

December 2008

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*Calls directly to the hotline 808.566.2299

** Individual submissions/inquiries. Does not include individual transcript comments from Public Hearings

GATHERING PLACE

Make sure you get the rail system you want

By Panos Prevedourous

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Dec 02, 2008

Regardless of whether you are for or against rail, the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is the document that should provide answers to all reasonable impacts. Does it? Here is a sample of questions:

- » The bus routes will change. What happens to your route? What happens to express buses?
- » Lanes will be taken away, some temporarily for construction and some permanently. Where are those lane closures and what's their duration? Are there traffic rerouting plans?
- » Will bikes, surfboards or luggage be allowed on the train? What about large items purchased at a big box retailer? What's the size limitation?
- » Will there be washrooms at the stations? How about convenience stores, vending machines? Will the platforms have seats? How many?
- » The plan calls for Aloun farms to relocate. Is that possible? Where will they go?
- » Sewer upgrades in Kailua and Kapiolani led to the loss of businesses and jobs. Are details provided about similar effects during the construction of the rail?
- » Rail construction involves unique skills and certifications that Hawaii construction workers do not have. How will this be addressed?
- » The city has declared that in many cases only a portion of a parcel needs to be condemned. Can the business survive with the remaining portion? Isn't this mandatory downsizing and fewer jobs?
- » There are 16 schools adjacent to the route. Will the overhead structure, the continuous high current exposure and the intermittent noise and vibration affect the learning environment? Would

it be prudent to relocate these schools?

» Does rail fit our Hawaiian sense of place? How was the impact to tourism and local quality of life by a large elevated structure through town been assessed?

» Does the DEIS address the affected vistas and scenery? Are the aesthetics of the structure and each station explained and presented adequately?

» What will happen in the event of a hurricane? Will the train operate? Light rail in Houston was shut down for 10 days due to Hurricane Ike.

» BART in the Bay Area uses rail cars made of aluminum to combat corrosion. Is the city's position that corrosion is not an issue?

» It appears that general excise tax surcharge proceeds for rail will be much lower than expected for at least four years in a row. How is this deficit going to be made up?

» If ridership turns out to be much lower than forecast, then what? If the city is forced to provide free train rides like in Puerto Rico, how is the shortfall going to be covered?

» Is there a detailed plan for the effect of rail construction on water, sewer, gas and electric utilities? Will there be disruptions of service? Does the budget cover all these?

I urge you to review the DEIS and seek answers to the questions that are important to you. Write to the city director of transportation with your questions and concerns and send copies to the City Council and the governor.

Regardless of whether you want rail or not, if the city builds the rail system, then make sure that it is done in a way that satisfies your needs and concerns.

Panos D. Prevedouros is a professor of transportation engineering at the University of Hawaii-Manoa. He ran an unsuccessful campaign for mayor as an anti-rail candidate.

December 3, 2008

Council mulls rail questions

Main issue is if city can solicit bids to start the project's construction

BY PETER BOYLAN
Advertiser Staff Writer

The City Council will continue to debate questions relating to procurement proceedings for the city's proposed \$4.3 billion commuter rail project when they meet this morning.

The main question is whether the city can legally solicit bids to begin construction of the system.

The council's Transportation and Public Works committee passed a bill that would remove a technical glitch preventing the solicitation of proposals to begin construction of the first phase.

The original ordinance authorizing the city to build the system requires the administration to seek council approval before soliciting proposals.

That provision was added as a way to keep the council and public informed about key project details. However, the provision also violates state procurement laws, according to the state Procurement Office.

"We don't want to violate state procurement law. There are those who feel they need to stay involved in the project but the trick is to what extent can we remain involved without slowing down the process," said City Council member Nestor R. Garcia. "That's the balance we're trying to strike. People are very interested in this project, and we want to see how we can oversee this without getting in the way."

Bill 63 would eliminate that provision and allow the city administration to seek construction proposals without council approval, but that issue also isn't expected to be resolved until early next year.

The bill is up for second reading, and if it passes will go back to the committee for further discussion.

City Council member Charles K. Djou said the section should not be removed because the public should know about design and build specifications and timetables tied to the rail transit project.

"I think it's a good thing for the city to be as open as possible and share as much information as possible about the largest public works project in the history of the state," said Djou, who voted against the project. "There is a difference between putting up another water pump station and building a rail system. Should the public know where, when, how the system is being built? Yes!"

Djou said the city's argument that leaving the bill intact violates state procurement law is evidence of the "sloppiness of the administration" in pushing the rail transit issue through.

Wayne Y. Yoshioka, director of the city's Department of Transportation Services, said the City Council's responsibility is to set policy regarding projects like the Honolulu High Capacity Transit system.

Yoshioka pointed out that the council voted to select elevated fixed guideway as the Locally Preferred Alternative, the alignment of the project, the termini and alignment of the minimum operable segment, and the creation of the technology panel whose recommendations were used in selecting the technology for the project.

When the request for proposals and request for bids are issued, the information contained in them will become public, he said.

"All of the points above emphasize how open the project has been in the past and will continue to be in the future," Yoshioka said. "The state procurement law is designed to ensure that all qualified vendors have an equal opportunity to propose or bid in an open and fair environment. The only reason this action to delete Section 7 from the ordinance is being taken is to assure compliance with the state procurement law. Any other characterization misleads the public and only serves to create unnecessary and unwarranted controversy."

City Council chairman Todd K. Apo said language is being worked out to "hit the middle ground" so the council and public can continue to receive information about how the project is moving forward without costly hangups.

"The council and the public need to understand how the project is moving forward. The administration needs the autonomy to move this project forward in a timely manner," Apo said. "The hesitation to the (current) proposal to completely wipe it (council oversight) out is too far in one direction."

December 4, 2008

City closer to getting rail proposal power

Committee passes bill that would take council out of bidding process

BY PETER BOYLAN

Advertiser Staff Writer

A bill that would eliminate a provision that prevents the city from legally soliciting bids for the proposed \$4.28 billion rail transit system cleared another hurdle yesterday.

The council's Transportation and Public Works Committee passed a bill that would remove a technical glitch preventing the solicitation of proposals to begin construction of the first phase.

Bill 63 would eliminate that provision and allow the city administration to seek construction proposals without council approval, but the issue isn't expected to be resolved until early next year.

The City Council voted 7-1 yesterday to pass the bill through second reading and send it back to committee for further discussion.

The bill included an amendment that will require the city to provide to the council a copy of the qualifications potential bidders must meet at the same time the request for proposals goes out.

The original ordinance authorizing the city to build the system requires the administration to seek council approval before soliciting proposals.

That provision was added as a way to keep the council and public informed about key project details. However, the provision also violates state procurement laws, according to the state Procurement Office.

"The bottom line is the state procurement office says it's illegal to leave it (the provision) in there," said City Councilman Gary H. Okino. "We can ignore it and leave it in there but I don't think the administration can go forward. It will end up costing the city more. I can see the administration taking us to court to get this section invalidated. The simple thing to do is just to eliminate it."

Two council members questioned why the issue of illegality was only being raised now since the original ordinance passed in 2006.

City Councilman Charles K. Djou said the section should not be removed because the public should know about design and build specifications and timetables tied to the rail transit project.

"If this really, truly was a problem, the mayor could have and should have vetoed the measure. No such statements were made and here we are two years later," said Djou. "We spent \$100 million on consultants to tell us about this rail system and we still have problems with it. This is an enormous public works project. The more public scrutiny the better."

City Councilwoman Ann H. Kobayashi voted against the bill and said she sees no reason to eliminate the provision.

"Usually if a bill is illegal corp(oration) counsel advises the mayor and then there is a veto," said Kobayashi. "This bill has been in place for two years and no one has said anything about illegality."

Wayne Y. Yoshioka, director of the city's Department of Transportation Services, said the City Council's responsibility is to set policy regarding projects like the Honolulu High Capacity Transit system and that adequate oversight is in place.

Yoshioka brushed aside concerns that eliminating the provision would lead to a lack of public input, saying the city has been transparent on the rail project.

NO TEXTING AND DRIVING

A ban on text messaging while driving was allowed to move forward by City Council members, despite concerns from police about the difficulty of enforcement and other issues.

The ban, which also covers playing video games while driving, was under consideration by the council's Transportation and Public Works Committee. If the bill passes, it would be the first restriction on using mobile phones while driving in the state, excluding military bases.

The bill would ban writing, sending or reading text-based communication while driving — including text messaging, instant messaging and e-mail.

Honolulu police Maj. Thomas T. Nitta said the department neither supports nor opposes the proposed legislation, but said it would be difficult for officers to differentiate between a driver punching in a phone number and one sending a text or e-mail.

"The bill as it is written right now would be difficult for us to enforce," Nitta said. "We understand the intent of the bill. Our proposal would be banning (the use of) all electronic devices while operating a vehicle."

CITY CLERK RETIRES

City Clerk Denise De Costa is retiring after more than five years of city service. Her last day as city clerk is Dec. 31.

In addition to her duties as clerk, DeCosta has sat through all council meetings and taken roll calls for every vote.

"We thank you for your service and wish you the best. At least now you won't have to deal with all of us," said Djou.

December 4, 2008

Council must avoid needless rail contract delays

A hands-on approach can be a good thing, but not when there are too many hands in an undertaking better handled by a few.

In the case of the city's planned rail system, the nine City Council members will complicate more than help matters if they retain approval power at every step of the process for issuing contracts to plan and build the system.

The best use of the council's time is not on micromanaging such details of planning and construction but on broader policy questions. A principal part of that task was done almost two years ago when members approved the basic framework of the system. Now the proper focus for its work is to see that the buildout of the rail meshes well with the communities it will serve.

Besides — according to Bill 63, now under council consideration — the city administration's chief procurement officer can't legally hand over contract approval power to the council, anyway.

The current draft of the bill, which passed a key vote yesterday, would amend a section of the 2007 ordinance approving the fixed-guideway route.

The problem language compels the city administration to submit to the council "specifications in each proposed request for proposals or invitation for bids for work that includes the planning, design or construction of any portion of the locally preferred alternative before issuing the request or invitation."

It only takes a moment to consider what set of hurdles that places in the project's path. In the proposed revision, the council would be notified of procurement steps but would not be called to approve them. This is a better approach, enabling the city to meet its crucial deadlines.

City Councilman Charles Djou has aired his worries that relinquishing council control will undercut adequate oversight of the project.

But those are separate issues. Oversight can and must be maintained, but that can happen without the legislative branch exerting executive approval at every stage.

Wayne Yoshioka, director of the city Department of Transportation Services, argued that the state's procurement law already ensures that procurement happens "in an open and fair environment."

He's right. And now the council has an option to debate the bill further, pushing the final decision until next year, or to call a special meeting this month and make the amendment now. It's clear that the better move is to move quickly to correct the language. Anything less simply throws obstacles in the path of a critical city project and makes it difficult to bring it in on time and on budget.

The last thing the city needs as it revs up Honolulu's biggest public works project is a complication that offers little other than padding to the bottom line.

Djou: Starting Rail in Town Makes More Sense



Written by KGMB9 News - news@kgmb9.com
December 04, 2008 06:46 PM

The City Council is already talking about changing the rail route and now another possible switch to the transit project could mean people in Kapolei will be the last to ride it.

There is a new proposal to to begin construction Downtown, instead of West Oahu. The idea is to get people riding it between Aiea and Downtown, not East Kapolei to Waipahu.

Some say it would make more sense to get as many riders on board as early as possible.

"If a natural disaster occurs, if the economic recession goes on a lot longer and we cannot build the whole thing, and we can only build a portion of it, the portion that should be built is this initial segment here, in town," Councilmember Charles Djou said.

The City sent out a response saying Djou's endless political games and publicity stunts contribute nothing of substance to this discussion.

Spokesman Bill Brennan adds the councilman should stop looking for ways to delay the project and get in step with what people voted for.

The next step is public hearings where you can weigh in.

The first is Saturday morning at Kapolei Hale at 9 a.m. After that, here are the next hearings.

- Tuesday, Dec. 9 at 6 p.m. at Salt Lake District Park.
- Wednesday, Dec 10 at 6 p.m. Filipino Community Center
- Thursday, Dec 11 at 6 p.m. at Bishop Museum



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Local Top Stories

Councilmember Djou says First Leg of Rail Should Connect Aiea to Downtown

By **Gina Mangieri**

The first phase of Honolulu's rail project should connect Aiea to Downtown.

That's what one councilmember says, instead of breaking ground in Kapolei first.

Councilmember Charles Djou says it's the best route if full funding for the project doesn't pan out, and that most cities have done their projects starting at the urban core.

The planned rail route connects Kapolei to downtown and on to Ala Moana Center. The administration plans to start the first leg connecting East Kapolei to Waipahu.

"A system that goes from East Kapolei to Waipahu, I really question who the heck is going to ride it?"

That, he says, is if any number of financial problems prevents the rail from being built out all the way -- slower tax revenue from a slumping economy, if federal funding isn't as big as hoped, any significant change in construction costs...

"If we have a rail system that runs out of money and we never connect to downtown, why are we doing this? Why are we spending these billions of dollars."

Here's how it would work -- start building in town and go as far west as possible in the first segment -- ideally, he says, to the Pearl Ridge Area. If not that far, then the stadium. If money is tighter still, at least make it to Pearl harbor or the Airport.

Some potential riders see his point.

"If you start at Aiea and go toward town and they run out of money, they still can make a park and ride over here, and then they can get on from Aiea," says Pam Weaver, Aiea Shopper.

But what about the people way out west who have waited years for the project?

"Then what if it doesn't get to Kapolei, right? Then the people on the leeward side won't be able to utilize that transit," questions Adele Lagaret, a Windard Resident.

"I'm not saying cut off Kapolei at all, and indeed if the financial projections do hit, we're going to connect to Kapolei," adds Djou.

It's not up to the council at this point though unless they held a special session before January. Instead the councilmember asks the public to vouch for the idea with comments on the draft environmental impact statement.

The administration responded that Djou's idea contributes nothing of substance to the discussion.

Councilmember Todd Apo representing Kapolei says problems include that the planned baseyard is in Waipahu -- and suggests building town and Kapolei segments at the same time.

For more Information, or to Learn More

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Story Updated: Dec 4, 2008 at 6:19 PM HST

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Councilman Djou Wants To Start Rail In Town

City Administration Says Project Would Get Faster Start In West

POSTED: 4:48 pm HST December 4, 2008

UPDATED: 5:25 pm HST December 4, 2008

HONOLULU -- Honolulu Councilman Charles Djou is pushing to start the \$4.3 billion transit system in downtown Honolulu instead of in West Oahu.

When the route for the city's new \$4.3 billion transit system was first announced, many Oahu residents were disappointed. They wanted the initial phase of the route to start downtown instead of out in West Oahu.

Djou said there is still time to make the change and follow a 10-mile route from Aloha Tower to Aloha Stadium in Aiea.

"It makes so much more sense to have the initial section of the rail route in town, where we can have some impact on traffic rather than way out on the west side where its impact on traffic will probably be marginal at best," Djou said.

The city's plan is to have the initial phase start in East Kapolei and go 8 miles to Waipahu.

"An Aiea to downtown route will be much more popular. It makes more sense you will see so many more people riding it I just don't think you are going to get a heck of a lot of ridership from East Kapolei to Waipahu," Djou said.

The city transportation director said the initial phase of rail could be built much faster if it runs through open land in Kapolei.

City officials said the west side would be better starting point because there is plenty of room on the west side to build the maintenance base yard needed for the rail system.

Djou said if the rail system goes through the airport Pearl Harbor instead of Salt Lake there is plenty of land for a base yard in the airport area.

City officials also favor the west side, saying more land is available there for a transit base yard.

However, Djou said that if rail goes through the airport area instead of Salt Lake there is plenty of land available for a base yard. For example, land at the city's refuse station at Middle Street.

State Transportation Director Brennan Morioka said the state also has possible land that could be leased to build a transit base yard closer to town, including state land off Nimitz Highway near the airport that is now used for paintball games.

Djou hopes the public will push for having rail start in town during the project's public comment period that begins Saturday and ends Jan. 7.

In a written statement, the mayor's spokesman said, "Djou is politically motivated ... and his ideas might delay the transit project."

Previous Stories:

- November 12, 2008: [Council Moves To Divert Rail Line From Salt Lake](#)
- November 6, 2008: [Djou, Apo's Change Of Heart Could Divert Rail Route](#)
- November 5, 2008: [City Moves Forward With Rail Transit After Vote](#)

December 5, 2008

Build Downtown-Pearl City rail link first, Hawaii official urges

Councilman says Kapolei-Waipahu route isn't as practical

By Peter Boylan
Advertiser Staff Writer

It makes more sense to begin building Honolulu's commuter rail line between Pearl City and Downtown, according to one member of the City Council.

Current plans call for constructing the first phase of the \$4.28 billion rail system between East Kapolei and Waipahu where fewer businesses and residences would be displaced.

But Council member Charles K. Djou said yesterday that having a working segment that runs into urban core would be advantageous if the city runs out of money before the project is completed.

Djou said a segment that allows for travel between town and Pearl City would help bring traffic relief to all O'ahu roadways and allow the city to confront possible legal challenges from Downtown businesses affected by the project early on in the construction process.

The city plans to start work on the rail line in late 2009. Limited service between West Loch and Waipahu would start in late 2013, and full service to Ala Moana would begin by the end of 2018.

"The whole purpose of this rail system is it is supposed to relieve traffic congestion in town. That's where most of the traffic congestion is," Djou said at Honolulu Hale. "This is where the rail system is needed and this is where the first phase should be built."

It is at the discretion of the city where to start construction, and Djou said he hopes the public will urge the administration to begin building a route that runs Downtown.

He questioned who would ride a rail system that started in East Kapolei and ran to Waipahu when, he said, most residents are looking for an alternative way to get into town.

Djou, who has declared his intention to run for Congress, said he respects the will of the majority of voters who supported rail but he does not think O'ahu residents can afford the project right now.

The city administration said the public will have a chance to voice their concerns and suggestions during the public comment period on the draft environmental impact statement that starts at 9 a.m. tomorrow at Kapolei Hale.

"We're well aware of Council member Djou's need to enhance his public image in light of his congressional ambitions, but it's clear that his endless political games and publicity stunts contribute nothing of substance to this discussion," said Bill Brennan, press secretary for Mayor Mufi Hannemann.

"Our ongoing message to Council member Djou is stop always looking for ways to delay implementing our overdue rail project,

get on board with the majority of his council colleagues and get in step with what the majority of the people on O'ahu voted for rail now."

Council chairman Todd K. Apo said Djou's proposal wouldn't work, in part because a base yard needs to be built in an area with ample space to service the trains.

Apo said the project should start as the city has planned it but added that work could be done simultaneously on segments that eventually met up.

"I understand his concept in trying to identify the areas that are most heavily used but we still need to build a realistic system for all with all the pieces necessary for operation," Apo said. "I have not heard a reason why portions of the project could not be built in parallel. Those are the types of realistic options we need to be discussing."

Djou's proposal comes while the council is still deciding the rail system's route. On Nov. 20 the council deferred action on measures that would change the route to include Pearl Harbor and Honolulu International Airport instead of the Salt Lake route.

Changing the route would break a commitment by the city to the Salt Lake community, which lobbied for the current train route in early 2007. That's when council member Romy M. Cachola, who represents Salt Lake, cast a swing vote to keep the rail project alive.

A commuter rail system that runs past Pearl Harbor and the airport would cost more to build and maintain, but carry more passengers and alleviate more traffic, according to the city's recent draft environmental study. The change would add about \$220 million to the project's \$4.28 billion price tag.

Letters to the Editor

For Friday, December 5, 2008

Easy to push ideas that haven't been studied

It's ironic that Panos Prevedouros used his [Gathering Place column Tuesday](#) to "educate" the public on review procedures for rail documents. His self-promoted freeway plan has never been peer reviewed, much less subjected to the rigorous public review that rail requires. His plan, apparently partially completed by University of Hawaii students, was used by mayoral candidate Ann Kobayashi as the "alternative" to rail. We saw the result of that effort on Nov. 4.

With their usual hubris, anti-transit folks have vowed to continue to oppose transit. Thankfully, former rail opponents are now sensibly advocating routes to the airport, UH and Waikiki.

The draft rail report is now available and should be reviewed by all. The public's concerns also can be addressed at the planned public meetings for rail. Unlike Prevedouros' freeway scheme, the rail process must be supported by facts and data, responsive to public concerns and open to peer review. Failure to do so jeopardizes federal funding.

So, let's work to ensure the best possible rail system and let's quit spending resources providing a platform for anti-transit lobbyists of yesteryear.

Jeff Merz
Waikiki Neighborhood Board



City holds first public hearing on mass transit

Posted: Dec 6, 2008 04:56 PM

Updated: Dec 7, 2008 01:27 PM



By Roger Mari - [bio](#) | [email](#)

KAPOLEI (KHNL) - With the election one month behind us, it's now when, and not if Oahu will have a rail system. Today was the first of five public hearings on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Oahu residents had an opportunity to voice their opinions about the future of mass transit in the islands.

As part of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, a 45-day period is required to allow people in the community to comment orally or in writing about the proposed rail system.



Pat Patterson

"There were a few concerns and we have logged those dually and we will respond to them as one of the D.E.I.S. process," says City transportation Director Wayne Yoshioka.

Some of the issues covered in the hearing: transit alternatives, how mass transit will reduce traffic and the effects the rail will have on Hawaii's environment. Cost is another topic and whether or not funds will be available to start the project.



"I think that the federal money is still questionable and when it will come through," says Waianae Resident Pat Patterson.

Leeward residents voiced their opinions at previous public hearings, and today the same pleas go out for the rail to service the people living in Makaha and beyond.

"Make it go all the way to Kaena Point, so the rail would give the Waianae coast some reason to be in favor of rail," says Patterson.

It was a small turnout today. With five other hearings scheduled, city officials hope more people will come out to comment on what will likely be the biggest public works project in the state's history.

All comments will be reviewed and considered; they can be

written or emailed. The next public hearing will be 6-pm Monday December 8 at the Neal Blaisdell Exhibition Hall.



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Local Top Stories

Public Hearings Regarding Draft EIS Begin

By Olena Rubin

The first of five public hearings regarding the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the city's rail transit system began Saturday.

Members of the community along with city transportation officials gathered in Kapolei to ask questions and give comments regarding Honolulu's rail transit project.

Residents were encouraged to participate in the public hearing, but only 12 people gave public testimony including two lawmakers.

"This area especially have been very very active in coming to many many meetings on the transit and I think given the participation we've had I think they've felt like they have said what they had to say," City Transportation Director Wayne Yoshioka said.

The majority of the feedback from Saturday's hearing was in support of the transit system, however not all residents agree with the technology of choice.

"I am not happy about the fact that they are limiting the competition to steel wheel on steel rail systems only," Makakilo resident Frank Genadio said.

Genadio says using urban magnetic levitation would be much quieter compared to steel on steel, he also says the city should consider expanding the route.

"I think it's especially important to accommodate the students at UH Manoa right now, the city budget doesn't include any money to extend it beyond Ala Moana center," Genadio said.

But it's not just the course or the technology that concerns residents

“People are afraid they are going to get displaced,” Salt Lake resident Thomas Strout said.

He says many residents from his neighborhood are unsure about rail.

“People are afraid that the rail is too close and they are going to here the noise,” Strout said.

But Strout, who is a rail supporter, says something needs to be done about the traffic problem.

“I have seen the traffic get worse and worse and I am going to hate what it’s going to be like in 20 years,” Strout said.

The city will hold four more public hearings:

Monday, 12/8 from 6pm-8pm at Blaisdell Exhibition Hall

Tuesday, 12/9 from 6pm-8pm at Salt Lake District Park

Wednesday, 12/10 from 6pm-8pm at the Filipino Community Cntr

Thursday, 12/11 from 6pm-8pm at Bishop Museum

Story Updated: Dec 6, 2008 at 6:07 PM HST

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December 7, 2008

Only 10 testify at rail hearing

First of five public meetings ends a mere 31 minutes after start

*By Will Hoover
Advertiser Staff Writer*

KAPOLEI — The first of five public hearings to allow residents to comment on a Draft Environmental Impact Statement regarding the planned multi-billion dollar Honolulu rail transit system ended yesterday almost before it got started.

Scheduled for two hours, the hearing began promptly at 9 a.m. in a small meeting room on the first floor at Kapolei Hale. As the first person began, a handful of other registered speakers waited for their number to be called so they could talk for their allotted three minutes.

But when hearing officer Kenneth Toru Hamayasu called for Number 6, he was told that that resident had canceled. Five others took their turns. Then, when Hamayasu called for speaker Number 12, he learned that nobody else had signed up.

With that, Hamayasu brought the hearing to a close at 9:31 a.m.

The scene was a contrast to previous transit forums held at Kapolei Hale.

In June 2006 dozens of residents packed the building to engage in a lively discussion about the city's proposed transit system. The following January a similar throng attended a celebration at which Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann signed the bill that officially set the fixed-guideway mass-transit process in motion.

Hamayasu, chief of the city's Rapid Transit Division, said he wasn't that surprised by yesterday's low turnout. There are four comment hearings to go. Otherwise, people can make formal comments through Jan. 7 in writing or online, he said.

"When people are basically supportive, you don't get a lot of turnout," added Wayne Yoshioka, director of the city's Department of Transportation Services. "This area here has been very supportive and has turned out in large numbers for past hearings."

Even as the hearing was in progress, other residents congregated in an adjacent large conference room where information panels on easels were placed around the room. City transit project team members stood by to answer questions until 11 a.m. Some visitors took time to fill out comment forms that they placed in one of two locked black boxes.

Otherwise, they could make a formal comment orally to a court reporter stationed at a table in one corner.

Most of those who spoke at the hearing were in support of rail, although more favored the Airport Alternative route over the Salt Lake Alternative route the City Council selected in early 2007.

State Rep. Sharon Har, D-40th (Royal Kunia, Makakilo, Kapolei), was there to speak as a private citizen and resident of Kapolei who is an ardent supporter of starting the rail line in Kapolei. She's opposed to a proposal to begin transit closer to Honolulu.

"With all the development we have out here in our great new city, you must have transit beginning here so that we can build 'smart growth projects,' " said Har.

Such projects incorporate transit around them as an effective way of preventing urban sprawl, which is a main concern in the island's most rapidly developing corridor, she said.

Rodlyn Brown said she, like other Wai'anae Coast residents, strongly backs the rail concept. But now she was calling on city officials to show support for area residents who desperately want an alternative route to Farrington Highway — the coast's solitary, congestion-prone, frequently shut down thoroughfare.

"We are the only location on the entire island that has no way in or out except for Farrington Highway," said Brown. "And we need to get to the train just like everybody else. ... Please, please, support our need as we will support yours."

Wai'anae Coast resident Pat Patterson voiced a dissenting view. She said she resented having her tax dollars used to pay for "slick" ads favoring a steel-on-steel rail system, and that a better, more cost-effective alternative should have been considered — such as the Phileas Magnet-Rail Super Express system.

Otherwise, she suggested, the city might simply restore the former Oahu Railway and Land Company system that once traveled from Waipahu to Hale'iwa.

"If you really want rail, why don't you restore the old OR&L all the way to Ka'ena Point and give the Wai'anae/Makaha residents access?" she said.

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Hearings begin on rail study

[By Gene Park](#)

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Dec 07, 2008

Only a handful of people showed up at the first of five public hearings on the rail project's draft environmental impact statement yesterday.

The public hearing at Kapolei Hale yesterday lasted just a half-hour after 10 people gave testimony - eight were in favor of the project and two were opposed.

City Department of Transportation Services Director Wayne Yoshioka expects better turnout at this week's hearings.

"The more people we have, the happier we are," Yoshioka said. "I'm sure the closer we get to the city, we will be getting better participation."

Some residents were concerned about where the initial phase of the \$5.5 billion project would begin. The city is planning to begin construction on the first segment between East Kapolei and Waipahu.

Rosita Sipirok, a Makakilo resident who works downtown, hopes to see the project begin closer to the city.

Clearing up traffic immediately in the more bottlenecked areas should be a priority, she said.

"If it were built here in the Kapolei area, and something were to happen to the project, it's

Comment on Transit sought

More public hearings on the transit project will take place from 6 to 8 p.m.

» Tomorrow at the Neal S. Blaisdell Exhibition Hall, 777 Ward Ave.

» Tuesday at Salt Lake District Park, 1159 Ala Lilikoi Place

» Wednesday at the Filipino Community Center, 94-428 Mokuola St.

» Thursday at Bishop Museum, 1525 Bernice St.

Public comments will also be accepted in writing to the Department of Transportation Services office at 650 South King St., or online at www.honolulutransit.org. The draft environmental impact statement is online at the Web site, or can be ordered for \$59 by calling (808) 566-2299.

 going to be sitting there as a white elephant," she said. "It's going to be a system to nowhere. If you build it downtown, it could still be used."

City Councilman Charles Djou also has recently said the rail should begin construction downtown to alleviate traffic. Ewa Beach resident John Higgins agreed.

"To go from here to Pearl City, the ridership will be virtually nothing," Higgins said.

Residents Voice Their Rail Transit Opinions



Many voice their opinions on one of Hawaii's most controversial topics.

[[Watch](#)]



State Rep. Sharon Har, whose district includes Kapolei, said because that because East Kapolei is developing, the smart thing to do is to build around a base yard in Kapolei, where the equipment and materials could be stored and maintained during construction and after the system is completed.

"As we build more houses, we build around transit," Har said. "It's one of the most effective tools in preventing urban sprawl."

Yoshioka said the decision to build in the west has to do with availability and cost of land, especially for the 40 acres needed for the base yard. Waipahu also has been proposed as a possible site.

"The further in you go toward downtown, the less available it (land) is and the more expensive it is," Yoshioka said. "If you look at the more urbanized area, where can you find an area of that size that is currently uninhabited?"

Pat Patterson of Makaha Valley, an AARP member, said she is opposed to the project and the way it has been promoted.

"I really resent that taxpayer money was spent on this slick stuff to get people to vote for

the rail," she said. "I think the vote was so close that it should not have been counted."

The deadline for public comments is Jan. 7. Yoshioka said all comments received will be considered as the final environmental impact study is prepared.

Find this article at:

http://www.starbulletin.com/news/20081207_Hearings_begin_on_rail_study.html

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How to Send Public Comments for Rail Draft EIS



Written by KGMB9 News - news@kgmb9.com
December 07, 2008 09:23 PM

The City and County of Honolulu today announced the beginning of the official public comment period for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) for Honolulu's proposed rail transit project. The Draft EIS presents the potential environmental and economic effects of three Build Alternatives for a rail transit system between East Kapolei and Ala Moana Center as well as a No Build Alternative.

Public Comments

Comments will be formally accepted from government agencies and the public until 4:30 p.m. on January 7, 2009. During this period, comments on the Draft EIS will be accepted via the following three ways:

- In writing to the Department of Transportation Services, 650 South King Street, 3rd Floor, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813. Comments must be received or postmarked by January 7, 2009.
- Online at www.honolulustransit.org.
- The public comment period is mandated by federal and state laws. All comments received will be considered as the Final EIS is prepared by the FTA and the City. All substantive comments will be responded to in writing.

Draft EIS Availability

Copies of the Draft EIS are available for review at State libraries, the City library, the Department of Transportation Services office (650 South King Street - 3rd Floor), and the DTS - Rapid Transit Division office (1099 Alakea Street - Suite 1700). In addition, the Draft EIS is online at the

project's website: www.honolulustransit.org.

The project website has additional content: a video guide to the Draft EIS and a computer-simulated fly through of the two alternative alignments covered in the Draft EIS; the Salt Lake alignment and the Airport alignment. Renderings of rail transit station characteristics will be added to the website in the coming days. Residents can request a free DVD with the Draft EIS, the video guide, computer simulations of both alignments and renderings of rail transit station characteristics by calling 566-2299 or visiting www.honolulustransit.org.

Printed copies of the Draft EIS can be ordered for the reproduction cost of \$59 by calling 566-2299 or visiting the project website.



Last Updated (December 12, 2008 06:50 PM)

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Residents Offered Final Input On Rail

Honolulu Transit System Draws Questions, Concern

POSTED: 5:15 am HST December 7, 2008

UPDATED: 5:20 am HST December 7, 2008

HONOLULU -- If you've been waiting to make your feelings known about the Honolulu rail transit system, this could be your last chance.

The last official formal comment period began Saturday in an area where the project is very popular.

But there are critics.

Amid the slick placards, video displays and surrounded by experts, Makakilo bus rider Rosita Sipirok studied the project and came to the microphone to express her doubts.

"Is the system going to have an express system during the rush hours during the morning and the afternoon?" she asked.

Her concern is that the planned system has many stops, none near Makakilo, and won't reach downtown for years.

"It is going to take me longer, so I am going to stick to my express bus," she said.

The city said the transit line will be faster than the bus by the time it is built.

Related To Story



Despite support for rail here, there is criticism, especially since there is no initial plan for stops in the developing urban area, and nothing is being done where there is already congestion in Ewa Beach and Nanakuli.

"I'd love to see one that alleviates the traffic on Fort Weaver Road, which is probably one of the worst congested roads in the world, let alone Hawaii," Ewa Beach resident John Higgins said.

He also wants a route to the University of Hawaii at Manoa and a reassurance of federal funding.

Waianae resident Rodlyn Brown just wants it built quickly.

"Get the politics out of it and get the people into it," she said.

Saturday marked the first of five comment sessions, which offer a chance to speak publicly, privately to a court reporter, or through written comments.

On Saturday, only 11 comments were received.

The Kapolei area perhaps is suffering from input exhaustion.

"I'm thinking they get tired of making the same comments over and over again," city transportation director Wayne Yoshioka said.

Yoshioka said it's not too late to have influence, especially on details like how the system should handle bikes and luggage.

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Letters to the Editor

For Sunday, December 7, 2008

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Dec 07, 2008

Djou's plan would cause more disruption

Honolulu City Councilman Charles Djou's lack of vision is staggering. We saw it when he put forth his texting and video game ban while driving. A true visionary would have added a ban on phone calls when driving without a hands-free device. It would save time in the legislative process to bundle these bans and save lives.

Now here he is trying to drop the rail project into a populated area. I thought he was pro-business and pro-family. The current plan allows for the families and businesses that will be affected time to relocate.

Djou's plan would have this process fast-tracked and displace those businesses and families almost immediately. It also would increase the number of those displaced by having to build the base yard in a heavily populated area.

Djou fought rail at every turn and now he wants to micromanage the project. Has he seen the light or is he just posturing for his congressional run? Maybe he thinks he can kill the rail project if he meddles with it enough.

Michael Golojuch Jr.
Kapolei

Letters to the Editor

For Sunday, December 7, 2008

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Dec 07, 2008

It makes sense to start rail downtown

Honolulu City Councilman Charles Djou is correct; the common-sense way to build the rail is to start where it will be used the most and relieve traffic right away. That way is not starting construction on the Ewa side but to start downtown.

As I grew up in Washington, D.C., the metro was built in the city first and moved its way to the suburbs as time went by. They are still adding tracks further and further outside the city. This common-sense approach ensures it will be used right away. Come on, Mufi, what are you thinking?

Bob Martin
Hawaii Kai



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Local Top Stories

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Bus Ridership Up on Oahu

By Marisa Yamane

During these tough economic times, people are looking for ways to save money.

Many folks are cutting their monthly expenses by hundreds of dollars by riding the bus.

Bus ridership is up on Oahu -- according to the latest numbers released by Oahu Transit Services.

It mirrors a trend being reported in cities across the nation.

Steve Lozano started catching the bus into town several months ago.

"I live in Makaha yeah the gas was getting kind of expensive for awhile," says Lozano.

Lozano works at the Kalihi-Palama Health Center, and says his company buys monthly bus passes for the employees.

"I don't mind it actually," says Lozano.

Lozano is among the thousands of new bus riders on Oahu in recent months.

"As the gas prices have been going up our ridership has been going up," says Roger Morton, Oahu Transit Services.

Gas prices started to fall in October, but ridership numbers still remained strong.

According to October figures...

"We're up over 5% over the previous year," says Morton.

Which amounts to approximately 12,000 more trips taken on the bus per day.

"When we look at it on a route by route basis the largest increases are the longest runs the runs from the west side, from Central Oahu, runs from Ewa Beach," says Morton.

Nationwide, public transportation soared six and a half percent between July and September.

It was the largest quarterly increase in 25 years.

"We're all interested to see what the november and december is because I think that's when the major declines in gas prices have been," says Morton.

Steve Lozano says he has noticed it's easier to get a seat these days.

But Morton remains optimistic because catching the bus is still very economical.

"We're hoping all our new riders stay with us," says Morton.

Honolulu ranks sixth in the nation for saving riders money.

A regular bus rider in Honolulu saves \$846 a month .. and more than \$10,000 a year in gas and maintenance costs, according to the American Public Transportation Association.

Lozano estimates he saves about \$600 a month by catching the bus, and says he likes riding the bus.

"I've gotten so used to it," says Lozano.

The top cities in the nation for saving riders money are New York City and Boston.

It's estimated that folks who take public transportation in those cities save more than a thousand dollars a month.

Story Updated: Dec 8, 2008 at 10:52 PM HST

Find this article at:

<http://www.khon2.com/news/local/35787039.html>

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December 8, 2008

Letters to the Editor

transit

Tram can link airport to train terminal

The last time my wife and I went to San Francisco, we were traveling to Gilroy, Calif., with carry-on luggage only, with the intention to take the train.

We took the SFO airport's free tram to the BART station and BART to the Amtrak station nearest the airport, then to Gilroy. It worked well for us both going and returning.

Now my question is: Why can't the Honolulu International Airport have a tram from the airport to a mass-transit terminal in Mapunapuna or Salt Lake? It would avoid much of the fighting over routes and be less costly. Obtaining rights-of-way would cause minimal disruption, especially since much of the route would be on state or federal land.

Dick Botti | Honolulu

December 9, 2008

Letters to the Editor

RAIL ALIGNMENT

Councilman Djou micromanaging rail

We saw it when he put forth his texting and video game ban while driving. A true visionary would have added a ban on phone calls when driving without a hands-free device. It would save time in the legislative process to bundle these bans and save lives.

Now here he is trying to drop the rail project into a populated area. I thought he was pro-business and pro-family. The current plan allows for the families and businesses that will be affected time to relocate.

Charles Djou's plan would have this process fast-tracked and displace those businesses and families almost immediately, as well as increase those displaced by having to build the base yard in a heavily populated area.

Djou fought rail at every turn and now he wants to micromanage the project. Has he seen the light or is he just posturing for his congressional run? Just maybe he thinks he can kill the rail project if he meddles with it enough.

Michael Golojuch Jr. | Makakilo

December 9, 2008

Letters to the Editor

RAIL ALIGNMENT

No more votes: Let leaders do their jobs

As I read the letter to the editor on Nov. 26, suggesting we have a vote on the route of rail transit, "Salt Lake vs. Airport," it occurs to me that this has gotten way out of hand.

We were basically forced into putting the vote on the ballot by the Stop Rail Now crowd, and now we should vote on the route? Please give me a break. Should we vote on the specifics of every City Council decision? We have voted for rail, we have voted for our representatives, let's move on and let them do their job.

Michael C. Soucie | Makakilo

December 9, 2008

Letters to the Editor

RAIL ALIGNMENT

Start from the airport or UH and build out

I agree with your editorial (Nov. 4). Also: Rail must serve the airport and Pearl Harbor and UH.

Furthermore, it would be folly to start at Kapolei to Waipahu, which would help very few. Best to start at the airport and build out in both directions. Or start at UH and build out.

Nancy Bey Little | Makiki

December 9, 2008

Mayor, rail supporters outspent opponents

*By Peter Boylan
Advertiser Staff Writer*

The latest campaign spending reports show Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann outspent City Councilwoman Ann H. Kobayashi by more than 4 to 1 in his successful re-election bid.

From Oct. 21 through Nov. 4, Hannemann spent \$549,882, while Kobayashi spent \$125,520, according to records from the state Campaign Spending Commission.

"Our volunteers really worked hard and operated within the framework of a grassroots campaign. We were able to capture more than 42 percent of the vote without spending a lot of money," said City Councilman Donovan M. Dela Cruz, who chaired Kobayashi's campaign.

Kobayashi lost by more than 47,000 votes.

From Jan. 1 through Nov. 4, Hannemann raised \$921,414. He entered 2008 with nearly \$2 million in his campaign war chest.

For the year through general election day, he spent almost \$2.2 million.

Kobayashi raised \$409,579 and spent \$591,516 from Jan. 1 through Nov. 4.

During the last mayoral contest, Hannemann spent roughly \$2 million, while his opponent Duke Bainum spent \$4 million.

"We feel fortunate we had such a significant edge in fundraising," said Hannemann campaign coordinator A.J. Halagao. "Bear in mind that most of the donations our campaign received were \$100 or less. People throughout the island wanted to support a proven, effective leader. And the voters showed this at the polls, where we earned a decisive victory, easily winning all nine council districts."

The reports also show the spending by anti- and pro-rail transit groups on a ballot question that asked voters to approve a rail system using steel wheels on steel rails.

Pro-rail groups such as the Hawai'i Carpenters Union, Go Rail Go and the Pacific Resource Partnership spent a total of \$1,122,790 on advertising and other pro-rail marketing campaigns. Specifically, Go Rail Go spent \$342,209.

The main opposition group, Stop Rail Now, spent \$101,380.

During the campaign, proponents said the rail project could provide Honolulu's economy a needed boost.

"It presented us a once-in-a-lifetime economic stimulus opportunity. Beside the economic value the project would bring, it provided an opportunity to reduce traffic in the future, and it allows us to build high-density, affordable homes so our children and grandchildren will have a place to live within walking distance of a rail stop," said Ron Taketa, business representative for the Hawai'i Carpenters Union, which spent \$441,221, primarily on prime-time TV ads promoting the project.

In addition to the carpenters union, the Pacific Resource Partnership and the Committee for Balanced Transportation (Go Rail Go) were the top three pro-rail spenders.

The Pacific Resource Partnership, which is a joint program of the Hawai'i Carpenters Union Local 745 and contractors across the state, spent \$262,849, according to campaign commission records.

Go Rail Go's contributors include transit contractors such as InfraConsult, employees of transit contractors such as Parsons Brinckerhoff, and hoteliers such as Outrigger Enterprises Inc.

Stop Rail Now's contributions were primarily from individuals.

Spending by these political action committees excludes ads paid for by the city to promote rail and educate residents. The city has spent more than \$2.7 million in taxpayer money since August 2005 on public relations and outreach efforts.

Letters to the Editor

For Wednesday, December 10, 2008

Will it be coffee, tea or rail transit?

With the constant conflicting opinions in letters to the editor about rail transit, TheBus, cars, mopeds, bicycles and simply walking, I'm inclined to wonder whether anybody will actually make it to work, let alone decide whether they prefer coffee, tea, hot chocolate or a shot of vodka.

John L. Werrill
Honolulu

December 11, 2008

Transit tax nets state less this year

Tough economy has surcharge collection down nearly \$2 million

BY PETER BOYLAN

Advertiser Staff Writer

The latest transit tax collection figures are down nearly \$2 million from where they were at this time last year as the global economic crisis keeps visitors away and spending slow.

Through October, the state has collected \$61,233,859 from the Honolulu county surcharge, compared with \$63,086,834 through the same time last year, according to the state Department of Taxation.

That excludes a 10 percent fee kept by the state to cover transit tax collection expenses.

The state began collecting a half-percentage-point general excise tax surcharge for transit in January 2007 and \$246 million was raised in the first 20 months, according to state tax department records.

The state and the city and county of Honolulu are raising that money in the form of a 15-year increase in the state's general excise tax on O'ahu, from a maximum of 4.166 percent to 4.712 percent.

Toru Hayamasu, deputy director of the city Department of Transportation Services and the transit project director, said lower collections may require the selling of bonds somewhat sooner than expected, with a resulting increase in finance charges.

Overall short-term fluctuations in general excise tax revenue are not devastating as long as the total revenue collected in the 2007 to 2022 life of the tax is within the expected range, he said.

"We are certainly continuing to closely watching GET surcharge collections, revising our forecasts of expected revenues, and observing forecasts made by others such as the State's Council on Revenues. At this time, our forecast for GET surcharge revenues through 2022 is sufficient to meet the demands of the project. An extended downturn in the economy may result in our needing to lower our forecast, but, on the other side of the equation, may result in a lowering of expected construction costs," said Hayamasu.

An advantage of the collection of the GET surcharge having started in January 2007 is that the project has a "bankroll" available to start construction. The plan has been to start construction on a "pay-as-you-go" basis, then to sell bonds as needed, backed by the expected GET surcharge revenue flow through 2022, Hayamasu said.

July marked the first month that year-over-year transit tax collections were down. The city's portion of the transit tax dipped 32 percent to \$11.4 million versus \$16.8 million in July 2007. That trend continued in August, when year-over-year collections fell nearly 5 percent to \$14.3 million.

"I wouldn't make too much about a comparison over just four months of the fiscal year except that things are going to get worse before they get better," said Carl Bonham, executive director of the University of Hawai'i Economic Research Organization.

The slowdown is likely to have an impact on tax collections needed to build the elevated train from East Kapolei to Ala Moana.

City officials hope to raise an inflation-adjusted \$4 billion between 2007 and 2022 to pay for the 20-mile rail system. That, coupled with \$925 million in anticipated federal funds, is expected to pay the \$5 billion in capital costs associated with rail, according to the city.

Even with the slowdown, the city is still collecting much more than it is spending, because construction isn't scheduled to begin in full until late 2009.

In addition, the project's budget includes \$1 billion to cover potential cost overruns, which could provide some budget leeway if tax revenues are lower than expected.

The city hopes that any near-term revenue shortfall could be offset by an economic rebound in future years.

December 11, 2008

Letters to the Editor

RAIL

Start construction Downtown, not 'Ewa

Council member Charles Djou is correct — the common-sense way to build the rail is to start where it will be used the most and relieve traffic right away. That way is not starting on the 'Ewa side but to start Downtown.

As I grew up in Washington, D.C., the Metro was built in the city first and moved its way to the suburbs as time went by. They are still adding tracks farther and farther outside the city.

This common-sense approach ensures it will be used right away! Come on, Mufi, what are you thinking?

Bob Martin | Honolulu

December 14, 2008

Letters to the Editor

RAIL

Start project where it will be used most

The construction of the rail system should start in a heavily populated area, which is Downtown/airport.

In view of things that could happen, and in the case that the project slows down or has to stop altogether for whatever reason, at least the system can be used to service and alleviate Downtown traffic. It takes 30 minutes from Kapolei to Middle Street using the Express Bus (22 miles) and it takes 20-25 minutes from Middle Street to Downtown (5 miles). Now we know who the culprit is. If the construction starts in east Kapolei and it has to stop, it will be a giant white elephant and a railway to nowhere.

Rosita Sipirok-Siregar | Makakilo

Letters to the Editor

For Sunday, December 14, 2008

Sydney system gives rail riders pause

Sydney, Australia, has a steel-on-steel rail system. Our initial impression was good because the rail car was new. Later, in using the system for intra-city travel, we saw most car walls marred with graffiti and windows etched with the same. In the suburban area, sides of the tracks were littered and the squealing of the rails was irritating - more so to people who endure that several times a day as trains pass their homes.

Is that Honolulu's future? Panos Prevedouros' excellent column ("Gathering Place," Dec. 2) includes a list of questions that should be answered to ensure we get the rail system we want. Let's include those questions in petitions to the mayor, City Council and city director of transportation services and request them to answer so we know each has been fully considered prior to starting any construction.

Ronald Wong
Honolulu

December 16, 2008

Reduce rail burden on O'ahu's taxpayers

By Romy M. Cachola

A recent article in The Honolulu Advertiser reported that general excise tax collections are down compared with last year's totals because of the bad economy and declining visitor arrivals.

Funding for the city's 20-mile minimum operable segment of rail has always been a major concern for me.

The half-percent GET collection for rail for the first 20 months was \$246 million. If averaged out over the 15 years of collection, the total GET would be about \$2.2 billion, which falls short of the overly optimistic \$4.1 billion in GET surcharge revenues estimated in the draft environmental impact statement.

The following are other reasons for concern:

- With GET levels down, there may not be enough funds collected to build the eight-mile first segment from East Kapolei to Waipahu, which I suspect may cost around \$1 billion.
- The airport alignment, if selected instead of Salt Lake Boulevard, would add \$220 million more to the total price tag, plus an additional \$75 million to double-deck the platform and guideway at the Lagoon Drive station, according to the draft EIS.
- According to the president's budget for fiscal year 2007, as stated in the Annual Report on New Starts Proposed Allocation of Funds for Fiscal Year 2007, there are 21 other transportation projects ahead of Honolulu's rail project that have applied for full funding grant agreements.

I stated early on that we can expect one or more of the following proposals if our construction cost estimates are off:

- Extend the half-percent GET collection beyond 2022, the final year of tax collection.
- Increase the GET to 1 percent.
- Borrow money by floating bonds.
- Increase property taxes.

It seems that the administration's plan to fast-track the first segment of the project using collected GET funds is coupled with the notion that once construction begins there will be no stopping. This may explain why the administration is hinting at floating bonds sooner rather than later to make up for the shortage. If we are forced to borrow money, as I suspect we will be, the debt service will be an added strain on taxpayers.

Instead, I strongly suggest, if at all possible, that the city fast-track its application to secure a FFGA with the Federal Transit Administration before starting construction.

The benefits of an FFGA are that it:

- Defines the project scope.
- Establishes a firm date for project completion.
- Provides a mechanism for designating funds for future years.
- Leads to the development of accurate cost estimates.
- Permits the use of state and local funding for early project activities without jeopardizing future federal funding for those activities.

An FFGA will result in better predictability and transparency and hopefully prevent cost overruns and delays of the project. Also, an FFGA will give our taxpayers peace of mind and comfort in knowing that they won't be saddled with the burden of repaying long-term debt through borrowing. We would further save taxpayers' money if the more affordable Salt Lake Boulevard alignment, which has a solid ridership base, is selected.

The City Council and administration need to keep taxpayers' best interests in mind for this multi-billion-dollar project. A successful project is one that will not only encourage commuters to leave their cars at home but also won't bankrupt our taxpayers' pocketbooks.

Romy M. Cachola is the councilman for Council District VII (Salt Lake, Halawa, Mapunapuna). He wrote this commentary for The Advertiser.

KITV.com

City Extends Time For Comments On Transit Plan

Public Can Mail Letters Of Comment To City Transportation Officials

POSTED: 11:58 am HST December 18, 2008

UPDATED: 1:15 pm HST December 18, 2008

HONOLULU -- City officials on Thursday announced they added a month to the period for people to comment on the draft environmental impact statement of the rail transit project for Oahu.

The city hosted a series of meetings around the island for residents and businesses to share their concerns and questions about the multibillion-dollar project.

Originally the comment period was scheduled to finish on Jan. 7. Now, the public can send in letters to the city Department of Transportation Services until Feb. 6.

The address is: 650 S. King St., Third Floor, Honolulu, HI 96813.

Previous Stories:

- December 10, 2008: [Some Salt Lake Residents Voice Anger Over Rail Move](#)
- December 7, 2008: [Residents Offered Final Input On Rail](#)
- December 5, 2008: [Councilman Djou Wants To Start Rail In Town](#)
- November 12, 2008: [Council Moves To Divert Rail Line From Salt Lake](#)
- November 6, 2008: [Djou, Apo's Change Of Heart Could Divert Rail Route](#)
- November 5, 2008: [City Moves Forward With Rail Transit After Vote](#)
- November 5, 2008: [Oahu Voters Approve Rail Transit](#)

December 19, 2008

Rail public comment period extended to Feb. 6

Advertiser Staff

People now have until Feb. 6 to provide comments on the draft environmental impact statement for Honolulu's proposed rail-transit system.

That's one month longer than originally planned. The Honolulu Department of Transportation Services yesterday extended the comment period, which was to conclude Jan. 7.

The extension is aimed at allowing stakeholders and residents additional time to review and comment on the environmental impact statement.

Copies of the statement are available for review at state libraries, the city library, the Department of Transportation Services office at 650 South King St., 3rd Floor; and the DTS — Rapid Transit Division office at 1099 Alakea St., Suite 1700.

It's also available online at www.honolulutransit.org.

The public can comment in writing to the Department of Transportation Services (650 South King St., 3rd Floor, Honolulu, HI 96813) and online at www.honolulutransit.org.

The public comment period is mandated by federal and state laws.

All comments received will be considered in preparation of the final environmental impact statement.

December 19, 2008

Letters to the Editor

rail system

Council should pass Bill 63 without delay

The state's top procurement officer has ruled that under state law it is improper for the City Council to approve the specifications for a rail system.

But beyond the law, there is good reason for the council to rely upon professionals to prepare system specifications and to control the proposal/bidding process.

The development of a steel-on-steel rapid transit system will be Hawai'i's largest public works project. Now that the policy decision has been made to implement the system, proposal/bidding must be done in a business-like manner.

Rail systems are complex, and it's important that there be meaningful competition from the several global conglomerates that are capable of developing a system appropriate for Honolulu.

Professional transit engineers have the qualifications and experience to ensure that Honolulu can develop the most cost-effective system possible.

Injecting politics into the proposal/bidding process may well delay the project and result in higher costs.

The council should make it clear that the city administration is responsible for a transparent proposal/bidding process.

They should then hold the administration's feet to the fire and monitor the process closely.

Bill 63 provides that transparency, and the council should pass the bill without any further delay.

J. Roger Morton | President and general manager, O'ahu Transit Services Inc.

Letters to the Editor

For Friday, December 19, 2008

Mayor should keep rail within the city

The more testimony I hear, the more it seems the mayor's rail transit project is half-baked. We should direct him to confine his passions to his core domain, inside Honolulu's incorporated borders. If this effort turns out to be the transportation marvel we've needed for the past decade, we can ask him to consider extending the line into the unincorporated areas of Honolulu county.

Dennis Egge
Salt Lake

GATHERING PLACE

State is looking for cooperation from city on stimulus plan

By Brennon T. Morioka

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Dec 21, 2008

Last Monday, Gov. Linda Lingle hosted a news conference to announce an unprecedented effort by her administration, the neighbor island mayors, federal agencies, trade unions, contractors and the private business sector to help the state meet current economic challenges through a \$1.8 billion statewide capital improvement plan. The governor pledged total collaboration by her administration, including staff in all state departments, to work closely with the counties to facilitate state and county construction projects.

With that as a backdrop, it was surprising and disappointing to hear and read comments from the mayor of the City and County of Honolulu regarding what he said has been a lack of support and involvement by the state with the city's rail project. Contrary to his statements, the state has been extremely cooperative in ensuring that the city has all of the information and attention required to make the best, most transparent decisions it can for a project that will have such a significant impact on the future of so many people in Hawaii and those who visit us.

The state Department of Hawaiian Home Lands has worked diligently with the city in making lands available at the old Navy Drum site near Leeward Community College as a possible maintenance and baseyard facility that will serve as the nerve center for the entire rail system.

DHHL and the Department of Land and Natural Resources have also worked with the city to rapidly resolve land issues for stations and park and rides along the rail route in the Kapolei region and have developed a comprehensive community development plan for East Kapolei through collaborative planning and coordination with the University of Hawaii-West Oahu, the DeBartolo shopping center development and the Department of Transportation in building a community that will serve as a work-live-play model throughout Hawaii. And, more importantly, the East Kapolei community is being planned, in coordination with the city, around multimodal transportation opportunities including bicycling, walking, shuttle and bus services and, of course, rail transit.

In addition to the discussions and negotiations with other state agencies, the DOT also has been the lead agency for the state in working with the city on developing many of the parameters and guidelines for the rail project. Considering that more than half of the rail system will be within DOT highway rights of way, it was very important that open and constant communication continue between the city and the state.

In fact, the DOT requested monthly meetings be held between the DOT, the city and their rail transit consultants almost two years ago - meetings that continue today. It should be noted that the last monthly briefing by the city and their consultants to the DOT was as recent as this past Wednesday. These monthly briefings are also accompanied by numerous other meetings with the various technical staff offices within the DOT, whether it is the property management offices in both the Airports and Highways Divisions, or the traffic, design, planning, hydraulic, maintenance, landscaping or construction offices to discuss in greater detail many of the issues that will need to be analyzed, mitigated or overcome as part of the environmental impact statement, design or construction process for the rail transit project.

We have considered ourselves partners in this effort, offering to expedite many of our reviews to assist in the city's aggressive and optimistic schedule. It is flat wrong for the mayor to characterize our efforts as being uncooperative.

While continued collaboration on rail transit is important to address transportation solutions and help our economy over the long term, it is vital that we also work together to ensure other critical infrastructure improvement projects move forward now in order to stimulate our economy and create jobs. Of the \$1.8 billion in state construction projects being prioritized by the Lingle-Aiona administration and its partners, \$1,002,675,910 - 803 projects - are slated for Oahu over the next 18 months.

The state looks forward to working with the city on all of these projects, including rail transit, to accelerate the review and permitting processes and to overcome any barriers that might impede our progress and our ability to strengthen our economy and get our residents back to work.

Brennon T. Morioka is director of the state Department of Transportation.

December 21, 2008

Letters to the Editor

transportation

Bus system confusing, later buses needed

I'm a 20-year-old student from Switzerland. I have been in Honolulu (Manoa) for one month and will stay four more.

In general I really love Hawai'i and its lifestyle. It's very different from my country.

But there are some things that could be arranged better.

At first, it was really hard for me to get used to the bus system here. The buses aren't on time, there are so many bus stops, it's so cold in the buses and it's difficult to figure out which bus leaves from which bus stop.

But the most important thing for me is that in some places the last bus leaves before 9 p.m.

Also, if you just go out for dinner, you need to take a taxi, which is not really cheap. If you want avoid this, you have to return before 9 p.m., which is very early.

If you don't have a car, your options are limited and you are dependent on the bus.

Especially on weekdays, there should be buses until midnight, including for valleys like Manoa.

Eveline Coretti | Honolulu

December 22, 2008

Oahu landowners bracing for rail

Some worry they won't be fairly compensated for property in its path

By Peter Boylan
Advertiser Staff Writer

To build Honolulu's planned \$5.3 billion commuter rail line, the city must acquire all or part of more than 180 private properties.

The city, which budgeted \$70 million to buy the land, intends to offer owners fair market value based on an appraisal. But not all property owners are convinced they will be fairly compensated.

"How much are they going to pay?" asked Florante S. Sebastian, owner of a commercial building at 1901 Dillingham Blvd. that may be bought by the city.

Sebastian said his building — which is home to a mortgage business, Dillingham Cafe and a beauty salon — is worth \$2.1 million. But he said that price won't account for the lost business and rent he receives.

"We're making good money, so I need fair market value or better," he said. "The value of my property is \$2.1 million and I want to have that at least, but I would need more because I would be losing my business. I would have to calculate how much business I would lose for the rest of my life."

Mayor Mufi Hannemann said the city is working to assure landowners they will get fair value for their property.

"There is always going to be anxiety, which we understand. We're going to be sensitive," the mayor said.

Hannemann hopes to begin construction late next year on the 20-mile system linking East Kapolei to Ala Moana, with parts of the line opening in phases between 2013 and 2019.

In an attempt to minimize the project's land requirements, the city plans to build the elevated, approximately 26-foot-wide guideway within existing street rights of way and on government-owned land. However, the guideway and its 50-foot-wide stations will still require acquiring some private lots.

The city is considering two possible rail routes. Under current plans, if the train travels on a route through Salt Lake, the city needs to acquire — fully or partially — 193 properties. An airport-area route would affect 182 properties. Both routes would displace 20 homes, most of them in an area near the H-1/H-2 merge known as the Banana Patch.

The location of properties that could be affected has been available on the city's Web site for about two years. An updated version, which can be viewed at www.honoluluadvertiser.com, is included in the project's recently released draft environmental impact statement. That document, which is still subject to change, includes several changes from the prior plan.

That's the case with a parcel under a Kalihi 7-Eleven store at the corner of Dillingham Boulevard and Mokauea Street near Sebastian's property. Under prior plans, the city was considering taking 36 feet of that property's Dillingham Boulevard frontage. Now the city is considering taking the entire 9,214 square-foot property.

The city's plans are likely to affect lease renegotiations with 7-Eleven scheduled to occur next year, said property owner Michael Kam.

"Obviously that's going to throw a monkey wrench into our plans," he said.

Kam said he has not yet had a chance to meet with city officials, who have notified him the city may need the land.

"We would definitely be against taking the entire property," he said. However, he added, "We also own property on Dillingham further diamondhead of the 7-Eleven location, so the good thing is it might make that property more valuable."

Fighting the city on property condemnation wouldn't be easy. That's because mass transit serves a public purpose.

Buzzy Okazaki said he won't oppose the city, which wants to acquire his 12,056-square-foot parcel in Waipahu near Farrington Highway and Mokuola Street. Okazaki's lot, which is leased to a car dealer, and a car lot under separate ownership across the street are targeted for full acquisition by the city.

"I'm not going to fight it," Okazaki said. "All I'm doing is negotiating with them on the value of the property."

"I'm resigned to this takeover. I can always get another property somewhere — it's not a big thing."

Final right-of-way requirements could still change until the project's design is finalized in 2010, according to city officials.

The property acquisition process won't begin until the federal government approves the environmental impact statement, which city officials hope will occur in fall 2009. The city plans to begin construction on the first phase, which would connect East Kapolei to Waipahu or Leeward Community College, in December 2009.

One of the main reasons for starting construction on the 'Ewa end is that the city thinks it can acquire the land in that section relatively easily, at least compared with land elsewhere along the line.

Once the acquisition process starts, the city said, it will determine fair market value for properties and offer owners that much. If they refuse to sell, the city may condemn the property.

Property owners, business owners and the city may battle over what constitutes fair value — and that will hinge on when assessments are made. Businesses that could be displaced include Dee Lite Bakery in Kalihi and the Aku Bone Lounge & Grill in Kaka'ako.

Kristine Altwies, who runs Hawaii International Child Inc., an international adoption agency on Waimanu Street, said she is planning to move because her landlord will be forced to sell.

"It's literally coming through our board room. I do hope the city gives these folks (the landowners) a good deal; this is the hottest neighborhood on the island right now," Altwies said.

"I think whether you're for or against rail, this sort of thing happens. It's life, and when you're a small business, part of your business plan and strategy has to be flexibility. If the planners have figured out that this is the best route, even if we're a minor tragedy in that, I don't think it's that big a deal."

Additional Facts

Rail Online

See our transit coverage at
www.honoluluadvertiser.com/rail

Letters to the Editor

For Tuesday, December 23, 2008

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Dec 23, 2008

Rail transit will help residents go green

I am a 13-year-old kid who lives in Mililani. I currently attend Mililani Middle School. I would just like to express my feelings about the rail transit. I am pro-transit because I want to go green. The rail will make us go green because it will take cars off the road and make less traffic. Fewer cars means less gas emissions.

Spencer Serrao
Mililani

December 24, 2008

'Ewa rail start means clearer path to goal

Councilman Charles Djou has taken issue with the city's plan to start construction of the rail system near 'Ewa. He argues that it makes more sense to build the first segment within the urban core, where there are more potential riders.

But while that seems logical on the surface, Djou's idea misses some key facts. The city's current plan is the one with the best chances of long-term success.

There are solid reasons for building first in 'Ewa, say others on the council and within the administration. First, it's easier to locate the 40-acre baseyard for storing equipment in an area that now is sparsely populated. The city would be hard-pressed to find that much land in the city.

Secondly, the preparatory work in urban Honolulu — condemning land, relocating existing utilities — will take far longer, which will delay actual construction further.

This will mean the entire 20-mile project will ultimately take longer to complete. And on a project of this size, time is money. Delays add inflationary costs. Starting in 'Ewa now will allow real progress to be made early on.

City Council Chairman Todd Apo said it's his hope that much of the in-town work can happen in tandem with the west-side buildout, and he's right. The city needs to make wise use of the lead time it has now so that anticipated town-side complications can be efficiently dealt with.

Officials should approach the \$4.8 billion project with a plan that enables the greatest efficiency for completion of the full 20-mile route. The current plan seems on track toward that final goal.

10 WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE: PANOS PREVEDOUROS

The UH professor stirred up the race for mayor with his focus on rail transit

STORY SUMMARY | [READ THE FULL STORY](#)

In a daily countdown, the Star-Bulletin is profiling 10 people who have made a difference in Hawaii during the past year.

These are people who worked in any field - community service, education, politics, law, labor, medicine, science, business, sports, entertainment, the arts - to make a difference. Some fought controversial battles in public.

All that matters is that each, to the one, had a devotion to their cause that made a profound impact on Hawaii.

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FULL STORY >>

[By Laurie Au](#)

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Dec 24, 2008

Panos Prevedouros was the unlikely mayoral candidate.

He had no political experience. No name recognition. And, perhaps most importantly, no money.

THE HONOREES

This year's choices:

Monday:

Manti Te'o, Punahou football star

Yet this well-respected, quirky University of Hawaii at Manoa engineering professor challenged powerful incumbent Mayor Mufi Hannemann, changing the race and shaping much of the campaign around the city's controversial \$4 billion rail transit project.

Yesterday:

Christina Hemming, Maui activist

"He was a fresh face who was a very serious candidate for mayor," said Neal Milner, a UH political scientist. "You don't get that very often - a face that's new who's also a fairly serious candidate for a high elected office in Hawaii."

Prevedouros was reluctant to run for mayor. He had a baby boy due in November with his fiancée and would be forced to put his career at UH on hold during the campaign. But a small but vocal group called Stop Rail Now was gaining publicity, and needed a candidate. The group eventually persuaded Prevedouros to run in early July.

"Before Panos, there was no one," said Sen. Sam Slom (R, Diamond Head-Hawaii Kai). "I was a part of a group that approached Panos and he said absolutely no. We kept working on it from the standpoint that the issues he was very knowledgeable about were the issues facing the City and County. In the end, that's what got him to say reluctantly that he would run."

Prevedouros, known for his staunch opposition against the elevated rail system backed by Hannemann, was soon labeled as a one-issue candidate. But others weren't so quick to brush him off, including Gov. Linda Lingle.

"It may be one issue, but it's one very big issue," Lingle said in July.

Soon after, City Councilwoman Ann Kobayashi entered the mayor's race, becoming the greater threat against Hannemann.

On the campaign trail, the two remained mostly cordial - almost supportive of each other - as they continually criticized Hannemann, particularly on the 20-mile rail system from Kapolei to Ala Moana.

In the Sept. 20 primary election, it was clear throughout the night that Prevedouros had no chance of becoming mayor. He conceded the race after getting just 17.2 percent of the vote.

While Prevedouros ultimately failed in his bid for mayor, his role in the race perhaps helped stop Hannemann from getting the more than 50 percent needed to win re-election outright in the primary.

Prevedouros later joined Kobayashi's campaign as a "senior adviser for infrastructure," a role that had little impact in the end, but kept forcing rail transit as the main issue for the mayor's race.

"He really did help to frame the discussion about mass transit," Milner said.

"His position was not the position that won out, but I think he brought a fair amount of people to

think about alternatives. He raised issues that are going to come back regardless of what side you are on on mass transit."

December 24, 2008

Letters to the Editor

rail transit

An eco-friendly kind of convenient travel

Before coming to the University of San Francisco, public transportation never played a big role in my life. Now that I am without a car, however, every destination is reached by foot or public transit.

Mass transit needs a mass schedule. San Francisco's equivalent public transit both the BART and MUNI schedules are convenient so I can plan my trips around the Bay Area to my own accord. O'ahu's new transit system needs to be equally convenient, and goes where people need to go, and arrive often.

One thing I have learned in San Francisco about change is the need to spread the message. Keeping our islands' natural habitat intact has always been a concern with many locals, and since the passage of the new railway bill on O'ahu, that topic has come up once again.

People are making decisions based on the effect they will have on the environment, so locals should look at using the railway as the preservation of the Earth's environment. According to the BART Web site, it costs 19 cents a mile on the BART, while it costs 69 cents for gas money. If the new transit system is a hit, O'ahu's traffic problem will begin to dissipate, and the carbon dioxide emissions from O'ahu will decrease.

Talon Kishi | Honolulu

December 24, 2008

Letters to the Editor

rail transit

Start train from Aloha Stadium to Ala Moana

Just start the transit line from Aloha Stadium to Ala Moana Center. You don't have to worry about building a parking lot for the transit users. If possible, build an off-ramp right into the stadium parking lot from the town-bound freeway.

Clyde Sasamura | 'Aiea

December 25, 2008

Debate on rail details not over

Public comments range from noise concerns to impact on environment

By Sean Hao

Advertiser Staff Writer

The city's planned \$5.3 billion elevated commuter rail project was victorious in the polls on Nov. 4 but still must go through a lengthy and potentially contentious environmental review.

The environmental study is a major hurdle in the city's effort to obtain more than \$1 billion in federal money needed to build the 20-mile rail project.

Already, about 200 individuals or groups have raised concerns about the rail line as part of the environmental review. To accommodate those wanting to get involved, the city recently agreed to extend the public comment period by one month to Feb. 6.

The comments so far cover the gamut from aesthetics and concerns about noise to archaeological resource conservation, energy consumption and where to start construction of the train. Some are relatively minor issues, such as where to place construction signs, while others touch on fundamental questions, such as whether the city adequately considered rail alternatives.

The city must address all comments raised in its final environmental impact statement, which is due to be released this summer. The city expects to complete the environmental review process in time to begin construction in December 2009.

The extension of the public comment period and the concerns raised could jeopardize the city's timetable. However, city officials still hope to get all federal government approvals needed to begin construction on the project as scheduled. The city's timeline calls for service between West Loch and Waipahu to start in late 2013 and full service to Ala Moana would begin by the end of 2018.

"There's a wide spectrum of concern," said Wayne Yoshioka, director of the city Department of Transportation Services. "It depends on where you are in the (rail) corridor and how it applied to you.

"We don't see any problems at all in terms of responding to those comments," added Yoshioka. "Most of them are pretty straightforward."

So far, one of the biggest unresolved concerns is whether the East Kapolei to Ala Moana route should traverse Salt Lake as planned or be diverted to pass by the airport. Early next year, the City Council is expected to switch the route to pass by the Honolulu International Airport. There's also been a recent push to start construction on the train in town rather than in the 'Ewa plain. Comments received from the public are expected to help address those and other issues.

right-of-way issues

Under current plans, the project's first phase would connect East Kapolei to Leeward Community College. One of the main reasons for starting construction on the 'Ewa end is to avoid right-of-way acquisition issues during the project's early stages.

Initial service also is tied to the location of a maintenance and storage facility, which may be placed between Leeward Community College and Waipahu High School. Starting construction at that facility and proceeding in 'Ewa also takes advantage of the fact that construction along Farrington Highway and in West Oahu will not require significant utility relocations, according to the city.

However, City Council member Charles Djou is urging the city to reconsider starting construction in town.

"Most of the other cities, when they do a rail project, they start in town and build out, not out and in," he said. "It just strikes me as nonsense that the city government here is doing it backwards.

"What happens if an economic recession goes longer than we think in the next two decades and we run out of money and all we can build are eight or 10 or 12 miles of the 20-mile route? Won't it be better to have that eight or 10 or 12 miles in town?"

City officials contend that the budget for rail includes nearly \$1 billion to cover contingencies, which should prevent such a scenario from happening.

The largest public works project in state history also is raising concerns about energy consumption and carbon emissions. Trains can be more energy efficient than autos. However, construction of an elevated guideway will require a massive amount of energy during construction.

"That's one set of concerns and the costs obviously," said Randy Ching, chairman of The Sierra Club O'ahu Group. "Other things we're concerned about are how are people going to access the transit station — is the train going to be pedestrian friendly, bicycle friendly and handicap accessible?"

power consumption

According to the city, train stations will have elevators and escalators and will accommodate bicycles and wheelchairs.

Honolulu's planned commuter rail system will consume enough electricity each day to power about 9,250 homes, or a community the size of Hawai'i Kai. However, that shouldn't pose a risk of energy shortage and could lower air pollutants and energy use as people switch from automobiles to trains, according to the city.

Other concerns include the aesthetics of the train, which will run on a dual-rail guideway that's about 30 feet wide and between 40 to 80 feet tall, depending on the location. There also will be 19 to 21 elevated train stations, each 50 feet wide and as much as 300 feet long.

The size of the elevated track and stations has caused some neighborhood groups and architects to question whether it will damage the city's attractiveness and block views of the ocean or mountains.

Sidney Char, president of the American Institute of Architects' Honolulu division, said the group is urging the city to consider building at least portions of the train at ground level, where it won't obstruct mauka/

makai views.

"This is not only about the engineering solution — about moving people from point A to point B — it's really about how it impacts our city and the feeling of our city," Char said.

Another concern is how the train may affect Native Hawaiian burials and other archaeological objects during construction. According to a preliminary study, there's a possibility that the transit project will affect burials and precontact archaeology as it traverses Nimitz Highway, Halekauwila Street and Kapi'olani Boulevard. An expansion spur to Waikiki also has high potential to disrupt historical sites.

Among the groups concerned about iwi is the state Office of Hawaiian Affairs. In September, OHA wrote the city expressing "great concern" about the city's ambitious timetable. The agency sought assurances that all environmental rules would be complied with. OHA also asked that construction cease if iwi or other archaeological objects are discovered so that appropriate agencies can be consulted.

Other groups are raising questions about whether the city's draft environmental study was done correctly. Anti-rail group www.Honolulutraffic.com and environmental group Life of the Land both have accused the city of failing to adequately consider alternatives to an elevated rail.

The city maintains that other alternatives, such as elevated highway lanes and a bigger bus system, were eliminated from consideration in early 2007.

However, proponents of new highway construction contend the city did not conduct a rigorous, good-faith analysis of managed lanes. A so-called HOT, or high-occupancy toll lane, would carry express buses and other high-occupancy vehicles. Single-occupant autos can use these lanes if they pay a toll and if the added traffic doesn't interfere with the free flow of high-occupancy traffic.

There are also complaints that the city overestimated the cost of building managed lanes and underestimated how much they would reduce traffic congestion.

"The way that the HOT lanes have been handled is just absolutely appalling," said Cliff Slater, chair of anti-rail Web site www.honolulutraffic.com. "They have a requirement to handle things objectively (and) scientifically.

"I really expect that they will have to do the managed lane alternative the right way," which could significantly delay any federal environmental approval, Slater said.

Additional Facts

have your say

The public can comment about the rail project in writing to the Department of Transportation Services (650 South King St., 3rd Floor, Honolulu, HI 96813) and on online at www.honolulutransit.org. The city will respond to the comments in its final environmental impact statement, which the city expects to release next summer.

Copies of the draft environmental impact statement are available for review at state libraries, the city library, the Department of Transportation Services office at 650 South King St. - 3rd Floor, and the DTS - Rapid Transit Division office at 1099 Alakea St., Suite 1700.

It's also available online at www.honolulutransit.org.

ANOTHER VIEW

State has been lax in support of city transportation projects

By Wayne Y. Yoshioka

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Dec 26, 2008

We're encouraged by state Department of Transportation Director Brennon Morioka's pledge that his and other state agencies will cooperate fully on the city's rail transit project (["Gathering Place," Star-Bulletin, Dec. 21](#)).

This is the most definitive indication of support we've received from the state regarding this project, and we've long been concerned about the mixed signals we've received.

While Morioka and his DOT have been very helpful working with us on engineering aspects, Gov. Linda Lingle and others have been less than fully supportive, so it is quite a stretch to claim that state government in general has been "extremely cooperative."

Let's not forget that Lingle signed the petition advanced by the Stop Rail Now group, Lt. Gov. Duke Aiona supported their efforts and Lingle publicly stated that she voted against rail. Lingle earlier threatened to veto the bill that authorized the City Council to create the general excise tax surcharge that made the entire project possible. Though she later allowed the bill to become law without her signature, Lingle made it difficult for the city to collect the surcharge.

Although we are making progress, the state's Department of Land and Natural Resources is taking time to work out the details of a commitment to providing land in the vicinity of the University of Hawaii-West Oahu so that a rail station can be integrated with the new campus. Similarly, we hope that the proposed land swap for the old Navy Drum site will proceed with speed and diligence.

We believe that a cooperative relationship like the one that exists between the city's Department of Transportation Services and the DOT would benefit the people of Oahu the most. The two agencies work cooperatively in many modes of transportation, from traffic signals to bikeways, and from traffic cameras to roadways interfaces. Let's see if we can accomplish this for a major

effort such as the rail project as well.

Mayor Mufi Hannemann assured his support for state capital improvement projects when the state recently began working to speed up its efforts. We're encouraged that the governor recognizes that cooperation between all levels of government is key to revitalizing the economy.

Rather than engage in finger-pointing, we hope Morioka will succeed in persuading Lingle to finally get on board with rail transit, which promises to be the most important economic stimulus anywhere in Hawaii for the next decade. The project will provide thousands of jobs at a time when Hawaii sorely needs them, while adding an environmentally friendly alternative to clogged freeways as our state continues to grow and prosper. We look forward to closer collaboration on rail transit and other important issues.

Wayne Y. Yoshioka is director of the City and County of Honolulu's Department of Transportation Services.

Letters to the Editor

For Sunday, December 28, 2008

Start rail construction from downtown

The construction of the rail system should start in the heavily populated area, which is downtown/airport.

In view that unforeseen things could happen, and in the case that the project slows down or has to stop altogether for whatever reason, at least the system can be used to service and alleviate downtown traffic.

As it is now, it takes 30 minutes from Kapolei to Middle Street using Express Bus (22 miles) and it takes 20-25 minutes from Middle Street to downtown (5 miles).

Now we know who the culprit is. If the construction starts in east Kapolei and it has to stop, it will be a giant white elephant and a railway to nowhere.

Rosita Sipirok-Siregar
Makakilo

December 29, 2008

Letters to the Editor

rail

EIS should include all transit technologies

An acknowledged transportation expert, Roger Morton (Letter, Dec. 19), agrees with the ruling that it is improper for the City Council to approve specifications for the transit system.

Why didn't Mr. Morton testify on this during the lengthy hearings on Bill 79, that led to passage of Ordinance 07-001? (My notes indicate no discussion whatsoever on specifications during the third reading.)

Where was the corporation counsel to recommend deletion of Section 7, the one dealing with specifications approval? Why did Mayor Mufi Hannemann sign a flawed bill? The real question, perhaps, is would the City Council have approved Bill 79 without Section 7?

The "meaningful competition" and "transparency" that Morton refers to apparently only apply to steel-wheel-on-steel-rail systems (i.e., five suppliers, with two of them possibly merging).

We will not have a meaningful competition until all qualified suppliers, including five other companies proposing non-SWSR systems, are allowed to bid. The draft environmental impact statement, currently limited to SWSR, must be delayed and rewritten to cover all technologies that met the criteria in the city's request for information.

Frank Genadio | Kapolei

December 30, 2008

Honolulu transit tax revenues plummet

By Sean Hao

Advertiser Staff Writer

Tax collections needed to build Honolulu's \$5.3 billion commuter train fell 16 percent in November from a year ago as economic activity in Honolulu continued to slow.

Transit tax collections last month totaled \$13.2 million, versus \$15.8 million in November 2007. Through the first five months of the fiscal year that ends June 30, transit tax collections are down nearly 6 percent to \$67.7 million.

The decline in collections comes less than two years into a 15-year tax hike adopted to fund construction of the elevated train from East Kapolei to Ala Moana. The city's rail plan anticipated transit tax revenue growing each year, but plunging visitor arrivals, slumping real estate sales and a downturn in construction activity make it unlikely revenue will be up this year.

The city hopes that any near-term revenue shortfall will be offset by an economic rebound in future years, said Wayne Yoshioka, director of the city Department of Transportation Services, which is overseeing the train project.

"Right now we're not concerned," Yoshioka said. "While the current collections are down, we feel that in the future, given the way things move cyclically, it should even out.

"What was important is that over the life of the project we have some (revenue) assumptions in there that we think are conservative. What we've been told by those that have reviewed us is we have been conservative."

The project's budget includes \$1 billion to cover potential cost overruns, which could provide some leeway if tax revenues are lower than expected.

Voters narrowly approved the rail project in November as frustration over congested roads outweighed concerns about costs.

The state began collecting a half-percentage-point general excise tax surcharge for transit in January 2007, and \$283 million was raised in the first 23 months, according to state tax department records.

City officials hope to raise nearly \$4.1 billion, on an inflation-adjusted basis, between 2007 and 2022 to pay for the 20-mile rail system. That, coupled with about \$1.2 billion in anticipated federal funds, is expected to pay the \$5.3 billion in capital costs associated with rail, according to the city's financial plan.

Under that plan, the city expects to net \$188 million in the current fiscal year ending June 30. That means the city needs to collect an average of about \$17 million a month for the remaining seven months of the fiscal year. The average monthly take during the first five months of the fiscal year was about

\$13.5 million.

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

rebound unlikely

A rebound in tax collections this fiscal year seems unlikely. In late October the state Council on Revenues, which generates forecasts used to set the state budget, predicted that overall state tax revenue will decline 0.5 percent this fiscal year and warned that the state's financial picture could deteriorate even more because of the volatility of the nation's economy.

The current economic slowdown is forcing the state and city to reduce tax collection forecasts and reduce spending.

Even with the slowdown in tax revenues, the city is still collecting much more than it is spending because construction isn't scheduled to begin in full until late 2009. If transit tax collections don't meet expectations, the city may need to sell bonds sooner than expected to finance construction, which could increase finance charges.

Outside experts who have analyzed the city's tax revenues projection include Bank of Hawaii chief economist Paul Brewbaker, who has said the estimates were reasonable given the cyclical nature of the economy.

If transit tax collections don't meet expectations, the added burden would fall on local taxpayers.

Lowell Kalapa, president of the nonprofit Tax Foundation of Hawai'i, which opposes the transit tax, doubts the city will be able to make up lost tax revenues in future years.

"It doesn't look good," he said. "Because it's so sensitive to how people spend, (the general excise tax) is really not that dependable in the long term because consumerism is cyclical.

"When (collections) start falling by more than 10 percent of projections, you're never going to make that up because this is good for only 15 years," Kalapa said.

December 31, 2008

2008's top stories

From Obama triumph to an overpass tragedy, these events defined the year

Advertiser Staff

In a state where local pride reigns, could there be any bigger local story in 2008 than the election of Hawai'i-born Punahou graduate Barack Obama to the nation's highest office?

Obama's historic campaign, and his three visits here in recent months, focused global attention on the Aloha State, whose voters had become accustomed to being marginalized in presidential elections.

His election as the country's 44th president was picked as the state's top story of 2008 by The Advertiser's editors and reporters.

The November election also saw Honolulu voters support a multibillion-dollar elevated commuter rail system — an ongoing saga that was tabbed as another of the year's biggest stories.

Other picks include more grim events, including mass layoffs, the failure of one of Hawai'i's iconic businesses, the shocking death of a Honolulu toddler, and upheaval in the University of Hawai'i's Warrior football program.

3. Voters approve rail

Honolulu voters approved a November ballot initiative authorizing the city to move ahead with a \$5.3 billion rail line.

The vote, which favored rail by roughly 51 percent to 46 percent, brought the city closer than it has ever been to building a commuter rail system.

Three previous mass-transit plans over the past three decades failed for lack of political support.

Those voting for rail cited the need for transportation alternatives and traffic relief.

Rail gained momentum about three years ago when Mayor Mufi Hannemann proposed linking East Kapolei to Ala Moana.

Hannemann won the endorsement of the City Council and the state Legislature, which adopted a 0.5 percentage point increase in the general excise tax to pay for the plan.

Gov. Linda Lingle allowed the tax bill to become law without her signature in 2005, and for a while the rail plan took on an aura of inevitability.

Then came Stop Rail Now, a coalition of rail opponents who launched a petition drive in April to put rail on the ballot.

The organization collected 49,000 signatures by mid-July.

While Stop Rail Now eventually failed to get its ordinance on the ballot, it succeeded in forcing the City Council to place a separate version of the rail question before the electorate.

The ballot question asked voters if they wanted the city to move forward with a steel-wheel-on-steel-rail transit system.

The favorable result paved the way for the city to start construction possibly late next year with limited service between West Loch and Waipahu scheduled to start in 2013.

Service between East Kapolei and Pearl Highlands would begin a year later. Full service to Ala Moana would begin by the end of 2018.

Letters to the Editor

For Wednesday, December 31, 2008

Why is Phoenix's rail so much cheaper?

Phoenix just opened its light rail project on Dec. 27. Like Honolulu's planned system, it runs 20 miles with future extensions planned. It also has free park-and-ride sites with security and enhanced bus service. Tickets are \$1.25 one way. Unlike Honolulu's rail project, all this cost \$1.4 billion, with the federal government paying almost half. How come ours is going to cost more than five times as much and the federal government is expected to put up only \$900,000?

Miles Kaneshiro

Pearl City

An Update on the Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project

Review the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Honolulu Rail Transit



Aloha! You have the opportunity to have your voice heard on one of our community's most important transportation projects. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) for the Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project is now available. We invite you to review the Draft EIS and submit your comments. The public comment period will end on January 7, 2009.

The Draft EIS examines the environmental, economic and community impacts and benefits of 4 future alternatives between Kapolei and UH Mānoa: 3 potential routes for a rail transit line from East Kapolei to Ala Moana Center are analyzed in comparison to the No Build alternative.

Where can I get a copy of the Draft EIS?

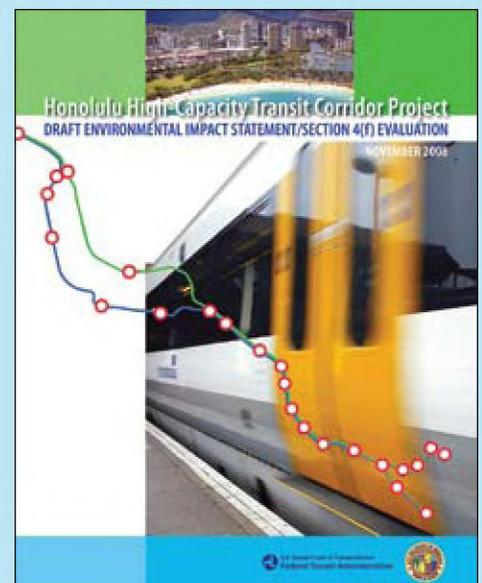
You can review a copy of the Draft EIS at your local state library, the City library, the Department of Transportation Services (650 South King Street, 3rd floor), the Rapid Transit Division (1099 Alakea Street, 17th floor), and online at www.honolulutransit.org.

You can also request a free DVD that includes a video about the Draft EIS. In addition, printed copies of the Draft EIS are available for purchase for \$59. Call **566-2299** or visit www.honolulutransit.org to order. Please include your full name, address and phone number when contacting the project.

— continued on back

Public Hearing Dates for the Draft EIS

- **Saturday, December 6**
9 to 11 a.m. at Kapolei Hale
1000 Ulu'ohia Street, Kapolei
- **Monday, December 8**
6 to 8 p.m. at the Neal S. Blaisdell Exhibition Hall, Hawai'i Suites
777 Ward Avenue, Honolulu
- **Tuesday, December 9**
6 to 8 p.m. at Salt Lake District Park
1159 Ala Liliiko'i Place, Honolulu
- **Wednesday, December 10**
6 to 8 p.m. at the Filipino Community Center
94-428 Mokuola Street, Waipahu
- **Thursday, December 11**
6 to 8 p.m. at Bishop Museum
1525 Bernice Street, Honolulu





Contact Us

You can reach us by calling the project hotline at 566-2299 or by submitting your comments to www.honolulustransit.org.

Call or email us if you would like to receive an electronic version of this newsletter or would like to be removed from our mailing list.

— continued from front

How can I comment?

There are three ways to comment:

- In writing** at a Draft EIS Public Hearing or mailed to:

**Department of
 Transportation Services
 650 S. King Street, 3rd Floor
 Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813**

Comments must be postmarked by January 7, 2009.

- In person** at a Draft EIS Public Hearing in December.
- Online** at www.honolulustransit.org.

Here is a look at several of the project's key environmental milestones.

Milestone and Date	Description
EIS Preparation Notice (2005) Scoping (2007)	Scoping identified the alternatives and impacts that are examined in the Environmental Impact Statement. Along with technical studies, the project reached out for the public's ideas and opinions through community meetings, City Council hearings and the Internet.
Alternatives Analysis (2006)	Information from Scoping was used to identify and analyze types of transit and routes that were reasonable and practical.
Honolulu City Council selects Locally Preferred Alternative (January 2007)	Based on the Alternatives Analysis and public testimony, the City Council selected a transit system for the Kapolei to UH Mānoa traffic corridor.
Draft Environmental Impact Statement (November 2008)	The Draft EIS studies the potential impacts of three routes from East Kapolei to Ala Moana Center, as well as a No Build alternative. The public and government agencies can review and comment on the Draft EIS.
Final Environmental Impact Statement (projected for 2009)	The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) will issue the Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS). The Final EIS will respond to comments received on the Draft EIS, identify a preferred alternative, show state and federal environmental laws are followed, and identify any mitigation measures.
Record of Decision (projected for the second half of 2009)	The FTA will issue a Record of Decision (ROD), which will state the FTA's determination that all environmental steps have been completed. The ROD describes the basis for the decision, identifies alternatives that were considered and summarizes specific mitigations for the project.

Honolulu Rail Transit Project

Honolulu On The Move 

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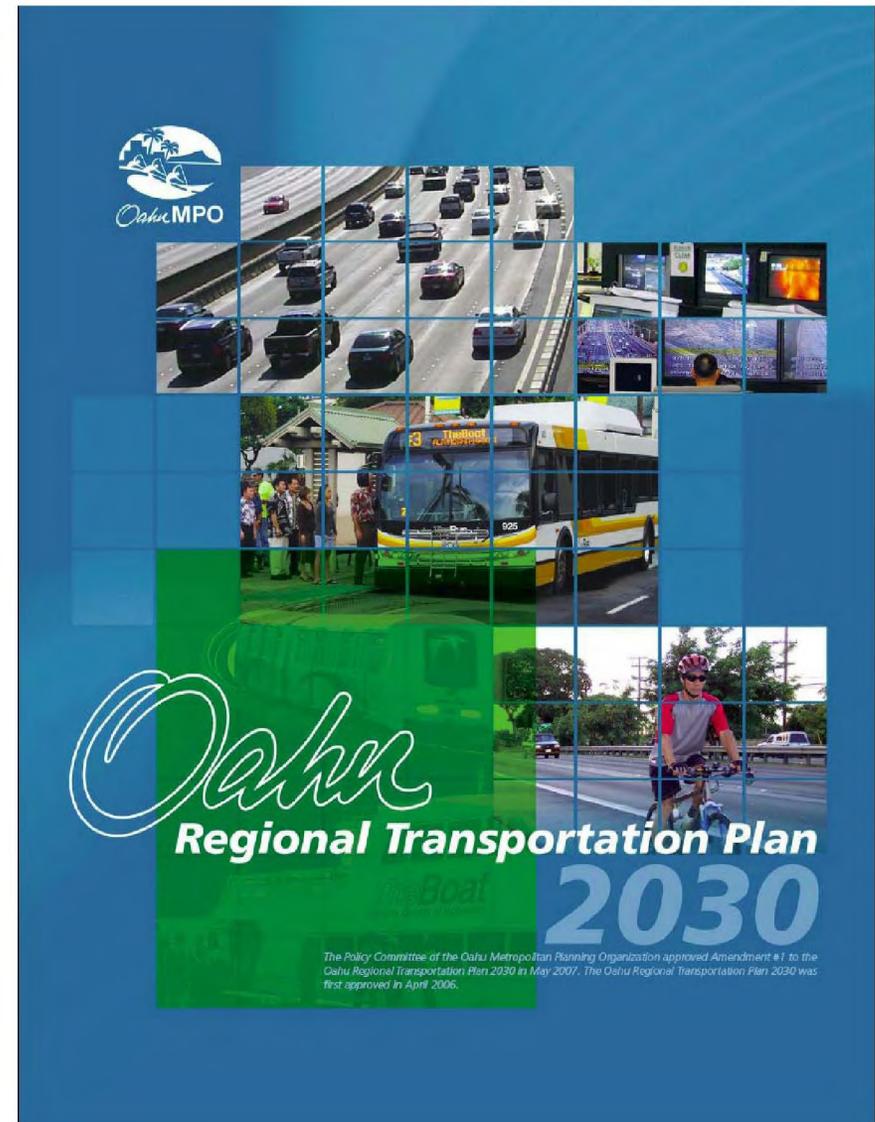
Planning for the Future

O'ahu in 2030

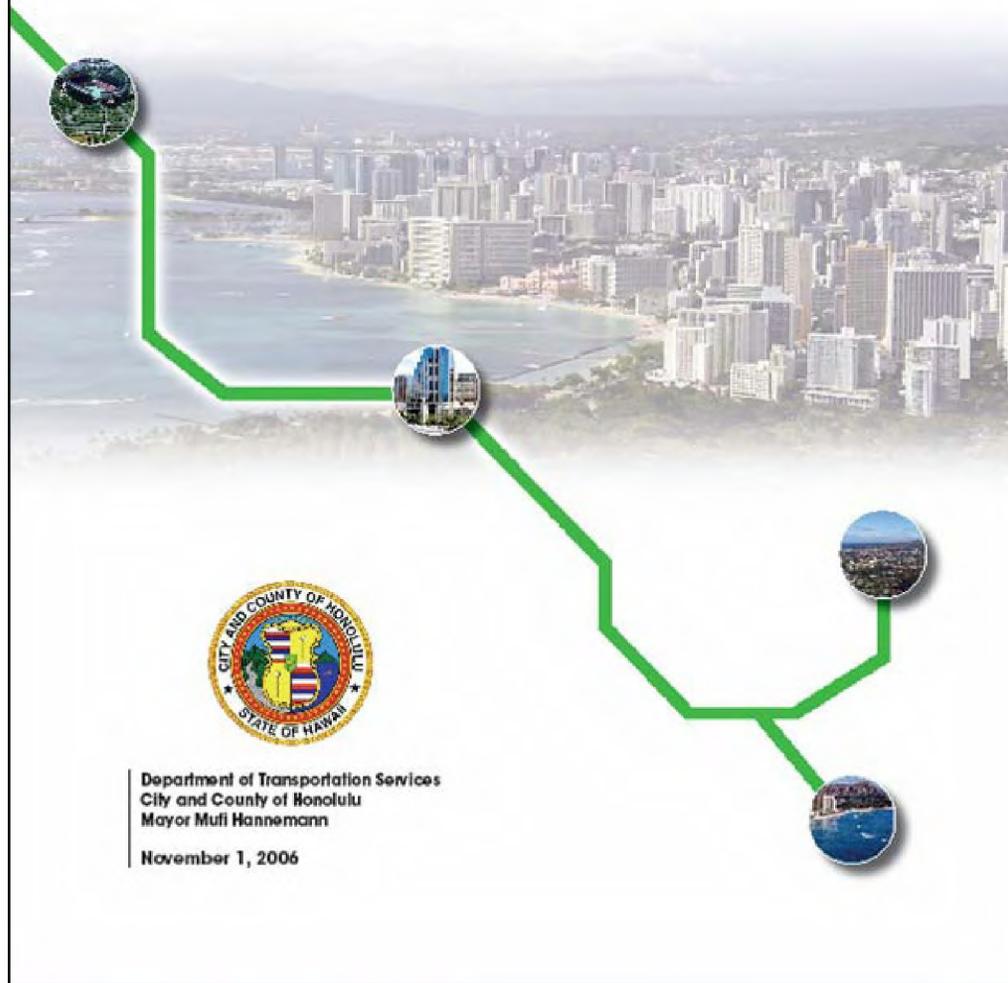
- 200,000 more residents than in 2005
(22% more people)
- 100,000 more jobs than in 2005
(21% more jobs)
- 750,000 more daily trips than in 2005
(27% more trips)

Multi-Modal Options to Improve Mobility

- Highway Expansion
- Traffic Engineering Improvements
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Projects
- TheBoat
- Expansion of TheBus
- Fixed Guideway Project



Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project Alternatives Analysis Report



Department of Transportation Services
City and County of Honolulu
Mayor Mufi Hannemann
November 1, 2006

Four Alternatives

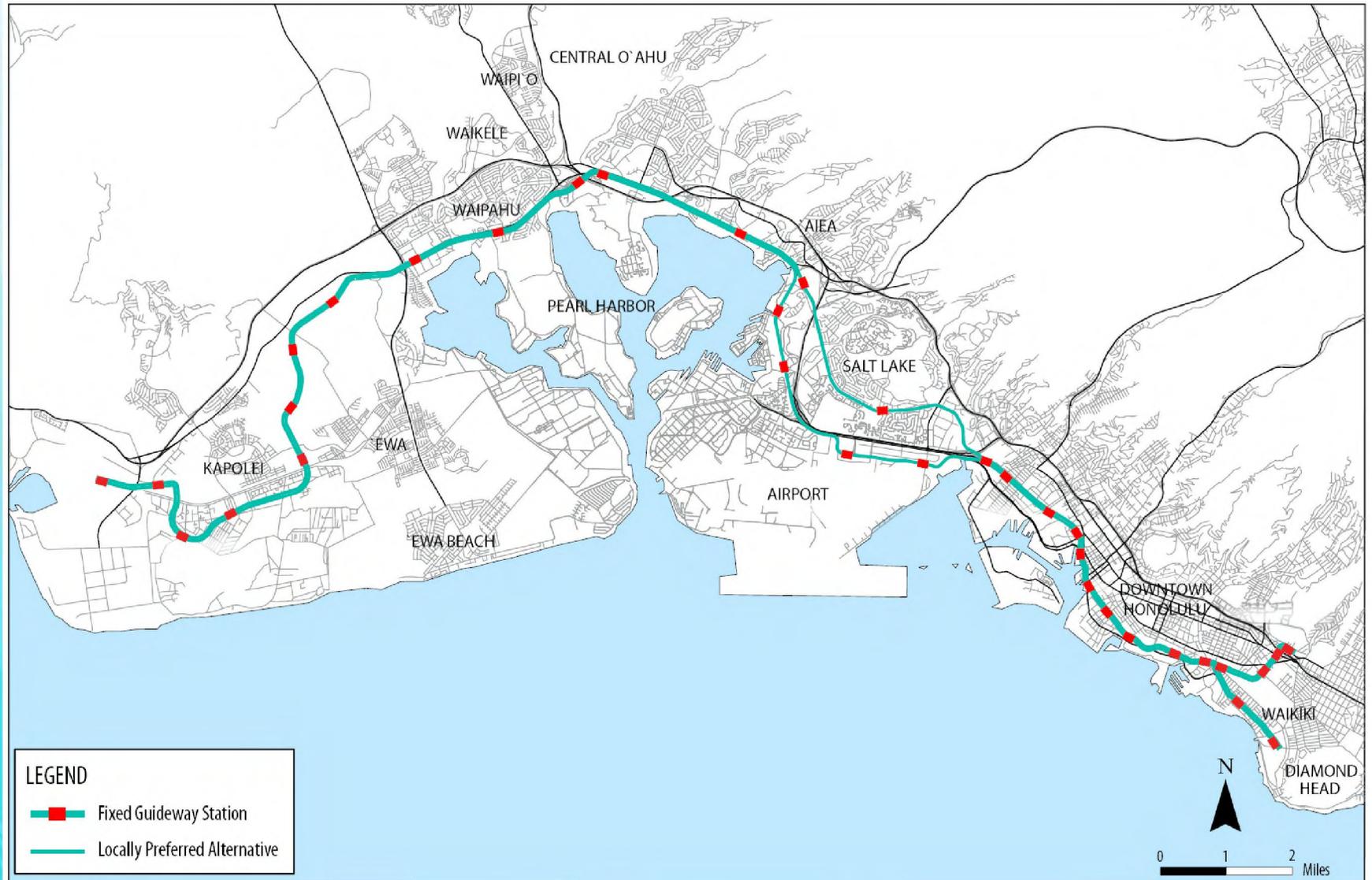
- No Build
 - No Transit Improvements
- Transportation System Management
 - Expanded Bus Service
- Managed Lane
 - Buses on Managed Lanes
- Fixed Guideway
 - Alignment Options

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



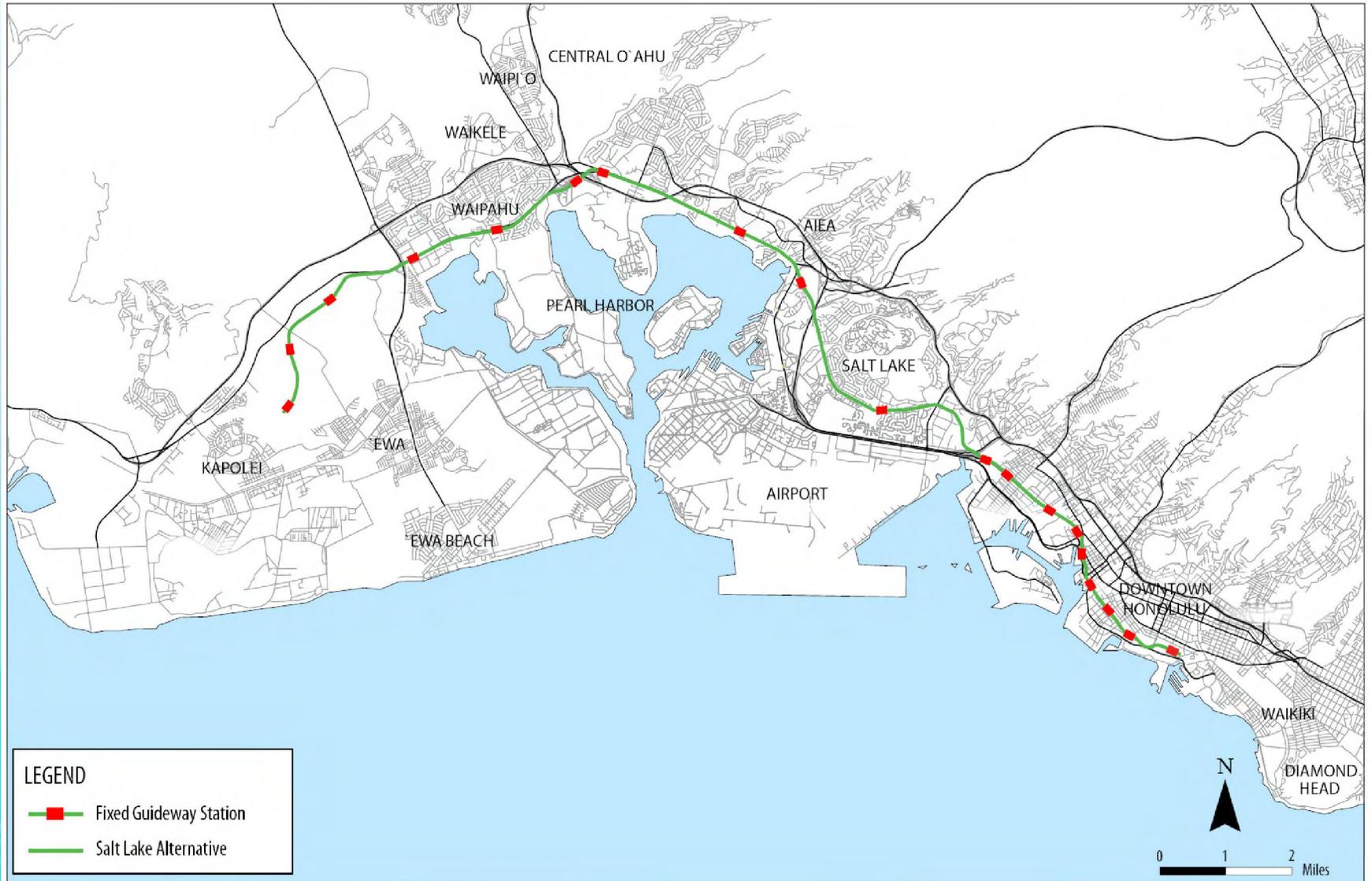
Why Not Expanded Bus Service?

- Traffic congestion slows buses and increases operating costs – bus operating costs per passenger mile are 2/3 more than for rail
- Traffic congestion hurts schedule reliability
- Bus system is currently approaching capacity
- Attracts fewer riders than bus+rail system

Why Not Buses on Managed Lanes?

- Results in only minor increase in transit usage – only 22% as many new riders as bus+rail system
- Higher O&M cost per passenger served than bus+rail system
- Doesn't meet FTA cost-effectiveness threshold
- Managed lanes are not financially feasible – Neither Federal transit funds nor GET surcharge revenues can pay for highway lanes

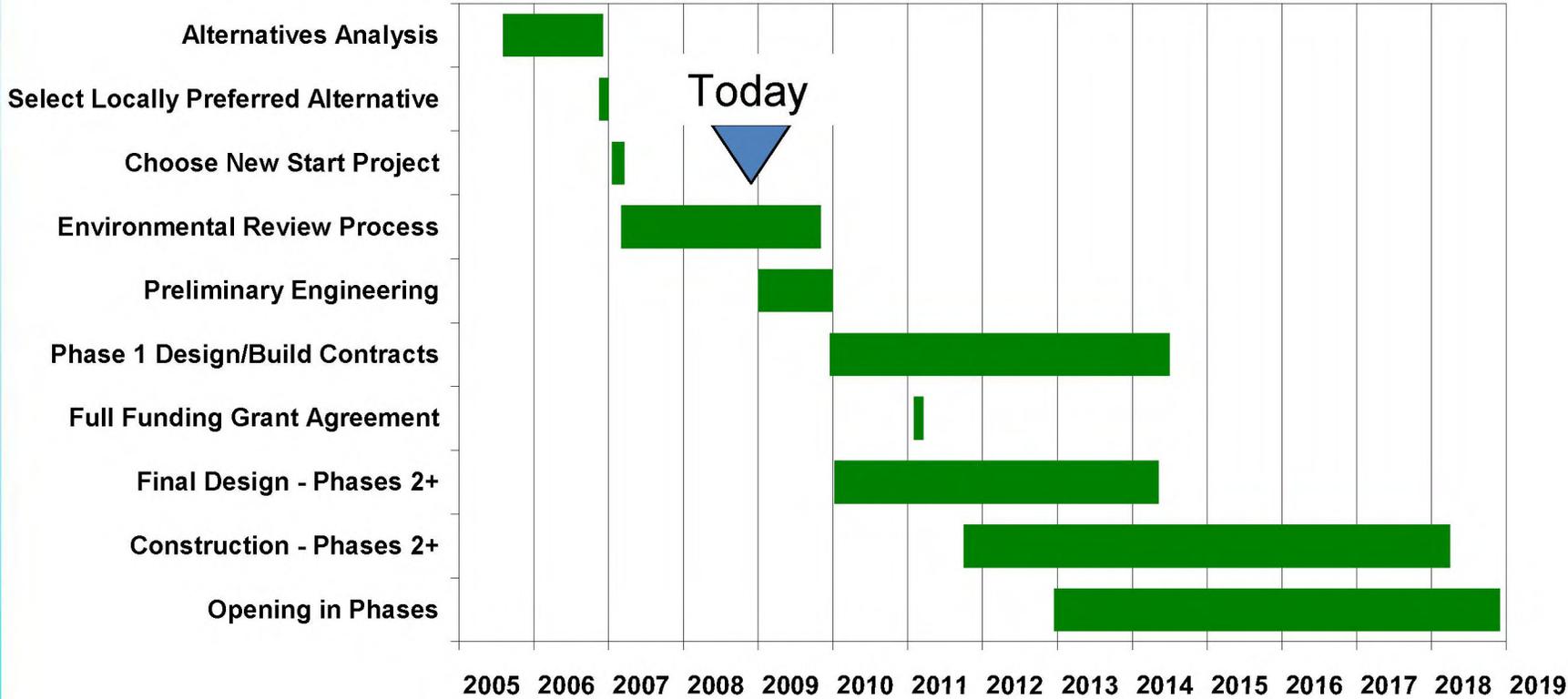
First Construction Project



Summary – Decisions Made

- Choice of Mode
 - Fixed Guideway in Exclusive Right-of-Way
- Choice of Alignment
 - Initially – East Kapolei to Ala Moana Center
 - Ultimately – Kapolei to UH Mānoa and Waikīkī
- Choice of Vehicle Technology
 - Steel Wheel on Steel Rail

Project Schedule

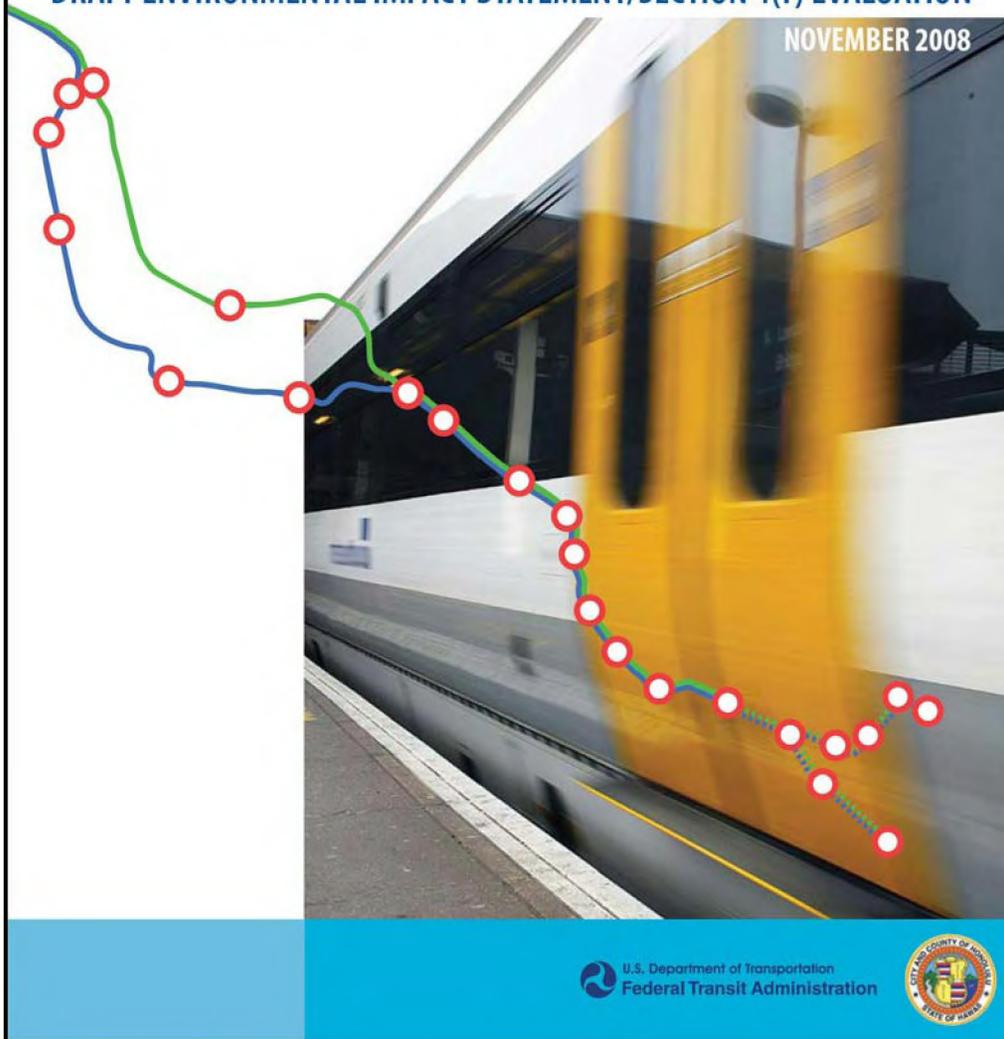




Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT/SECTION 4(f) EVALUATION

NOVEMBER 2008



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration



Honolulu On The Move

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Draft EIS Outline

- 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

Draft EIS Alternatives

- No Build
- Fixed Guideway, East Kapolei to Ala Moana Center via Salt Lake
- Fixed Guideway, East Kapolei to Ala Moana Center via Airport
- Fixed Guideway, East Kapolei to Ala Moana Center via Airport & Salt Lake

Transportation Effects

- 2030 Fixed Guideway Daily Riders
 - Salt Lake Alternative: 88,000
 - Airport Alternative: 95,000
 - Airport & Salt Lake Alternative: 93,000
- Reduction in 2030 Daily Vehicle Hours of Delay
 - Salt Lake Alternative: -21%
 - Airport Alternative: -23%
 - Airport & Salt Lake Alternative: -22%

Property Acquisitions & Displacements

Alternative	Parcel Acquisitions			Displacements by Land Use		
	Total*	Partial	Full	Residential Units	Commercial & Industrial Businesses	Churches
Salt Lake	190	155	35	20	62	1
Airport	179	145	34	20	65	1
Airport & Salt Lake	205	170	35	20	67	1

* Total parcel acquisitions includes full and partial acquisitions.

Partial Acquisition = acquisition of only land and possibly minor buildings on a property. The existing owners would continue to be able to own and use the property in the future.

Full Acquisition = acquisition of the entire property—land and all buildings on the property. The existing owner and existing land uses would be displaced by project improvements.

Visual Impacts – Examples

- Kamehameha Highway at Ka‘ahumanu St.
- Ala Lilikoī St. at Salt Lake Boulevard
- Kamehameha Highway near Radford Dr.
- Crossing Nu‘uanu Stream
- Halekauwila St. at Mother Waldron Park

Kamehameha Highway at Ka'ahumanu Street



Ala Liliko'i Street at Salt Lake Boulevard



Kamehameha Highway near Radford Drive



Crossing Nu'uuanu Stream



Halekauwila Street at Mother Waldron Park



Noise Effects

Residential buildings, parks and schools with noise impacts

Alternative (2030)	Moderate Impacts	Severe Impacts
Salt Lake	23	0
Airport	18	0
Airport & Salt Lake	18	0

Jobs Created

Alternative	Construction Cost 2007 \$ (millions)	Average Number of Jobs per Year (9 years of Construction) ¹			
		Direct	Indirect	Induced	Total
No Build	\$0	0	0	0	0
Salt Lake	\$3,921	4,000	1,700	3,900	9,600
Airport	\$4,125	4,200	1,800	4,100	10,100
Airport & Salt Lake	\$4,803	4,900	2,100	4,700	11,700

¹ Multipliers of 9.25 for direct, 4.03 for indirect, and 8.90 for induced jobs are based on the 2008 State of Hawai'i Input-Output factor for heavy civil construction (jobs per million \$)

Cost to Build

	Millions of 2008 \$
Salt Lake Alternative	
Capital Cost	3,920
Finance Charges	360
TOTAL	4,280
Airport Alternative	
Capital Cost	4,120
Finance Charges	380
TOTAL	4,500
Airport & Salt Lake Alternative	
Capital Cost	4,800
Finance Charges	540
TOTAL	5,340

How Will We Pay for It?

Salt Lake Alternative	Millions of Inflated \$
GET Surcharge Revenues	4,050
FTA New Starts Funds	1,200
Interest Income	30
TOTAL REVENUE	5,280
Capital Cost	4,800
Finance Charges	480
TOTAL COST	5,280

Operating & Maintenance Cost

- Rail operating & maintenance cost, after fares, will be ~\$40 million a year
- 2-3% of the City's annual operating budget, an amount that could 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

Where to Get a Copy of the DEIS?

- Libraries (for review)
- City Offices
 - Fasi Municipal Building, 3rd Floor
 - Ali'i Place (1099 Alakea Street), 17th Floor
- Download at www.honolulutransit.org
- Order a free electronic version on DVD or order a printed copy at cost. Call 566-2299 or visit www.honolulutransit.org to order.

How to comment on the DEIS

- In writing to: Department of Transportation Services, 650 S. King Street, 3rd Floor, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813.
- Online at www.honolulustransit.org

The public comment period ends January 7, 2009

Stay Informed

- Sign up for the newsletter
- Watch Channel 54, Mondays at 6:30pm
- Visit www.honolulustransit.org
- Call the project hotline: 566-2299
- Stay informed with *accurate* information

Mahalo!

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