think we're taking risks with a project that's too expensive to mess up," said City Council member Duke Bainium. "What's the rush?"

"The rush, rush, rush, rush is more likely to play into the hands of those that want to stop rail right in its tracks. If you don't do it right now, you're going to pay later."

If the city's aggressive approach works, construction on the transit project could start sooner and cost less.

However, the city could pay more later if a lengthy environmental review drags on, delaying the project and possibly leading to added bond interest, salary and other costs.

In the case of the Superferry, officials for the interisland transit service sought to avoid conducting an

environmental impact study. State lawmakers later passed a law allowing Superferry to operate during an environmental review, but the company was forced to suspend operations indefinitely after that law was deemed unconstitutional by the state Supreme Court.

Although the city has done an environmental impact study, in recent months several groups — ranging from the Environmental Protection Agency, Kamehameha Schools and the American Institute of Architects — have expressed concerns that it was inadequate. Part of the concern is whether the city adequately explored potentially cheaper options such as an at-grade train system. Additionally, three government agencies — the U.S. District Court, the U.S. Marshal for the District of Hawai'i and the U.S. General Services Administration — have asked the city to alter the train's route to avoid the Prince Kuhio Federal Building for security reasons.

## Learning lessons

City officials have been quick to dismiss concerns and maintain that the project isn't likely to encounter obstacles that could prevent construction from starting late this year.

City Council Chairman Todd Apo defended the city's decision to assume that no environmental issues will delay the project.

"You've got to follow the law obviously, but you've got to be prepared," he said. "No one runs these projects in series where you wait for everything to be done in step one and then start step two. Clearly we're not going to attempt to start construction or anything we shouldn't ahead of the (environmental impact statement) being completed."

Council member Charles Djou acknowledged that the circumstances surrounding the Superferry and train projects aren't comparable. Still, the Superferry situation shows that an environmental impact study cannot be treated as a formality.

"I don't think the city is learning any lessons from the whole Superferry fiasco and unfortunately may be doomed to repeat it," Djou said. "The Hawai'i state Supreme Court has made it very clear that environmental review is not to be rushed. Trying to push things through without very careful and deliberate environmental review is going to get shut down by the courts. I think the lesson to be learned by the rail system from the Superferry is that you've got to do the environmental review carefully deliberately and not rush things."

## Moving forward

Steps being taken to expedite the train project include:

- Soliciting bids for a \$550 million to \$600 million contract for construction of the elevated guideway.
- Soliciting bids for a 13-year contract to buy, operate and maintain the trains.
- Including nearly \$7 million in salary for 79 city rail-related jobs in next year's budget.
- Issuing nearly \$917 million in rail-related bonds, which is included in the budget for the next fiscal year starting July 1.

The city's timetable also means starting construction on the project nearly two years before \$1.4 billion in federal funds are secured. Until then the project will be funded nearly entirely by a general excise tax surcharge.

Council member Romy Cachola raised concerns about the city's timetable during last week's City Council meeting.

"If we start in 2009, we haven't really applied for a full funding grant agreement, and you start breaking ground. Why are you doing that?" Cachola asked city transportation Director Wayne Yoshioka.

Yoshioka indicated that the timetable is partially dictated by concerns that the state may attempt to take money the city needs to build the train.

"Time is of the essence," he said to Cachola. "Right now we're collecting the (excise tax) money. It's clear that if the money stays unused, it can be taken for other purposes by other entities."

Yoshioka said the city's plans were made in coordination with the Federal Transit Administration. City officials have said the FTA has essentially guaranteed that it will give Honolulu \$1 billion or more to help pay for the train.

"They're fully aware of what we are doing and they're on board with what we're doing, so it's not like we're taking a procedure that's independent of the FTA," Yoshioka said.

## Seeking momentum

The sooner the city starts construction, the less likely that political and public support for the project will breakdown, said council member Gary Okino. Changes in priorities and political will killed Honolulu's last two efforts to build major new mass-transit systems in 1982 and 1992.

"Once you start (construction), it's hard to stop," Okino said. "I think it's a fairly low risk to take in exchange for an expedited process. We just need to get this on the ground as soon as we can."

That attitude has fueled concerns that the city is rushing to start construction at the expense of doing the project in the most financially prudent way. Council member Bainum and groups such as the American Architects Association are asking the city to reconsider critical and costly decisions such as building the train on an elevated guideway. However, attempts to revisit such issues have been characterized by some rail proponents as an effort to delay and possibly kill the project.

"That mantra is being used to ram this through at a pace that is unsafe," Bainum said. "We're not (trying to kill the project), we're trying to do a project that's going to protect the environment and protect our pocketbooks for generations to come. We've been waiting 20-something years" for rail transit, Bainum added. "What's the harm in waiting a couple months?"

Okino, chairman of the council's Transportation and Planning Committee, and Apo said there's no need to rehash prior decisions such as whether the system should be built at ground level or on an elevated guideway.

"A lot of those so-called issues that people want to reexamine, they've been looked at," Apo said.

"They're not new. If there's something brand new that didn't get dealt with I am more than happy to take a look at it (but) we can't just relook at it because some people want to relook at it.

"Doing it right doesn't mean everyone's going to agree that is the absolutely best way to do it. You're never going to reach that point."

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May 6, 2009

## Rail transit

### **Anderson win sends a strong message**

Lee Cataluna's column ("Voters sent a message to Felix," April 26) got it partially correct. Go Rail Go believes that the landslide victory of Ikaika Anderson sends a strong message that Windward O'ahu is ready to move forward on rail transit.

Steve Holmes, the only candidate publicly opposing rail, received only 14 percent of the vote — an indicator that his position on the issue was no longer salient to a majority of Windward voters. Anderson, instead, recognized the "will of the people" and honored their support for rail during the 2008 elections. Like Barbara Marshall, he will "exercise vigilance and oversight on the project and ask tough questions." Barbara would be proud.

Alicia Maluafiti | Go Rail Go

May 8, 2009

## Budget includes education, transportation, military funds for Hawaii

Proposal also includes \$20M for rail, \$4M for intra-isle ferry studies

*By John Yaukey*

*Advertiser Washington Bureau*

WASHINGTON — The \$3.6 trillion budget request that President Obama sent Congress yesterday contains education, housing and transportation funds for Hawai'i, while also sparing the state's sprawling military presence from targeted defense cuts.

The transportation portion of the budget includes \$20 million for a commuter rail project in Honolulu and \$4 million to test the viability of intra-island ferryboat routes and technologies.

The budget would also invest \$45.2 million in state and local educational initiatives throughout Hawai'i aimed at strengthening student achievement in low-income areas.

It would provide \$12.4 million for the state's school breakfast program and \$55 million for its school lunch program.

Under Obama's plan, domestic spending would grow about 7 percent while defense would increase 4 percent to \$533 billion.

But to offset a small fraction of the increases, Obama highlighted 121 programs that he wants to eliminate or reduce — with more than half the savings coming from defense.

Most of his targeted defense cuts would be to expensive weapons systems such as the F-22 fighter jet and the C-17 cargo plane, which are not produced in Hawai'i.

Moreover, the budget — certainly as it pertains to Hawai'i — promises to look quite different when it's finally passed months from now with significant input from Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Daniel K. Inouye, D-Hawai'i.

Inouye's considerable influence in federal spending largely led to Hawai'i's windfall of several hundred million dollars in the \$787 billion economic recovery package passed this year.

Obama's budget proposal includes more than \$1.2 trillion that must be appropriated by Congress, including big increases in healthcare, energy and education.

"The president has made his budget clear," said Rep. Mazie Hirono, D-Hawai'i. "Congress will now review the budget line-by-line to make sure it conforms with our priorities."

Inouye yesterday deferred comment on Obama's budget request until he's had a chance to digest the 1,374-page document.

For the roughly 57,000 military personnel in Hawai'i, the budget request includes a pay raise of 2.9 percent and an increase in benefits that "keeps pace with or exceeds those of the private sector," according to the budget.

## Tricare stays same

For Hawai'i's 118,000 veterans, the budget plan would let retirees receiving pensions have access to disability payments, which many are now largely denied.

At a briefing yesterday, Pentagon officials said they would fully fund the military's Tricare healthcare system, meaning no increases in out-of-pocket expenses for 2010.

During each of the past three years of the Bush administration, the Pentagon tried to raise Tricare fees. But Congress rejected the increases and added the money back into the defense budget each time.

Still, Pentagon officials warned yesterday that military healthcare costs — like those in the civilian sector — are rapidly rising and must be contained in future defense budgets.

The Pentagon is projected to spend roughly \$47 billion on healthcare in fiscal 2010, making it the fastest-growing part of the defense budget.

"At some point we need to work with the Congress to end the freeze on increases in co-pays and premiums," Pentagon Comptroller Robert Hale said yesterday at a budget briefing.

## Additional Facts

[Learn more](#)

White House budget cut proposal:

[www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/fy2010/assets/trs.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/fy2010/assets/trs.pdf)

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## Letters to the editor

For Friday, May 8, 2009

### Hawaii running out of time to invest in clean energy

For more than a generation we have been waiting for the utility companies and government in Hawaii to do the right thing for our future and make a reasonable investment in clean and renewable energy.

Instead, they did the easy thing: more of the same. Hawaii is now more dependent on oil and coal for our energy than we were 25 years ago.

We are running out of time — the effects of global warming are obvious. The world is running out of oil — we will all pay more for gas and electricity as more people try to secure this diminishing resource. And I am running out of patience with lawmakers who refuse to take sure and dramatic action to end our state's oil addiction.

Hawaii has plentiful natural and renewable energy in sun, wind, wave, geothermal and quick-growing plants. We don't need oil. We don't need excuses. We need to ban oil and coal from our energy future.

Lorenz Sell  
President, Blue Lava Technologies

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## Letters to the editor

For Saturday, May 9, 2009

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, May 09, 2009

Looking forward to riding the rail

Mayor Mufi Hannemann has signed a bill into law that prohibits drivers from using hand-held phones, laptops and other portable electronic devices while driving a car. This is a good thing for all of us, and it will make our streets a lot safer.

But in a few years we will all be able to talk on cell phones, use our laptop computers to get our e-mail, play video games or whatever while traveling in style on a new, modern rail system.

Rather than being stuck in my car in traffic, I'll be getting on the train and reading a newspaper or taking a nap if I want and enjoying the ride for a change.

Lisa Matsumoto  
Honolulu

May 10, 2009

## Honolulu's switch to hybrid buses stalled by realities of costs

### City study finds diesel-electric fleet not saving so much green after all, recommends scrapping plan

*By Sean Hao  
Advertiser Staff Writer*

Honolulu's rapidly growing fleet of hybrid buses is not saving as much green as promised, and converting to hybrids has meant fewer new buses and an inventory that is likely the oldest in the nation.

Those conclusions are from a recently released city study that finds that the "green" buses don't make broad financial or environmental sense, and recommends a halt to hybrid purchases in favor of modern, clean-burning diesel buses.

Only a year ago, city officials said they were so pleased with their 50 hybrid diesel-electric buses that they wanted to convert half of the city's 530 buses to hybrids by 2013. At the time, only anecdotal evidence of the cost-effectiveness of the new hybrid buses was disclosed, and there was no data provided to support the decision. The new report, which the city posted on its Web site, assessed the cost-effectiveness of Honolulu's hybrids and is the first sign that the city's drive to buy them may have been ill-advised.

"Today's hybrids have not performed at the levels hoped for (and promised by the manufacturers)," according to the report. "While most manufacturers tout fuel savings as high as 60 percent, in-service tests have produced results that are, at best, about half of that level. In fact, most hybrid fuel savings are in the range of about 20 percent."

The report found that some maintenance costs are lower with hybrid buses, but that the high cost of batteries likely offsets those savings.

According to the report, hybrid buses do emit fewer pollutants and greenhouse gases than conventional diesel buses. However, there is still debate over whether hybrid buses are more "green" than modern so-called "clean diesels," the report states. Regardless, older bus engines are substantially dirtier than modern diesel engines, so buying more modern diesel buses is better for the environment than buying a relatively small number of more expensive hybrid buses.

"That's kind of the summary" of the report, said City Council member Gary Okino, who chairs the Transportation and Planning Committee. "Economically, if you look at it, I don't think ... (the city) is going to buy any more (hybrid buses)."

Henry Curtis, executive director of Life of the Land, an environmental and community action group, agreed with the report's conclusions that replacing old diesel buses with clean-diesel buses is better for the environment.

"My only caveat in supporting that would be if the old buses are taken off the road," he said. "If instead they're sold to someone else ... then you're not really taking them off the road, you're just adding new buses."

So-called "green" initiatives, while well intended, should not be launched in an ad hoc manner, Curtis said.

"The question is not what is the latest buzzword, but what does the scientific proof of different alternatives look like," he said. "What's actually going to make the environment better? What's actually going to make the climate better? That requires that we think about it and analyze it before we make the decision."

City Transportation Director Wayne Yoshioka and Roger Morton, president and general manager of bus operator O'ahu Transit Services Inc., did not return messages from The Advertiser seeking more information and comments for this story.

## 'Green' Image

Honolulu is among numerous transit agencies nationwide buying hybrid buses, but that decision may not be paying off in at least one other city.

C-Tran, a public transit agency in Clark County, Wash., recently purchased 12 hybrid buses, which were touted as fuel-efficient and environmentally friendly. However, an August report by Portland's Cascade Policy Institute found that, based on current rates of diesel price increases, the new hybrid buses would need to be in service for more than 31 years to offset their added up-front costs, according to the free-market public policy research center. The actual lifespan of the buses is estimated at 12 years.

For many cities, buying a hybrid is about buying an environmentally friendly image, said Todd Wynn, a climate change and energy policy analyst at the Cascade Policy Institute.

"It kind of creates a green veil over people's eyes," he said. "They hear the word green, they hear the word hybrid, and they think all these green happy thoughts."

"But once you look into it further, it doesn't make economic sense and a lot of times it doesn't make environmental sense either."

Currently, 275 city buses — more than half of Honolulu's fleet — are eligible for replacement under federal criteria.

The average age of TheBus fleet is nearly 10 years old, which likely makes it the oldest transit bus fleet in America, according to the city's report. The conversion to hybrids, which are 50 percent more costly than diesel buses, has led to fewer overall bus purchases in recent years and, in turn, an aging fleet, according to the report.

It's unclear whether the increasing age of the city's buses raises safety issues. However, the report states that the city needs to launch an aggressive bus repurchasing and rehab program to avoid operational and maintenance problems that could take years to overcome.

Council Chairman Todd Apo said the report's findings were unexpected.

"Hearing this is a little bit of a surprise because the (city transportation) department and the administration have been touting this whole (idea of) 'buy hybrid buses,' " he said. "If going completely green doesn't make sense from an economic, practical standpoint, and we're able to obtain greater sustainability goals through getting rid of old diesel buses, which are worse, then we need to do that."

## 'Doesn't make sense'

The hybrid buses, first bought in 2004, were touted as cleaner, quieter and more fuel-efficient than conventional diesel buses. But those benefits come at a premium.

Hybrid articulated buses cost nearly \$1 million each, compared to about \$380,000 for a typical 40-foot diesel bus. Previously, the city has said those higher costs may be recouped by long-term fuel efficiency gains. However, the buses are not cost-effective unless fuel costs increase at a rate of 20 percent each year for 15 years, according to the report.

During the past year, city officials have boosted the six-year bus and Handi-Van replacement budget by \$100 million, to nearly \$144 million. It's unclear whether that decision was made before or after the city learned the results of the hybrid bus report.

That increase in the bus replacement budget comes as the city is having to raise property taxes and a host of fees to balance its budget.

Overall, the city needs to buy about 40 buses a year to maintain its fleet, according to the report. The city did not specify how many buses it purchased annually prior to the conversion to hybrids. However, in the next 21 months the city only expects to receive 40 new buses. That includes 30 more diesel-hybrid articulated buses and ten 35-foot conventional diesel buses.

Okino said the city is continuing to buy hybrid buses to take advantage of federal stimulus money.

In addition to new bus purchases, O'ahu Transit is rehabbing about 12 buses a year at a cost of about \$90,000 each. That extends the useful life of a bus by about four years.

City Council member Charles Djou said the city needs to rethink its strategy of switching to hybrid buses.

"I'm all for clean technology. I'm all for hybrids — just not at the expense of stupid economic decisions," he said. "I can see if it costs slightly more because hybrid buses just generally speaking are better for the environment, but if it's significantly more, then it just doesn't make sense.

"Why are we doing this?"

It's unclear why it took the city five years to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of hybrid buses.

"That's a very good question," Djou said.

## Additional Facts

### HYBRIDS

**Savings:** The report says "most fuel savings are in the range of about 20 percent."

**City fleet:** 50 buses

**Emit** fewer pollutants and greenhouse gases than conventional diesel buses. But it's not clear if they're less polluting than newer-style "clean diesels."

**An articulated hybrid** bus costs nearly \$1 million.

## **DIESELS**

**City fleet:** 480

**275 city buses** are eligible for replacement, based on federal criteria

**10 years:** average age of buses in Honolulu's fleet

**\$90,000:** cost to overhaul a diesel bus to help it run for four more years

**12:** number of Honolulu buses being overhauled each year

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### West Oahu community to give input on rail transit

Posted: May 10, 2009 05:54 PM

Updated: May 10, 2009 06:39 PM



Scott Ishikawa

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

KAPOLEI (KHNL)- Rail transit picks up speed towards its ground-breaking and construction at the end of this year.

People in West Oahu get their turn to decide what the rail stations there should look like.

"What we want to try to do is capture the community's personality and character and have that reflect the station itself," City and County of Honolulu Rail Transit spokesperson Scott Ishikawa said.



Morley Margolis

There will be three rail stations in West Oahu. One near the Department of Hawaiian Homelands development, another by the UH West Oahu campus and one near the Ho'opili development. The first of three community workshops is set for this Tuesday night at Kapolei High School.

The Waipahu community gave its input on what its rail station should look like. Now, it's the people of Kapolei's turn to decide the fate of theirs.



"Waipahu has a rich plantation history and I think they're going to try and reflect that in their station, Kapolei, being a new community, they may go with something different, they may go on a Hawaiian background for that particular area," Ishikawa said.

He says it's important for people to attend these workshops.

"I think government has been criticized many times for not getting resident's input, I think this is a good way to do it," he said.



Some people in Kapolei feel the rail stations should look like the new buildings in town, while others don't have an opinion just yet.

"I really don't care what it looks like, as long as it's effective and appropriate for the setting that it's in and suits my needs," Makakilo resident Morley Margolis said.

Those who attend the workshops will be broken down into groups, to get ideas on the table. The second meeting will show a rough design.



"Like the Honolulu Advertiser, the courthouse and the government offices, they're all brand new buildings so it should be compatible or consistent with those, the architecture of those buildings," Kapolei resident Nita Peters said.

The final design will be unveiled at the third workshop. The workshop on Tuesday is free. You can RSVP by calling 566-2299 or e-mailing info@honolulutransit.org.



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May 11, 2009

## Honolulu rail route, elevation draw most public comments

*By Sean Hao  
Advertiser Staff Writer*

More than 600 public comments were lodged in response to a city plan to build a 20-mile East Kapolei to Ala Moana train.

City officials released the comments last week at the urging of the City Council. The 1,389-page document highlights a broad range of concerns about the planned \$5.4 billion project ranging from noise, aesthetics, archaeological conservation, energy consumption and costs.

The comments reveal several main areas of dispute, including whether the train should be built on an elevated track or at street level, whether the train should bisect Salt Lake or the airport district, and whether construction of the train should start in town rather than near Kapolei.

Then there's the main issue of whether the city should even build the train.

"I feel that Honolulu transit is one of the best transit projects for O'ahu," wrote Christian Sorli of Kailua. "We are only twenty years too late. We need to move forward quickly to make up for all the lost time."

Clifford Mercado of Ewa Beach expressed an opposite opinion.

"We do not need this form of transportation (the train) and I don't want you or anyone else to spend a dime on this lame idea," Mercado wrote. "So do what you can to squash this project."

While many comments came from individuals, major landowners also weighed in on the plan.

Kamehameha Schools raised concerns about the visual impact the elevated track system will have on Honolulu's scenery and about the high costs of building the 20-mile route entirely above ground.

General Growth, which owns Ala Moana Center and Ward Centers, expressed concerns the train will reduce available parking and driveways and result in added security and maintenance costs among other things.

"As a general observation, as previously discussed with the city, our traffic consultants have other alternative routes through the area that would better serve the totality of Kaka'ako and reduce the economic impact to our properties, as well as reduce the number of businesses affected," wrote Jan Yokota, a General Growth vice president for development.

## Concerns about Route

General Growth isn't the only one pushing for a change in the 20-mile route. Three government agencies — the U.S. District Court, the U.S. Marshal for the District of Hawai'i and the U.S. General Services Administration — asked the city to alter the train's route to avoid the Prince Kuhio Federal Building for security reasons.

Additionally, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency urged the city to alter the train's route to avoid displacing a small Waiawa neighborhood. The League of Women Voters of Honolulu and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs also have expressed concerns about dislocating the neighborhood known as the Banana Patch.

Any significant change in the train's route could require the city to prepare what's called a supplemental environmental impact statement, which would disrupt a timeline that calls for construction to begin in December.

Overall, major property owners such as Kamehameha Schools and D.R. Horton, owner of the planned Ho'opili community in East Kapolei, and downtown property manager Pacific Guardian Center, expressed support for the project. However, some of that support was couched with concern.

For example, Pacific Guardian Center, which oversees two high-rise towers and the Dillingham Transportation Building, urged the city to build the train "at-grade," meaning at street level.

"It is our understanding that compared to at-grade transit solutions, elevated systems require inherently larger station structures to accommodate necessary elevators, escalators and stairs as well as connecting walkways and concourses," wrote H. Brian Moore, a Pacific Guardian vice president. "Despite being placed overhead, this larger overall bulk would seem to reduce the city's flexibility in planning suitable station and route locations in historic, visually sensitive and pedestrian-oriented districts."

The city eliminated ground-level transit options long ago on concerns that a ground-level train would interfere with road traffic, operate at slower speeds and generate lower ridership and higher long-term costs. However, the American Institute of Architects and other groups also urged the city to build a ground-level train because of concerns about the visual impact the approximately 30-foot-wide, 50-foot-high elevated track system will have on Honolulu's scenery.

Switching to an at-grade system at this stage would require additional environmental and engineering studies and result in major project delays.

## starting in kapolei

Another major point of concern was where to start construction on the train. The city wants to open the first 6.5-mile leg from East Kapolei to Waipahu in late 2013 and the full route in late 2018. That means it could be nearly a decade before the train stops at major traffic centers such as Downtown and Ala Moana Center.

The dirt fields in East Kapolei are the best place to start building the 20-mile line because they require little displacement of existing homes or businesses, according to city transportation officials. However, numerous residents expressed concern that few people will want to commute between Waipahu and East Kapolei.

"Why ride it to Waipahu and then have to get on a bus to go the rest of the way?" wrote Kathleen Ebey of 'Aiea. "Just get on a bus in Kapolei, or continue to drive. However, if you start at the 'destination,' and work backwards, then people start riding it right away."

City officials already are grouping and categorizing concerns and preparing responses, which will be included in a final environmental impact statement, which they hope to release this summer. The environmental study is a major hurdle in the city's effort to obtain \$1.4 billion in federal money to build the train system and to stick to a December deadline to start construction.

May 11, 2009

## Letters to the Editor

### Rail transit

#### No insurmountable obstacle in the way

If misplaced concern were constructive ("Worry arises with rail on fast track," Advertiser, May 4), the city rail project could use that instead of concrete. In fact, there is no insurmountable obstacle to the on-schedule approval of the final environmental impact statement and start of construction.

First, no practical at-grade technology can carry enough people to serve Honolulu. During peak times, our rail line will run 20 trains per hour, averaging 30 mph. By comparison, the busiest North America light-rail line on reserved street lanes, the Boston "B" Line, runs no more than 10 trains per hour, with an average speed of 9 mph on that segment!

Second, the only significant issue the EPA has raised, the removal of the "Banana Patch" neighborhood in Waiawa, can be avoided by building a park-and-ride lot at Leeward Community College station instead of Pearl Highlands; that parcel has been studied in the draft EIS as an alternative maintenance and storage facility site.

In the future, please contact independent, informed experts to improve your reporting on the rail transit system.

Hannah Miyamoto |Manoa

May 11, 2009

## Letters to the Editor

### Rail transit

#### Why can't we have our voices heard?

I am so thankful to David Shapiro for his article (May 6) regarding rail. He brings up all the same troubling issues I have been worrying about for such a long time.

When the vote was taken for rail transit, although the yes vote was in the majority, it was far from a landslide victory. In fact close to half the votes cast were against building this project, for many good reasons. So you would think the administration and City Council would be a lot more sensitive to those of us who are very worried about this project.

Why can't we get our voices heard without being vilified? The administration is blatantly disregarding alternative opinions from major respected organizations.

Our economy is in shambles. If ever there was a time to be prudent and get this right, it is now.

The mayor promised us he would only undertake projects on a need-to-have basis; not a nice-to-have basis. We already have "mass transit." It is called TheBus.

Diane Anderson | Hale'iwa

## Letters to the editor

For Monday, May 11, 2009

### City's rail transit plan wrong for isles' future

The rail issue has become a war of words, and it looks like it is time for some constructive action.

Yes, we were most assuredly duped into this steel wheel, steel rail issue - most definitely a slick maneuver for personal, political gains by those who are unwilling to discuss this project further.

Times have changed drastically since "We've been talking about this for 30 years and let's just build it already." We do not have enough money to build or maintain it.

Yes, our state needs construction to put people to work, but we also need tourism and we have an obligation to maintain a basic quality of life standard for our residents and future generations.

We need to put some intelligent heads together and start putting people to work on green construction for a change. We are a finite island. We are not the mainland, which has more space to negotiate with.

Our city administration should be listening to some of the experts we have right here in Hawaii.

There can be a better solution, but if the city refuses to address the concerns of the AIA, Outdoor Circle, Kamehameha Schools, U.S. EPA, the federal court and countless other concerned groups and individuals, we will all rue the day.

MJ Culvyhouse  
Kaneohe

May 12, 2009

## Honolulu may hike property taxes

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

Just days after the state Legislature approved tax increases to help meet its budget deficit, the City Council is looking at a potential hike in property taxes.

The Council Budget Committee will consider a property tax increase at its meeting at Honolulu Hale at 9 a.m. tomorrow.

Mayor Mufi Hannemann proposed a budget that calls for an increase in the residential property tax rate to \$3.59 per \$1,000 of assessed value, up from \$3.29 this year. Factoring in a one-time \$75-a-household real property tax credit, the increase would amount to about a \$120 annual hike for the typical family owning a single-family home on O'ahu.

The mayor and council members are facing a decline in income due in part to a drop in property values, hotel room tax and fuel tax collections and a decline in revenue from investments.

Council members said they are combing through the \$1.8 billion operating budget for ways to cut spending and reduce or even eliminate the need for a hike in residential property tax rates.

Council Budget Chairman Nestor Garcia said that while his committee and staff are searching for ways to soften the rate hike, it's not likely that an increase can be avoided entirely.

"I'm not sure if that's realistic," Garcia said. He noted that next year's operating budget is only 0.28 percent more than the budget approved by the council for this year.

"There wasn't much fat there; I'm getting into the muscle and I might be starting to get into the bone, so that's why we've got to be careful now," he said.

### possible trims

Garcia said among the cuts he's looking at are eliminating TheBoat operations, saving about \$5 million and delaying the start of curbside recycling in suburban O'ahu neighborhoods at a savings of about \$4 million to \$5 million. There also won't be any increases in the salaries of elected officials or other nonunionized employees except for those whose pay is contractually directly to coincide with raises for unionized workers.

He also is thinking about increasing the city's fuel tax of 16.5 cents per gallon by a few pennies. The city last raised the fuel tax in 1989 — by 5 cents. Garcia said he's looking at raising the fuel tax less than that.

Noting that hoteliers will be seeing an increase in hotel room taxes, Garcia said he wants to reduce the property tax rate for the hotel/resort class.

One thing he won't consider is any cuts in the budget for a planned \$5.4 billion elevated commuter rail line, which is to begin construction at the end of this year, he said.

Garcia has not suggested any changes to the administration's plan to increase a number of other charges, including motor vehicle weight taxes, highway beautification fees, bus fares, golf green and cart fees, Honolulu Zoo and Hanauma Bay Nature Preserve entrance fees, park attendant fees and alarm permit fees.

Council members Duke Bainum, Donovan Dela Cruz and Charles Djou are proposing to cut the budget by roughly \$40 million to avoid the need for a property tax increase.

Among the cuts Bainum is suggesting are about \$5.6 million in rail-related expenses and \$4 million from the judgment and losses account, used when the city loses a lawsuit. Dela Cruz wants to eliminate salary increases for noncollective bargaining positions and any funding for positions vacant since 1995.

Djou wants to trim 5 percent from the city budget across all agencies and programs, excluding federal funds, special funds or debt service.

## **budget changes**

City Budget Director Rix Maurer III said the administration will consider whatever changes the council decides to make with the budget and property tax rates, although he declined to discuss any specific suggestions made by council members.

"I think we had a prudent and fiscally responsible budget that we've submitted to the council and we certainly think it holds the line on year-over-year spending while providing the services that the residents want," Maurer said.

The administration has also pointed out that the operating budget is essentially the same for next year despite increases in fixed costs such as pay for police and firefighters, debt service payments and employer health contributions.

The council has until June 15 to pass its annual budget and tax rate plan, but is expected to do so at its June 10 meeting.

The budget year runs from July 1 to June 30.

## **Additional Facts**

Meeting TOMORROW

**What:** City Council Budget Committee meeting on property taxes with public testimony

**When:** 9 a.m. tomorrow

**Where:** Second floor committee room at Honolulu Hale

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## Smooth ride

Officials say new bike plan is geared for success

[By Rob Shikina](#)

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, May 12, 2009

Grant Larson, who has been hit by a vehicle three times in six years while riding his bike in Honolulu, says he has little faith in the city improving bicycling facilities.

"I'm a nonbeliever in, like, any effective safe bicycling program being established here," said Larson, 33. "There's nothing to show for things being changed."

Despite the skepticism of bicyclists, city officials say their upcoming bicycle master plan will be more successful than the last one, completed 10 years ago.

The 1999 plan contained \$77 million in projects in urban Honolulu over 20 years, including a bike path that ran from Kahala to Pearl City. That path, meant to have been completed in five years, remains largely unfinished because of lack of planning and money.

For example, a Waiialae Avenue portion awaits a study to remove the contra-flow lanes before bike lanes are installed. The city is still planning to complete the east-west path, including along Young Street.

"There's a groundswell of people that want bike facilities," said Chris Sayers, Honolulu bicycle coordinator. He said the new planning proposal will have projects vetted and researched with more detail so "we can implement them without too many problems."

Not only will the \$370,000 master plan will keep the previous plan's ideas, it will expand

**Bike to the Zoo Day**

Free admission to the Honolulu Zoo for anyone who bikes there:

» **Hours:** 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday

» **Benefits:** Free valet bike parking, and the first 200 bicyclists will receive a tote bag with goodies such as blinkers, safety materials and a bike map

to cover the entire island. The plan will focus on connecting existing bike paths, providing routes to rail transit stations and adding facilities such as bike lockers.

Bicycle advocates hope the new plan, which is expected to be released in a first draft in June, will help Honolulu become a more bicycle-friendly city.

Hawaii Bicycling League Executive Director Mitchell Nakagawa said Honolulu is on the tipping point of change in favor of bicycling with community support and pro-bike public policies.

"We're in the best position that we've ever been in to make these things happen," he said recently.

"There's no reason why Honolulu can't be a platinum bicycling city," he said, referring to a ranking by the League of American Bicyclists. "I believe that our constituents really believe that that's possible."

"There's almost endless possibilities," Nakagawa said. "Some of these infrastructure projects do require a lot of money. It takes public will."

Since 1999, new state and city policies have laid a better foundation for the goal of a bicycling-friendly city, cycling advocates say.

In 2006, Honolulu residents passed a City Charter amendment making it a priority to design Honolulu into a pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly city. In 2007, Honolulu won an honorable mention award from the League of American Bicyclists for its attempts to become bicycle-friendly.

This year, Gov. Linda Lingle signed into law a bill creating a state policy to reasonably make public roads accessible to all users, including pedestrians and cyclists.

Sayers, the city's bicycling coordinator, said the city has completed about 60 percent of priority-one projects in the 1999 plan, installed 200 bike racks and continued with bike education programs.

The city has also accomplished projects not included in the 1999 bike plan, such as a Pearl Harbor bike path extension and Kailua Beach bike path bridge, both at a cost of about \$850,000.

The city receives about \$400,000 a year from bicycle registration funds. For the last few years, the city has had about \$1 million a year with additional federal funds. Still there is a lack of continuous bike lanes, sometimes forcing cyclists to ride on sidewalks.

"It's unsafe, man, riding here in Hawaii. You've got a patchwork of bike lanes," said Roman Robinson, 29, a Kakaako resident who sometimes rides his bike to the North Shore.



Posted: Wednesday, May 13th, 2009 1:27 PM HST

## **Divided state GOP prepares for annual convention**

By Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — As Republican Gov. Linda Lingle begins her last 18 months in office, the state party she once chaired finds itself at a crossroads.

In that way, it is not unlike the national Republican Party, buffeted internally by differing views on the path it should take and facing an emboldened Democratic Party. Only in Hawaii, Republicans are wrestling with even worse circumstances.

Only eight of the Hawaii Legislature's 76 members, and none of the state's four members of Congress, are Republicans. Its likely 2010 gubernatorial nominee — Lt. Gov. James "Duke" Aiona — is widely regarded as an underdog despite eight years of being groomed to succeed Lingle.

And, while GOP officeholders and activists have recently coalesced in opposition to tax increases that Democrats approved last week over Lingle's veto, under-the-radar dissension remains over the direction of the state party and contentious policy issues, such as federal legislation to establish a governing body for Native Hawaiians.

Those and other challenges will confront an expected 300 GOP members on Saturday when the party holds its annual convention on the Big Island.

The highlight of the gathering is likely to be the contest among at least four candidates for the volunteer post of party chairman — the first contested election for the job in a decade.

Lingering on the sidelines is Lingle.

Barred by term limits from seeking reelection, she has announced no plans to seek another post in 2010. Party chairwoman from 1999 to 2002, she has not publicly weighed in on Saturday's contest. It is unclear what impact Lingle would have if she did jump into the fray.

Some Republicans, even her allies, concede that the state GOP has

weakened in recent years and something novel is needed to make the party relevant again to voters.

"We need to find new ways to do things because I think it has become clear from the results of the past elections that what we have done in those elections simply has not worked," said Brennon Morioka, a former state party chairman and now the Lingle-appointed director of the state Transportation Department.

Even Willes Lee, the current chairman, acknowledged bubbling dissatisfaction among the party faithful with him, other party leaders and the party's dismal electoral record of recent years.

"With our inability to support Linda Lingle (by electing enough Republican legislators to uphold a veto,) we've pretty much wasted this opportunity," he said.

The four announced candidates for chairman are Jonah Kaauwai, a former deputy chief of staff to Aiona; Jimmy Kuroiwa, the Honolulu County party chair in the late 1990s; Mike Palcic, a Republican activist and owner of a Honolulu computer shop, and Paul Smith, head of a new conservative grassroots group called the Hawaii Republican Assembly.

Lee has yet to announce whether he will seek the post again, and he or others have until Saturday morning to submit candidacy papers.

The contender with the most high-profile endorsements is Kaauwai, 36, who is backed by Aiona, House Minority Leader Lynn Finnegan and Senate Minority Leader Fred Hemmings.

In an interview, Kaauwai said his strength lies in his age and understanding of Internet-era communications tools.

"We're bringing in a greater youthful energy into the party," he said.

Hemmings points to Kaauwai's mixed ethnicity — he is German and Hawaiian with a bit of Mexican — as a trait that will aid the party during the era of Hawaii-born Democrat Barack Obama, the country's first African American president.

"Republicans have been unfairly stereotyped in the past (as) middle-aged, better-off haoles," said Hemmings, of Lanikai-Waimanalo. "Kaauwai represents, along with many people, the great cross-section of Hawaii's ethnic diversity."

But rivals contend Kaauwai, who has never held a party post, is too inexperienced for the top job. They assert he will continue focusing party resources on Lingle and, increasingly, Aiona, at the expense of the grassroots and legislative candidates.

"Jonah has not had that experience, and he is moving in the same direction that we feel ... is making the party again a campaign committee for a top candidate," said 66-year-old Kuroiwa.

Kuroiwa said he wants the state party to highlight opposition to issues such as same-sex civil unions and the so-called Akaka bill, the measure in Congress that Lingle supports that would establish a Native Hawaiian government.

"The Republicans are not bringing those issues up," said Kuroiwa, the lead plaintiff in a federal lawsuit alleging that the goals of the state Office of Hawaiian Affairs are discriminatory toward non-Native Hawaiians.

Palcic said a prime motivation for his candidacy was the unwillingness of state GOP leaders to allow consideration of changes to the party platform at last year's convention. An amendment he sought would have expressed opposition to a 2004 law allowing Honolulu to hike the general excise tax to help finance its rail transit project.

Such a plank would have amounted to implicit criticism of Lingle, who allowed the tax measure become law without her signature.

"They just shoved the platform down our throats," said Palcic, 60. "It made it obvious to me how far the party had drifted away from Republican principles."

Smith opted not to comment about his candidacy.

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## PACIFIC BUSINESS NEWS

Wednesday, May 13, 2009, 1:11pm HAST

### Nominee supports Honolulu rail project

Pacific Business News (Honolulu)

President Barack Obama's nominee for transit administrator at the Department of Transportation weighed in on Honolulu's rail transit project on Wednesday, saying the city was "reaching a make-or-break point."

Peter Rogoff was asked by Sen. Daniel Akaka at his U.S. Senate confirmation hearing about his commitment of time and attention to the \$4.6 billion rail project.

"I've toured the corridor of this project, I've met with Mayor Hannemann on more than two occasions to discuss it, and I agree with you we are reaching a make-or-break point on the Honolulu project," Rogoff told Akaka. "I unfortunately, along with a former colleague of mine, was serving on a [Senate] subcommittee when the City Council reversed itself and undid the project in the 1990s and we went through the very unfortunate exercise of reallocating funds already appropriated to Honolulu to other cities.

"We must not let that happen again. You have my assurance both in working with the people in Region 9 as well as within headquarters to make sure everyone is talking to each other clearly in terms of what needs to be done to move this project forward."

Akaka, D-Hawaii, told Rogoff that 70 percent of the project's costs will come from local government financing, but that it will need "significant federal support."

The 20-mile elevated rail line is set to break ground later this year and is expected to be completed in 2018.

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## PACIFIC BUSINESS NEWS

Wednesday, May 13, 2009, 12:21pm HAST

# TheBoat suspended, will end service in June

Pacific Business News (Honolulu)

TheBoat passenger ferry service will be suspended next month.

Mayor Mufi Hannemann announced Wednesday that he will end the project after June 30.

The service, operated by the City and County of Honolulu, was launched in September 2007. It transported commuters from Kalaeloa Harbor to Aloha Tower and back on three weekday round trips.

The service was started with \$4 million in federal funds and \$1 million from the city.

“As I noted in my State-of-the-City address, I am a staunch supporter of multimodal transportation, which includes the bus, this ferry, and rail transit that breaks ground later this year,” Hannemann said in a statement. “However, given our fiscal condition, we needed to take a critical look at all expenditures, and I directed the Department of Transportation Services to complete an evaluation of the service. That’s led to my decision to terminate the project and redirect the money to increasing the homeowners’ tax credit proposed in the fiscal year 2010 budget, as well as to offering additional bus service to accommodate those riding TheBoat.”

Hannemann said he hasn’t ruled out a return of TheBoat in the future.

The city said TheBoat has carried about 110,000 passengers since its inception and averaged about 270 riders a day aboard two vessels, the Rachel Marie and the Melissa Ann.

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May 14, 2009

## Drivers may have to pay more gas tax

### Council panel passes increase of 3¢ per gallon

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

O'ahu motorists would pay 3 cents more a gallon at the gasoline pump under a plan approved 3-2 by the City Council Budget Committee yesterday.

Council Budget Chairman Nestor Garcia said raising the fuel tax is one way to help resolve a \$50 million budget shortfall.

Garcia and his colleagues are looking at a combination of budget cuts and tax hikes to balance the budget.

Raising the fuel tax to 19.5 cents a gallon from the existing 16.5 cents would add about \$9 million annually to city coffers, Garcia said. The city last raised the fuel tax in 1989 — by 5 cents.

The council must approve the gas tax twice more before it can go to the mayor's desk for his signature, and Garcia acknowledged that he's not sure the plan will pass.

In March, Mayor Mufi Hannemann proposed a \$1.8 billion operating budget and called for an increase in property taxes that works out to about a \$120 annual hike for the typical family owning a \$600,000 single-family home on O'ahu.

Garcia said he preferred a mix of a gas tax increase and a smaller property tax increase.

"Here is an opportunity to try to relieve some of that pressure off of property taxpayers," Garcia said.

Budget Committee members Duke Bainum and Charles Djou voted against the fuel tax increase.

Bainum said he would like to see the council look harder for additional budget cuts so neither property or fuel taxes need to be raised. He has proposed \$42 million in savings and cuts, including eliminating about \$5.6 million in rail-related expenses and \$4 million from an account used when the city loses a lawsuit.

"Raising the fuel tax is going have some real ripple effects on our economy," said Djou, who has proposed a 5 percent across-the-board budget cut. "Now's not the right time to raise taxes, period," he said.

## 'Hard to recoup'

Gareth Sakakida, managing director of the Hawaii Transportation Association that represents trucking and bus companies, said a gas tax increase during a down economy will be hard to absorb.

In addition to the city tax, Hawai'i residents pay 18.4 cents per gallon in federal fuel charges and 17 cents a gallon in state fuel taxes.

Sakakida said his group's research shows O'ahu's combined per-gallon fuel tax is among the highest in the country, adding that the state and federal governments are also looking at raising their charges.

"Those kinds of impacts are hard to recoup even in normal times," Sakakida said.

Councilman Gary Okino, who voted for the fuel tax yesterday, said he's not wedded to the plan.

City Budget Director Rix Maurer III said the Hannemann administration had not yet studied a fuel tax increase fully enough to offer a position on it. The administration did not look seriously at increasing fuel taxes to balance the budget because it wanted a more steady source of income, he said.

The committee deferred a vote on property tax rates until Monday, when it is set to finish its work on the rest of the budget plan.

## 2 residents testify

Only two O'ahu residents testified yesterday on the proposed property tax hike and both opposed them.

One of them, Paul Smith, said the city should furlough employees to save money.

Overall, the budget submitted by Hannemann is 0.28 percent more than the budget approved by the council for this year. Much of the budget shortfall is the result of nondiscretionary issues including previously approved raises tied to collective bargaining contracts, increases in employee health and retirement benefits, and a drop in hotel room tax and interest revenues the city receives.

The administration has said that its original budget for the coming year was \$128 million short, and that it was reduced to a \$50 million shortfall only after spending restrictions, a hiring freeze and other budget belt-tightening.

Garcia said he wants to pass some kind of tax increase this year because he's troubled at the prospect of needing to push through a larger tax increase next year, when the city is projected to have a \$170 million shortfall and many of his colleagues are up for re-election.

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May 14, 2009

## TheBoat ends service in June

### Suspension would save city \$5M as it faces a \$50M revenue shortfall

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

TheBoat will cease operations at the end of June, bringing to a close the city's 20-month demonstration project for a Kalaeloa-Honolulu passenger ferry service.

Mayor Mufi Hannemann cited fiscal constraints for his decision to halt the service, but said he is not ruling out a return of TheBoat.

The city is facing a \$50 million revenue shortfall and several City Council members have proposed eliminating TheBoat and diverting the nearly \$5 million used annually to subsidize the project to other programs.

"I am a staunch supporter of multimodal transportation, which includes the bus, this ferry, and rail transit that breaks ground later this year," Hannemann said in a press release. "However, given our fiscal condition, we needed to take a critical look at all expenditures."

Money saved from the operations could be used to help pay for a homeowners' tax credit in 2010, as well as offering additional bus service to those now riding TheBoat, the mayor said.

The operation has been plagued by low ridership, forcing the city to heavily subsidize it.

City officials estimate about 270 people ride it daily, running at about 30 percent of capacity.

A recent city study showed that while passengers pay only \$4 for a roundtrip ticket, the cost to the city is about \$124 per rider per round trip. That means the city is paying about \$30,000 a year for one commuter to make the daily trip on TheBoat.

The city received a one-time \$5 million federal grant to help operate TheBoat the first year, but the city picked up the cost of the subsidy when it decided to continue the service.

Both supporters and opponents agreed that ridership would have been higher if the city had been allowed to use the harbor at Iroquois Point in 'Ewa Beach as a terminus. But the Navy would not give clearance for it as it had for a previous commuter shuttle pilot project several years earlier.

"It (Kalaeloa harbor) is just in the wrong place," said Councilman Gary Okino, who heads the Council Transportation and Planning Committee. "But the best place isn't available."

Hannemann said he would restore TheBoat service if a terminal could open up in 'Ewa. Not only would an 'Ewa terminal have opened TheBoat to a larger ridership, administration officials said, but an 'Ewa-to-Honolulu boat ride would have been only 30 minutes, half the time of a Kalaeloa-to-Honolulu route.

Longtime Makakilo resident Michele Golojuch had been a regular rider until a change in her daily routine required her to take her car.

Golojuch said riding TheBoat had been less stressful than riding TheBus and offered opportunities for people to chat, work on a laptop computer and nap.

"It was a really nice alternative," she said.

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## Council edges toward fuel tax hike

[By B.J. Reyes](#)

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, May 14, 2009

The City Council is pushing a 3-cent-a-gallon fuel tax increase and plans to discuss raising property taxes next week.

City Council Looking To Raise Gas Taxes



The City Council is considering raising gas taxes as well as looking at reducing the property tax hikes that have been proposed.

[ [Watch](#) ]



The Council Budget Committee advanced yesterday a bill to raise the county's fuel tax to 19.5 cents a gallon.

Committee members deferred taking action on a real property tax increase proposed by Mayor Mufi Hannemann, delaying the matter until Monday, when they take another crack at crafting the city's operating budget for fiscal year 2010, which begins July 1.

Budget Chairman Nestor Garcia said he wanted to give members time to study the various revenue-generating options and funding-cut proposals available to balance the budget.

When taken together, an increase in the fuel tax could raise enough money to lessen or eliminate the need to increase property taxes, Garcia said.

"This is more art than science, trying to figure out whether or not if I pull down here, what can happen here," Garcia said. "We could see a drop in the (property tax) rate ... but in order to do that, maybe the fuel tax has to come into play."

Hannemann has proposed an increase in the property tax rate of 30 cents, placing it at \$3.59 per \$1,000 of a property's value. The property tax hike proposal, coupled with increases for some bus fares, Honolulu Zoo entry, public golf courses and other fees, was aimed at closing a \$50 million gap in the 2010 budget.

The increase in the fuel tax was proposed by Garcia, who said every one-cent increase in the fuel tax would bring in an estimated \$3 million. If enacted, the new tax would go into effect by August.

City Budget Director Rix Mauer III said the administration had discussed the possibility of raising the fuel tax, but decided to instead pursue more reliable sources of revenue. He noted that last summer, as fuel prices soared, gasoline consumption fell along with gas tax revenue.

The proposed tax of 19.5 cents a gallon would be on top of federal taxes of 18.4 cents a gallon and state taxes of 16 cents per gallon. Hawaii has among the highest taxes on gasoline of any state.

Any city increases would come on top of several state tax hikes approved by the state Legislature for the next fiscal year. They included higher income taxes for individuals making more than \$150,000, and an increase in the hotel room tax.

Garcia said the fuel tax has to be considered as the Council looks ahead to the 2011 fiscal year, with a looming budget deficit of more than \$176 million.

Councilmen Charles Djou and Duke Bainum voted against the fuel tax increase, which now goes before the full Council for a public hearing on May 27.

Bainum also cautioned that a fuel tax increase might lead to increased costs for fueling the city vehicle fleet, potentially offsetting any revenue gains.



## EDITORIAL

# Let's roll on bikeways

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, May 14, 2009

Today is the 15th annual national Bike to Work Day, but too many bicycles will remain idle in Honolulu because some accommodating projects that were part of a 20-year plan a decade ago were not completed. Fortunately, many of the unfinished projects have been dusted off and are going forward, with the goal of making Oahu bike-friendly.

A new \$350,000 master plan is intended to return to the 1999 plan for \$77 million in urban Honolulu projects and expand the effort to cover the entire island, said Chris Sayers, bicycle coordinator for the city Department of Transportation Services. "There's a groundswell of people that want bike facilities," Sayers told the Star-Bulletin's Rob Shikina.

Three years ago, voters approved a City Charter amendment making it a priority to redesign Honolulu into a pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly city. In 2007, the League of American Bicyclists awarded Honolulu an honorable mention for its attempts to become friendly to two-wheelers.

The league ranks Hawaii 22nd among states in bicycle-friendliness, which is unsatisfactory when considering the islands' fair climate and low levels of air pollution. Gov. Linda Lingle this year signed into law a policy of reasonably making public roads accessible to all users, including pedestrians and cyclists.

The city has completed about 60 percent of the projects in the 1999 plan, Sayers said. The plan calls for completing a bike path stretching from Kahala to Pearl City, which was to be completed five years ago but was set aside because of lack of planning and money. The new plan is to connect existing bike paths and create new ones to rail transit stations.

The city receives about \$400,000 a year from bicycle registrations, and federal funds have increased revenues to \$1 million in recent years. Projects not part of the original plan but now completed include a Pearl Harbor bike-path extension and a Kailua Beach bike-path bridge.

The popularity of biking soared last summer when high gasoline prices prompted commuters to consider alternatives. The national bicyclers' league points to health benefits of bicycling, noting that nearly two-thirds of American adults are overweight and nearly half of those are obese.

Bikers account for less than 1 percent of commuters in the United States but as much as 6 percent in Portland, Ore., one of three recipients of the league's platinum award for high levels of bicycle use and a commitment to improve conditions of cyclists ranging from avid mountain bikers to everyday commuters.

"We're in the best position that we've seen to make these things happen," said Mitchell Nakagawa, executive director of the Hawaii Bicycling League. "There's no reason why Honolulu can't be a platinum bicycling city."

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## Letters to the Editor

For Thursday, May 14, 2009

### **Bike plan needs accountability**

As a bicyclist who rides every day, I, too, am skeptical of the upcoming City & County Bike Master Plan ("Smooth ride," Star-Bulletin, May 12). Despite repeated complaints to, and meetings with, City & County officials, existing bike paths have not been maintained. The Pearl Harbor bike path surface is marred by potholes and tree roots and used daily by motorized vehicles; the path along Fort Weaver Road has been overtaken by construction vehicles and material.

The article correctly pointed out that large amounts of money have already been directed to the bike-path program, yet it failed to address why the millions have not resulted in safe and adequate bike paths. Who is being held responsible for management of those tax dollars?

Master plans are great, but they are only plans that require individuals and money to implement. Based upon what I have observed over the past 20 years, the City & County needs to ensure that they have the right individuals assigned to oversee the project, as well as an independent accounting of how our tax dollars are being spent to build and maintain the bike paths.

Ken MacDowell  
Waipahu

## Letters to the editor

For Friday, May 15, 2009

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, May 15, 2009

### **Greed propels buildup in Ewa**

As I sat in traffic on Fort Weaver Road heading for the H-1 last Saturday at 9:30 a.m., I watched the traffic signals at Holowaka Drive and then Renton Road change to red about four times before we moved at all.

I wondered at the stupidity of the government for allowing all the new home development before making infrastructure improvements. Then I thought that perhaps it was greed that trumped stupidity and getting their hands on all the new property taxes as soon as possible and then fix the traffic.

It also occurred to me that simply widening Renton Road might not solve the problem. I think that overpasses, such as the one at Fort Weaver Road and Farrington Highway, would have been a better solution (and probably cheaper). I also thought about Mayor Frank Fasi's idea of a tunnel under Pearl Harbor.

As you can see, I had plenty of time to think about things while sitting and twiddling my thumbs waiting for traffic to move.

Joel Maimon  
Ewa Beach

May 16, 2009

## Honolulu's rough roads add \$688 a year to your driving costs

### Honolulu motorists pay \$688 in extra fees, fifth highest in nation

*By Michael Tsai  
Advertiser Staff Writer*

For what local drivers pay extra to operate a vehicle on Honolulu's ragged roadways, they could fly roundtrip to New York, buy 30 or so shares of current hot stock Nordstrom Inc., or load the fridge with 68 pounds of choice Angus tenderloin.

According to 2007 statistics compiled by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials in its recently released report "Rough Roads Ahead: Fix Them Now or Pay For It Later," Honolulu drivers pay \$688 in additional vehicle operating costs — more than twice the national average — each year due to poor pavement conditions.

Among cities with populations of 500,000 or more, Honolulu ranks fifth in additional vehicle costs behind Los Angeles (\$746), San Jose (\$732), San Francisco-Oakland (\$705) and Tulsa (\$703).

Statewide, drivers pay an average of \$503 extra because of rough roads. The national average is \$335.

The state also fared poorly in the association's analysis of pavement conditions.

Drawing on Federal Highway Administration data, the report categorized all urban and rural roads in each state as "good," "fair," "mediocre" or "poor."

Hawai'i had the fourth-highest percentage of roads in the "poor" category — 27 percent — behind New Jersey (46 percent), California (35 percent) and Rhode Island (32 percent). It led all states with roads in the "mediocre" category at 44 percent.

According to the report, only 19 percent of Hawai'i roads were rated "fair," and only 10 percent — the lowest percentage of all states — were considered "good."

Among urban areas, Honolulu tied with San Jose and San Francisco-Oakland for the second-highest percentage of roads in "poor" condition at 61 percent. Los Angeles ranked first at 64 percent.

Hawai'i has 4,281 miles of roads (2,104 urban and 2,177 rural).

"This is just an approximation of what's going on," said Panos Prevedouros, a professor of civil and environmental engineering at the University of Hawai'i. "The reality is that our roads are much worse than the report says."

Prevedouros said the report relied heavily on data tracked by the state, but seemed to lack complete information on roads maintained by the city. Had such information been available, Prevedouros said,

"We'd be at rock bottom."

"This is what years of neglect have done," he said.

State Transportation Director Brennon Morioka could not be reached for comment.

## roads in trouble

Honolulu resident Joe Baloloy, 36, didn't need a report to understand that the roadways he drives every day in his truck are in serious need of improvement.

"Compared to the rest of the country, I think we're pretty far back," Baloloy said. "There are a lot of bad areas — Vineyard, Bishop, Alakea. The most crowded areas they don't want to fix."

The state of local roads isn't just a concern for drivers.

Terry Noble, 47, walks to where he needs to go — he stopped bicycling after a near collision with a bus - but he has to step carefully to avoid broken pavement and potholes.

"Even walking I see that there are lots of potholes," he said. "Across the street from where I live on Victoria Street, (the pavement) is totally destroyed."

Yet, Noble isn't sure what can be done given the extent of the problem around the state.

"I think it'd be impossible to keep up," he said.

The cost to drivers here and on the Mainland is twofold.

As the report states, "The American public pays for poor pavement conditions twice — first through additional vehicle operating costs, and then in higher costs to restore pavement to good condition."

Pavement conditions are rated according to a measure known as the International Roughness Index. While roads rated "mediocre" or "fair" may be repaired to "good" condition, those rated "poor" generally need more intensive and costly resurfacing or reconstruction to address serious wear and deterioration to the surface and underlying structures.

As the AASHTO report noted, driving on rough roads accelerates vehicle depreciation, reduces fuel efficiency, and damages tires and suspension.

Data contained in the report supports the correlation between pavement conditions and additional vehicle operation costs. For example, Georgia, which ranks first among states with 92 percent of roads in good condition, also ranks last in additional vehicle operation costs at just \$44 per driver.

## 'a major setback'

Keith Martin, 48, of Kane'ohe is on the road all day as a delivery driver for Carrier Corporation of Hawai'i. He says the vans he and other drivers use for work are under continual maintenance for flat

tires and other problems caused by poor pavement conditions.

"I think there definitely need to be improvements," he said. "There are too many potholes out there that can cause accidents."

The six-year, \$4.2 billion Highways Modernization Plan proposed by Gov. Linda Lingle and Senate and House leaders in January was intended to address the state of Hawai'i's deteriorating roadways with 22 statewide projects and 161 projects on O'ahu, the Big Island and Maui County.

However, the measure died a quiet death earlier this month amid concerns over tax hikes provided for in the plan.

"That was a major setback," Prevedouros said. "In the short term, it would have solved congestion and pavement problems. It didn't go far enough but it was a start. But I guess in Hawai'i we can't even get started."

Prevedouros said gas tax increases would be a fair way to pay for necessary improvements since the primary users of Hawai'i roadways would contribute to the work based on their level of usage.

With the plan shelved at least until next session, Prevedouros said the city should focus on establishing a clearly defined process for addressing repairs and maintenance. He said increased emphasis on pavement work, possible now because of decreases in the cost of gasoline and asphalt, would also help to address immediate problems while providing a boost to the economy.

"It should be a priority," he said. "It would be good for the local economy as well as for the tourists who come here and travel on our roads. It would help to address the impression that we're in a downward spiral."

May 16, 2009

## Rail transit

### Speak up against train before too late

The rail issue is coming to a critical juncture. There is a budget committee hearing scheduled for Monday, May 18, at 9 a.m. Council members appear ready to vote for a budget containing well over \$1 billion to build a Kapolei-to-Waipahu rail line without any requirement that the mayor first have a commitment in writing from the federal government that there will be federal funding for rail. If they vote for this budget, without any conditions, they will set us up for either:

(a) An expensive, but worthless, 6 1/2-mile "train to nowhere" that will serve only to develop more of the 'Ewa plain without any plans to give the people in Kapolei traffic relief coming into town. After we build the rail to Waipahu, there will be no money for highways to provide relief from this terrible congestion;

or (b) If the first segment is an elevated, heavy, third rail system, the rest of the line must be elevated, heavy rail. It will be the end of beautiful downtown Honolulu. We believe the mayor is setting the budget up this way so that in the event the federal government does not give him the approvals he wants, he will go ahead to build the first segment with only local money and forgo the federal funds. We are now predicting that the city will be around \$750 million short from local tax collections, which can only be relieved by more tax increases. Without a large show of opposition, they will pass this budget without provisos. The council is counting on a passive citizenry that will not object to ruining Honolulu with a monstrous train running through downtown Honolulu and tax increases which will drive more of our people from Hawai'i and contribute to the slow decay of our Island. This project is about who we are, what a Hawaiian sense of place is about, and what kind of a future we seek for our beloved island and for our children. No one can change this but the people.

Bobbie Slater | Honolulu

## EDITORIAL

# Demise of TheBoat unavoidable

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, May 16, 2009

After a laudable effort at testing a ferry commuter service between Leeward Oahu and downtown, Mayor Mufi Hannemann has announced that the service will be stopped at the end of June. While the mayor did not rule out a possible return of TheBoat, the completion of a rail transit line probably will render the concept of a ferry line even less viable than it turned out to be without rail in place.

Efforts in 1992 and 1999 to operate a ferry between Kalaeloa Harbor and Aloha Tower failed for lack of support by commuters. Bus service to the ferry at the leeward harbor was not provided, and Kapolei residents were reluctant to drive several miles in one direction to board a ferry operated by a company that looked for revenue from dinner cruises with schedules that made ferry departure times impractical.

In launching the new system two years ago, the city provided bus service to and from downtown locations and Aloha Tower, and to and from Kapolei neighborhoods to Kalaeloa at an annual cost of \$1 million. TheBoat was dedicated entirely to the ferry operation, with the help of a \$5 million federal grant.

The results were impressive. While only a dozen or so commuters made a habit of boarding the large and smooth cruise boats for the previous 45-minute commutes by sea, the three 75-foot catamarans averaged about 270 riders a day — including tourists who took the cruise for the joy of it — for the sometimes rough hour-long journeys between downtown and Kalaeloa. Hannemann said the 149-passenger boats have been running about 30 percent full. But they have been running at a significant financial loss.

Hannemann said he would consider a return of TheBoat if the Navy grants permission for it to make a stop at the harbor at Iroquois Point in Ewa Beach. That was part of the itinerary of the Wikiwiki ferry that operated in 1999 and 2000 under the sponsorship of the state Department of Transportation, averaging more than 1,000 riders a week from a

Navy housing area.

While the mayor may continue to favor "a multimodal transportation system," the rail system planned between Kapolei and Ala Moana remains the key component for the future.

In a U.S. Senate confirmation hearing this week, Peter Rogoff, President Barack Obama's nominee as federal transit administrator at the Department of Transportation, told Sen. Daniel Akaka that he supports the rail project, which he said is "reaching a make-or-break point." Rogoff said he will work with people in the federal agency "to make sure everyone is talking to each other clearly in terms of what needs to be done to move this project forward."

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**Find this article at:**

[http://www.starbulletin.com/editorials/20090516\\_Demise\\_of\\_TheBoat\\_unavoidable.html](http://www.starbulletin.com/editorials/20090516_Demise_of_TheBoat_unavoidable.html)

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## Letters to the Editor

For Sunday, May 17, 2009

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, May 17, 2009

### **City's planned train system should chug off into sunset**

Mayor Mufi's TheBoat is now officially canceled. So should be Mufi's train system.

The taxpayers of Oahu should not pay in perpetuity for the many sweet-sounding but fiscally unsound grand schemes of the mayor. TheBoat's ill-fated trial run pretty much proves that we can't trust Mufi's forecasts. And the train is very, very expensive.

Michael P. Rethman  
Kaneohe

May 18, 2009

## Public input a high priority for rail project

*By Toru Hamayasu*

As general manager for Honolulu's rail transit project, I have overseen our extensive and unprecedented efforts to provide accurate information to the public, and to review concerns about how the project will affect O'ahu. We take these responsibilities very seriously, and are committed to working with the community to ensure this project is successful and will benefit our island home for many years.

We are carefully reviewing and responding to hundreds of written comments we received regarding the project's draft Environmental Impact Statement, in full compliance with state and federal law. We are also compiling additional information to more fully explain how earlier decisions were made, and will include this in the final environmental document.

For example, some property owners and others have suggested changes to the rail route, or expressed a preference for a street-level transit system downtown, rather than the planned elevated system. We respect these preferences, but it should be understood that the street-level option was carefully evaluated and presented to the City Council approximately three years ago. The council selected the present alignment after a series of public hearings with ample opportunity for the public and various special interests to voice concerns.

The city has gone to great lengths to ensure transparency and public accountability regarding this project. For example, there was no legal requirement that the draft EIS be publicly released prior to the November 2008 election, in which voters authorized a steel-wheel-on-steel-rail-transit system. And there was no requirement to release the hundreds of comments we later received in response to that report, prior to completion of our detailed responses. We did so, however, because it was the right thing to do.

We also prepared newsletters and DVDs to explain technical issues in ways that are more user-friendly for people who don't have the time or inclination to wade through hundreds of pages of technical documents. This innovative multimedia approach to explaining issues and conclusions in the environmental review process recently won an Ilima Award from the International Association of Business Communicators-Hawai'i as one of the best communication tools. The Hawai'i chapter of the American Planning Association also commended the DVD as the first in Hawai'i created specifically to help the public understand information in a draft EIS.

We have also held special public workshops in neighborhoods that will be served by rail transit so that people who live there have opportunities to help design transit stations and receive answers to any questions they may have. While many residents have attended and voiced appreciation for these efforts, a few critics who have publicly complained about a lack of access to information did not bother to show up, and had not attended any of the public hearings held earlier at Honolulu Hale when the City Council made important decisions on the project over the past three years. As Council Chairman Todd Apo pointed out in an Advertiser article on May 4, "A lot of those so-called issues that people want to re-examine, they've been looked at."

I would like to emphasize that we are working quickly and efficiently to move forward with this long-

overdue project, but are also carefully complying with federal and state environmental requirements. We designed a schedule that minimizes delays, because inflation alone can add million of dollars to the cost of a project of this size. Time not wasted is money saved. The end result will be a high-quality rail transit system that the people of O'ahu deserve. U.S. Sen. Daniel Inouye has described the city's rail transit initiative as a "now or never" project. And in these challenging economic times, we couldn't agree more.

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## Comments on rail available to public

[By Gary T. Kubota](#)

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, May 19, 2009

The city has released public comments contained in the draft environmental impact statement for its proposed 20-mile rail transit system, including criticism of its plan to build a raised rail system along Ala Moana and the historic district of Chinatown.

The release follows a proposed resolution drafted by City Council member Duke Bainum calling for Mayor Mufi Hannemann's administration to release the public comments.

Bainum said he believed that a review of the comments should occur during the planning stages so that decisions about the rail transit could examine all possibilities, especially in light of its estimated cost of several billion dollars.

Hannemann's spokesman, Bill Brennan, said the administration plans to address every comment in the draft environmental impact statement.

Under the federal process, public comments do not have to be released until a final environmental impact statement is completed.

Council Transportation Chairman Gary Okino said that in response to a formal request to the city Department of Transportation Services, he received copies on compact discs of all public-comment letters. Okino said he was grateful for Hannemann's quick response.

"This should take care of it rather than passing another piece of legislation," Okino said.

Okino's office said 623 comment letters were submitted to the Department of Transportation Services, containing some 3,500 specific comments.

Okino said about 500 comment letters came from individuals, including one man who submitted 40 letters.

Okino said he expected all the comment letters to be critical but was pleasantly surprised to find that many were in support of the project.

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## Elevated argument

Architects suggest building the rail system near ground level

[By Gary T. Kubota](#)

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, May 19, 2009

The city's plan for a 20-mile elevated rail transit system worries many architects.

Officials with the Honolulu Chapter of the American Institute of Architects want the city to look at building the transit system near ground level in portions of downtown to reduce its visual impact and potential cost.

But a Hannemann administration spokesman, Bill Brennan, said that in its review of a route through Honolulu in 2006, the City Council decided to select a system that includes an elevated rail.

Council Transportation Chairman Gary Okino agrees that is the best alternative. "I wouldn't have voted for it if it was an at-grade system," Okino said. "It absolutely doesn't make any sense to put the system on the ground. ... There's a huge difference in terms of efficiency, speed, capacity and operating cost."

Okino said he agrees the elevated rail will affect the views, but believes it is a "trade-off."

Okino said the system is similar to the elevated rail operated by the Vancouver Skytrain, an operation established in 1986 that has been so successful it "pays for itself."

He said elevating the rail allows the system to be fully automated and reduces the cost of operation tremendously.

At stake is a projected \$5.4 billion rail transit system from East Kapolei to Ala Moana, \$1.4

billion of which would be paid by the federal government and the remainder by the city.

The city plans to break ground for the project by the end of this year and is receiving comments about a draft environmental impact statement for the rail system.

Okino said the Council reviewed the alternatives along with advice from experts before the 2006 vote.

But Councilman Duke Bainum said the Council's vote in 2006 did not require an elevated rail system, and the time to make a decision on the height of the rail system is supposed to be during the review of the environmental impact statement.

"Insisting otherwise and rushing to put out bids for an elevated system will likely lead to delays and legal challenges," Bainum said. "City taxpayers need a transit system that fits our pocketbook, preserves our neighborhoods and provides the most flexibility."

Jeffrey Nishi, president of AIA Honolulu, which has about 700 members, said the city should look into a light-rail system that allows transit cars to move on both elevated and ground-level tracks.

He said the transit cars could be powered by hanging electrical lines or by a system that would only trigger an electrical current when the cars touch the rail.

Nishi said with the elevated system being considered by the Hannemann administration that has a "hot rail" with electricity, the rails would have to run at least 3 feet off the ground as a safety precaution.

"What we think is really important is to get a technology that is versatile, so that we're not locked into an all-elevated system," Nishi said.

Nishi said the development cost is reduced substantially by lowering the height of the rail system and eliminating raised platforms, along with elevators and escalators.

"Obviously, we're not in it for the money, because we're talking ourselves out of a lot of work," Nishi said.

Nishi said his group estimates that lowering the rail system through downtown would increase travel time by eight to 10 minutes over the 20-mile route.

He said his group has been receiving "very general" responses from the city and wants officials to provide more information.

"We know they've studied it very hard," he said. "We need a little more convincing."

City Transportation Director Wayne Yoshioka said the minimum height of a rail structure will be about 25 to 30 feet above ground, and the city has provided numerous photographs showing the

simulated views of a raised rail system through downtown in its environmental impact statement.

He said the photographs show the rail will not be as intrusive as some critics believe.

But former AIA Hawaii president Sidney Char said some photographs make the rail system seem smaller than it actually is. "You don't get the sense of scale."

## Public comments

A sample of comments collected by the city:

"I expect my grandchildren will pay dearly and will not benefit since they will not be riders. ... I think it is too costly, but I don't know what the answer is to traffic." -- *Tom Barbara, Honolulu*

"I really resent all my taxpayer money that was spent on the slick stuff to get people to vote for the rail." -- *Pat Patterson, Makaha*

"Even in the local streets, like Ward Avenue, I never saw so much traffic. And, you know, it's building up so big and to the point where it's going to choke itself. And mass transit is an asset to this community." -- *James R. McManus, Honolulu, former New York resident*

"As much as I dislike Councilman Djou's 'tactics' to prolong the debate on the project, he has a point in building the Aiea to downtown portion first. It would bring the most ridership at the project's very beginning." -- *Gilbert Lee, Waipahu*

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## Is Elevated Acceptable?

19 May 2009

### Honolulu debates the look of its future transit system.

Is a new high-capacity transit system worth the visual encumbrments it will cause? Should the views of a beautiful tropical city be obstructed for the benefit of passengers on public transportation? That's the question now being debated in Honolulu, which is planning an elevated rail line that will run throughout the city.



Hawaii's biggest city is planning a **20-mile transit line**, running from Kapolei in the west to Ala Moana Center downtown, via Waipahu and the airport. Honolulu's density is high enough to require a rail system with a fully independent right-of-way; the city's *The Bus* transit system **already carries** an average of 225,000 riders a day, and the new line is expected to transport a full 95,000 of those passengers by 2030. The first phase of the system is expected to be completed by 2018 at a cost of \$5.8 billion, with construction possibly beginning late this year.

Yet, while the elevated alignment has been set in stone for more than a year now, the city's chapter of the American Institute of Architects is now asking the city to **run the system at ground level downtown** so as not to obstruct views in that dense waterfront area. The architects argue that Honolulu's landscape will be decimated by the concrete guideways. The elevated route would run on an aerial viaduct 30 feet off the ground (visualized in the before-and-after pictures above). An underground subway isn't an economically realistic option.

The negative consequence of moving the trains to ground level would be significant: overall trip time would increase by 10 minutes and automated operation would be impossible. If current plans play out, on the other hand, Honolulu's system would probably operate like Vancouver's *SkyTrain*, which has driverless vehicles running on third rail electric current. More standard light rail lines require drivers and overhead catenary, both of which increase operating costs, but which allow for street-running trains.

There's no doubt that the elevated guideways aren't going to be pretty — nobody

### About

This blog is by Yonah Freemark  
yfreemark (at) thetransportpolitic (dot) com



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likes huge concrete bridges spanning neighborhoods, which may find themselves plunged into occasional daytime darkness depending on the position of the sun. In addition, stations will be more difficult to access because they'll be elevated over the sidewalk.

But the advantages of overhead rails come in the form of speed, because a SkyTrain-like system never encounters traffic, whereas LRT lines are all too frequently delayed by vehicles getting in the way. Driverless systems also have higher and more stable acceleration rates. Transit's travel time benefits over automobile commuting is debatable, reducing public transport's attractiveness to potential riders. Any effort to increase the speed of transit offerings would likely increase the number of people switching modes.

It's a wash, then.

Are there potential compromises? One option is opting for extensive viaduct treatments downtown that would make the elevated line look less imposing and sinister. If the city invested in exciting artwork and lighting treatments along the bottom of the guideway, an aerial track might be something of an attraction. Similarly, a ground-level line could function well if fully separated from automobile lanes and given traffic signal priority *at every intersection*, modifications that would eliminate at least some of that 10-minute gap between the two alignment options. On the other hand, that would require a significant drop in the level of service offered to car drivers in areas near the line, something that's not the easiest thing for which to advocate.

No matter whether an elevated or ground line is picked, though, the city would do well to consider seriously about how to minimize its respective drawbacks. Without that thinking process, Honolulu won't get as good of a transit corridor as it deserves.

*Image above: from Honolulu Star-Bulletin*

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1. [anonymous](#) | 19 May 2009 at 15.23 

On the other hand, those riding on an elevated transit system will have a better view of the surrounding landscape than those at ground level currently do.

I don't know why they want to run it in the middle of downtown, though. Can't

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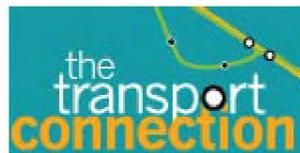
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they put the stations on the edge of honolulu and make people walk a few feet? Or else, run the elevated, automated systems to the edge of the city and then have street cars or BRT to take people the rest of the way.

2. [jfruh](#) | 19 May 2009 at 15.45

Those pics are interesting — when's the last time anyone in North America built an elevated transit line suspended over a city street like this? Reminds me of a more modern version of some NYC elevated lines.

(I suppose calling Honolulu "North America" is debatable...)

3. [ColoZ](#) | 19 May 2009 at 17.59

The image brings to mind something I've been wondering about for a while: why are modern concrete structures so big and bulky? This is most obvious in highway viaducts: the ones built 40-50 years ago are much slimmer and less visually obtrusive than similar ones built today. Near where I live, a 57-year-old two-lane bridge over an expressway was recently replaced. There was no capacity expansion: two old lanes became two new lanes. But the new structure is probably three times the size and weight of the old one — and this is in a rural location with no seismic risk.

It makes one wonder if "modern" construction standards were developed to favor the concrete industry. It may also explain part of the spectacular increase in public construction costs and timescales over the last 30 years.

That Honolulu elevated is far uglier and bulkier than what would have been built even thirty years ago. (A hundred years ago it would have been a slim steel structure and not concrete at all.) Why?

4. [Switching Modes](#) | 19 May 2009 at 19.32

The Overhead Wire featured the elevated [tram-train](#) in The Netherlands. It effectively features a very attractive elevated system; actually it looks like a piece of art.

Maybe Honolulu could develop something that looks like a wave for their elevated system. I'm no architect, but that sounds neat anyways.

Also, at Switching Modes there was recently a feature an [elevated cable cars](#). The advantage is that the system is pooled by a cable so the train cars are lighter (no need for an engine) and the elevated guideway requires fewer, smaller supports. Venezuela is building one of these system, Las Vegas already has one, and BART in the Bay Area is looking at using this technology as well. (for images visit this [link](#)).

However, elevated cable cars are probably not appropriate for this line in Honolulu. They cannot cover 20 miles, nor carry the passenger volumes required for this system.

BUT — what you might be able to do (I'm not an expert on this project), is use the cable technology through downtown, and use a standard metro service on an

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LRT

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elevated guideway next to the freeway further inland. The metro service would connect to the cable car line at both ends of the line.

This system would address the aesthetic problem of an elevated system, more capacity would be added through downtown where traffic will be heaviest, the transit system could reach more people, and the trip for commuters going through downtown their trip could be even faster because there could be fewer stops. The system could use the same fare collection system and be designed for cross-platform transfers or the transfer platforms could be stacked on top of each other so that all that is needed is single story escalator ride to get between trains.

Trains and traffic don't mix well; not when you have just one main artery through an urban area like that.

5. Jarrett at HumanTransit.org | 19 May 2009 at 19.35

Good post. See my comments on the topic here, greatly influenced by my experience living in Vancouver, and commuting on a driverless system, as well as my experience as a transit planner:

<http://www.humantransit.org/2009/05/is-elevated-acceptable.html>

6. TrainsinTokyo | 19 May 2009 at 20.12

*That Honolulu elevated is far uglier and bulkier than what would have been built even thirty years ago. (A hundred years ago it would have been a slim steel structure and not concrete at all.) Why?*

Earthquakes?

7. Nathanael | 20 May 2009 at 01.30

Why not put the trains at ground level and build road and pedestrian overpasses/underpasses?

8. BruceMcF | 20 May 2009 at 01.39

Why can't most of the area beneath the line be *built structures*? EG, commercial space, professional space, shaded arcades next to open plazas, etc.

Or treated with a colonnade to make it seem less like an ongoing freeway entrance ramp running through the downtown.

9. jon | 20 May 2009 at 01.52

i bet the operating costs and farebox recovery ratio would be better as elevated

i dont recall the honolulu cityscape being very attractive to begin with... lots of 1960s highrises with repetitive balconies

10. t joey | 20 May 2009 at 09.34

I don't mind elevated systems. If Honolulu looked back into some of the station design alternatives for Seattle's monorail they might get some interesting ideas. I liked how one of the alternatives was an offset double stack (the only picture I could find without too much investigation was here: <http://www.boosman.com/blog/images/2003-08-08-02.jpg> and here: <http://www.seattleweekly.com/2004-03-03/news/monoreality/>). The difference of course is that Seattle was proposing a monorail system.

 **11. Rockfish** | 20 May 2009 at 12.45

This is not a wash in any way. There is no good way to incorporate an elevated track into an attractive, vibrant city environment. These tracks destroy neighborhoods, which is why you cities all over America removing them. Solving these problems is going to be a lot harder and more complex than people let on. You can't just myopically say "build more rail" and then start obsessing over minutia like automated operation, average trip speeds, etc. This is the same internal engineering obsession that has lead highway planners over the decades to destroy America in the name of "efficiency." You don't create good cities just because the blunt instrument you wield is a rail line and not a highway.

I'm glad somebody, somewhere is trying to raise awareness of these issues.

 **12. Patrick M** | 20 May 2009 at 13.38

C'mon- Honolulu is nice, but Kauai it ain't. There's nothing significant visually there that highrises and massive cruise ship terminals have not already taken away visually.

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## Letters to the editor

### Don't let Oahu's trains go the way of the ferry

The trains are coming, and I hope to live to see them. We need them badly. Michael Rethman ([Letters, Star-Bulletin, May 17](#)) in Kaneohe may not need them, but those of us on this side surely do, and have for a long time.

The Luddites destroyed our ferry, which many used, needed and enjoyed, and it was a crying shame to see it leave. The naysayers should not have such destructive power over progress.

Nancy Bey Little  
Makiki

## Paying more at the pump

Gas prices will rise 9.6 cents a gallon on July 1 after a state tax exemption expires

By Richard Borreca and B.J. Reyes

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, May 20, 2009

The state Legislature quietly let expire a tax exemption on the sale of gasoline in Hawaii, meaning that drivers will pay an extra \$40 million a year in state taxes starting July 1.

With the average price of a gallon of gas today costing \$2.553 after fuel taxes are added, it will mean that on July 1 the gas will cost 9.6 cents more per gallon.

That would push the price of gas on Maui to more than \$3 a gallon.

The excise tax is added to the retail price of gasoline before all the other taxes are included. Hawaii motorists already pay a per-gallon federal tax of 18.4 cents, a state tax of 17 cents and county fuel taxes of between 16.5 cents in Honolulu and 8.8 cents on the Big Island.

The other taxes, however, are a set price. The excise tax is a percentage, so if the price of gasoline goes up this summer, a motorist's excise tax will also jump.

Since 1980 the state has exempted the sale of ethanol-blended gasoline from the general excise tax to encourage use of the so-called gasohol. After the state made the use of blended gasoline mandatory, the exemption essentially applied to all gas sold in the state.

But the exemption was set to expire at the end of this fiscal year unless extended by the Legislature.

The state Senate passed a bill to do that, Senate Bill 32, but it was killed in the House.

### Bottom line

If it takes about 15 gallons to fill up your gas tank:

» **Today:** With a gallon of gas averaging \$2.553, you pay about \$38.30 to fill your tank.

» **After July 1:** If gas prices stay the same, you'll pay \$39.74 to fill up, \$1.44 more.

» **Adding it up:** If you fill up every two weeks, the increase will cost you about \$37 over 12 months.

The Senate again slipped the permanent exemption into another bill, House Bill 1271, which creates a separate new barrel tax on petroleum used in Hawaii. But the excise tax exemption was deleted without comment in the conference committee version of the bill.

Linda Smith, Gov. Linda Lingle's senior policy adviser, said yesterday that without the exemption state excise taxes must be paid on all gas sold in the state.

In 2007 the exemption expired even after Gov. Linda Lingle urged the Legislature to keep the exemption in place. When legislators saw the rising prices of gasoline in 2007, they reinstated the exemption but set it to expire at the end of this fiscal year.

This year the state Tax Department opposed making the exemption permanent, noting that it would add \$40 million to the state treasury.

State Rep. Mina Morita, chairwoman of the House Energy and Environmental Protection Committee, opposed the gas exemption because she said it was being wrongly applied.

The exemption, Morita said, originally was intended to give gas station operators a tax break because they had to put in new equipment to store and pump ethanol-blended gasoline. Now that the switch has taken place, the excise tax should continue, Morita said.

The state also needed the money, and there was no assurance the tax break was being passed along to drivers.

"The exemption was never factored into the budget," Morita (D, Hanalei-Kapaa) said, noting that the \$40 million is cranked into the budget.

She added that it was never clear whether the excise tax exemption resulted in lower fuel prices, because "gasoline pricing isn't transparent; it was being sold as a way to lessen the cost of gasoline for consumers. But that may not be true."

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## Letters to the editor

### All those high-rises sure are ugly, too

How can the American Institute of Architects-Honolulu say [the rail will have drastic visual impact](#)? Are they kidding? Who designed all those high-rises that obstruct views of Diamond Head, the ocean and everything else that we used to have clear views of? Sounds like the anti-rail people have gotten to your organization.

Actually, you can see over and under the rail lines. Not like the massive high-rises all over Waikiki and Honolulu.

Adrienne Wilson-Yamasaki  
Lloyd Y. Yamasaki  
Wahiawa

## Letters to the editor

### **Stop the bickering, build the rail already**

It seemed like in 2008 all we did was bicker about whether or not to build a rail system. Now in 2009, it seems like all we do is bicker about whether the rail system should be elevated or at-grade.

Frankly, I just want the thing built. It will bring major relief from the terrible traffic between the west side and town, and it will create a lot of jobs for local families. Stop arguing, work together and build the rail already!

Debbie Nakamura  
Honolulu

May 21, 2009

## Hawaii drivers among worst in nation on road rules test

*By Christie Wilson  
Advertiser Staff Writer*

Hawai'i drivers are third-worst in the nation when it comes to their knowledge of basic road rules, according to a survey.

Local motorists posted a barely passing average score of 72 percent on the 2009 GMAC Insurance National Drivers Test, and a third failed the 20-question, multiple-choice exam that included actual questions from driver's licensing bureaus across the nation.

Hawai'i scores have continued a downward trend, dropping significantly in ranking the past three years, the report said. The state ranked 49th this year, 45th in 2008 and 23rd in 2007.

"It does surprise me," Honolulu Police Maj. Thomas Nitta said of the test results. "I think Hawai'i drivers are up to par — not terrible, but as good as everybody else. Some are more polite than on the Mainland, and that can be a problem."

The insurance company polled 5,183 licensed drivers, age 16 and up, from all 50 states and the District of Columbia and found the national average for the test was 76.6 percent, with anything below 70 percent considered failing. New York drivers had the lowest average score, 70.5 percent, and New Jersey was at 71.5 percent, followed by Hawai'i.

Motorists from Idaho and Wisconsin tied for first, with an average score of 80.6 percent.

Hawai'i motorists are required to take a written test only once, at the time they apply for an instructional permit. License renewals require only an eye exam.

King Kekaulike High School sophomore Ryan Knutson of Maui passed the written exam in February, and was quick to recall rules requiring motorists to signal 100 feet ahead of making a turn and allow a safe following distance of three seconds.

"I think it is helpful to take the test. It keeps you safe and you remember everything you learn because you want to pass it on the first time and it stays with you," said Knutson, 15.

More than 20 years after taking the written test, Knutson's mother, Lisa, had a little harder time answering the GMAC test questions correctly. Still, she considers herself "a good driver" and said experience behind the wheel should count for something.

"I do talk on the phone and check my e-mail. I know what I'm supposed to do but sometimes I don't practice it," she said.

Nitta said cracking down on distracted drivers is an enforcement priority, with an impending Honolulu

ban on the use of hand-held cell phones and other electronic devices while operating a vehicle that goes into effect July 1. The police major noted there are a lot of other things that can distract a driver.

"People, when they are operating a vehicle, must make the choice of driving rather than trying to do other things," he said.

## Experience helps

Many Hawai'i motorists also disregard speeding laws, Nitta said.

"One of the things drivers seem to forget is the speed rule. Whatever the speed limit is, that's the speed limit," he said.

Posted speed limits are based on the optimum speed for a particular road and take into account engineering and other safety factors for that location, according to Nitta.

He agreed that experience is important in making safe drivers. "It does work in your favor. It takes three to four years to gain experience to be a good driver, depending on your learning curve," Nitta said.

Overall, findings from the GMAC survey indicate the number of drivers who know basic road rules is decreasing, with this year's test scores lower than last year's — 76.6 percent vs. 78.1 percent. Applying the test results nationally, 20.1 percent of licensed drivers, or about 41 million motorists, wouldn't pass a written exam if taken today, the study said.

## 3-second rule

Nationally, only 15 percent of drivers knew the correct answer to what to do at a traffic light with a steady yellow signal — stop if it is safe to do so. Almost three of every four drivers couldn't identify a typical safe following distance to the car in front of them: three seconds.

However, 98 percent of the test takers knew what to do when an emergency vehicle with flashing lights approaches (pull over to the right and stop), what to do to avoid hydroplaning (slow down in wet conditions) and the meaning of a solid yellow line (do not pass).

When comparing genders, men are still more likely to pass the test than women, (81 percent vs. 79 percent), and drivers 35 and older were most likely to pass.

The age group with the highest failure rate was young adults, ages 18 to 24.

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## EDITORIAL

# Look to gas tax to prod fuel efficiency

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, May 21, 2009

A state tax exemption on the sale of gasoline in Hawaii will expire on June 30, adding nearly a dime a gallon to the price come July 1.

Tax increases will likely have to go far beyond that and be made nationwide before Americans will trade in their gas guzzlers for more fuel-efficient cars, which is the goal of a new mileage standard. At some point, Congress should address the question of whether substantial federal gas tax increases will be needed to create the needed market for hybrids and electric cars.

Since 1980, Hawaii has exempted from the general excise tax the sale of ethanol-blended gasoline, which now includes all gasoline sold in the state. The exemption amounts to 9.6 cents a gallon. Honolulu motorists now pay 17 cents a gallon in gasoline taxes and 16.5 cents in county taxes, in addition to the federal tax of 18.4 cents.

The Lingle administration supported reinstating the tax, which will mean \$40 million a year in state tax revenue. Kurt Kawafuchi, the state director of taxation, noted in testimony to legislators in February that oil prices had dropped to near record lows so that both prices at the pump and demand had "plummeted to the benefit of drivers." Indeed, oil prices dropped from a high of \$147 a barrel last July to below \$35 in March but have increased since then to more than \$60.

The Obama administration announced Tuesday that auto manufacturers would be required to produce fleets by 2016 that are 40 percent cleaner and more fuel-efficient, with a national standard of 35.5 miles per gallon, up from today's 27.5 miles per gallon. Stunned last summer when gasoline prices rose to \$4.50 a gallon, auto executives agreed with environmentalists that such a goal was needed to reduce the dependence on foreign oil.

Since then, gas prices have dropped to \$2.55 a gallon in Hawaii, with the tax exemption, and around \$2.25 across the mainland. Motorists once again are comfortable with their road monsters, and compact cars' share of vehicle purchases has actually dropped since last summer. The administration predicts that the fuel requirements will add \$1,300 to the price of a car, while others say it could be twice that.

Americans cringe at the suggestion that the federal gas tax, now 18.4 cents a gallon, should be increased to create such a market, cognizant that taxes of \$3 a gallon in Europe have resulted in domination of the market by fuel-efficient cars. Members of Congress shy away from giving any credence to the idea, as does the Obama administration.

Pressed Tuesday by co-host Diane Sawyer on ABC's "Good Morning America" if an increase in federal gas taxes would be needed to create the desired market, Carol Browner, Obama's assistant for energy and climate change, refused to go beyond saying that the administration works "within the laws on the books." Refusal to recognize the realities of the market could doom the ambitious energy goals of the administration.

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## Letters to the Editor

### **Train lines would help alleviate traffic woes**

I bet none of the white-collar architects who want to change the elevated rail line actually live in Kapolei like I do, suffering through 60-minute commutes to town in the morning and evening. If they did live out here, they would know that we need those trains running as soon as possible.

I resent these architects trying to change plans that have been in place for more than a year simply because the rail system isn't pretty enough for them.

Janice Tanoë  
Kapolei

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## Letters to the Editor

For Saturday, May 23, 2009

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, May 23, 2009

### **Rail will cost us less in long run**

Stories about the rising price of gasoline are among the prime reasons we need rail transit.

Let's face it, while gas prices have been remarkably low for the past year, does anyone really expect them to stay below \$3 a gallon? I sure don't.

I think that we need more alternatives that let us travel without a car, like more bike paths for short trips and rail transit for long trips. They will save us all money in the long run.

Rachel Gibson  
Makiki

## Building bust

Isle construction spending plunges and recovery is unlikely soon

[By Allison Schaefer](#)

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, May 24, 2009

Brandon Cruz, a carpenter's apprentice, used to pound nails.

Now he pounds tunes on a guitar to earn money while the severe downturn in Hawaii's construction industry plays out.

"It got hard to find jobs toward the end of last year. Before that, there was always work," said Cruz, who was among 6,500 people vying for jobs at Workforce, Hawaii's oldest and largest job fair, on Wednesday.

Since construction has declined, Cruz has worked odd jobs and the occasional late-night music gig to survive. He walked around the job fair with his guitar strapped to his back offering music samples to potential employers; however, it was a tough crowd, and Cruz left when he could not find anyone to listen.

Some construction workers have jobs in this economy, but most are playing Cruz's tune. The Hawaii Carpenters Union, Local 745, the state's largest building trade union, has declined to 7,300 members from 7,800 a year ago, and of those, 45 percent are out of work, said Ron Taketa, HCU financial secretary and business representative.

"Some have not had work in over a year and have already exhausted all of their state unemployment benefits," said Kyle Chock, executive director of the Pacific Resource Partnership (PRP), which serves as a bridge between Hawaii's leading contractors and the Hawaii Carpenters Union.

The situation has become so desperate that some members have turned off their cell phones to save money, Chock said.

"We can't find them to tell them about open jobs," he said.

Others have begun taking hardship withdrawals from their 401(k)s, Chock said.

Harder-to-fill construction-related jobs in fields like environmental science and engineering are still open, as evidenced by EnviroServices & Training Center LLC's presence at the recent job fair; however, the industry's bread-and-butter jobs have dried up.

"We've been trying to fill four positions for the last five months," said Brant Tanaka, principal at EnviroServices & Training Center LLC, who spent a good part of the job fair politely deflecting inquiries from unemployed construction workers, who did not have the required science background for the work.

"They are looking for anything that they can get right now to feed their families," Taketa said. "The unemployment levels are tragic."

Seasoned journeymen Sam Ige, who has been in Hawaii construction since 1970, said he was benched for about a third of last year; however, he found work this year at Halepawaa, a nine-story office building.

"I'm kind of lucky this time," he said. "To me this downturn hasn't been as bad as some that we've seen before."

However, the affects could be acute for younger workers who are less prepared for the decline, Chock said.

"They thought that the party would never end," he said, "but everything went off the cliff late last year."

Private-sector construction jobs, which comprised 75 percent of the last cycle, disappeared as the credit crunch hit, Taketa said.

"By the middle of last year, it was clear that we were all going to have a rough go of it," said Lance Wilhelm, senior vice president for Kiewit Building Group.

PRP data showed that construction revenue in Hawaii fell to \$439.8 million in the first quarter of 2009, a 45 percent drop from the same period in 2008 and a 39 percent drop from the fourth quarter of 2008.

These figures translate into hard times not only for Hawaii's construction industry, but for the state as a whole, Chock said.

"You can't have a healthy economy in Hawaii without having a healthy construction industry because of the multiplier effect," he said. "The average construction worker makes a healthy salary, and those dollars get distributed into the economy."

While the first of state and federal stimulus projects have gone to bid, Hawaii economists

have said that they won't be enough to grow the industry, which could lose another \$2 billion in construction spending over the next two years.

"Residential and commercial construction are on the downside and could take several more years to reach bottom," said Byron Gangnes, an associate professor of economics and the director of the University of Hawaii's Economic Research Organization's Hawaii Economy Group.

And, due to the length of the prior buildup and the continued uncertainty of the financing market, recovery could be slow, Wilhelm said.

"Generally speaking, the busier you are at the peak, the longer the trough, and this was a darn good peak," he said.

The construction industry anticipates that the downturn will extend into the middle of next year, Taketa said.

Federal and state spending will not be enough to return the industry to its previous boom, he said.

UHERO has forecast that by the end of 2011, Hawaii's construction industry will have lost more than 9,000 jobs. UHERO did not factor the rail project into its forecast because of the uncertainty surrounding its delivery; however, Gangnes said that when under way, it likely would boost Hawaii's economy.

"We hope to break ground at the end of the year," said Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann.

When in full throttle, rail will create 4,700 construction jobs and some 11,000 related jobs, Hannemann said.

"There is no bigger stimulus project for Hawaii than rail," Chock said.

Market uncertainty makes it challenging to predict when the jobs will come back, but Taketa said that union members will be ready when the work becomes available.

The Hawaii Carpenters Union was slated to open a \$25 million training center yesterday, he said. The 56,000-square-foot facility at the Kapolei Business Park symbolizes the union's commitment to providing the best-trained carpenters in Hawaii, Taketa said.

### ***By island***

First-quarter construction spending has varied by island:

<b>ISLAND</b>	<b>TOTAL SPENDING *</b>	<b>PCT. CHANGE FROM Q1 2008</b>	<b>PCT. CHANGE FROM Q4 2008</b>
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Oahu	\$280.7 million	-29 percent	-41 percent
Big Island	\$44.2 million	-78 percent	-52 percent
Kauai	\$24.3 million	-76 percent	-52 percent
Maui	\$90.5 million	-11 percent	-9 percent

\* Excludes permits and bids under \$50,000, federal IDIQ (indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity) projects and public/private joint ventures

Source: Pacific Resource Partnership



May 25, 2009

## Rail revenue plummets

Excise tax surcharge for April down 11% from last year due to slowdown

*By Sean Hao  
Advertiser Staff Writer*

Monthly tax collections needed to pay for Honolulu's planned \$5.4 billion elevated commuter train fell 11 percent last month to \$12 million compared with April 2008. The decline reflects a reduction in economic activity relating to a statewide slump.

Through the first 10 months of the current fiscal year, the half-percentage-point general excise tax surcharge raised a net \$119.7 million for the city, based on figures provided by the state Department of Taxation. That's down 14 percent, or \$19 million from year-ago levels.

With two months remaining in the current fiscal year, tax collections remain well below the pace needed to meet a city forecast of \$188 million in tax surcharge revenues.

City officials hope to use the tax to raise nearly \$4.1 billion, on an inflation-adjusted basis, from 2007 through 2022 to pay for the 20-mile rail system linking East Kapolei to Ala Moana. That, coupled with about \$1.4 billion in anticipated federal money, is expected to pay the estimated \$5.4 billion in capital costs associated with rail, according to the city's financial plan.

If monthly tax collections continue at the current average of \$13.2 million, the city could be short about \$42 million in transit funds by June 30. In the fiscal year starting July 1, the city's financial forecast anticipates transit tax revenue growing to an inflation-adjusted \$198 million, or \$16.5 million a month.

The state began collecting a half-percentage point general excise tax surcharge for transit in January 2007. The tax is scheduled to expire at the end of 2022. Overall, the tax has raised \$349.3 million during the first 28 months. That figure, and all figures in this article, do not include the 10 percent the state takes off the top to pay for administering the tax.

Officials want to begin construction in December, contingent on federal approval, and launch service in phases between late 2013 and 2019.

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May 26, 2009

## State competes for rail funding

### Repairs to largest, oldest systems could trump Honolulu line

*By Sean Hao*  
*Advertiser Staff Writer*

The city needs to get about \$1.4 billion of the \$5.4 billion needed to build a 20-mile elevated commuter rail line from the federal government. However, the federal government may be stretched to pay for Honolulu's rail system given the needs of many aging public transport systems in cities such as San Francisco, New York and Chicago.

More than a third of the assets at the nation's seven largest rail transit agencies are in marginal or poor condition. And fixing those assets, which include trains, guideways, stations and control systems, will require \$50 billion in repairs, according to a report by the Federal Transit Administration.

Fixing those ailing, older train systems may require diverting money from recently built and planned train systems, according to the recently released report to Congress. That could mean less money for Honolulu's planned rail system.

Overall, the report found that current methods for funding ongoing maintenance at the nation's largest and oldest train systems are inadequate and in need of fixing. The report also indicates that new and recently built train systems also have sizable maintenance backlogs.

"In a period of rising congestion and fuel prices, these services, and the infrastructure and rolling stock that support them, are critical to the transportation needs and quality of life of the communities they serve," the report states. "At the same time, this infrastructure is aging, and the level of reinvestment appears insufficient to address a growing backlog of deferred investment needs."

The seven cities studied in the report included older train systems in New York, Boston, Chicago and Philadelphia, and relatively new train systems in San Francisco, New Jersey and Washington, D.C. Combined, these systems serve more than 80 percent of the nation's rail riders. The study found that 35 percent of assets at these train systems were in marginal or poor condition. The proportion of train assets that are near or have already exceeded their expected useful life at newer train systems was close to 20 percent.

## several options

"This comparison suggests that the reinvestment needs for these seven operators is measurably higher (per dollar invested) than the rest of the transit industry," the report states.

The options presented to Congress to fix the problem include shifting more money to larger, older train systems and creating a special fund using federal and state resources to reduce the maintenance backlog, according to the report. Federal funding for the upkeep of older train systems has declined as new train systems have opened.

The federal government annually provides about \$2.3 billion for rail capital reinvestment. That funding covers just 13 percent of the average annual reinvestment needs of older U.S. rail systems. In contrast, federal funding covers 30 percent of average annual reinvestment needs at newer rail systems.

The FTA report is likely to be welcomed by cities with older, aging trains. But the report may not bode well for Honolulu, which needs \$1.4 billion in federal money to help build a rail system linking East Kapolei to Ala Moana and \$800 million more in federal funds to help maintain the transit system

through 2030.

Overall, the city expects to spend \$5.4 billion building rail and \$1.4 billion more operating and maintaining the system from 2013, when the first extension is to open, through 2030.

## 'A huge problem'

Rail opponents claim the federal government is unlikely to provide all the money the city needs to build rail. Cliff Slater, chairman of [www.Honolulutraffic.com](http://www.Honolulutraffic.com), said the new FTA report shows that the federal government can't afford to maintain its existing train systems, let alone build new ones.

"This is a huge problem," said Slater, who wants the city to build an elevated highway rather than rail. "If (the FTA) is sitting there with a backlog of \$50 billion, how long can they stretch that out without (older trains) taking all the money? Those things have to be taken care of.

"All those systems, they've just let maintenance go as governments are wont to do," Slater added.

Just how these train funding issues are resolved is up to Congress.

Jennifer Goto Sabas, U.S. Sen. Daniel K. Inouye's chief of staff in Honolulu, said the maintenance problems with the nation's older trains shouldn't affect the amount of so-called new starts funding available for new train projects. If anything, the expectation is that Congress will spend more money on transit overall in the future, she said.

"There isn't ... any interest in reducing the new starts side in an effort to take care of the legacy systems," Sabas said. "Part of it over time is are there going to be new taxes, (or) are you going to increase fares, but there's clearly not an interest in reducing the new starts at all to pay for that."

## Additional Facts

the process

Last week, President Obama recommended Congress provide \$1.83 billion to fund major transit projects throughout the United States. More than \$600 million of that money is being recommended for new projects in areas as diverse as northern New Jersey; Austin, Texas; and Roaring Fork Valley, Colo. No money was awarded to Honolulu's train project, which isn't expected to receive federal funds until 2011 at the earliest.

In addition, Honolulu was not among the 11 projects that were approved to enter the preliminary engineering phase of project development.

During preliminary engineering, the city will finalize management plans, refine the route's alignment and project costs, and identify benefits and impacts.

After preliminary engineering is completed, which usually takes 15 to 30 months, transit projects enter the final design phase, according to the Federal Transit Administration.

If the project passes muster then, the FTA provides what's called a full-funding grant agreement.

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## EDITORIAL

# Construction needs boost during recession

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, May 26, 2009

Reflecting the sharp downturn in tourism, Hawaii's construction industry [has been tumbling at unprecedented rates](#). The state will need to go forward with state and federal stimulus projects and break ground for the rail transit project by the end of this year to offset any ripple effect -- with tidal-wave potential -- from crisis-ridden California.

Construction spending in Hawaii neared \$1.3 billion in the second quarter of last year but plummeted to less than \$440 million in this year's first quarter. Membership in the Carpenters Union Local 745 fell to 7,300 from 7,500, and 45 percent of those remaining members are unemployed, says Ron Taketa, the union's financial secretary.

The University of Hawaii's Economic Research Organization's Hawaii Economy Group expects a loss of more than 9,000 construction jobs by the end of 2011, without factoring the rail project, which is expected to create 4,700 jobs at the peak of construction.

Construction is an integral part of Hawaii's economy, says Kyle Chock, executive director of the Pacific Resource Partnership, which acts as a bridge between contractors and the Carpenters Union. "The average construction worker makes a healthy salary, and those dollars get distributed into the economy," he says.

Hawaii's economic engine remains tourism, and that is affected by the smallest of economic blips on the mainland -- especially California -- and Asia. Hawaii felt the U.S. recession and then the Japanese recession in the 1990s, just as tourism was jolted in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The swine-flu scare added to tourism-dampening effects of the current recession.

California voters, who have gingerly approved propositions mandating tax ceilings over the decades, rejected five ballot measures a week ago that were intended to close \$5.5 billion from the state's budget gap, which now totals \$21.3 billion. The Los Angeles Times reports that California could fire every state employee and close every government office and still be running in the red.

As high-tech companies have bitten the California dust, governors of Maryland, Massachusetts and Texas reportedly are offering inducements to laid-off biotechnology employees. Throughout her administration, Gov. Linda Lingle has called for expansion in biotech, pharmaceuticals, astronomy, ocean sciences, film-making and renewable energy to expand the state's economic base, but more must be done.

That was apparent at Hawaii's oldest and largest job fair last Wednesday. Brant Tanaka, principal at EnviroServices & Training Center LLC, told the Star-Bulletin's Allison Schaefer that he spent much of his time at the job fair turning away unemployed construction workers who lacked required science backgrounds to fill four openings.

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## Letters to the editor

For Tuesday, May 26, 2009

### **Rail is an expensive luxury**

All the recent pro-rail letters to the editor do not take into consideration several points: 1) The city does not have enough money to pay for rail at this time. The collection from the transit tax, which expires in 2022, will be short by about \$3.14 billion and who else but us taxpayers will have to shoulder the \$3.14 billion. 2) The huge and expensive bureaucracy to administer and maintain rail once it is built would be a heavy burden to us taxpayers. 3) Trains will be almost empty the whole day and night except during rush hours.

Rail will be a luxury the taxpayers of Oahu cannot afford at this time.

Ruben Reyes  
Waipahu

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From  to

## More U.S. airports add rail service to downtown

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[Enlarge](#) By Port of Portland

Portland, Ore., is among major metropolitan cities in the USA to have a public rail system that runs from the city's center to the airport. The number of travelers using Portland Metro's service to the airport grew 7.7% in 2008.

### 'FASTER THAN DRIVING AND PARKING'

Reporter Roger Yu discussed airport rail links with members of Travel's Road Warrior Panel. Here are their thoughts:

*"I use (New York JFK) AirTrain in conjunction with the Long Island Rail Road as often as possible -- at least once a month. It is very convenient and reliable to get to JFK. It's also very fast. I can get from my home to JFK in about 30 minutes -- only five minutes more than driving." -Glenn Goldberg, Baldwin, N.Y.*

*"Having the light rail to (Portland International) is great. If someone from home has to take me, I often have them drop me at a light rail station. Where I get on, on the eastside of Portland, it is faster than driving and parking, with the end of the line about a hundred feet from baggage claim." -Bob Jackson, Portland, Ore.*

*"Stupid politics prevented us getting a metro (at LAX). The taxi and shuttle van companies lobbied to make the metro stop just short of LAX, which was a horrible disservice to the public. I also have a place in Amsterdam and (the city's) airport has a full fledged train station inside it that has great connections all over the Netherlands and neighboring countries. From my apartment, there are trains about every 5 minutes to the airport, so it's super easy." -Matt Holdrege, Los Angeles*

*"I think it's a great idea (for a city with) a high*

By Roger Yu, USA TODAY

Riding the rails between downtown and the airport is becoming a reality for more U.S. travelers.

With their roadways jammed with cars and shuttles, a growing number of domestic airports are building or have plans for a rail link that will connect passengers from the terminals to regional metro-rail systems, allowing road warriors and vacationers to ditch their cars.

"There is a consensus building that this is a desirable piece of overall strategy to deal with ground transportation challenges," says Matthew Coogan, director of New England Transportation Institute who has written extensively about the subject.

Direct rail connections to Seattle-Tacoma and Dallas Love Field are expected to open later this year. Other large airports with an approved rail project that will be completed in the next few years: Salt Lake City, Phoenix Sky Harbor, Miami, Dallas/Fort Worth and Oakland.

Several other airports, including Denver, Washington Dulles and Los Angeles, have similar plans, but their projects are years from completion.

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Airport rail links have long been popular in Europe and Asia. But only eight of the 20 largest U.S. airports, based on 2008 boardings, have rail service that drops passengers off within walking distance of the terminals: Atlanta, Chicago O'Hare, New York/John F. Kennedy, San Francisco, Newark, Minneapolis, Boston and Philadelphia.

But a confluence of operational and economic factors have pushed the airport rail agenda forward in recent years despite

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*density population, such as New York, Chicago or Philadelphia. In a city like Los Angeles, it would be a waste of tax dollars. LA metro has no population after 5 p.m. Before 6 a.m., it's a deserted wasteland." -Pat Reynolds, Riverside, Calif.*

opposition from taxi and bus proponents and fiscally conservative lawmakers.

With air traffic rising rapidly in recent years, airports are learning that simply building more parking lots and enlarging roadways aren't sustainable practices, Coogan says. Many U.S. airports have also embraced the green movement, budgeting more for programs that reduce their carbon footprint.

Greater availability of federal funding sources for airport rail is helping the cause. After a rigorous application process, Phoenix Sky Harbor persuaded the Federal Aviation Administration to let it use the passenger facility charge — a fee added to air tickets — to partially fund its rail project. Oakland received \$70 million for its rail project from the federal economic stimulus package this year.

### Popular rail services

Experts cite Washington, D.C.'s metro service to Washington Reagan National, Bay Area Rapid Transit's (BART) connection to San Francisco International and New York JFK's 8-mile AirTrain that links to the local subway as the most heavily used and popular systems in the USA. They also feed into established and far-reaching regional metro systems that are easy to use for travelers who forgo rental cars. Since it opened in 2003, AirTrain ridership has grown steadily, and about 4.75 million paid to ride the JFK train in 2008, according to the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey.

"When I fly to SFO, I always take the BART from the airport to my office in downtown San Francisco, and I love it," says business traveler Marc Belsher, a health care technology consultant. "It is inexpensive, reliable, relatively fast and ultraconvenient. It is the natural choice for me, especially in this economy."

Cleveland, St. Louis and Portland, Ore., run smaller rail systems that also provide direct-to-airport service. The number of travelers using Portland Metro's service to the airport grew 7.7% in 2008, says Steve Schreiber, aviation director for Portland International.

Still, airport-rail ridership in the USA is woefully low compared with other countries, says Andrew Sharp, director general of the U.K.-based International Air Rail Organisation. In many European and Asian airports, 20% to 30% of travelers get to and from the airport using rail. In the USA, ridership typically ranges from 2% to 5%, he says.

Airports actively pursuing a rail connection have several options:

- Add to existing systems.** Seattle's Sound Transit, a voter-approved initiative passed in the late 1990s to create a regional light-rail system, is close to finishing its latest line. The Central Link, a 16-mile line running between downtown Seattle and Sea-Tac airport, will launch later this year. Its airport station is scheduled to open in December.

About a decade ago, Salt Lake City had no public rail. The Utah Transit Authority has since built a system that covers about 150 miles. A 5-mile downtown-to-airport connection is under construction and scheduled to open in 2012, says Michael Allegra of UTA. He expects about 6,000 riders daily when it opens.

One of the largest construction projects in the nation's capital is a 23-mile extension of the region's Metro to Washington Dulles. The new line will also serve the Tysons Corner area, Virginia's largest employment center. The completion date hasn't been determined.

- People-mover rail.** Some airports have a metro station nearby but not within walking distance. To close the gap, they are looking to automated people-mover trains as a solution. Because people-movers typically run within airport grounds, airport authorities can tap funding sources that are available only for airport projects.

Phoenix Sky Harbor will use passenger facility charges to partially fund its Sky Train, a people-mover that will open in 2012 and connect to a nearby light-rail station. One airport station will contain an enclosed and air-conditioned moving walkway that will take travelers directly to the terminals.

BART this month approved funding for a 3.2-mile elevated people-mover that will connect BART's Coliseum station to Oakland International, replacing the current bus connection. It's scheduled to enter service in 2013. About 4,300 Bay Area passengers a day are expected.

Meanwhile, Miami-Dade Transit broke ground last week on a people-mover extension from the Earlington Heights station — the nearest stop to Miami International — to a ground transportation hub that's being built next to the airport. The rail link and the ground transportation hub are both expected to be completed in 2012.

### Ongoing debates

Like most large construction projects, airport rail proposals face stiff headwinds. Opponents challenge funding sources and new taxes and cite preferences for cars and buses. But the central argument in most debates has centered around ridership, specifically whether airports have enough demand to justify millions in cost.

BART's connection to SFO, completed in 2003, has yet to reach BART's initial ridership forecast and is still not profitable. Prior to construction, BART projected there would be 17,800 average daily boardings to and from the airport by the year 2010. As of this month, SFO ridership was at about 11,000.

Frank Sterling and Juliet Ellis, activists in the Bay Area, also questioned BART's plans to spend \$500 million for Oakland International's people-mover and its decision to charge \$6 for the service vs. \$3 for the current shuttle bus.

"The proposal to charge double that for the new connector might drive away customers, unless it delivers twice the value," they wrote in a recent newspaper commentary, "Can East Bay residents afford this?"

These are appropriate debates, Coogan says. Some cities are better off sticking to buses, he says. For example, LAX's FlyAway Bus, which provides non-stop rides to various neighborhoods in Southern California, is more convenient for many travelers than the metro.

For some cities, it'd be wiser to spend scarce funds for extending metro to public transportation-friendly suburbs before considering airports, Coogan adds.

"How often does a person go to work? And how often does a person go to Paris in a year?" he says.

In Seattle, where light-rail coverage is still growing, expectations are modest, with 3,000 riders a day expected at the airport station initially. "We're at the beginning. It's a step-by-step process," says Ron Lewis of Sound Transit. "But there are other neighborhoods that will be served by the line along 15 miles."

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TOP TRAVEL STORIES | Most read | Most e-mailed

1. More U.S. airports add rail service to downtown
2. Disney on a dime: Yes, Mouseketeers, you can do it
3. La. teen goes overboard from cruise ship
4. Today in the Sky
5. Search continues for Carnival Fantasy passenger - Cruise Log

Advertisement



May 27, 2009

## oil dependence

### Rail transit provides much-needed option

Our state imports 90 percent of its oil and all of its motor fuel. Which is why stories like the 9-cent rise in gas prices are so scary: We don't have alternative fuel sources for our cars, and our island is dangerously dependent on car travel.

We need to get serious about car-free ways to move around our island. Honolulu already has great bus service, but it's just not enough. We need mass-transit alternatives like rail. It uses less energy than cars to move far more people, it's dependable, and every major city in the nation has rail. The sooner rail is built, the sooner we take a major step forward to energy independence.

Keane Omaye-Backman | Honolulu

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## Letters to the editor

### 'Green' isn't always the best way to go

It was recently reported that the hybrid buses have failed to live up to their touted environmental and economical savings. This is just the latest in the series of how some have pushed the "Go Green" agenda without looking at both the advantages and the disadvantages.

We're often so enamored with the idea of "going green" that we overlook the practical aspects of doing so. Ecology groups pushed to do away with paper bags to save the trees, and we ended up with plastic bags that have become the biggest pollutant and danger to our local environment. Groups are pushing for replacing our incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent lights (CFLs), but you rarely hear any information about the hazards, to both health and the environment, that CFLs bring.

Now the plan is to mandate higher miles per gallon for our cars and more hybrids. This will lead to less gas bought, fewer taxes paid and thus a lack of funding for infrastructure upkeep and repairs. This leads to just having to pay more taxes to make up the difference, offsetting any preconceived gains.

Let's start doing a hard analysis of "green" initiatives before we actually spend money on them.

Gary Stark  
Honolulu

## UH parking fees likely to rise

[By Craig Gima](#)

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, May 27, 2009

Parking fees for athletic and other events at lower-campus lots at the University of Hawaii at Manoa are likely go up to \$5 from the current \$3 starting July 1, and to \$6 next year.

The increase is part of a package of parking rate changes before the Board of Regents tomorrow. The board last approved a parking increase in 1993.

UH-Manoa is asking for a 65 percent increase in annual parking permit fees through five years on the lower campus and an 85 percent increase on the upper campus. It also wants to raise summer fees to be the same as spring and fall.

Lower campus permits per semester will be \$5 cheaper in the fall and spring because of the increase in summer rates. But through the next five years, rates would rise from \$134 in the fall and spring semesters and \$68 for the summer to \$191 per semester.

"I don't agree with it," said Debra Gono, a janitor at UH-Manoa for 14 years who said she feels for the students. Parking fees are already too expensive for her. Gono said she carpools or, if she has to drive, leaves home at 3:45 a.m. to find street parking.

"It will make people think twice about driving," said Matt Ogoshi, a senior graduating next year. But Ogoshi said he will pay the higher fees because he has a job after classes and has to drive.

Kathy Cutshaw, UH-Manoa vice chancellor for administration, said the increase is necessary to make parking self-sufficient. "This (the increase) causes us to break even," Cutshaw said.

Revenues are expected to rise from \$4.8 million this year to \$6.5 million next year and \$6.8 million in 2011.

Cutshaw explained that part of the increase is because the parking lots are on ceded lands

and 20 percent of the revenue goes to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. The university had been paying the 20 percent from other funds, but the money will now come directly from parking fees.

UH-Manoa also needs to spend about \$6 million to repair and maintain the parking structures and is still paying off construction bonds for building the structures. Other costs, including those for special-duty police officers for traffic control, have increased, Cutshaw said.

Chancellor Virginia Hinshaw has the authority to raise parking fees up to \$16 a day under current administrative rules, Cutshaw said.

This spring, the university put in metered parking in some lots and began charging \$4 an hour, to a maximum of \$16 a day, for parking on the upper campus before 4 p.m.

UH-Manoa Athletic Director Jim Donovan said a \$5 fee is about the same as event parking at the Blaisdell Center. "I would say that \$3 for general parking is probably low, but at the same time we'd like to keep any increase as nominal as possible," he said.

Volleyball fan Edsel Yamada said the increase might mean more competition for parking off campus before games.

"I don't know if it's the right time with the economy (to raise rates)," Yamada said, "but I guess they have to raise revenue."

## **UH-Manoa parking fee proposals**

### **Lower Campus flat rate**

Current: \$3

July 1: \$5

Next year: \$6

### **Upper Campus per semester**

Current: \$168

July 1: \$175

2014: \$259

### **Lower Campus per semester**

Current: \$134

July 1: \$129 \*

2014: \$191

\* Annual permits go from \$336 to \$387 on July 1. But because summer semester fees will now be the same as spring and fall, the average cost per semester will initially drop this year but rise next year.

## Letters to the Editor

For Thursday, May 28, 2009

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, May 28, 2009

### Council shuffles funds for rail

The City Council Budget Committee proposed cutting off curbside recycling to save property taxpayers \$6 million. At the same time it appropriated more than \$1 billion of Oahu, not federal, tax money for the rail system, which has no approved environmental impact statement (yet). Six million dollars is less than 1 percent of \$1 billion.

The Superferry was terminated because it had no approved EIS. The public outcry over that loss was great even though that loss did not approach \$1 billion.

Budget Committee Chairman Nestor Garcia was generously indulgent to those who testified on the rail appropriation, both for and against. But as a testifier, I could see that the committee was not very interested. The committee had no doubts about appropriating \$1 billion for a project that is far from ready to start.

Why is the committee so fixated on \$6 million and so carefree about \$1 billion? Is it because we need to get started on the train to nowhere because then we'll be committed to spending billions more once that first billion is spent? Who cares that no one will ride from Kapolei to Waipahu and then get on a bus to get them where they want to go.

Pearl Johnson  
Honolulu

May 29, 2009

## **Letter to the Editor**

### **Gas taxes**

#### **Increase would not help revenues**

The state's goal in raising the taxes on automobile gas is basically to raise revenue and help with the state's deficit.

When gas was \$4 and up a gallon, the people of Hawai'i changed their driving habits and consumed less gas, which meant less money for the state.

Now the price of gas is under \$3 a gallon. The people of Hawai'i still have those driving habits, which still means less money for the state and all its taxes on gas.

By raising the taxes for gas, do they, the state, think it's going to bring in more money? No, it's just going to make the people of Hawai'i improve those driving habits even more. Which would then mean less gas consumed, less money spent at the pump and less money for the state with all its taxes on gas, no matter how high.

John Bullard | Waipahu

## Letters to the Editor

For Friday, May 29, 2009

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, May 29, 2009

### **Move forward -- support is strong for rail system**

While Pearl Johnson's letter complains about the City Council's Budget Committee moving rail funding forward ("Council shuffles funds for rail," Star-Bulletin, May 28), I congratulate the Council members.

They are doing what elected officials are supposed to do: Follow the will of the people. As a community, our island voted for rail, in some areas by more than a 2-to-1 ratio. We sent a clear signal to our leaders that the time for debating about whether we should build rail is over.

Council members like Gary Okino and Nestor Garcia were proven right for supporting rail from the get-go. And even Council members such as Charles Djou, who vocally opposed rail before the election, have decided to heed the will of the people and work to move rail forward.

To the City Council, I say ignore the negativity of the anti-rail minority. They do not represent the will of the people. Keep pushing rail forward.

**Jason Wong**  
Honolulu

## City modifies bus stop to prevent use as a bed

[By Star-Bulletin staff](#)

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, May 31, 2009

An effort to prevent homeless people from using a Kaneohe bus stop bench for sleeping may have riled those who use the bench for its intended purpose.



**"This was kind of like a test to see if this would work (at the older stop), in terms of breaking up the surface enough so that it would be difficult to sleep."**

**Wayne Yoshioka**  
*City director of transportation services*

"I think it's a nuisance," said Scott Fujioka, 30, a bus rider from Kaneohe.

"Yeah, I think there's no need," added Diamond Jardine, 21, also of Kaneohe.

The bus stop is on Kamehameha Highway between Likelike Highway and Luluku Road, fronting Kaiser Permanente Koolau Clinic. What once was an open wooden bench was retrofitted by the

city in April with a wooden contraption to create individual seats separated by armrests.

The new "seats" make it virtually impossible for anyone to sleep on the bench, but some riders say the wooden beams leave little space to sit.

"Sometimes there's big people," Jardine said. "How are they going to fit in this? They're like, 'Oh, my God, I've got to stand up.'"

City officials say the retrofit is not uncommon to address concerns about homeless people sleeping at bus stops.

"On selected bus stops, where we get a lot of complaints, we replace the benches," said Wayne Yoshioka, the city director of transportation services. "In this case, this retrofit, it actually tries to deter people from using this as a bed."

Roy Yanagihara, the chairman of the Kaneohe Neighborhood Board, said he noticed the change last month.

"That's been modified because there's one individual that used to sleep there on a regular basis," Yanagihara said.

Homeless issues do not come before the neighborhood board often, he added.

"We're all aware of them, but they're not in overwhelming numbers," Yanagihara said. "Part of the problem in Kaneohe for the homeless is services for them are very limited, so there's nothing to keep them in our community."

Yoshioka said that renovations and retrofitting at bus stops occur "only where we get a high volume of complaints with regard to people either sleeping or using it inappropriately."

The wooden devices used at the Kaneohe stop were needed because it is an older station where the bench is part of the shelter structure, Yoshioka said. At newer stops, benches are typically replaced with concrete stools that discourage sleeping by homeless.

"This was kind of like a test to see if this would work (at the older stop), in terms of breaking up the surface enough so that it would be difficult to sleep," Yoshioka said.

He said there are no immediate plans to retrofit other stops with the wooden devices.

"Typically what we look at is if the bus stop is being unusable, clearly the interests of our bus riders are not being fulfilled there," Yoshioka said. "That's when we would move in and do something about it."



# Honolulu On The Move

NEWSLETTER OF THE HONOLULU HIGH-CAPACITY TRANSIT CORRIDOR PROJECT

## West O'ahu Awaiting Rail Project



West O'ahu Economic Development Association (WOEDA) president Roy Yonaoshi has witnessed

the recent development of major shopping centers, new roads and a UH-West O'ahu campus to complement the existing residential neighborhoods in Kapolei. But he knows the city's rail transit project is essential in linking the developing area with Honolulu in a speedy 40-minute commute.

Yonaoshi said WOEDA chose in 2006 to be a rail advocate to ensure a strong quality of life for area residents.

"While we see many businesses developing out here, they'll always be those who commute into town for work," he said. "Rail is a long-term solution to keep up with the population growth."

The rail transit project will also be an economic stimulus project to boost the struggling local economy, Yonaoshi said.

"Whereas the private sector has been slowing down in construction activity, this is perfect timing for the public sector to kick start their projects and build," he said.

While Kapolei was initially dubbed the "Second City," Yonaoshi said the nickname gives the wrong impression that it's ranked behind other communities.

"As infrastructure such as rail and UH-West O'ahu is put into place, more people will recognize this area for its own identity."

## Residents Make Their Voices Heard On Rail Station Design



Photo: Waipahu residents who attended a recent workshop provided input on the appearance of their two area stations.

**Aloha!** Thanks to the support and ideas of residents from across the island, the City's rail station workshops are off to a great start.

More than 200 community members attended the first round of workshops in Leeward O'ahu and contributed their ideas and opinions on ground-level design elements such as the lobby and plaza, landscaping, walls and archways.

The workshops encompass six of the stations to be built in the first 6.5 miles of the guideway. In Waipahu, the stations will be at West Loch and the Waipahu Transit Center; in West O'ahu, the stations will be built in East Kapolei, at UH West O'ahu and at the planned Ho'opili complex; and on the Leeward Community College Campus.

Later this summer, the design team will share sketches and models of the rail stations at the workshops, based on the community's input. The public will have the opportunity to again

give their input on the draft designs. The schedule of workshops is:

- Waipahu community – June 3 and July 8, from 6:30 to 9 p.m. at Waipahu Intermediate School cafeteria
- West O'ahu community – June 29 and August 5 at Kapolei High School, from 6:30 to 9 p.m. at Kapolei High School cafeteria
- Leeward Community College – August 18 from 11 a.m. to noon

The initial 6.5-mile segment of the transit route will run from Kapolei to Pearl Highlands near Leeward Community College. The city is scheduled to break ground for the rail project at the end of the year and begin service for the first leg of the transit route in 2012.

All station workshops are free. For more information, visit the project website at [www.honolulutransit.org](http://www.honolulutransit.org) or call 566-2299.



# Honolulu On The Move

## Contact Us

You can reach us by calling the project hotline at 566-2299 or by submitting your comments to [www.honolulustransit.org](http://www.honolulustransit.org).

Call or email us if you would like to receive an electronic version of this newsletter or would like be removed from our mailing list.

## Rail Transit: Creating Savings All Around

Honolulu's rail transit system is projected to create 10,000 jobs a year during construction. But even those not employed by the rail project will see benefits in many different ways.

Some of these "savings" by rail will benefit you in the pocketbook, while other benefits will be more intangible or assist in the bigger picture:

### Those choosing to ride mass transit will save transportation costs.

Honolulu is already one of the top 10 cities in the nation in the American Public Transportation Association's (APTA) list of transit savings. A family in Honolulu can save \$844 a month and more than \$10,000 a year by living with one less car and buying a monthly transit pass, according to APTA.

Less demand on your car or truck means less wear-and-tear for your vehicle, reducing your maintenance and repair costs.

### Those continuing to drive will see fuel and

### car maintenance savings from reduced traffic congestion because of rail.

Americans already spend 4.2 billion hours a year stuck in traffic, according to TRIP, a non-profit organization on transportation. The average rush-hour commuter spends an additional 38 hours annually – an average work week - stuck in traffic.



Traffic congestion costs American motorists \$78.2 billion a year in wasted time and fuel costs, according to TRIP.

Honolulu's rail system is expected to reduce traffic congestion by 23 percent once the entire 20-mile route is in place. Reduced traffic congestion means less idling in traffic for drivers,

which results in time savings and less wasted fuel.

### "Saving" the environment by riding mass transit.

Rail is expected to take an estimated 30,000 vehicles off our roads each day. That will significantly reduce the amount of harmful greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere. By using public transportation, a commuter can reduce their carbon footprint by more than two tons. Public transportation will shrink the amount of greenhouse gases generated by an individual by 4,800 pounds a year.

This is more than the combined carbon emissions reduction that comes from using energy-efficient light bulbs, adjusting thermostats, weatherizing one's home, and replacing an older refrigerator with a high efficient refrigerator.

### Improved quality of life.

Something that can't be measured using figures is a person's quality of life. Any project that can shorten someone's commute time means more quality time with family and for personal activities. Now that's a "savings" that's priceless.

# Honolulu Rail Transit Project

Honolulu On The Move 

566-2299 | [www.honolulustransit.org](http://www.honolulustransit.org)

# Presentation to

## May 01, 2009

# HONOLULU RAIL TRANSIT PROJECT



Honolulu On The Move 

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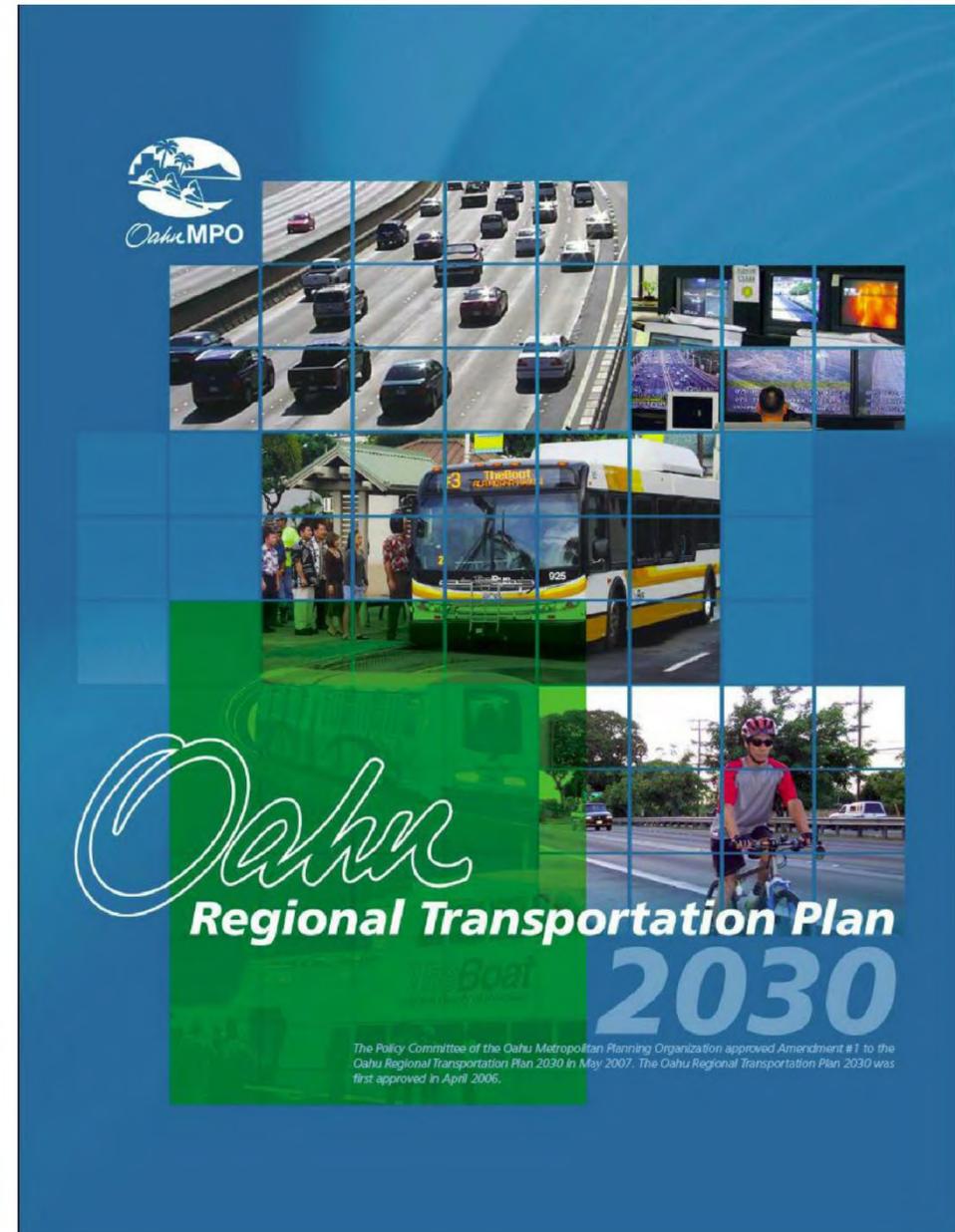
# Planning for the Future

## O'ahu in 2030

- 200,000 more residents than in 2005  
(22% more people)
- 100,000 more jobs than in 2005  
(21% more jobs)
- 750,000 more daily trips than in 2005  
(27% more trips)

# Multi-Modal Options to Improve Mobility

- Highway Capacity Expansion
- Traffic Engineering Improvements
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Projects
- Expansion of TheBus
- Fixed Guideway Project



# Decisions Made

- Choice of Mode
  - Fixed Guideway in Exclusive Right-of-Way
- Choice of Alignment
  - Ultimately – Kapolei to UH Mānoa and Waikīkī
  - Initially – East Kapolei to Ala Moana Center
- Choice of Vehicle Technology
  - Steel Wheel on Steel Rail – “Light Metro”



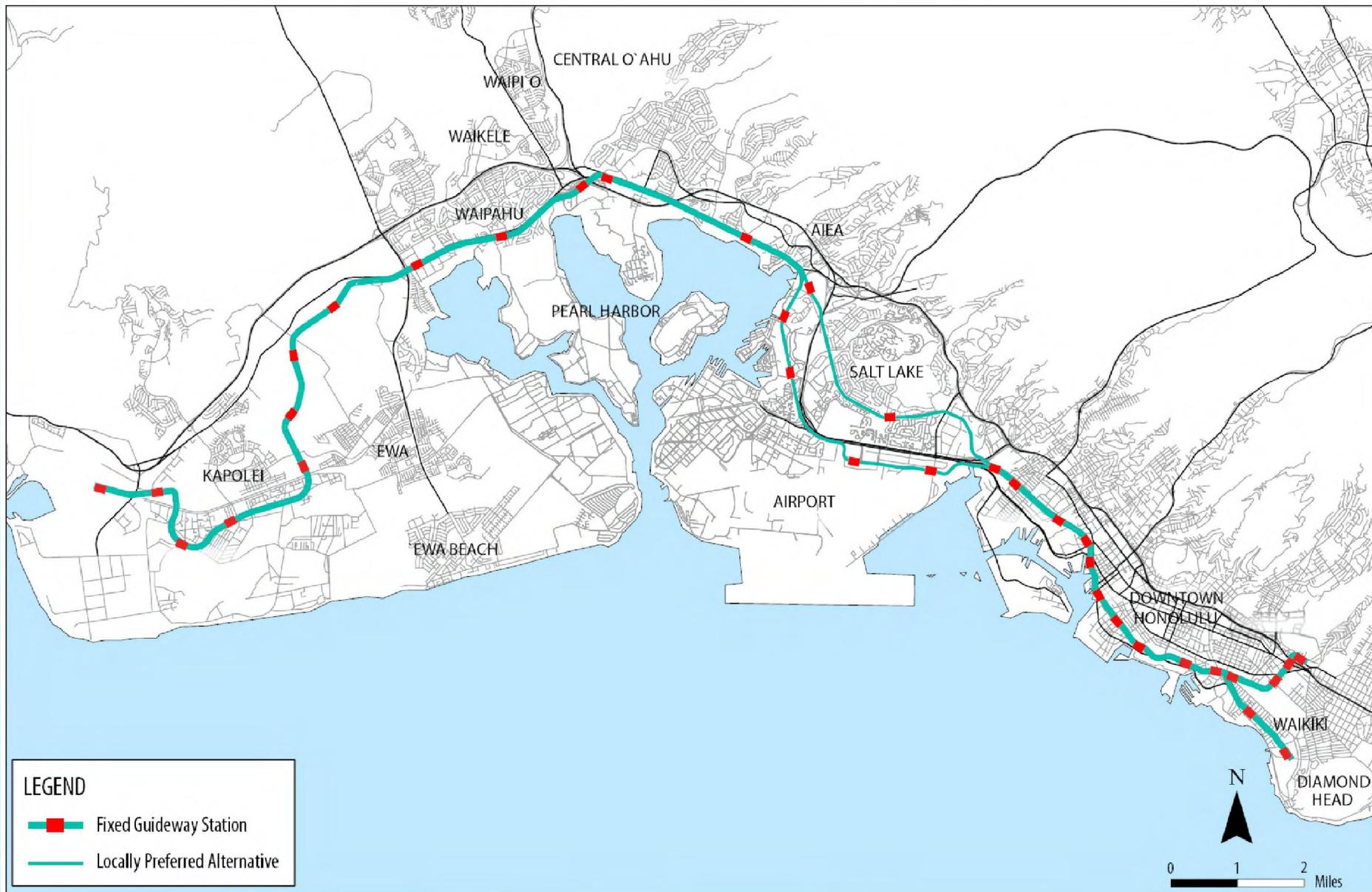
# City Council Selection

## December 22, 2006

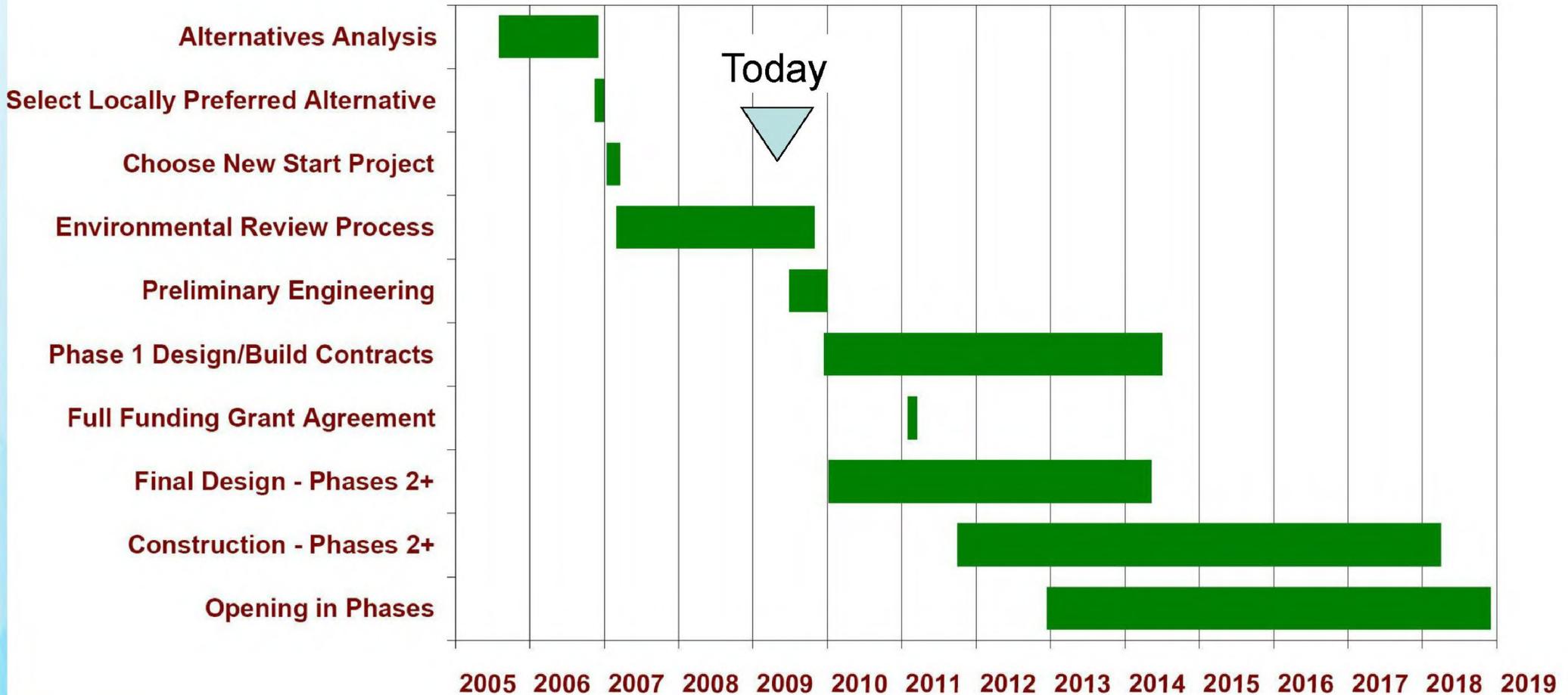
- By a vote of 7 to 2 the City Council selected Fixed Guideway

COUNCIL	12/22/06	CR-508 ADOPTED. BILL 79, CD2, FURTHER AMENDED ON THE COUNCIL FLOOR TO CD2, FD1, HOWEVER, BILL 79, CD2, FD1, FURTHER AMENDED TO BILL 79, CD2, FD2 (FINAL #2), AND SUBSEQUENTLY PASSED THIRD READING, AS AMENDED (BILL 79, CD2, FD2 (FINAL #2))					
		(NOTE: <u>BILL 79 (2006), PROPOSED CD2, FD1 (NORTH-SOUTH BRANCH, NON-LPA COMMITMENT)</u> WAS ALSO CONSIDERED AND SUBSEQUENTLY WITHDRAWN)					
	APO Y	CACHOLA Y	DELA CRUZ Y	DJOU N	GARCIA Y		
	KOBAYASHI Y	MARSHALL N	OKINO Y	TAM Y			

# Locally Preferred Alternative

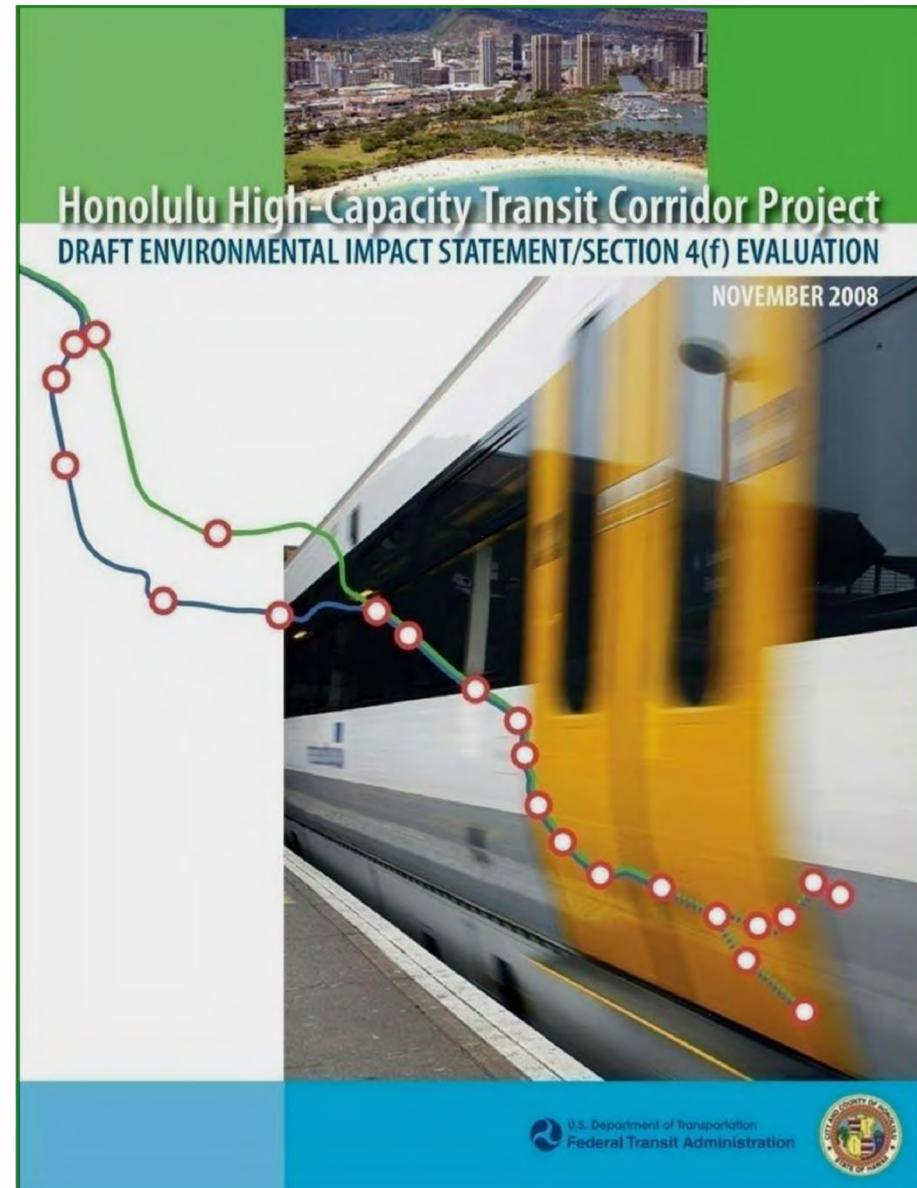


# Project Schedule



# Environmental Impact Statement

- **Draft EIS Comment Review Period**  
Nov. 24 – Feb. 6
- **Comments Addressed in Final EIS**  
Late Summer 2009
- **Record of Decision**  
Fall 2009



# Draft EIS Topics

- Chapter 1 Background, Purpose and Need**
- Chapter 2 Alternatives Considered**
- Chapter 3 Transportation**
- Chapter 4 Environmental Analysis, Consequences, and Mitigation**
- Chapter 5 Section 4(f) Evaluation**
- Chapter 6 Cost and Financial Analysis**
- Chapter 7 Evaluation of Alternatives**
- Chapter 8 Comments and Coordination**

# What could it look like?



Honolulu On The Move 

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# What could it look like?



# Kamehameha Highway at Ka'ahumanu Street



# Kamehameha Highway near Radford Drive



# Crossing Nuʻuanu Stream



# Halekauwila Street at Mother Waldron Park



EXISTING



SIMULATION

# How would I use it?

1. Walk or take bus to Waipahu Transit Center Station • 10 – 15 min
2. Take escalator or stairs up to station platform • 1 min
3. Wait for train • 2 min
4. Board train and ride to Civic Center Station • 26 min
5. Take escalator to ground and walk to work • 5 min

**Total Trip from home in Waipahu to Civic Center 44 - 49 minutes**

# How much will it cost to build?

	Millions of 2008 Dollars
Estimated Construction Cost	2,100
Design / Construction Contingency	555
<b>Construction Subtotal</b>	<b>2,655</b>
Right-of-Way	150
Vehicles	295
Professional Services	795
Project Reserve	230
<b>Capital Cost</b>	<b>4,125</b>
Finance Charges	380
<b>TOTAL COST</b>	<b>4,500</b>

# Sources and Uses of Funds

	Millions of Inflated \$
GET Surcharge Revenues	4,050
FTA New Starts Funds	1,385
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>5,435</b>
Capital Cost	4,930
Finance Charges	505
<b>TOTAL COST</b>	<b>5,435</b>

# Operating & Maintenance Cost

- Rail operating & maintenance cost, after fares, will be ~\$45 million a year
- 2-3% of the City's annual operating budget, an amount that can be accommodated without an increase in taxes

**A bus+rail system costs less than the cost of carrying the same number of riders on a bus-only system**

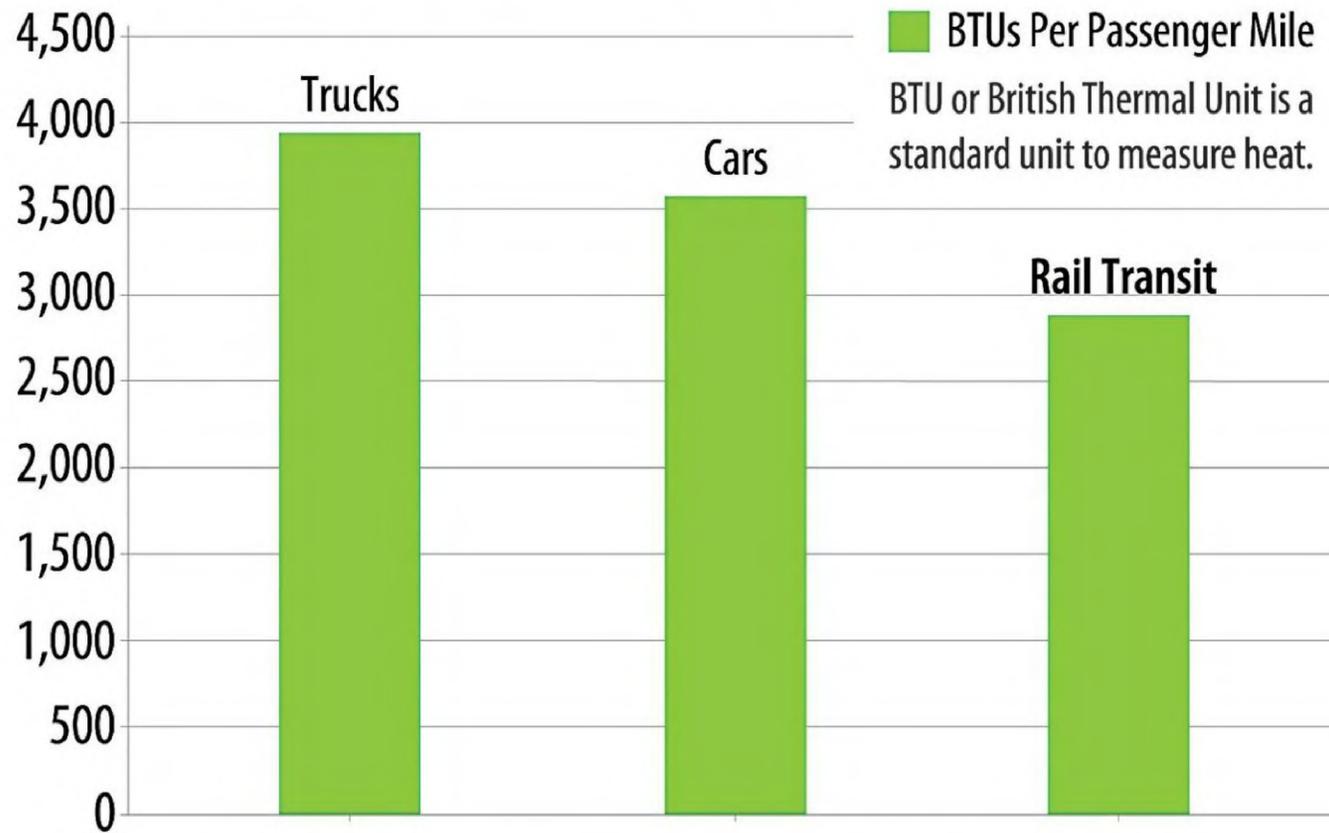
# Projected Economic Benefits

- Building rail can fight the recession
- Creating more than 10,000 jobs a year on average
- Generating jobs in construction, restaurants, retail, and other industries



# Environmental Benefits

## ENERGY USE: TRUCKS, CARS & RAIL

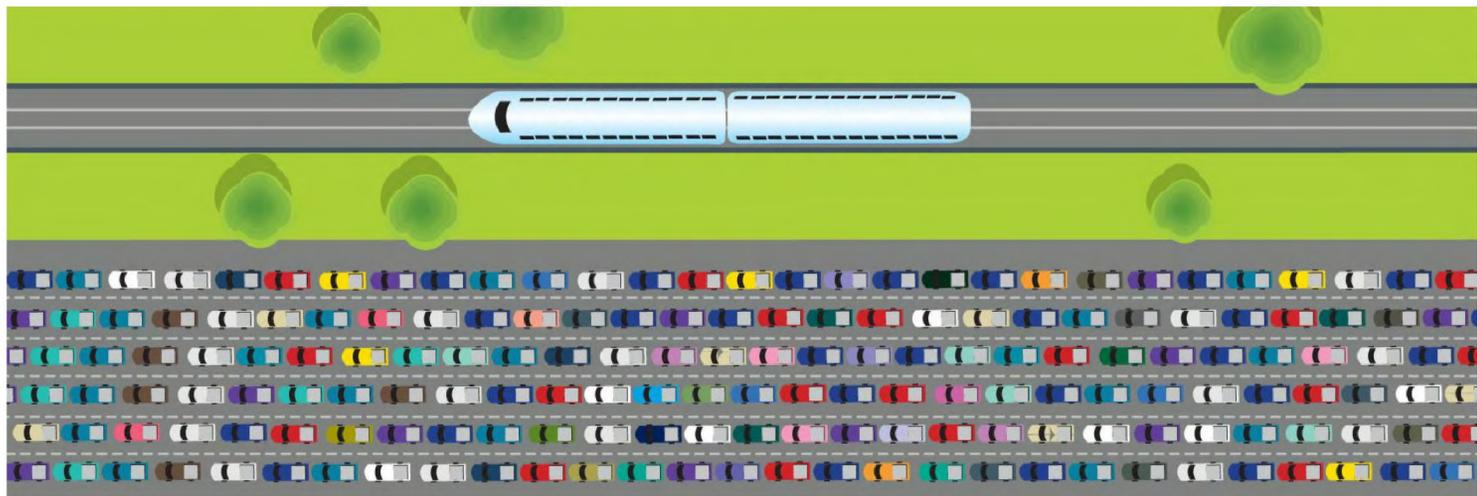


Source: U.S. Department of Energy's Transportation Data Book 2008

- Electrically powered trains use less energy per passenger mile than cars & trucks

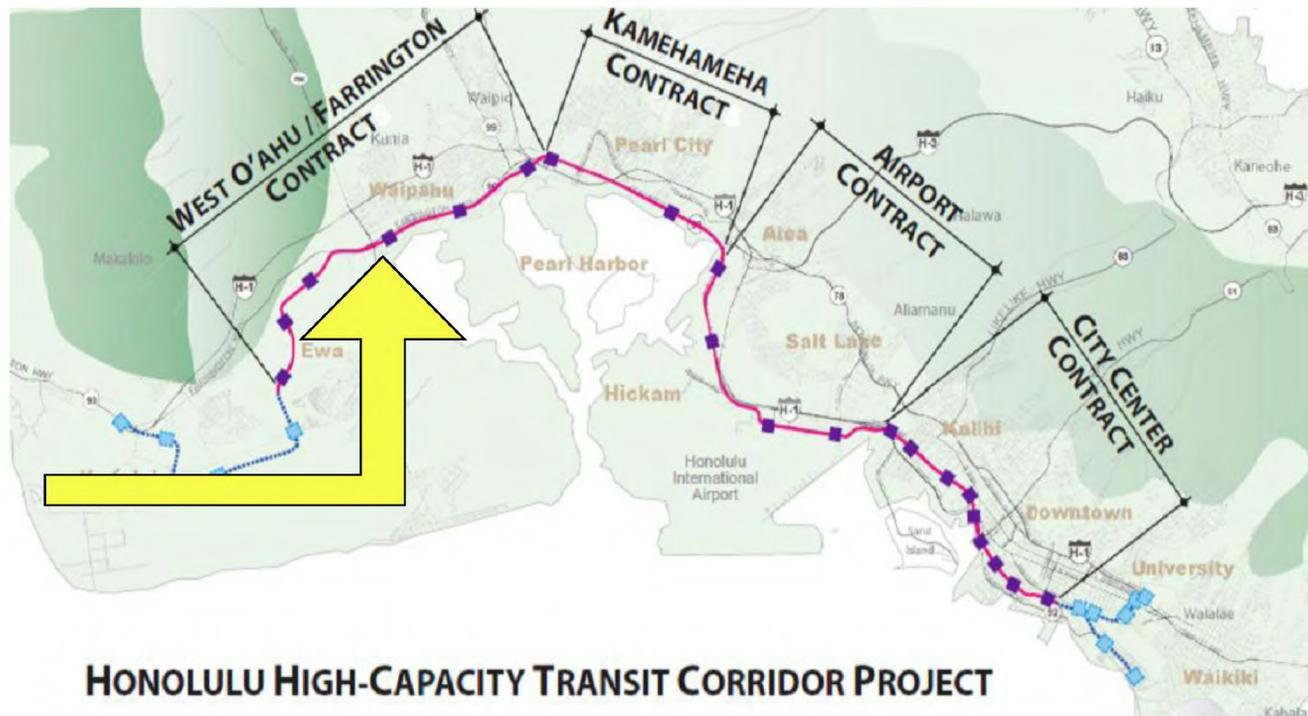
# Traffic Benefits

- Rail will reduce future traffic delay by over 20%
- Rail will remove more than 30,000 cars and trucks from our roads each day
- One 300-passenger train can take 200 vehicles off our roads



# Moving Forward

- **Late Summer 2009:** Release of Final EIS
- **Fall 2009:** FTA issues Record of Decision
- **Fall 2009:** Award design/build contract for first phase



HONOLULU HIGH-CAPACITY TRANSIT CORRIDOR PROJECT

# What's Next...

- **Spring 2011:** Full funding grant agreement with the federal government
- **Late 2012:** Initial service in Waipahu
- **Late 2018:** Start full service between East Kapolei and Ala Moana

# Stay Informed

- Sign up for the newsletter
- Watch Channel 54, Mondays at 6:30pm
- Visit [www.honolulutransit.org](http://www.honolulutransit.org)
- Call the project hotline: 566-2299
- Stay informed with *accurate* information

*Mahalo!*

# West O`ahu

## Rail Station Community Workshop

May 12, 2009

Kapolei High School



RAIL STATIONS COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

# Agenda

- Project Overview & Schedule
- Station Locations
- Guideway & Stations
- Community Ideas & Breakout Sessions
- Summary of Breakout Sessions
- Next Steps – Future Meetings



# HONOLULU RAIL TRANSIT



RAIL STATIONS COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

# Project Schedule

- Late Summer 2009: Release of Final Environmental Impact Statement
- Fall 2009: Federal Transit Administration issues Record of Decision
- Fall 2009: Award design/build contract for first guideway segment
- December 2009: Start construction of elevated guideway

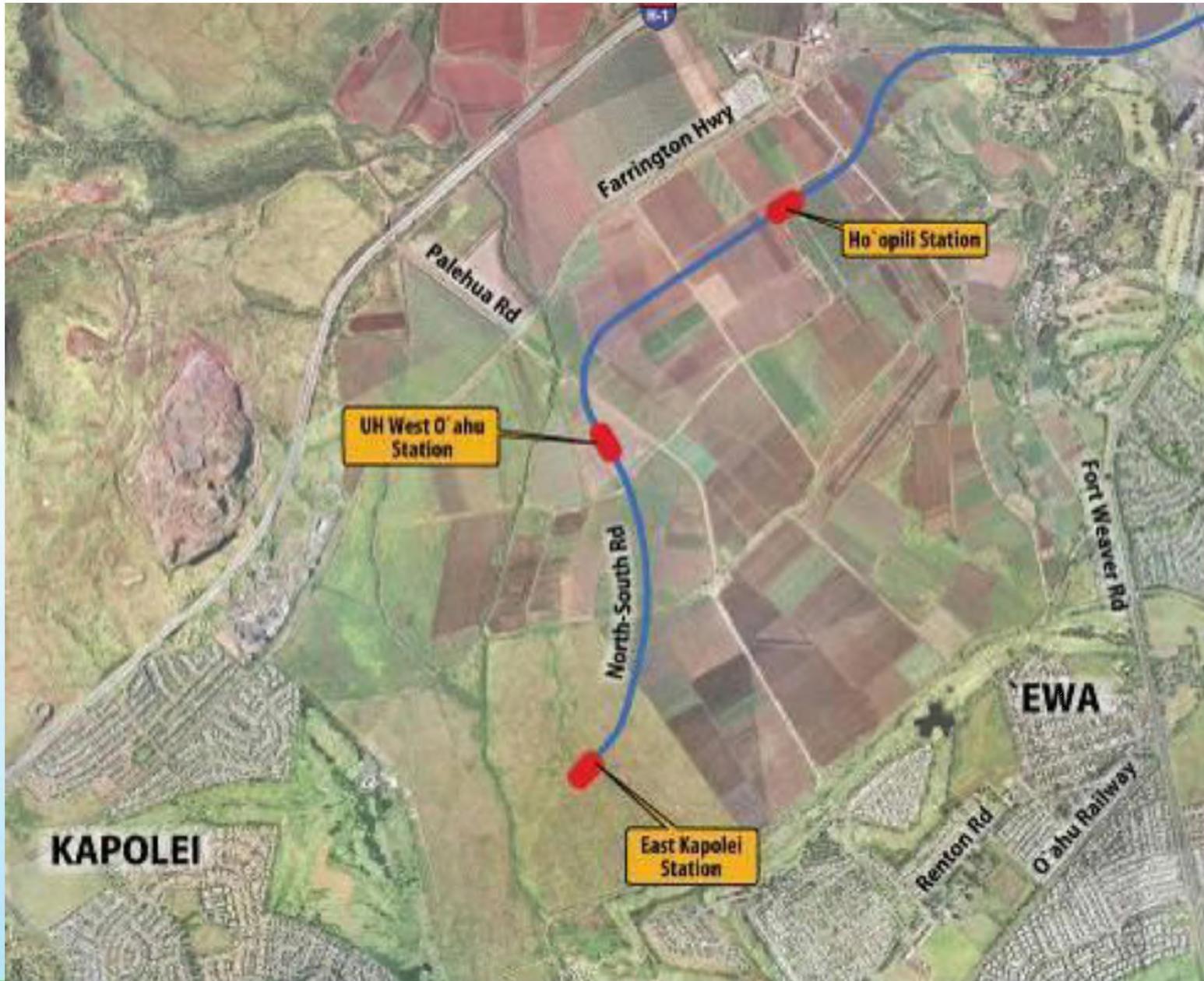


# Project Schedule

- Summer 2012: Start of construction of East Kapolei, UH West O‘ahu and Ho‘opili train stations
- Late 2012: Initial service in Waipahu
- 2014: Service from East Kapolei to Pearl Highlands
- Late 2018: Start of full service between East Kapolei and Ala Moana Center



# Project Route in Kapolei



RAIL STATIONS COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

# Elevated Guideway Simulation



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

# Elevated Guideway Simulation



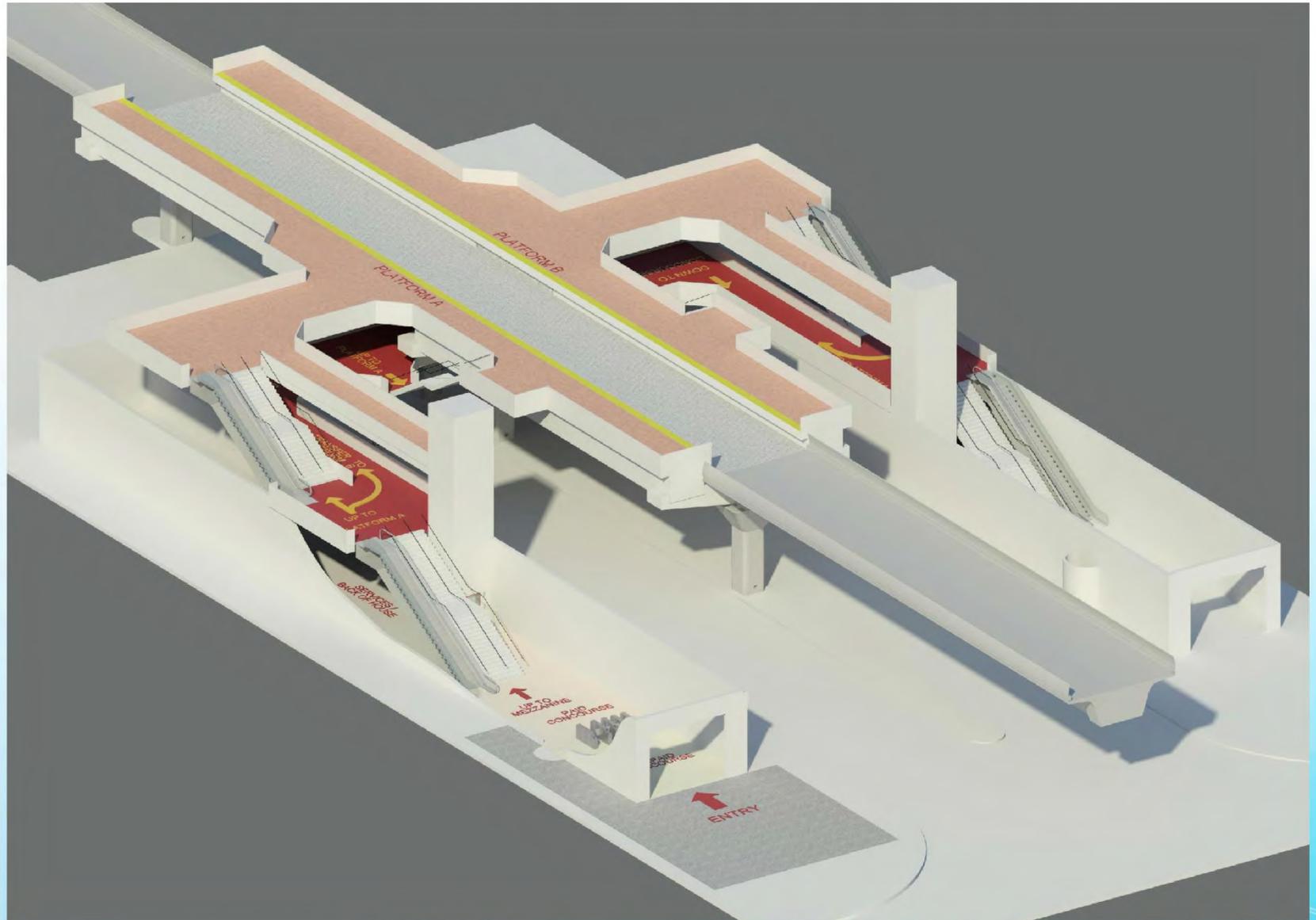
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# Travel Times from Kapolei

Destination	Travel Time
Pearl Highlands	14 minutes
Airport	26 minutes
Kalihi	32 minutes
Downtown	38 minutes
Ala Moana Center	42 minutes



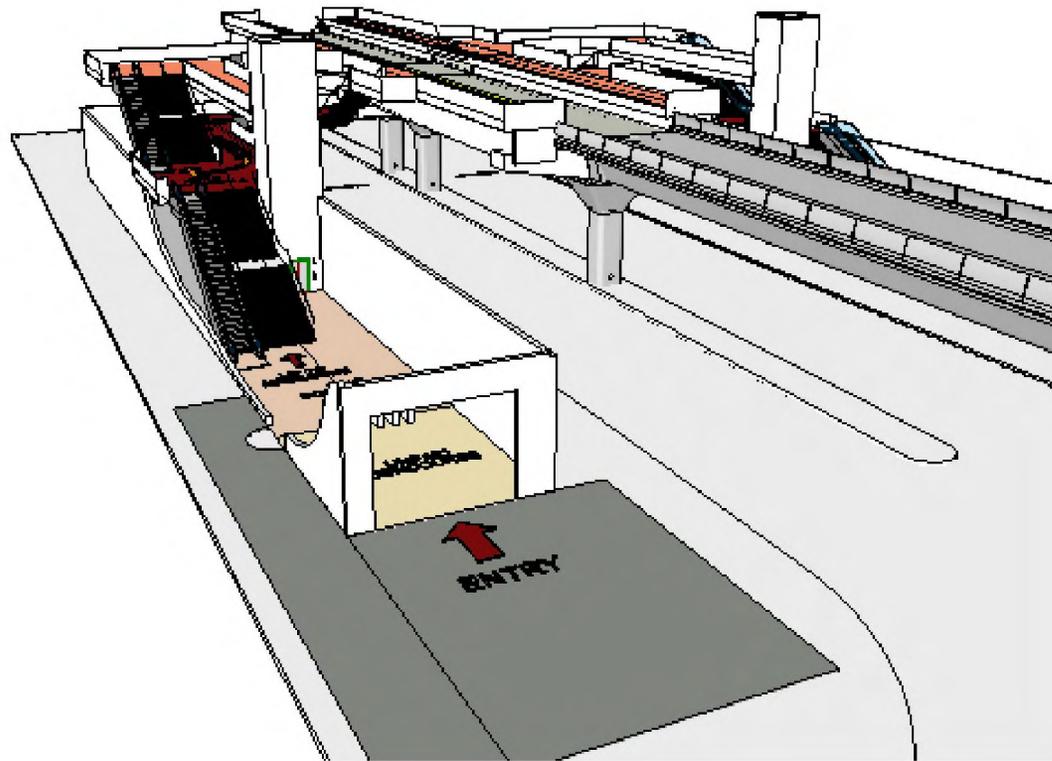
# Typical Transit Station



RAIL STATIONS COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

# Typical Transit Station

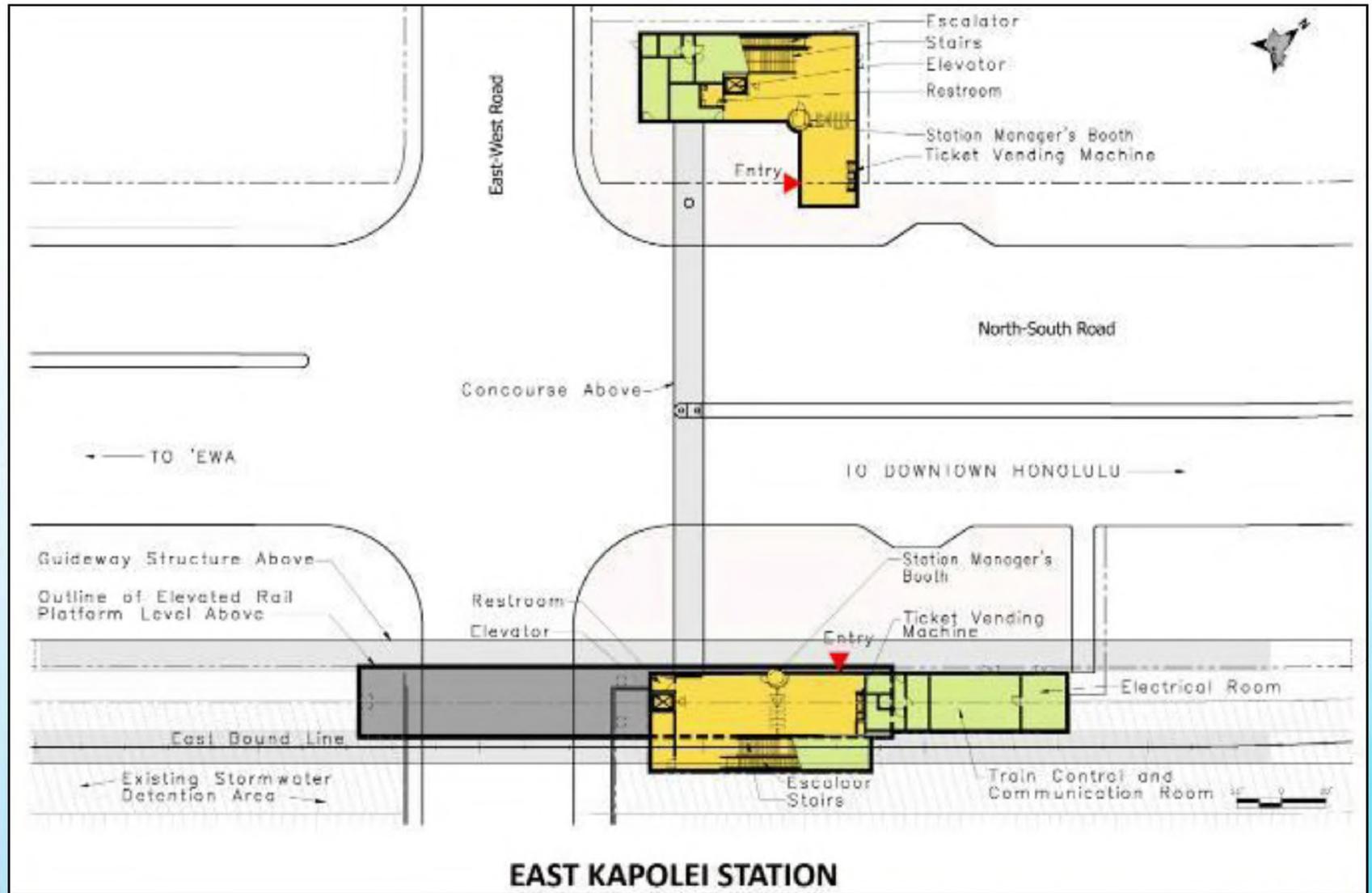
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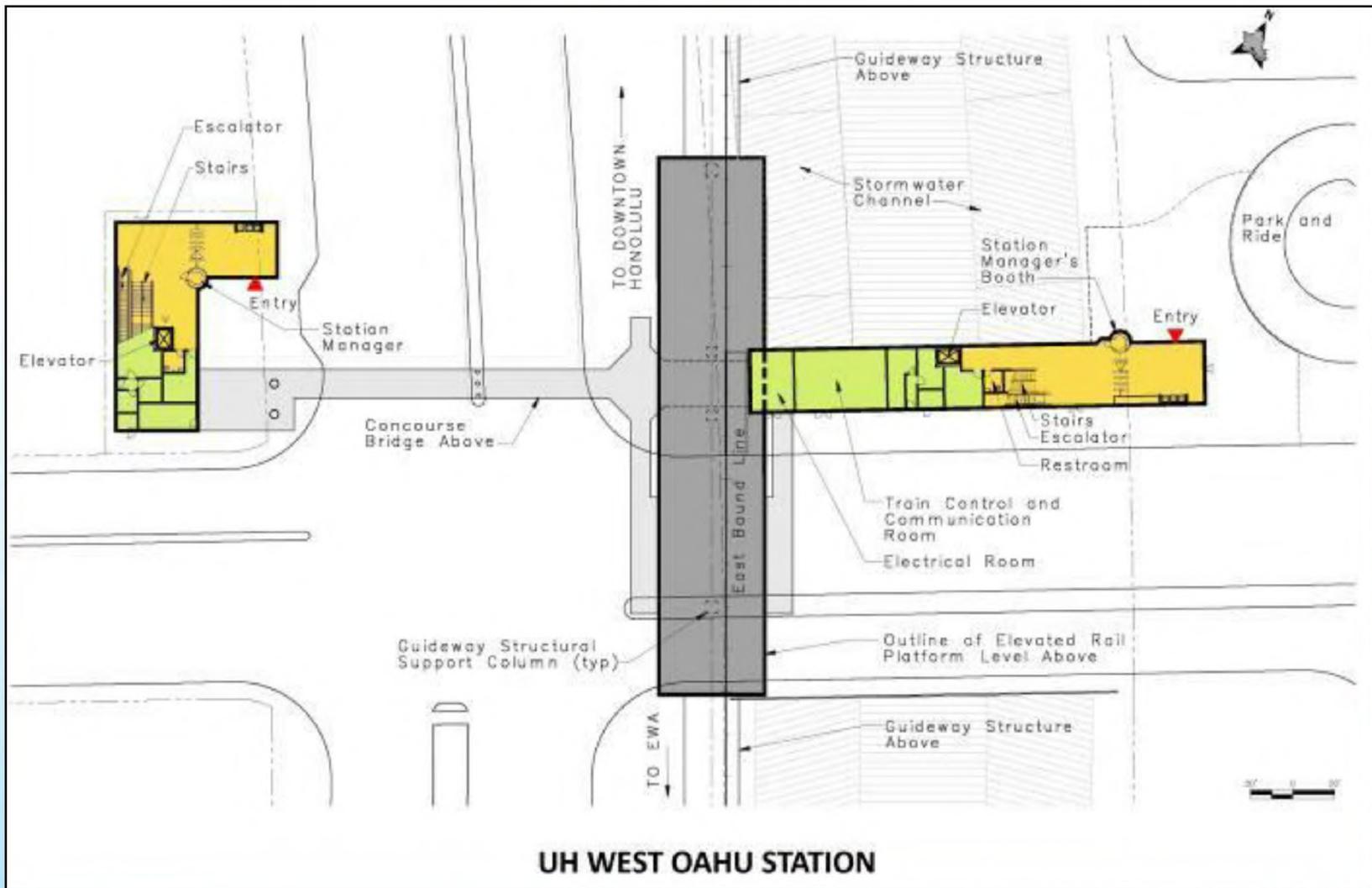
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# East Kapolei Station

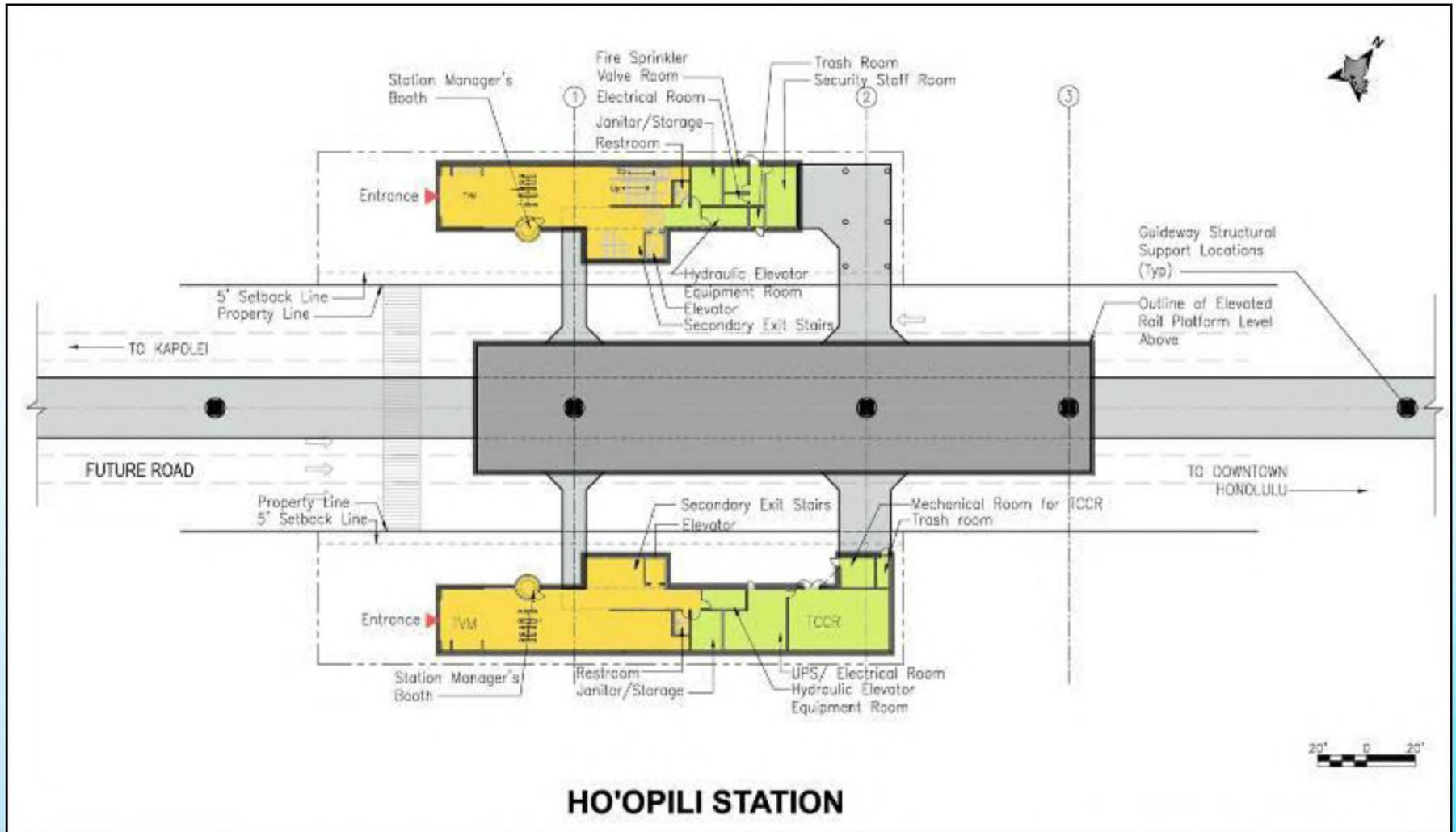
## Site Plan



# UH West O'ahu Station Site Plan



# Ho'opili Station Site Plan



# Our Community, Our Stations

- History
- Culture
- Character
- Appearance



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# Kapolei Design Guidelines

- Urban Design Plan, City of Kapolei (2007)
- Long Range Development Plan, UH West O'ahu (2006)
- Ho'opili Draft Environmental Impact Statement (2008)



# Kapolei Design Examples



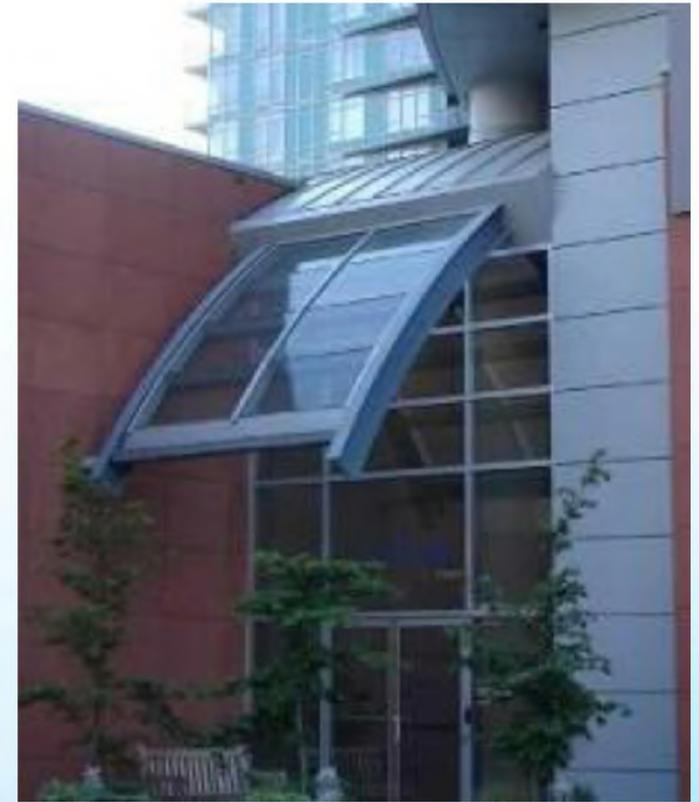
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# Design Elements

- Roofing materials and shapes
- Landscaping
- Native plants
- Railing, screens and meshes
- Exterior wall materials
- Shade canopies and screens
- Special treatments



# Roofing materials & shapes



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

# Landscaping



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

# Native species



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

# Railings, screens & meshes



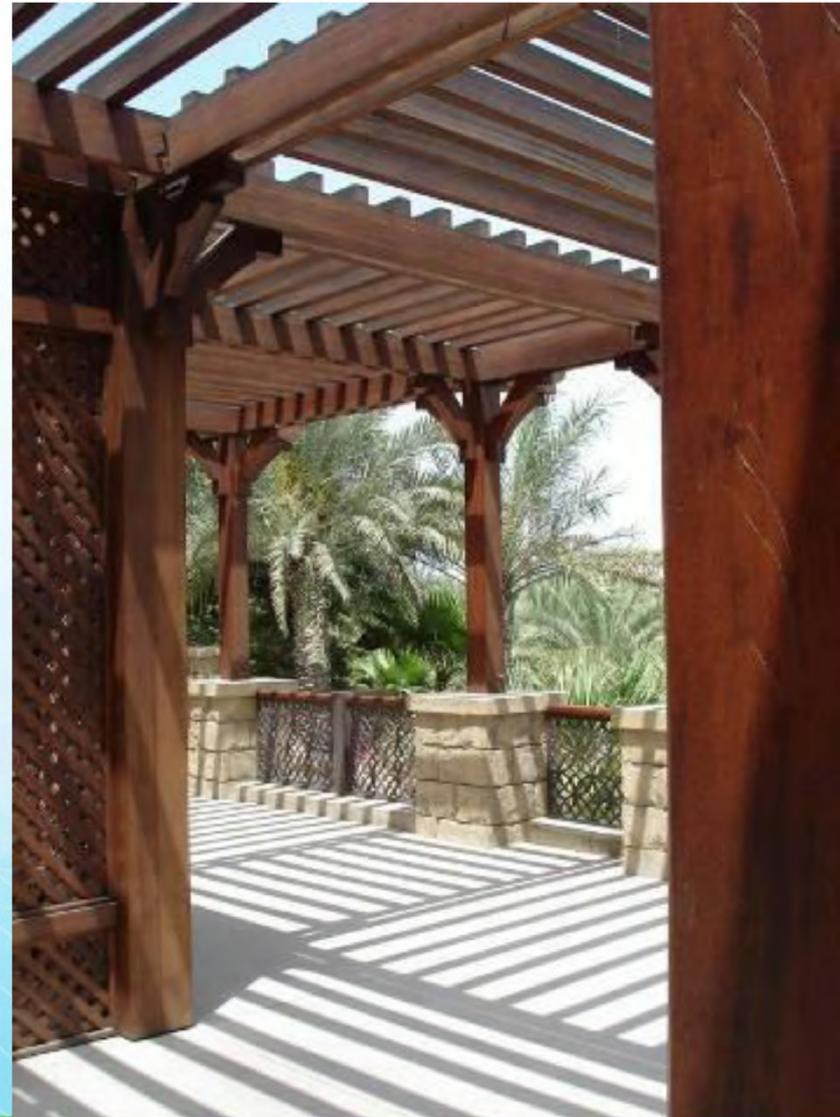
R A I L S T A T I O N S C O M M U N I T Y W O R K S H O P S

# Exterior wall materials



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

# Shade canopies & sun screens



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

# Special treatments



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

# Breakout Sessions



RAIL STATIONS COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

# Next Steps

**Kapolei High School Cafeteria**

**Monday, June 29  
and Wednesday, August 5**

**6:30 to 9 p.m.**



RAIL STATIONS COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

# Contact Us

566-2299

[www.honolulustransit.org](http://www.honolulustransit.org)

[info@honolulustransit.org](mailto:info@honolulustransit.org)



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