

Public Involvement Overview

June 2008

	Month
Hotline Calls	19
Comment Sense Comments/Inquiries	74
FOIA requests	0
Speakers Bureau	30
Presentation/Events	22
Neighborhood Boards	6
TAC	1
Workshops	1

Neighborhood Board reporting includes both full presentations and project briefings.

In addition to the monthly television show the project has bought radio time every Tuesday afternoon on 830AM between 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Our Olelo show still runs every Monday

**June 2008 Comments submitted to the Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project\***  
**(contains submitted comments only- requests such as inclusion on the mailing list are not presented)**

Submission Method	Submission Date	Submission Content/Notes
Website	06/02/2008	I read the article in the Advertiser about a property condemnations list but am not able to find any information on it. Please help. Some family property may be involved.
Website	06/02/2008	I am an electrical engineer at Pearl Harbor, and I work on the largest and most widely used steel-on-steel machines in Hawaii. Pearl Harbor is the only large steel-on-steel operating facilities that is IMPLIMENTING NOISE MITIGATION....and I am the electrical engineer that specifies, installs, maintains, commissions, and troubleshoots the system. I am a one-man show on this subject at Pearl Harbor, and therefore am the expert on this island. If you would like to participate in a study at Pearl Harbor, please feel free to call me to see if we can do a study that shows the effectiveness of what we are doing. I already know it works, and I know that the result is VERY SIGNIFICANT. If this example were to be televised, the noise issue would be completely eliminated...just like the noise.
Telephone	06/03/2008	wants to know if we have rendering showing bicycle facilities.
Website	06/03/2008	I'm a big fan of the rail project. One comment that I would like to make is regarding the proposed route through the Ward area. The proposed route currently follow Queen st as it curves and then follows Kona St to the Ala Moana center. I believe that a more direct route that does not follow the Queen st curve would be less noisy (since steel on steel makes the most noise on curves) and intrusive. If you follow a straight line from Kona st to the corner of Ward and Ilaniwai st there would be no curves and the rail would be hidden from public view. This would require more land of course but the benefit would be much greater acceptance from local residents. Regards, Mark Mesler
Website	06/03/2008	My company owns property/building on Halekauwila St. that is currently being leased out till 2016. How can we get more information on whether we will be affected and is there a time frame for the project to commence?

Website	06/03/2008	Thank you for working to bring light rail to Honolulu. I have recently moved here from Minneapolis and the rail system in Minneapolis is great. People fought about the need for rail in Minneapolis for years and now that it's up and running people love it and the fight has turned to "when can we get another rail line in my neighborhood". Keep up the good work. Jeff
Website	06/03/2008	The taxpayers I speak to daily are very angry that you spend our hard earned tax money on things we are against much less adding insult to injury by mailing your propaganda using our tax money to print and mail to us your nonsense.
Website	06/04/2008	Enforce existing traffic laws. Get the unlicensed, uninsured, uninspected, unregistered drivers/vehicles off the road. That should reduce overall traffic by 20%.
Website	06/04/2008	Having been in the railroad/ rail transportation business since 1974 I have seen several systems come on line and Honolulu will fall in love with rail transportation, as they all have, and the system will need to be expanded faster than you can imagine!
Website	06/04/2008	I met with Elisa Yadao today and she suggested I send in my request for further information via this website. I read the 6/1/08 Honolulu Advertiser story and am doing research on a parcel that is located on Colburn Street between Mokauea and Puuhale Streets. While I am fairly certain this parcel is not in the right of way of the proposed transit alignment, I am very interesting in learning more details about the project for this area. I have downloaded preliminary routes maps off this website but unfortunately those maps do not provide sufficient resolution, fidelity, and detail that I need to complete my research. Is there anything you can send me electronically that can help me complete my research on how the transit project will beneficially impact the properties in the area? Any information you can provide is much appreciated.
Website	06/05/2008	What is the proposed proximity of the system to our home? How will this impact our residence? Please address noise and pollution issues.
Website	06/05/2008	We have heard that the rail may go down Halekauwila street - what will be the impact on the Federal Courthouse/Building?
Website	06/05/2008	Please add me to your mailing list and delete the following from our organization: Kehaulani Padilla Derrick Kiyabu Brent Dillabaugh Piilani Pang Thank you.

Website	06/05/2008	If rail transit is such a good thing, why is so much money being spent on radio and tv advertising to cram it down our throats.
Website	06/06/2008	A Transit system is defenitly need. What kind? Not a rail. Has any one from the legislature lived next to a rail system to know what they are getting themselves into? I have for a couple for years and not only does noise play and huge factor but the appearance of a rail system looks down right unappealing. Has a Mag-Lev been considered? Moving People and Freight The second-generation Maglev 2000 system achieves four major innovations over the first-generation Japanese and German systems: (1) Much lower guideway cost—\$12 million per mile, compared to \$40 million to \$60 million per mile. (2) Much faster payback times—5 years instead of 50, by carrying piggyback trucks. (3) Electronic switching of vehicles at high speeds from the main guideway to off-line stations for loading and unloading. I mean 12 Mill per mile seems like a good deal. An M-2000 two-way guideway with single vehicles can carry 12,000 passengers or 120 trailer trucks per hour. With three vehicle "train sets," the capacity would increase by a factor of 3. Theres too many reasons to list on here on how i see this problem being resolved. <a href="http://www.maglev2000.com">http://www.maglev2000.com</a> Wouldn't this be a better solution?
Website	06/07/2008	What will the projected/estimated annual operating costs be for the project upon its completion and what percentage will be covered by fare revenues?
Website	06/09/2008	I am interested in finding out more about the process for the potential use of renewable energy to power the project.
Website	06/14/2008	I am really in doubt about this train system. It may seem that it'll reduce congestion, but this does not keep the working man and women in thought. After it's made, there would still be issue on times the transit will leave. If a person finishes work at 3, would they wait till 4 or 5 to catch the transit? Or when a person gets to their destination, they'll still have to either walk or catch their bus to their work destination. This transit seems really idealistic rather than realistic. We've been wanting to reduce traffic, but it'll just rust away in the future just like our aloha stadium with it's brilliant decision to not paint it and have it a natural red rust color.
Telephone	06/16/2008	Said that this will be a good project for Hawaii. Hotline message #49

Website	06/16/2008	I am one that catches the bus to and from work and even on weekends. I have my own vehicle but I love the our bus system. One would think that I would support the Rail Transit, BUT I DO NOT. It is a waste of time and money. It will also be an inconvenience to many homes. I don't think it is a good idea. We should work on a possible seperate freeway for our buses and or the bus having it's own bus lanes. Our traffic issues is not that big of a deal that we need to spend so much money when our kids/schools need the money, the roads need the money and everything else. What are you guys thinking? Apparently you're not.
Telephone	06/16/2008	Wanted to know how far station was from Leeward Community college. Hotline call
Website	06/17/2008	Hello, I would like a list of all the properties (with addresses) that will be condemned in the Waipahu area to make way for rail to be built. Thank you. --David Hoang
Website	06/18/2008	We need to find out who is funding "Stop Rail Now". This is NOT a "Grassroots Effort". Who is paying their rent and who paid for those glossy patitions inserted into last week's MidWeek? That's BIG BUCKS! If they are a non-profit, their books should be open to the public. I would guess they are just a paid lobbying effort. Find out is paying them and EXPOSE them to the public via the News Media and Press Releases via our " Support Rail Transit" organization. That should end their little game of trying to block rail. Thank you for bringing rail to Oahu - FINALLY! Dale Moyen
Website	06/18/2008	I think it would be a massive mistake to bypass the airport and the UH in favor of going through Salt Lake. In my experience in the mainland, I often caught the rail when I went to the airport - in fact, all the systems I have ridden went through the airport. What's the purpose of the route going though Salt Lake? To bow to the demands of one city council member? I also work at the UH and would seriously consider taking the rail to the UH from Aiea where I live. I think routing to the airport and the UH would serve more of the mass majority and cut down on the traffic more. Who in the world has Salt Lake as a destination from the West side???

Website	06/18/2008	<p>I am a rail supporter and I can increase your website traffic by at least %500. These domains get thousands of hits each week. My mail bow is jammed full with the traffic and it keeps increasing. buildrail.com bushuttle.com busrailshuttle.com busrailtransit.com ehonolulutransit.org ehonolulutransit.com ehonolulutransit.info fixedrail.com hawaiiirail.com hawaiiirailbus.com hawaiiirail.info hawaiiimaglev.com hawaiiirailroad.com hawaiiirailtransit.com honolulurail.mobi honolulutransit.mobi hawaiiimass-transit.com hawaiiirapidtransit.com honolulurail.com honolulumasstransit.com honolulumasstransit.info honolulumasstransit.org honolulu-rail.com honolulurail.info honolulutransit.info honolulurailtransit.com honolulutransitjobs.com honolulutransitjobs.info honolulutransitjobs.org localtransitjobs.com oahurail.com oahurail.info oahurailtransit.com oahumasstransit.com railhawaii.com railmasstransit.com railshuttle.info transitjobs.info When rail comes to town these domains will be getting 50,000 hits a day.</p>
Website	06/18/2008	What portion of our parcel will be taken by eminent domain?
Website	06/19/2008	<p>How many cars will it take off the road? how much federal money has been promised? Is the extra tax enough to pay for it? Is there a specific route? How much is it going to be subsidized by people not riding it? Will it go to the private schools and U.H.? How much will it cost? Are there any other options at all?</p>
Website	06/20/2008	<p>There are many pressing issues in this state that simply aren't going to fix themselves. Traffic is not one of those issues. Limmiting factors state that when people run out of space, they compensate. When a family can't afford to have any more children, if they're smart, they stop reproducing. When people in Hawaii realise they can't afford gas and that the commute is too big, when they realise that they are being limmited by how much time and money they have, they'll begin carpooling, taking the bus, and moving closer to their jobs. Don't be blind. Don't support rail.</p>

Website	06/20/2008	<p>I agree that something needs to be done about traffic in Hawaii, but one of the reasons I don't agree with rail in Hawaii at this time is because of the way the Mayor is going about trying to get rail here. It all seems very politically motivated. Have you people even noticed that traffic became significantly better once UH was out of school? I am a middle school teacher and my trip to and from my school was significantly better than when UH is in session. So, that being said, why isn't the proposed rail going to UH to begin with? It shouldn't be added on later, it should be added from the start. If you get the younger generation used to using the rail, they will more likely use it when they get older. If you are truly building for the future, then shouldn't you be interested in getting the college age generation to use the rail system? People now are not going to use rail because they are too dependent on their cars, and are not going to be easily swayed to use rail or any other type of mass transit system. You know why you won't build it to UH right away? Because there is the push to build UH West Oahu. If the rail goes to UHM, then students may not want to go to UH West Oahu. Is the city really going to pay people who will need to move and businesses who will need to relocate a fair price for their properties and help them relocate? I really don't think so. I feel sorry for all the hundreds of people rail is going to rip from their homes and force to leave. But that doesn't really matter because the city doesn't seem to care what happens to them. They can't sell now because who wants to buy property that will just be taken away in a few years? How are we going to maintain the rail system? If the Mayor can promise that it won't cost one penny over the 3 billion or whatever the price tag is, and can show how we are going to maintain it properly (unlike our current roads and highways) then maybe rail could be a possibility. However, I hate that it feels like the Mayor is trying to shove this down the people's throats. I don't think I've spoken to anyone that supports this project. I think if it is built, it will be like a lot of other things that are politically motivated in Hawaii...it will cost us, the taxpayers more money, it will fall into disrepair from not maintaining it properly, and whoever is the current Mayor will say, "well, it wasn't my fault, I wasn't in charge at the time." and our current Mayor will be no longer in office, and no longer responsible. Who will suffer the most in all of this...all of us, the taxpayers. I don't know if you can change my mind about rail. I have been to places that have rail (Washington D.C., London, Paris) and I don't want Hawaii to look like that. I have also been to Australia, and they have dedicated lanes for buses and taxis. They also have a great bus system that all students can ride for free and where buses stop near every school. The bus system is easy to use, and you pay based on how far you are traveling, not just one flat rate. The street signs &amp; highway signs are easy to understand and make finding your way around town super easy. Have we really looked at all the options and looked at each option fairly and unbiased? I don't feel like we have. H. Watanabe</p>
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Website	06/22/2008	<p>I haven't fully read your plans for Waipahu but someone told me by adding Waipahu into the plan, this would also revitalize this town. Hopefully, whoever is doing the planning for this town regarding revitalizing it, I hope that they have considered that the flood situation for this area needs to be looked at also. There are areas of Waipahu, the developed area, that are in the FEMA flood way. About 10 or more years ago, it was suggested that a study be made by the US Corps of Engineer to see if a dam was feasible to establish a flood control system for this town. If you're talking revitalizing, it should also include as much of Waipahu as possible, not only those areas which still need to be developed along the transit line. Just my thoughts in reference to Waipahu.</p>
Website	06/23/2008	<p>Is it possible to get a list of the attendees at the June 12th Construction Workshop? This will enable us to send information to those design firms present with our precast/prestressed concrete alternatives. Thanks in advance! Mark MacNeil Estimator</p>

Website	06/24/2008	<p>Note: I have worked in urban planning with HUD, and originally came here in the 70s to work on HART, with DMJM. My studio is located in the Kalakaua / Kapiolani neighborhood, and I believe we should have had a rail system years ago. I just reviewed your Transit Corridor Map after finally finding it on the city website. (negative first impression) You should have a direct link from the home page. I have a couple comments: First, the quality of your maps of the route is very poor, this is not a good reflection on the hopefully professional design and management team that will be responsible for this massive project that we are paying so much for. Also, I would strongly reconsider your choice of two rail stations (proposed) at Atkinson (Convention Center), and McCully. This does not make sense, and seems to be a waste of our money. One station at Kalakaua and Kapiolani would in my opinion, be a much better choice. Reasons: 1. As is, the two stations would be within a couple blocks of each other. The only reason I can see for the Atkinson / Kapiolani site would be the Convention Center, which has had minimal impact on traffic. 2. There are two lots available at Kalakaua and Kapiolani (parking lot and vacant) plus another vacant lot Diamond Head of Hard Rock, (which is moving) Plus the Diamond Head Video / Rocks, and empty lot, properties could be much better utilized. 3. This location would serve the Convention Center, and give walking access to what I believe is the densest -and growing, residential neighborhood in the state, bounded by Ala Moana / Ala Wai / McCully) 4. You need a transfer station for the future Waikiki spur, which will take more land. In fact, because of the unused land there, it might make more sense to end the first system at Kalakaua instead of one stop back at Ala Moana. Starting up construction again at Kalakaua, for phase 2, I believe, would have much less impact on the public, and cost less than starting up again in the middle of Ala Moana Center. You would only have one major interruption then be done with it. I do realize that I have limited information and that my suggestions may or may not make sense, when considering all the facts. Aloha, Phil Uhl <a href="http://www.uhlart.com">www.uhlart.com</a></p>
Website	06/24/2008	<p>Hello Transit team, Please, please, please continue the rail! My family will be receiving a pay cut soon and I will need to look for another job (for more pay) soon because of the cut. I live in Ewa and all the best opportunities for my family and I are in Honolulu. The transit will help tremendously! Keep up the great work and hope the transit is completed sooner than later. Thanks!!!</p>

Website	06/24/2008	I live in Kaneohe and Please explain to me how this would help us out on the windward side. No matter what we still need to drive to a station. And why aren't we part of the plan you can not serve only one part of the Island!The reason why we have a low amount of car sales is because the cost of living is so high people can't afford it! Please send me all the info. how much is it going to cost to ride on this rail? And I don't think it will be faster you still have to stop and board! and how big will these stations be. How many cars will they hold. What is it going to cost us to maintain this system! is our tax going to go back down were is the purposal for the rest of the Island. Is the stations going to be desighned correctly so it does not create more traffic. I read all the pros and cons I need more!
Website	06/24/2008	Please let me know immediately when that Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) comes out because I want to know what private properties will be "condemmed". Thank you.
Website	06/24/2008	Two wonderful suggestions that I know will be implemented... 1. Install the debit card system used in Singapore, and probable elsewhere. The card applies to all modes of public transportation. Scan the card when you get on, the system deducts the fare when you get off. Fare is based on distance traveled and type of transit. Good one, yea? 2. Go above grade, accept it, it's going to happen no matter what, but....in Downtown and at the edge of Waikiki DO NOT TAKE ELEVATED TRANS INTO THE CORE. Instead go around Downtown (say Beretania or the H1) and pass by Waikiki with elevated trans. At transit stations, which on on the edges, allow passangers to go to grade and take dispersed fixed rail at grade into the cores. These short segements of on-grade transits (hop on hop off) will connect more areas in Downtown and Waikiki for the commuters. Short, multiple routes will add positively to the urban experience and cover more area than single stop elevated rails. At grade fixed rail adds to the urban excitement by allowing for a direct connection of transit to the urban street scene. This is another great idea, yea? If you can only pick one idea, pick No. 2, Honolulu will be so happy with the results.

Website	06/25/2008	<p>From the very beginning my general suspicion was that the ridership would not be as great as projected and the cost of the system would be expensive. So I am tentatively against it. However, I can see your point about the eventual growth of ridership. What remains a problem in my mind is the cost. You say that "overwhelming clear that a system will be substantially less expensive to operate and maintain than a bus system". That kind of talk makes me distrust your comments because they are kind of inflammatory and you don't supply any numbers to support it. If you could show me the numbers I would jump on the light rail bandwagon, until then I have an open mind but am against it. What I'd like to see is the cost to support ridership. This would include the upfront cost and maintenance cost and operations cost per 1000 people versus other alternatives. Also include tables for cost overruns of 50% 100% and 150% as from what I have seen they are sure to happen. If those figures show the cost of ridership is reasonable then you can have my vote. Note: I haven't decided yet if I am going to sign the recall petition.</p>
Website	06/25/2008	<p>I am a strong supporter of this rail transit project and I'm already on your mailing list. I believe the next few months of public discussion are going to be critical for those citizens who still have not made up their minds about rail for Honolulu. For that reason, I frequently post comments on internet message boards of the local papers in defense of this project. I also maintain a blog where I recently posted my complete argument in favor of rail transit and answered what I think are the 10 most common objections to rail in Hawaii (ie. cost, ridership, route, etc). Here's a link to it if you're interested in reading my thoughts: <a href="http://thecommonloon.blogspot.com/2008/06/slow-train-coming-will-honolulu-ever.html">http://thecommonloon.blogspot.com/2008/06/slow-train-coming-will-honolulu-ever.html</a> Please know that you are welcome to cite my blog as a strong supporter of this rail project. Feel free to direct any skeptics or undecided citizens to my blog to have their objections and fears addressed with down-to-earth reasoning from a local citizen. Keep up the good work! Build it and we will ride!</p>
Website	06/26/2008	<p>Are there any "park and ride" lots at major stations to offer options for the working ridership?</p>
Website	06/26/2008	<p>To better help the public understand what riding the system would be like, it might be helpful to compare it to something many residents already have experience with - airport train systems, like the one at the Las Vegas airport which just about every adult has ridden or knows someone who has.</p>
Website	06/27/2008	<p>Mahalo to Mayor Hannemann for your letter and letting me know about this website. Your letter clearly explains your reasons for your position with this project. After reading your letter, I am now a proponent for this rail project.</p>

Telephone	06/27/2008	Wanted to know who pays for the advertisements. Said that Mayor should not be afraid to let the peopel vote if the project is such a good idea for the City. She doesn't want the City to go into debt. it is not the best choice.
Website	06/29/2008	Get off oil and build rail now!!! Japan is the expert on rail. Have them build it!!! Stop global warming and end the WAR !!! Please !!!
Website	06/29/2008	I support the rail proposal. Is there any data regarding fuel usage, i.e. the amount of fuel used to move 300 people from one end of the proposed system to the other, by automobile, bus, and rail. You have to factor in the cost of electricity too. My guess is that the steel rail system uses less energy, but would appreciate any input you have. To me, this is the real issue. At 4.50 a gallon and more, energy savings is the real economic issue. Plus the cost in terms of dollars and energy must, by now, indicate that rail is truly the best way to help the economy, save, energy, and move us as a community.
Telephone	06/29/2008	Will luggage be allowed on the rail - what are the restrictions.
Telephone	06/29/2008	Has question about the route
Telephone	06/29/2008	wanted to state support for rail

# Honolulu Rail Transit Project

Honolulu On The Move 

566-2299 | [www.honolulustransit.org](http://www.honolulustransit.org)

# Presentation

- Overview
- Project Benefits
- Decisions Made
- Project Characteristics
- Project Schedule
- Get Involved



# Planning for the Future

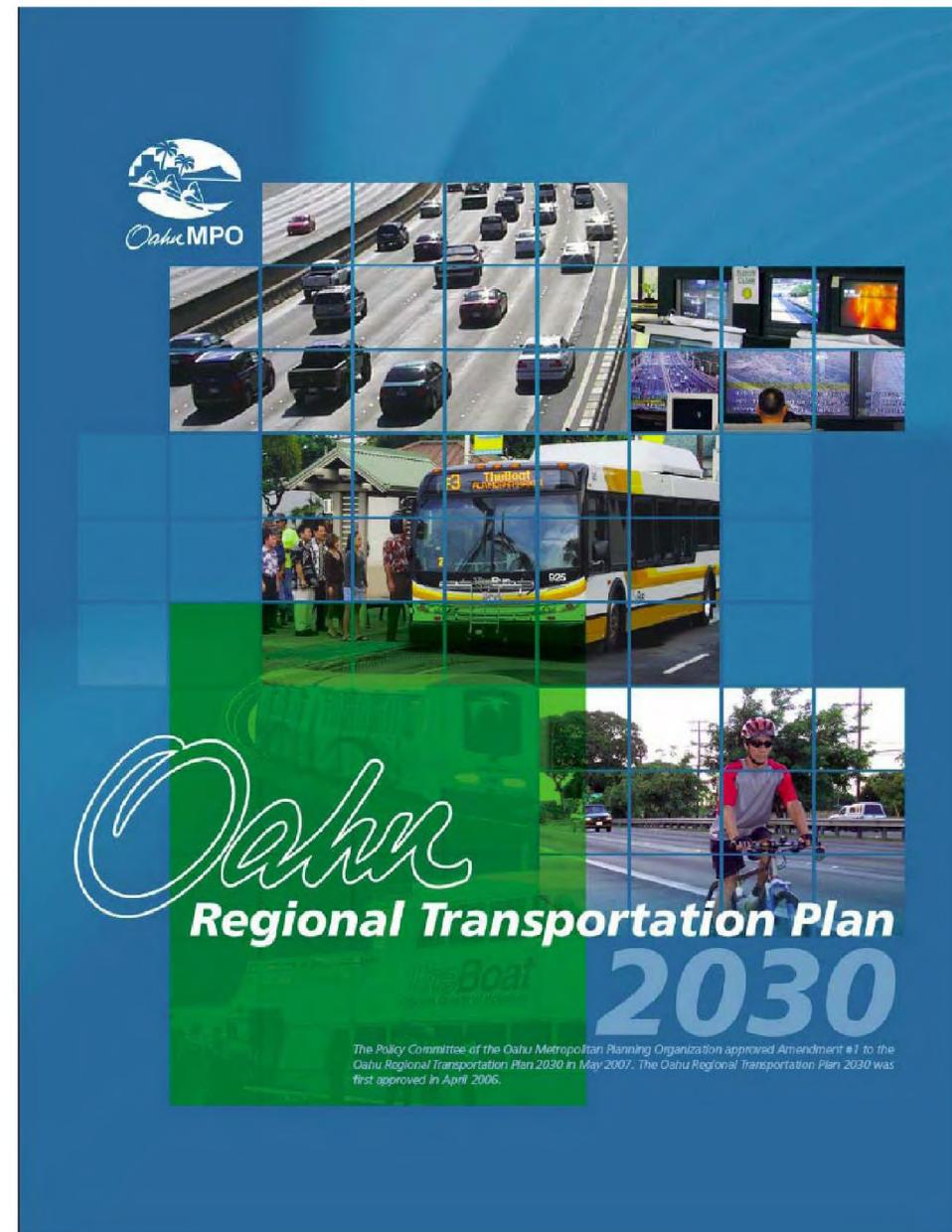
## O'ahu in 2030

- 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



# Part of Multi-Modal Plan

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



# Presentation

- Overview
- **Project Benefits**
  - ☺ Good for Mobility
  - ☺ Good for the Environment
  - ☺ Good for the Economy
  - ☺ Good for Communities
  - ☺ Good for You

# Good for Mobility



- System capacity equivalent to six freeway lanes of cars
- Reliable travel times on an exclusive facility
- 15% of population and 32% of employment within walking distance of a station
- Reduces future traffic congestion by 11%

# Good for the Environment

## Reduced Energy Use and Air Pollution

- **Passenger vehicles use 36% more energy on average per passenger-mile than rail transit.**
- **Passenger vehicles emit over 10 times more carbon monoxide per passenger-mile as rail transit powered with electricity from oil-fired power plants.**
- **Rail transit can be powered by electricity from renewable resources.**

# Good for the Economy

## Job Benefits of Construction

- Direct Employment
  - 4,700 construction jobs per year
  - 37,700 person-years of employment
- Total Direct plus Indirect Employment
  - 11,300 jobs per year
  - **90,400 person-years of employment**

# Good for the Community

- **Transit-Oriented Development**
  - Livable, walkable communities take advantage of transit access
  - Community-based planning
  - Publicly enabled, privately invested
  - Developing neighborhood TOD plans around each transit station



# Good for You

## Rail Transit is Good for You, Your Family and Your Quality of Life

- It lowers stress because you're not fighting traffic
- Travel time becomes personal time
- You can count on reliable travel times

# Presentation

- Overview
- Project Benefits
- **Decisions Made**

# Decisions

- Decisions Made
  - Mode: Fixed Guideway
  - Alignment
    - First – East Kapolei to Ala Moana Center
    - Next – Airport Spur
    - Ultimately – Kapolei to UH Mānoa and Waikīkī
  - Technology: Rail
- Decisions In Progress
  - Design Details

# Why Not Expanded Bus Service?

- Traffic congestion slows buses and increases operating costs
- Traffic congestion hurts schedule reliability
- Bus system is currently approaching capacity

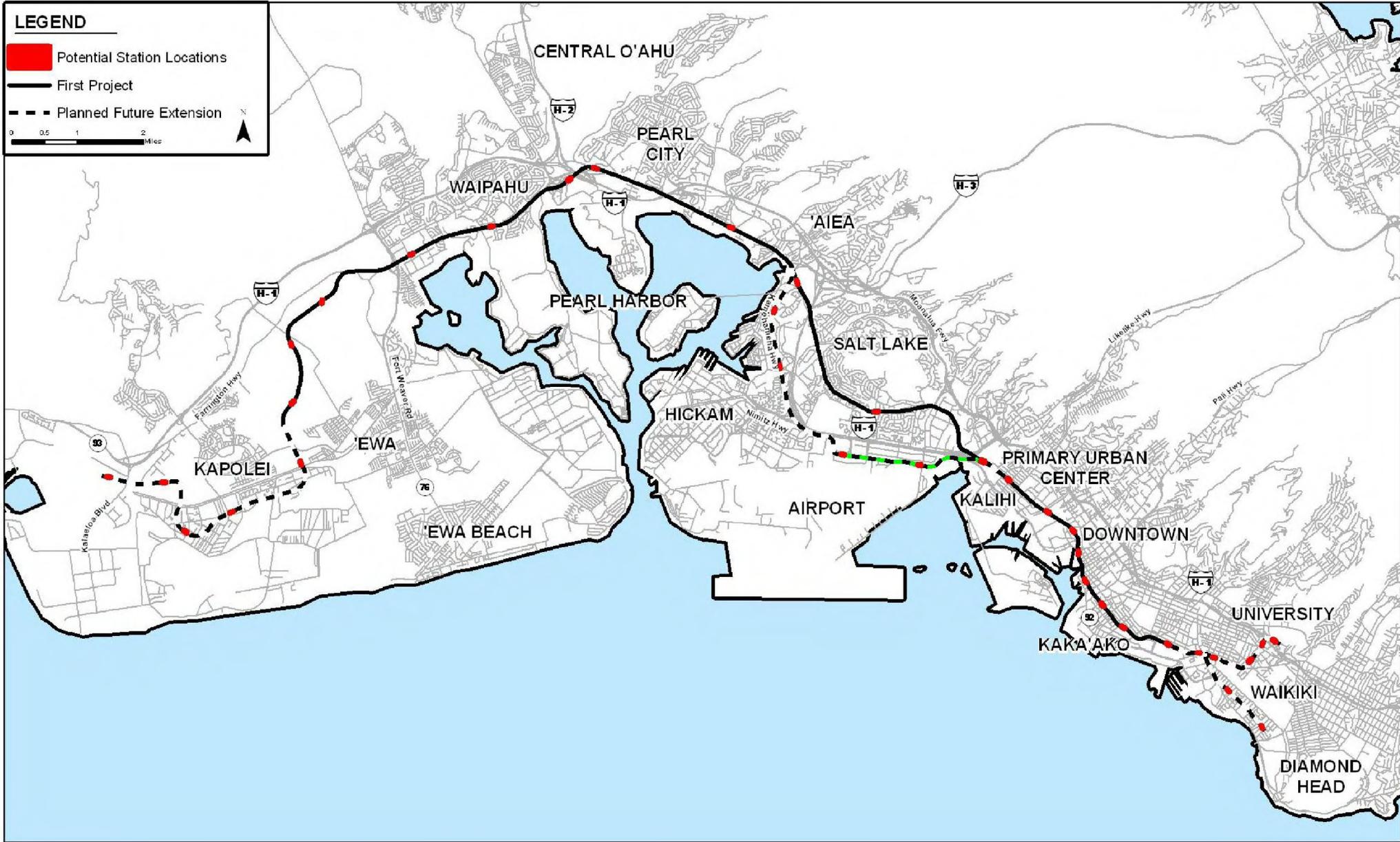
# Why Not Toll Lanes?

- Toll lanes will increase traffic and increase congestion
- Results in only minor increase in transit usage
- Toll lanes are not financially feasible
- Toll lanes add to the cost of travel
- Toll lanes do not support sustainability

# Decisions

- Decisions Made
  - Choice of Mode – Fixed Guideway
  - Choice of Alignment
    - Initially – East Kapolei to Ala Moana Center
    - Next – Airport Spur
    - Ultimately – Kapolei to UH Mānoa and Waikīkī

# Fixed Guideway Route



# Decisions

- **Decisions Made**
  - Mode: Fixed Guideway
  - Alignment
    - Initially – East Kapolei to Ala Moana Center
    - Next – Airport Spur
    - Ultimately – Kapolei to UH Mānoa and Waikīkī
  - **Technology: Rail**

# Rail vs. the Alternatives



Modern Rail Technology



Rubber Tire Technology



Maglev Technology

- Multiple Suppliers
- Widely Used
- Lowest Life Cycle Costs
  
- Proprietary Suppliers
- Uncertain Future Availability
- Higher Life Cycle Costs
  
- Sole Source Supplier
- Higher Life Cycle Costs
- Highest Energy Use

# Presentation

- Overview
- Project Benefits
- Decisions Made
- **Project Characteristics**

# What will the rail system do?

- Run from 4 a.m. to 12 p.m. continuously
  - Depart every 3 to 10 minutes
- Schedules integrated with TheBus and TheBoat
- Fare is the same as TheBus and TheBoat
- Get you from East Kapolei to Ala Moana in 40 minutes – every time

# How can it do that?

- Dual guideway
  - One in each direction
- Dedicated right-of-way
- Max. speed ~ 55 m.p.h.; Average speed ~ 30 m.p.h. with stops
- Elevated, with columns in existing roadway medians

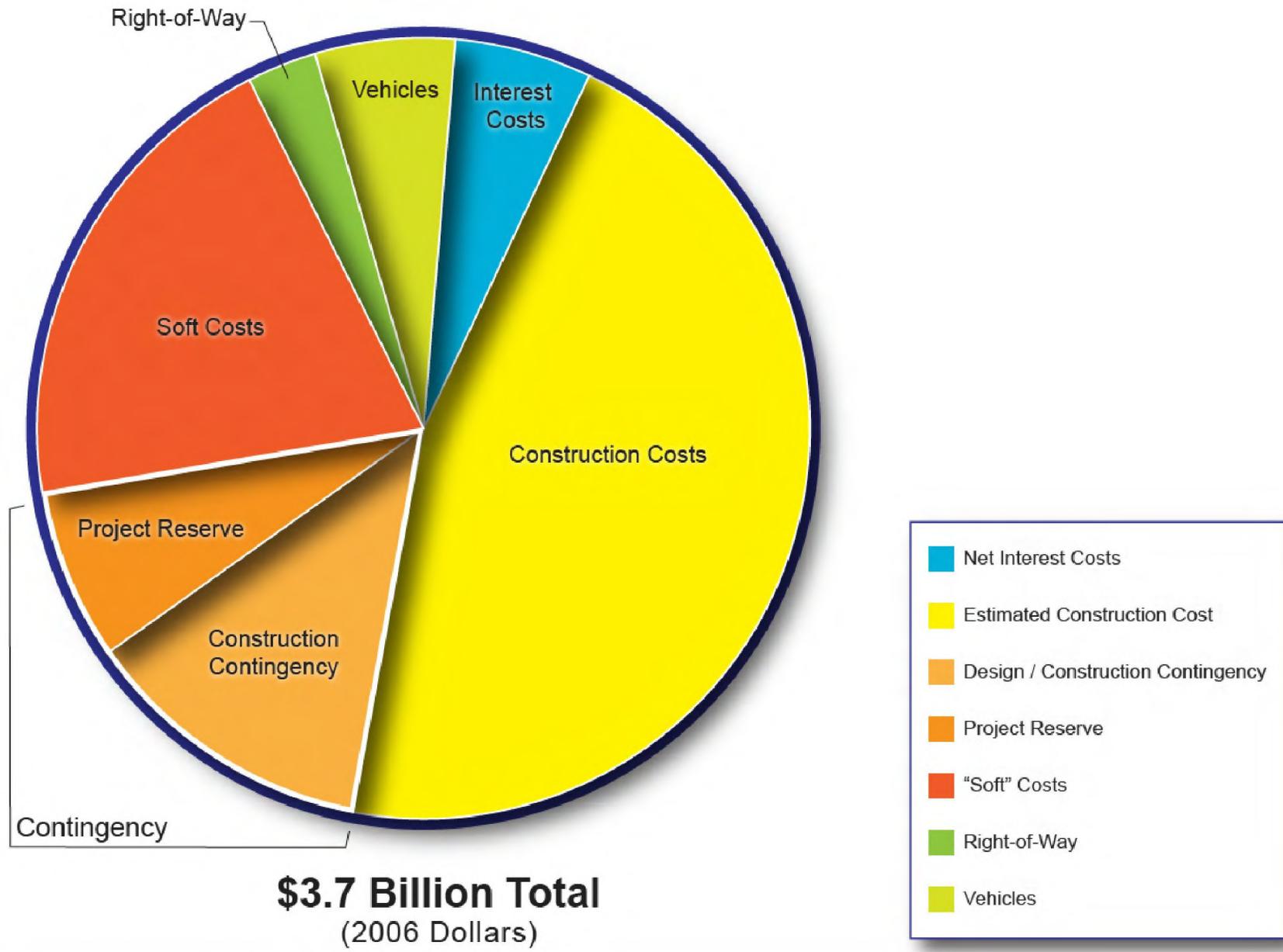
# How about some more facts?

- Stations
  - About every mile: 19 stations in 20 miles
  - Fully integrated with bus service
- Guideway Width
  - < 30 feet between stations
  - ~ 50 feet at stations

# What will it look like?



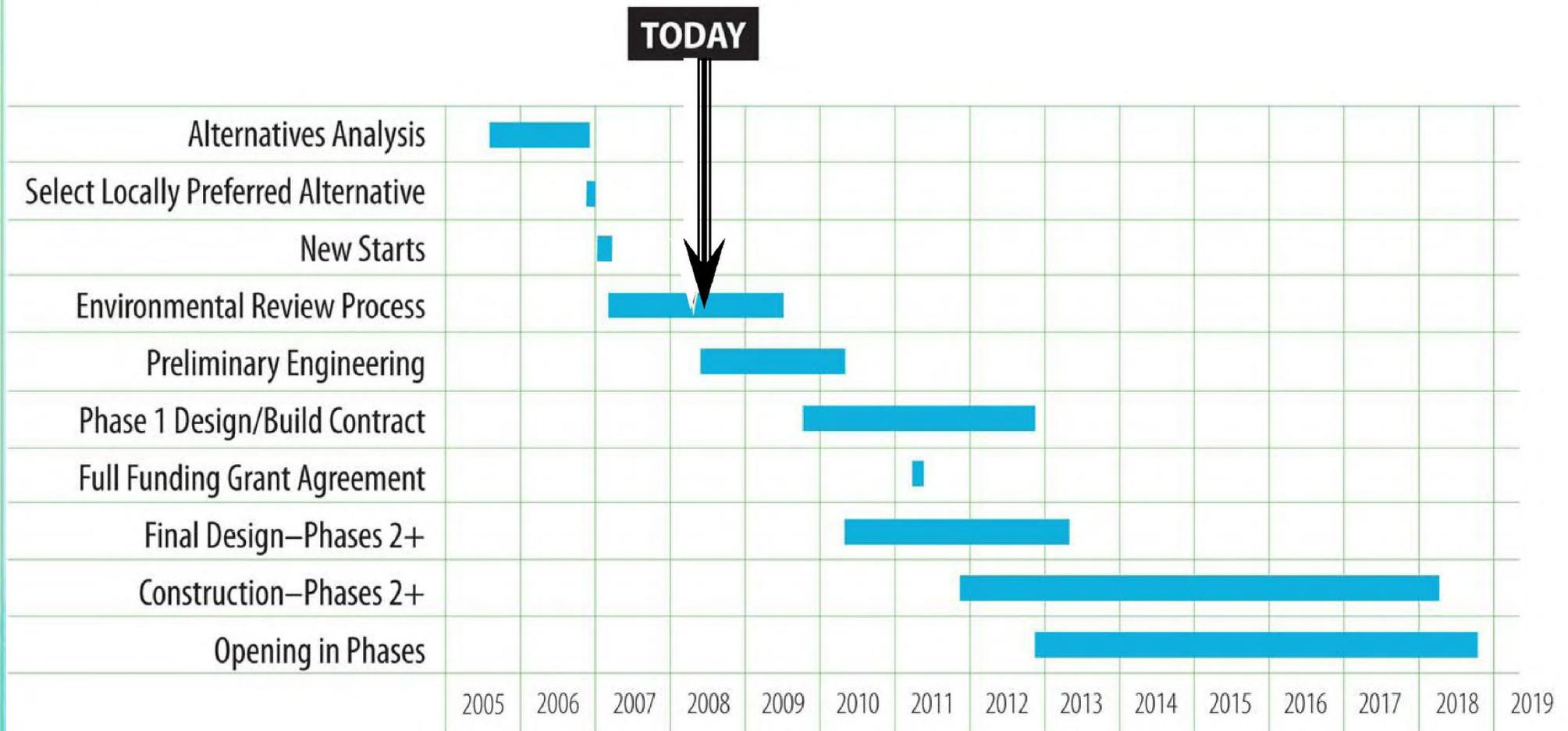
# How much will it cost to build?



# Presentation

- Overview
- Project Benefits
- Decisions Made
- Project Characteristics
- **Project Schedule**

# What's the schedule?



# Presentation

- Overview
- Project Benefits
- Decisions Made
- Project Characteristics
- Project Schedule
- **Get Involved**

# Get Involved

- Sign up for the newsletter
- Visit [www.honolulustransit.org](http://www.honolulustransit.org)
- Call the project hotline: 566-2299
- Stay informed with *accurate* information

*Mahalo!*

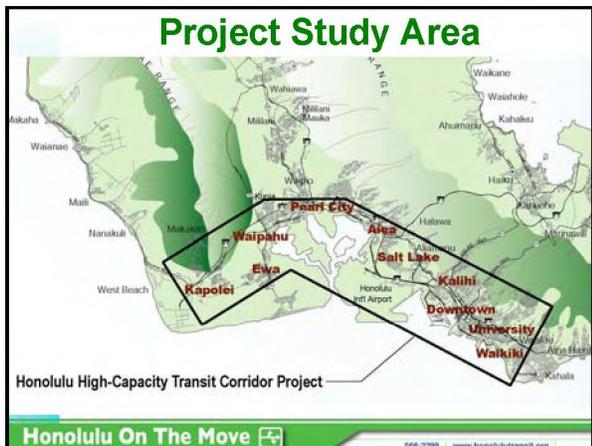
# Honolulu Rail Transit Project

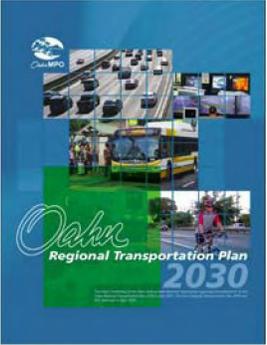
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- ## Presentation
- Overview
  - Project Benefits
  - Decisions Made
  - Project Characteristics
  - Project Schedule
  - Get Involved
- Honolulu On The Move  566-2299 www.honolulurail.org



- ## 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
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- ## Part of Multi-Modal Plan
- Highway Expansion
  - Traffic Engineering Improvements
  - Pedestrian and Bicycle Projects
  - TheBoat
  - Expansion of TheBus
  - Fixed Guideway Project
- 
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## Presentation

- Overview
- **Project Benefits**
  - ☺ Good for Mobility
  - ☺ Good for the Environment
  - ☺ Good for the Economy
  - ☺ Good for Communities
  - ☺ Good for You

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## Good for Mobility



- System capacity equivalent to six freeway lanes of cars
- Reliable travel times on an exclusive facility
- 15% of population and 32% of employment within walking distance of a station
- Reduces future traffic congestion by 11%

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## Good for the Environment

### Reduced Energy Use and Air Pollution

- Passenger vehicles use **36% more energy** on average per passenger-mile than rail transit.
- Passenger vehicles emit **over 10 times more carbon monoxide** per passenger-mile as rail transit powered with electricity from oil-fired power plants.
- Rail transit can be powered by electricity from renewable resources.

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## Good for the Economy

### Job Benefits of Construction

- Direct Employment
  - 4,700 construction jobs per year
  - 37,700 person-years of employment
- Total Direct plus Indirect Employment
  - 11,300 jobs per year
  - 90,400 person-years of employment

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## Good for the Community

- **Transit-Oriented Development**
  - Livable, walkable communities take advantage of transit access
  - Community-based planning
  - Publicly enabled, privately invested
  - Developing neighborhood TOD plans around each transit station



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## Good for You

### Rail Transit is Good for You, Your Family and Your Quality of Life

- It lowers stress because you're not fighting traffic
- Travel time becomes personal time
- You can count on reliable travel times

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## Presentation

- Overview
- Project Benefits
- **Decisions Made**

## Decisions

- Decisions Made
  - Mode: Fixed Guideway
  - Alignment
    - First – East Kapolei to Ala Moana Center
    - Next – Airport Spur
    - Ultimately – Kapolei to UH Mānoa and Waikīkī
  - Technology: Rail
- Decisions In Progress
  - Design Details

## Why Not Expanded Bus Service?

- Traffic congestion slows buses and increases operating costs
- Traffic congestion hurts schedule reliability
- Bus system is currently approaching capacity

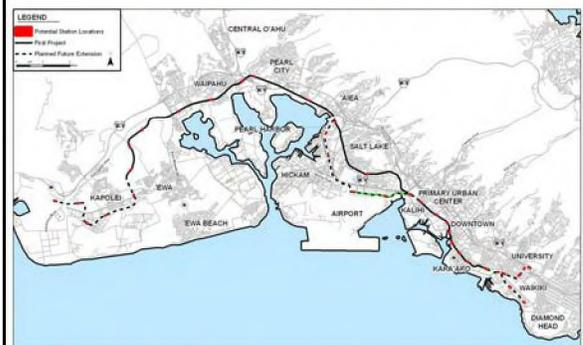
## Why Not Toll Lanes?

- Toll lanes will increase traffic and increase congestion
- Results in only minor increase in transit usage
- Toll lanes are not financially feasible
- Toll lanes add to the cost of travel
- Toll lanes do not support sustainability

## Decisions

- Decisions Made
  - Choice of Mode – Fixed Guideway
  - Choice of Alignment
    - Initially – East Kapolei to Ala Moana Center
    - Next – Airport Spur
    - Ultimately – Kapolei to UH Mānoa and Waikīkī

## Fixed Guideway Route



## Decisions

- Decisions Made
  - Mode: Fixed Guideway
  - Alignment
    - Initially – East Kapolei to Ala Moana Center
    - Next – Airport Spur
    - Ultimately – Kapolei to UH Mānoa and Waikīkī
  - Technology: Rail

## Rail vs. the Alternatives



Modern Rail Technology



Rubber Tire Technology



Maglev Technology

- Multiple Suppliers
- Widely Used
- Lowest Life Cycle Costs
- Proprietary Suppliers
- Uncertain Future Availability
- Higher Life Cycle Costs
- Sole Source Supplier
- Higher Life Cycle Costs
- Highest Energy Use

## Presentation

- Overview
- Project Benefits
- Decisions Made
- **Project Characteristics**

## What will the rail system do?

- Run from 4 a.m. to 12 p.m. continuously
  - Depart every 3 to 10 minutes
- Schedules integrated with TheBus and TheBoat
- Fare is the same as TheBus and TheBoat
- Get you from East Kapolei to Ala Moana in 40 minutes – every time

## How can it do that?

- Dual guideway
  - One in each direction
- Dedicated right-of-way
- Max. speed ~ 55 m.p.h.; Average speed ~ 30 m.p.h. with stops
- Elevated, with columns in existing roadway medians

## How about some more facts?

- Stations
  - About every mile: 19 stations in 20 miles
  - Fully integrated with bus service
- Guideway Width
  - < 30 feet between stations
  - ~ 50 feet at stations

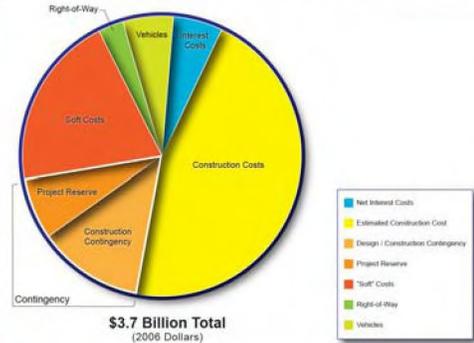
## What will it look like?



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## How much will it cost to build?



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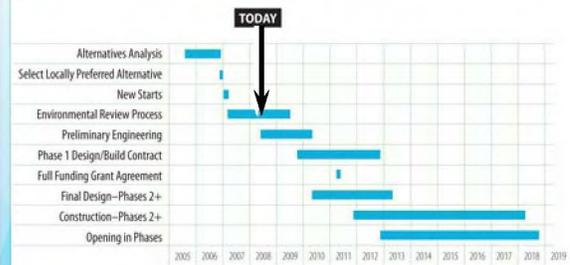
## Presentation

- Overview
- Project Benefits
- Decisions Made
- Project Characteristics
- **Project Schedule**

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## What's the schedule?



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## Presentation

- Overview
- Project Benefits
- Decisions Made
- Project Characteristics
- Project Schedule
- **Get Involved**

Honolulu On The Move

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## Get Involved

- Sign up for the newsletter
- Visit [www.honolulustransit.org](http://www.honolulustransit.org)
- Call the project hotline: 566-2299
- Stay informed with *accurate* information

Honolulu On The Move

566-2299 | www.honolulustransit.org

*Mahalo!*

Honolulu On The Move 

556-2299 | [www.honolulutramit.org](http://www.honolulutramit.org)

June 1, 2008

## 189 Hawaii properties in transit's path

But some landowners say they were unaware of the potential impact

By *SEAN HAO*

*Advertiser Staff Writer*

A Waipahu Burger King, a Kalihi 7-Eleven and an Ala Moana pool supply store are among 189 properties the city may need to buy to make way for Honolulu's planned \$3.7 billion elevated commuter rail system.

Some landowners in the path of the new rail line, who may have little choice but to sell to the city, are not pleased with the potential eviction and complain that the process so far has left them in the dark.

The city, which has budgeted \$70 million to purchase land needed to build the rail system, will offer property owners fair market value for their land based on an appraisal. That could prove controversial as some owners challenge the appraised value.

Mayor Mufi Hannemann hopes to begin construction on the 20-mile mass-transit system linking East Kapolei to Ala Moana late next year, with train operations beginning in phases between 2012 and 2018.

Under current plans, 89 commercial locations, 87 government or utility-owned properties and 13 residential properties could be acquired whole or in part.

A document listing the locations of these properties has been available on the city's Web site for more than a year. However, finding that list is not easy. As a result, many landowners and businesses may be unaware they're in the path of the transit project.

That's the case with the owner of land under a Kalihi 7-Eleven store at the corner of Dillingham Boulevard and Mokauea Street. The city is considering putting a train station nearby, which could result in the loss of 36 feet of that property's Dillingham Boulevard frontage.

"We weren't aware of that," said property owner Michael Kam. "Obviously there are some bad things and good things about (the train station), but 36 feet seems like a lot of property to be taken away."

Land owners that may be affected by the transit project will be notified before the release of a draft environmental impact statement later this summer, said city spokesman Bill Brennan. The city already is notifying landowners about potential right-of-way issues when they apply for building permits.

That effort appears to have failed in at least one instance.

Steve Johnson, general manager of California-based Kazi Foods Inc.'s Hawai'i operations, said he was not aware that the city may require 36 feet of frontage at a new Burger King planned for the corner of Mokuola Street and Farrington Highway in Waipahu.

Kazi, which operates Hawai'i KFC and Burger King restaurants, has worked with city officials on the restaurant's plans for months. However, city officials never mentioned they may eventually need part of the restaurant property's frontage, Johnson said.

"They've seen a schematic drawing of our site plan before we signed a lease for that property so, if they've known about that in the last six months, they would have made us aware that they're going to need a portion of it and to my knowledge they have not," he said. "They better not surprise me."

## awareness needed

The Department of Planning and Permitting should tell applicants about the potential impacts of the transit project before giving out new permits, said City Council member Gary Okino. That could relieve the city of some future liability, he said.

"The people that give permits should be aware of" these right-of-way issues, Okino said. "It's not only for (the property owner). It's for us, too, because there could be some added expense to the city."

Early and frequent discussions with property owners and others could aid acceptance for the project, said Sen. Clarence Nishihara, D-18th (Waipahu, Pearl City, Crestview).

"To me, the earlier you have a discussion the better," Nishihara said. "If you put it in, and people feel like it's already a done deal — they're forced to make changes — then you're going to have even greater resistance."

Under current plans, the property acquisition process won't begin until the federal government approves the project's environmental impact statement, the city said. The city hopes that approval will come sometime in fall 2009. That would allow for groundbreaking on the project's first phase, which 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, according to Jim Van Epps, project manager for Parsons Brinckerhoff, which is the city's largest transit contractor.

In the 'Ewa area, "the parcels are available or should be readily available to us to get the construction going easy," Van Epps said during a recent city-sponsored radio show. "We're not dealing with a lot of residential and commercial areas that are side by side by side that are going to take so many years for us to acquire in order to get the length of property that we need."

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 the acquisition of various private lots.

## A difficult fight

Fighting the city on property condemnation is not easy. Because mass transit serves a public purpose, there's little preventing the city from acquiring property needed to build it, said Robert Thomas, managing attorney for the Pacific Legal Foundation's Hawaii Center, which lobbies for property owner

rights. The U.S. Constitution allows local government to take private property if there is a compelling public interest in doing so.

"Right now, it looks like the chances of a fight on whether they can take this land is pretty remote," Thomas said. "There's very little standing in the way."

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

The key battles between property owners and the city will be over what constitutes fair value for the lands being acquired, Thomas said. That decision will hinge on when the property assessments are made.

"The critical piece in the puzzle is, when are we valuing this?" he said. "The owner could claim a higher valuation, if it's an earlier date, especially if it's a slightly declining market." However, "If our economy is going the way people think it's going, then property values are going down, which could benefit the city's acquisition prices," Thomas added.

Among the land scheduled for acquisition are several Ala Moana properties near Pensacola and Waimanu streets. One of those lots is owned by Jim Frierson, who operates Island Pool & Spa at 1169 Kona St. That property is valued at \$5.2 million, according to property tax records.

That tax assessment excludes the property's potential development value, which would not be realized if the city forces a sale of the land, Frierson said. City plans to acquire the property have already affected its value, he added.

"By just having that piece of paper exist, that has destroyed the potential value of the property," Frierson said. "Effectively, you can't really sell the property. Nobody's going to buy a property that's going to be condemned."

Pam Chambers | Honolulu

## transit

### Being pro-rail means being pro-community

In my opinion, the anti-rail people are being selfish. Our tax dollars are spent on things that improve the quality of life for everyone, even if it is indirectly.

For example, our taxes pay for making sidewalks accessible to people in wheelchairs. This is an improvement that most of us don't use, but we all pay for it through our taxes since it helps others in our community. Only people with a selfish attitude would protest and ask why should they pay for improved access for disabled persons because they themselves don't use those improvements.

It seems like many anti-rail people live in places such as Kailua or Hawai'i Kai and can afford to have cars as their mode of transportation, yet they fail to see that although the proposed rail routes do not serve their areas, the rail system will actually improve the quality of life for our whole island community. Think of the gridlock when there is an accident on the freeway. In the future, we will drive into a Honolulu that is less congested than it would be without a rail system.

With oil prices soaring, people will turn to alternatives such as using the rail system, in addition to walking, bicycling and taking the bus.

When the anti-rail groups say they don't want rail, they need to be reminded that the world doesn't revolve around them.

Community is the key concept in this discussion about our island transportation. To me, if you're pro-rail, you're pro-community.

Lei McLean | Honolulu

## kamehameha schools

### Scholar program is a powerful resource

As a follow-up to the wonderful letter from Betty White of Sacred Hearts Academy (May 27), I'd like to remark from a grateful family's point of view regarding the Kamehameha Schools Pauahi Keiki Scholar program.

This program, which began by assisting Native Hawaiian children to go to quality preschools and now promises to expand through kindergarten and beyond at private schools, is truly an innovative and powerful resource. It is a gift to families longing to provide their children the best education possible — while respecting the families' individual preferences on the type of school.

The program is set up with guidelines that require parents to take an active role in their child's learning through workshops and volunteering at their child's school.

June 2, 2008

## Hannemann in SF to speak on transit

*Advertiser Staff*

Mayor Mufi Hannemann is in San Francisco today and is a guest speaker at the American Public Transportation Association 2008 Rail Conference.

Hannemann will discuss the city's plans for the rail transit project and also gather information from transit experts from across the nation.

Hannemann is scheduled to return to Honolulu on Saturday.

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June 2, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

### **no. 1 ranking**

## **Report confirms city going in right direction**

The new Brookings Institution report that ranked Honolulu No. 1 out of 100 U.S. cities for our low carbon emissions was great news, but we will not be content to rest on our laurels.

We're moving forward aggressively on many important initiatives to further protect our environment and enhance our quality of life.

Our rail transit project is exactly what's needed to provide key improvements cited by the study to reduce pollution: Promote more transportation choices and transit-oriented development.

The study found that cities with rail mass transit systems and densely populated urban cores have far smaller "carbon footprints" per capita than sprawling metropolitan areas dependent on private vehicles. Our rail system will give thousands of commuters and visitors an alternative to private vehicles and clogged freeways, while providing important opportunities for new housing, commercial space and public facilities along the rail line.

Our 21st Century Ahupua'a Plan closely examined other environmentally friendly policies, and they are now reaching fruition. We're continually expanding curbside residential recycling, replacing buses and police cars with efficient hybrid vehicles, increasing the capacity of the H-Power garbage-to-energy plant, operating ferries from Kalaeloa to Aloha Tower and adding bicycle lanes to our roadways.

A few will always nit-pick when good news is announced, but we're confident that the Brookings report provided an honest assessment of Honolulu's ranking and made it clear that we are moving in the right direction with rail transit and other important initiatives. Our goal remains to leave Honolulu better than we found it.

Mayor Mufi Hannemann | City and County of Honolulu

June 2, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

### **transit station areas**

#### **Developments have had a dubious history**

Mayor Mufi Hanneman's land-use plans for Waipahu and other transit-oriented developments surrounding rail stations will designate private lands as "blighted areas." Through eminent domain proceedings, the city will condemn private properties earned by hard work and sacrifice to then be turned over to private developers. Eminent domain for redevelopments is a major controversy in courts nationwide.

Transit-oriented developments have a dubious history. Expectations of increased property values in TODs are often disappointing.

As Robert Cervero's UC-Berkeley team reported to the Transportation Research Board: "While the concepts of TOD and TJD enjoy broad appeal, in truth, the gulf between theory and practice remains large. To date, America's track record at implementing successful TODs has not been impressive."

For over a decade, Portland's MAX stopped at a desolate Cascade Station amid vast empty acres. By 2007, city planners caved in to a big-box lease by Ikea and eliminated zoning restrictions on parking.

TODs cater to transient urban professionals, empty-nesters, second-home and foreign buyers of pricey units. The absence of families with children in Portland's TODs is readily apparent. Lagging occupancy in the gentrified TOD Pearl district prompted lavish \$100,000 property tax exemptions per unit: \$10,000 per year for 10 years. Three different developers went bankrupt by investing in The Round, another Portland TOD.

The public policy implications of urban renewal are explained by Harvard professor Edward Glaeser; "Destroying lower quality, older homes means destroying affordable housing for the less fortunate....The impact of anti-poverty spending may be to increase, rather than decrease urban poverty."

Dale Evans|President, Charley's Taxi and Limousine

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# Rep. Hirono Announces Funding for Transportation Projects



Written by KGMB9 News - news@kgmb9.com  
June 02, 2008 11:32 AM

Congresswoman Mazie K. Hirono has announced \$1.96 million in U.S. Department of Transportation grants for roadway construction and improvements on Maui and the Big Island and for construction of an interchange along the H-1 freeway on O'ahu to ease traffic congestion in the Kapolei area.

\$1,059,458 in federal funds will be used in the design and construction of various transportation improvements. The projects include a parking area within the property of Kealia Pond National Wildlife Refuge on Maui. The funding will also go toward roadway improvements within the Kakahaia National Wildlife Refuge on Moloka'i and within the Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge on the island of Hawai'i.

\$905,520 in federal funds will be used to help pay for the construction of a new Kapolei Interchange Complex along the H-1 Freeway on the island of O'ahu. This project calls for an on-ramp and off-ramp interchange near Wakea Street in Kapolei.



Last Updated ( June 02, 2008 11:41 AM )

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June 3, 2008

## Hawaii gets nearly \$2M in transportation funding

*Advertiser Staff*

Hawaii has received \$1.96 million in U.S. Department of Transportation grants for roadway construction and improvements on Maui and the Big Island and for construction of an interchange along the H-1 freeway on Oahu to ease traffic congestion in the Kapolei area.

The funding was announced yesterday by congresswoman Mazie K. Hirono (D-Hawai'i). Hirono said \$1,059,458 in federal funds will be used in the design and construction of various transportation improvements. The projects include a parking area within the property of Kealia Pond National Wildlife Refuge on Maui.

The funding will also go toward roadway improvements within the Kakahaia National Wildlife Refuge on Moloka'i and within the Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge on the Big Island.

The remaining \$905,520 in federal funds will be used to help pay for the construction of a new Kapolei Interchange Complex along the H-1 Freeway on the island of O'ahu. An on-ramp and off-ramp interchange near Wakea Street in Kapolei will be built.

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June 3, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

### **waipahu**

### **TOD plan focuses on community's needs**

As a lifelong resident of Waipahu and an active community participant in the transit oriented development plan for Waipahu, I was disappointed in The Advertiser's May 25 article, "A whole new Waipahu."

The TOD plan does not create a low-rise downtown Honolulu, but focuses on community values and needs.

The Waipahu community recognizes that change is inevitable with mass transit.

That's why I make it a point to participate in this community-based planning process. With proper planning, over time we can maintain the characteristics that make Waipahu special, provide more housing opportunities for our families, and create a much-improved and livable Waipahu community for the generations to come.

Romeo Garcia | Waipahu



## Rail Ads Stir Questions of City's Use of Tax Dollars

Updated: June 3, 2008 07:31 PM



By [Mari-Ela David](#)

HONOLULU (KHNL) - There is some controversy brewing over city ads promoting rail on Oahu.

Did you know that you as a taxpayer are footing the bill for them?

Critics say taxpayer dollars should not be used to promote one-sided controversial political issues. And if they are, critics say the public should know about it.



Radio ads promoting the controversial steel on steel rail system has Council Member Charles Djou questioning why there is no wording in the commercials telling the public that taxpayers are paying for them.

"I think that it's extremely disappointing that the city has decided to use the public's money to weigh in on a controversial political issue and using the taxpayer money to do that," said Djou.



Cliff Slater

Djou has crafted a bill that would require the city to attach a disclosure for city-funded newspaper, radio or TV ads. It's a move anti-rail protesters applaud.

"The city should not be involved in the kind of propaganda they're putting on. They should be informing the public, the information they pass out should be balanced. There is no excuse," said Cliff Slater, an anti-rail protester.

Stop Rail Now says it funds all of its anti-rail material using private donations. The group says the city should do the same. Mayor Mufi Hanneman's administration was not available on Tuesday for comment.

The Honolulu City Council will vote on the bill on Wednesday. Djou says he is not against promoting steel on steel technology. He says the bill is more about making sure taxpayers know what city ads they're paying for, regardless of the issue.



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June 4, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

### **rail**

### **UH-Manoa connection should be top priority**

With so much news concerning the rail system, I wonder if anyone ever thought of how the traffic has been much lighter when the University of Hawai'i-Manoa is not in session.

The emphasis on connecting to the airport is great, but is it a high-priority item? I was under the impression that the intent is to ease the traffic woes. Thus, the fact of the matter is that the key is to connect to UH-Manoa, since that has the highest impact on the traffic.

Ask any commuter, and they'll tell you that traffic is so much better when Manoa is on break or on summer schedule.

The top priority should be to connect to UH-Manoa.

Robert Daguio | Mililani

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June 4, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

### **Airport should be on main route system**

The proper solution would be for the trains to serve the airport (not just a spur), since that is a major destination.

The spur can go to the Salt Lake neighborhood, which is not a major destination.

Nancy Bey Little | Makiki

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June 4, 2008

## *Letters to the Editor*

### **transit development**

#### **City working with Waipahu landowners**

Contrary to the erroneous assertions in Dale Evans' June 2 letter, no one is designating any areas of Waipahu as "blighted." Transit-oriented development is not urban renewal.

The city is not buying up land around stations to sell to private developers. In fact, it is exactly the opposite.

The community-based planning process ongoing in Waipahu is working with property owners to identify common objectives that can be achieved through TOD.

Ms. Evans' bald statement about TOD having a dubious history also lacks merit. There are many examples where the confluences of the transit station and station area development have resulted in substantial benefits to the landowner as well as to the municipality.

Even her quote of the Cervero study was taken out of context. The study pointed out that failure of developments around transit stations was due to non-application of TOD principles (access, design, walkability, mixed use). The Waipahu TOD plans emphasize these exact TOD principles.

Stop taking the public for a ride with misinformation about TOD. Our goal is to work collaboratively and cooperatively with the community to identify commonly held objectives and to work toward their implementation. TOD works best as a public/private partnership and should be pursued in context with market reality.

David Tanoue | Deputy director, Department of Planning and Permitting

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June 5, 2008

## New agency proposed to run rail, buses

Panel would run buses, rail, ferry if voters OK change in city's charter

By *SEAN HAO*  
*Advertiser Staff Writer*

A new transit authority would run the city's rail system, TheBus and TheBoat, with the power to tax and condemn property, under a resolution advanced by the City Council yesterday.

Before the new agency is created, however, voters would have to approve a change in the city's charter.

The transit authority would also oversee design, construction and operation of the planned \$3.7 billion commuter rail system.

The agency would be headed by a 13-member board of directors, with five appointed by the mayor, five by the council and three by state legislative leaders and the governor, according to the plan advanced by the council.

An alternative proposal, put forward by Mayor Mufi Hannemann's administration, would have a board of nine members, the majority of whom would be appointed by the mayor.

If the resolution, which the council tentatively approved on an 8-1 vote, passes on a final vote and is signed by the mayor, it would be placed on the November ballot.

The ballot measure to authorize a transit authority might be the closest Honolulu voters get to a referendum on the rail plan. A move by a citizens' group to put the rail issue on the ballot has so far failed to collect the necessary signatures.

The group, Stop Rail Now, said it had collected about 11,000 signatures as of May 27, five weeks after launching the petition drive. If it maintains that pace, the group would fall short of its goal of 40,000 signatures by Aug. 1, making it unlikely to get the measure on the November ballot.

Hannemann hopes to start construction on the commuter rail late next year. The system, which would connect West Kapolei with Ala Moana, is scheduled to open in phases between 2012 and 2018.

Councilman Donovan Dela Cruz introduced the transit authority resolution that advanced yesterday. Under the proposal, the authority would be able to condemn property, tax, spend money and issue bonds, among other powers.

## independent agency

The idea behind the resolution is to create a semiautonomous panel with the power and flexibility to more efficiently build the 20-mile transit project, said council member Todd Apo. That agency then would

integrate the train with other mass transit operations in Honolulu.

"The question is just the degree of autonomy that entity would have," Apo said. "The main thing is to get a degree of separation from the department of transportation through the development phase of the project. Once you get down the road to the operational phase, you then have an authority that can combine the mass transit with TheBus with TheBoat ... and not distract the (transportation) department from the things it needs to continue to do, which is (building) new roads, to signals and optimizing traffic flows."

The transit authority board would hire an executive director responsible for day-to-day operations. City employees currently working on the commuter rail project would transfer to the new agency, so the measure would not create an entirely new bureaucracy.

Under the administration's version of the resolution, the authority also would have the power to conduct investigations and issue subpoenas.

## **objection raised**

Council member Charles Djou, who opposes the rail project, said the city should not be abdicating the power to spend money, issue debt and condemn land to unelected individuals.

"These are all heavy-handed powers and we vest them only with elected officials," Djou said. "The concept of giving an unelected body, that is unaccountable to the people, the same authority, in my opinion just turns democracy on its head.

"It is an unelected body that is going to take the people's money, spend it without their consent, put people in debt, take away their land and investigate people, all without any accountability to the people."

Djou was the only member voting against the resolution. The resolution now goes to the Executive Matters Committee before a potential final vote by the full council in July.

The council is racing to pass the transit authority resolution in time to get the item on the November ballot.

If it is unsuccessful, or the charter amendment fails, work on the train project will proceed under the continued direction of the city transportation department.

Council member Gary Okino likened the proposed transit authority to the city Board of Water Supply, which is another semiautonomous city agency. The transit authority is expected to operate independently, with reduced outside interference, he said.

The creation of a transit authority is "absolutely essential," Okino said. "It's all a matter of implementing the project quickly, efficiently and as cost-effectively as possible."

June 5, 2008

## Integrated bus-rail system is best answer

### Buses alone are not a high-capacity solution for Honolulu's future

*By Roger Morton*

More buses are not the best solution to our island's growing traffic congestion. A modern steel fixed-guideway rail system is.

Don't get me wrong. We have a great bus system in Honolulu. Currently, TheBus accommodates about 230,000 daily boarding trips, and ridership is growing as gas prices increase. According to Federal Transit Administration data, the per-capita transit-riding rate on O'ahu is about 100 trips per person per year, making Honolulu the fourth-highest ranked transit city in America. This makes Hono-lulu a transit town.

As president of O'ahu Transit Services (TheBus and TheHandi-Van) and a career transit professional, I am proud of TheBus and the great job our dedicated employees are doing. But I am also a strong supporter of a high-capacity rail system that will form the backbone of a well-integrated bus/rail transit system.

Despite what some are saying, adding substantially more buses to Downtown streets is not a good idea. During peak times, we operate a bus every 30 seconds at the King-Liliha junction and about every 45 seconds along Kuhio Avenue. In Central Hono-lulu we have few through roads, and our Downtown and Waikiki streets are already at capacity and cannot accommodate increased numbers of buses.

Increasing our fleet by 50 percent, as some have suggested, would result in a nonstop ribbon of buses along our major streets and further slow traffic.

Buses are also not without impact. An accelerating bus is louder than a modern rail system, emits greenhouse gases, and uses increasingly costly and scarce petroleum products.

Operating a larger bus fleet would also be more costly than operating an integrated bus/rail system. Across the country, the cost per passenger mile for rail is about half the cost of buses. The difference is even greater in cities with a high utilization of buses.

The fact is that our Honolulu bus system has a higher utilization per vehicle than any other major bus fleet in cities across the U.S. And as traffic congestion increases, our trip times get longer and our costs go up. Today, our service runs 10 percent slower than it did 20 years ago.

Increased traffic also makes it hard for TheBus to offer reliable service. We work hard to keep our buses on time despite unpredictable traffic. Many times we must turn buses back short or divert bus trips just to cope with existing traffic congestion. Turning a bus back short or adjusting a trip inconveniences some passengers. But we must if we want our buses to run on-time for the majority.

Even with all this effort, we have a severe problem with on-time reliability. We will lose customers unless we can offer reliable service. A backbone rail system will result in greater reliability for riders and will lead to greater ridership.

As gas prices increase, our bus system is approaching realistic capacity at peak hours when most customers want to ride. Today, we average about 25 to 35 times per day when drivers report that they are leaving passengers behind because the bus is completely full. Often times, it's an articulated bus with a higher seating capacity. Our system needs the higher capacity that a rail system can offer.

Buses will always play an important role in any transit system. But rubber-tired vehicles, whether guided or not, must use the same Downtown streets as buses. Such a system is not a high-capacity solution for our future. A modern grade-separated steel-wheeled system promises the best performance and the lowest risk of the available technologies. The best way for us to improve our bus system is to develop an integrated bus-rail system that works for commuters, students, our elderly, our disabled citizens and our visitors. It's the best and the most cost-effective alternative.

That's why I support a high-capacity rail system.

*Roger Morton is president and general manager of O'ahu Transit Services Inc. He wrote this commentary for The Advertiser.*



Vol. 13, Issue 157 - Thursday, June 5, 2008

# Letters to the Editor

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[Write a Letter to the Editor](#)

## **Elevated toll roads have all the answers**

Yes, we do need relief from traffic congestion. How? An elevated toll road.

In the morning, buses pick up passengers at selected stops in neighborhoods and quickly enter the toll road. The number of buses can be adjusted up during peak hours. All onramps can become offramps in the afternoons. The four lanes take all buses in the morning east to various offramps to the airport, Kalihi, town, Waikiki, the University of Hawaii, Kaimuki and so on. Each bus, on exiting the highway, takes passengers to existing bus stops where the people can transfer to their individual destinations.

Owners of private cars can pay a toll and also use the elevated toll road. At a set time daily, the flow of traffic would change to go only west. Buses and cars reverse the flow toward Ewa. Buses pick up people at set locations and let them off at the same places in their neighborhoods. Buses, cars and people are quickly transported and disbursed twice a day.

Will people pay to drive or ride the super express to go fast and in comfort? The money collected can help pay for the buses, drivers and maintenance of the highway. Finally, whenever we have an accident on the H-1, the elevated highway can quickly come to the rescue for free.

**Samuel K. Ono**  
Honolulu

## **For rail: cheap gas is over**

With all the complaints about the rising cost of gasoline, I recently e-mailed a friend who lives in Stuttgart, Germany and asked him what gasoline costs there. His answer: 1.478 euros per liter. That didn't sound too bad until I did the conversion to gallons and dollars: \$8.57 a gallon!

If the American public woke up tomorrow to gas costing more than 8 bucks a gallon, there probably would be a howling mob carrying pitchforks in front of the headquarters of Exxon or Tesoro. But in Europe and many parts of Asia, drivers just grit their teeth and take it all with a shrug. Why the difference in attitudes? Is the rest of the world a bunch of complacent sheep compared to us Americans?

Because we've long lived with cheap gas in the United States, a whole range of poor decisions have been made. Low-density housing subdivisions were built creating sprawl, with drivers condemned to many hours of wasted time sitting in their cars. With no money to build mass transit, millions are dependent on their autos to commute or shop. Cheap gas encouraged people to buy hulking SUVs and other gas-slurping vehicles that now are expensive liabilities.

That's the situation we're in today in Hawai'i. So it's discouraging to hear the calls to cancel the plan for rail in Honolulu. Ask those commuters stuck in endless hours of bumper-to-bumper commutes on the H-1 if they'd rather be sitting in modern trains zipping past the traffic, and I think you'd get a resounding yes! And yet many think we can just keep doing what we've always done, building roads that only encourage more people to use their cars.

Particularly shortsighted are the calls to suspend the gas tax on both the federal and state levels. This would actually encourage consumption, just the opposite of what's needed, while reducing the funds needed to fix our roads, already at inadequate levels.

The days of cheap gas are over, and the sooner we accept that fact and change our policies and behavior, the better off we'll be. Stop looking for easy, painless solutions. They aren't out there.

*Robert Ristelhueber  
Honolulu*

June 6, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

### transit

## Already rudderless, with no clear course

The picture of the Waipahu of the future on your May 25 front page tells us better than a thousand words ever could what the proposed fixed-rail system is truly about.

It confirms what so many have been saying: It is not about reducing traffic, it is about development. Real estate speculators, contractors and their friends in government are salivating at the prospect of their riches while the public is being deceived about the merits of better alternatives to reduce traffic congestion. Where does the rampage stop before all that is special about Hawai'i and its ability to sustain itself is lost?

Editorializing in your May 21 edition, you wrote that unless each political party grows its own next generation of leaders, "Hawai'i will be rudderless and drift toward its future rather than charting a clear and sensible course." Are we not already there? Where are today's leaders who have a clear and sensible vision for this island? They are bobbing up and down in an ocean without a chartered course, driven by short-term profits for the few and devoid of sense of stewardship and long-term vision.

Concerned with the direction into which we are heading, former Gov. George Ariyoshi warned in his recent address to the state Democratic Party: "We need to ask the questions of how much water we have, what is our carrying capacity and about our natural resources."

The promoters of fixed rail and associated development interests have yet to answer those questions.

Ursula Retherford | Kailua

June 6, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

### **Only thing wrong with rail is it isn't built yet**

It isn't a surprise that the Stop Rail Now group is struggling to get the signatures required to get the initiative placed on the ballot.

Regardless, the proposal will be soundly defeated should it come to a vote. I think the Stop Rail Now group has significantly underestimated the despair and frustration of those who commute from the Leeward coast, Central O'ahu, and the 'Ewa Plain. Traffic congestion and its impact on the quality of life for the many people who reside in these areas is a flashpoint issue.

It's no longer about reducing the amount of traffic, rather it's about an alternative option of travel for those who choose to do so. And preliminary inquiries indicate that the rail will have heavy ridership, supported by the significant increase of ridership on the existing mass-transit system — the bus.

Meanwhile, it's good to know that all a citizen has to do is start a petition and get a specified number of signatures to put an issue to a vote.

I wonder how many citizens would be interested in repealing the bottle-deposit law? Can enough signatures be garnered to put to a vote the required closure of the Waimanalo Gulch landfill? How about a halt to development of Kapolei and the 'Ewa Plain? I bet a petition to put these issues to a vote would fill up faster than the Stop Rail Now initiative.

The only one thing wrong with the rail — it's not built yet and is 25 years too late.

Mel McKeague | 'Ewa Beach

June 6, 2008

Letters to the Editor

## city council

### Transit authority powers a bad idea

The idea of a transit authority to coordinate the various transportation efforts is a good idea.

The idea to give the new transit authority all the powers the City Council plans on is a bad, bad idea.

To give the transit authority the ability to levy taxes would truly be taxation without representation.

To give the transit authority the ability to condemn property without due process would be a travesty. We might as well all sign our property over to the developers right now.

It would seem our noble City Council is once again seeking to abdicate its responsibilities. They already let someone else choose the technology because they didn't want the responsibility. If the job is too difficult, then step down. It's time for you guys to earn the pay raise you recently "allowed" yourselves to have.

Our government is based on a system of checks and balances. When you give an institution such as a transit authority all the powers the City Council wants to give them without any checks, then we are headed for some very hard times.

They need to go back and redo their work and create an agency that is answerable to the public or to a least the people the public votes for every four years.

One other thing. Won't the Legislature have to approve the transit authority's ability to collect taxes? That's not something they give freely.

Bill Nelson | Hale'iwa

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June 7, 2008

## Drivers ditch cars to board TheBus

### Cheaper commute into town wins over riders as gas prices keep rising

*By Gordon Y.K. Pang  
Advertiser West O'ahu Writer*

KAPOLEI — Honolulu bus ridership was up 3 percent in the first three months of 2008, undoubtedly helped by gas prices that were 67 cents higher than the same period a year ago.

Prices have risen an additional 51 cents since then, to \$4.06 a gallon in Honolulu, making TheBus even more attractive when a full month of rides — \$40 for a standard monthly adult pass — costs less than just one fill-up.

That's what led Meri-Mine Clarke of Makakilo to begin riding TheBus to her job in Waikiki this week.

When unleaded gas prices hit \$4 a gallon, "I said, 'This is ridiculous, we'll try TheBus,'" Clarke said Thursday as she boarded the Route C Express bus.

Many signs indicate ridership is up, said J. Roger Morton, president and general manager of Oahu Transit Services, which operates TheBus under contract with the city:

- The farebox counting system, which TheBus views as its best gauge of daily ridership, showed a 3.2 percent increase during the first three months of 2008 versus January-March 2007. The system broke down on April 4, however, when there were an estimated 230,000 boarding riders per day. Morton said the company is waiting for a \$75,000 purchase authority from the city to repair it.
- There were about 100,000 valid bus passes in April, up over the same month a year ago, 7 percent for adults and 9 percent for school-age children. (Most passes are sold month to month but others last longer.)
- Revenues from cash fares were steady in April and May compared with the previous year. But Morton believes they may be held down by a decrease in the number of tourists, who account for half of all cash riders.

From what he can tell, "most of the larger (ridership) increases are coming from commuter trips into town from primarily Central (O'ahu) and the west," Morton said. "Things are going up generally, but let's put it this way: The longer-distance riders are the ones that have had the biggest percentage increase."

A number of those scurrying to catch TheBus at the Kapolei Transit Center on Haumea Street on Thursday morning said they only recently began catching TheBus.

Kapolei resident Raj Prasad, a network manager at Sprint's Downtown office, already bought a monthly bus pass even though he began riding TheBus to work only this week.

"I can be more productive" on the bus, Prasad said, as he fired up his laptop and navigated the Internet with the help of a wireless card. "It's a great use of the public transport system and commute time, especially at this time when fuel prices are skyrocketing."

He said he spent \$55-\$60 a week filling up his BMW sedan, but he added that the stress of navigating traffic gridlock also helped him convert to TheBus. It often takes less time riding TheBus to work than it did for him to drive himself since TheBus can hop onto the H-1 Zipper Lane into town that he, as a single driver, could not use.

Clarke, the Makakilo resident who is a postal clerk at the Waikiki station, said riding TheBus does not offer her the freedom or convenience of driving her van, which costs \$60 every four days to fill up. "But I don't mind it," she said. "I can read, I can relax. I can sleep."

Clarke said she was so convinced that she'll ride TheBus long-term that she bought a monthly pass after the first day.

Wai'anae resident Josephine Ruiz, who said she began riding TheBus to her job as a sales associate at Macy's Downtown a little more than a month ago, is already on her second bus pass.

"It was killing my pocketbook," Ruiz said, of the \$25 in gas she was putting into her Toyota truck every other day.

Like Prasad, Ruiz said it takes her less time to get to work on TheBus. And, "I don't have to get up as early," she said.

It's not just West O'ahu residents riding into town who are putting away their car keys.

Kapahulu resident Jerry Stovall, a mason, was on his way to a job at Campbell Industrial Park. Stovall said he began riding TheBus two weeks ago to jobs not just at Campbell, but also in Kalihi and on the Windward side.

"It's an easier commute," Stovall said. "It saves you gas, and you don't have to deal with the traffic and the road rage."

A friend gave him a Nissan Sentra when he moved back to O'ahu from the Mainland seven months ago. Recently, Stovall gave it back.

Passengers and bus drivers at the Kapolei bus stop all reported a noticeable increase in passengers who said that rising gas prices have driven them to public transit, up until the time school let out and ridership dipped again. Some drivers reported an increase in passengers of as much as 50 percent to 70 percent.

## **no changes in store**

Ridership typically decreases during the summer when most students are out of school and families are on vacation. As a result, TheBus' Morton said, no decisions will be made until the end of summer about whether to alter or add routes as a result of the surge in riders.

Even then, he said, it's not up to his company to decide what, if any, changes are to be made.

"It's not our budget, it's the (city's) Department of Transportation Services' budget," Morton said.

"There are a lot of places where we would love to have additional service," he said. "But it's a balancing act. You can't do much in transit without affecting anybody else."

While trying to cope with increasing ridership, Morton and his lieutenants are also wrestling with increasing diesel prices.

Diesel prices have gone from \$1.50 a gallon in April 2004 to about \$4.25 this month, according to a chart provided by Morton, and he acknowledged that the increases have significantly affected the company's operations.

"What kind of transportation company wouldn't be reeling in the additional cost of diesel, of course," Morton said.

Morton stressed, however, that only the Honolulu City Council can make decisions about fares, and he declined to discuss whether TheBus is even considering the idea of seeking higher fares or subsidies to offset the increase in diesel costs.

"We don't talk about transit policy, including fares," Morton said. "We're the operating company that operates."

The city requires that fares pay for between 27 percent and 33 percent of operations, with the city subsidizing the balance.

Currently, TheBus fares fund about 27.3 percent of operations, Morton said.

In general, more riders is a positive financial development for TheBus. "The more passengers we get, the better the revenue situation is for us," Morton said. "But if you do add service, you're most likely going to extend your subsidy out a little bit further, so it's a two-edged sword. But we're not making those additions at this point right now."



Vol. 13, Issue 159 - Saturday, June 7, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

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[Write a Letter to the Editor](#)

### **Don't accept blight in name of progress**

"People will get used to it," wrote Ted Chernin ([Star-Bulletin, April 28](#)) referring to the changes that the proposed rail system would bring to our city's landscape. He describes how large areas of Honolulu that once had ocean views now see only the high rises, and how people got used to them, "They became part of the landscape." And those who grow up with a changed landscape will see nothing wrong, concludes Chernin.

He also notes that while in earlier days the cries of protest against the defacing of our landscapes were shushed with claims of "it's progress," the new mix of citizens is not so easy to shush down. I find that last observation the only comforting thought in the letter.

Maybe as people look at what is and contemplate what could have been, and bemoan the lack of vision in preserving precious landscapes, they rise up in defense of what is left. They redefine "progress." For that we should be grateful.

We are not the owners but only the stewards of our landscapes. It is our moral responsibility to make sure that whatever we must do to meet the needs of our time leaves behind as small a footprint as possible.

This the proposed rail system fails to do. It rides roughshod over our landscape like a defiant, arrogant conqueror squashing what people hold sacred and dear. And this without solving the problem it purports to solve, while ignoring solutions that would leave a gentler footprint.

Ursula Retherford  
Kailua

June 8, 2008

## New authority needs own powers to run transit

This, as they say, is where the rubber hits the road.

Or, in the case of the planned transit system, where the steel wheel hits the rail.

The City Council soon will continue discussions about creating an agency that would have authority over the fixed-guideway system, as well as TheBus and TheBoat. It's critical that O'ahu residents weigh in on the process.

It makes perfect sense to create, as it's called in two versions of the proposal, a "semi-autonomous public transit authority" to oversee the development and operation of the system. Making the elements of the city's transit system mesh well together will take expertise, and leaving decisions to the council, with some members up for re-election every two years, will add needless disruptions.

The aim now, though, is to define "semi-autonomous." In other words: How much authority should the authority have?

The city must settle on a structure for the new transit agency and put the proposed City Charter amendment on the ballot this fall. Time is short, so the council and mayor need to arrive at some consensus quickly, avoiding power struggles in the process.

Here are some questions that must be answered:

- How many members should sit on the board? In terms of the board's size, the mayor's proposal for a nine-member panel sounds more workable than the 13-member board proposed by the council.

Elsewhere, 13 board members for a city of this size would be seen as unwieldy. The Denver Rapid Transit District board, which supervises a multimodal system, numbers 15, but that's for an eight-county district with a population of 3 million.

- Who should choose the board members? On this point, the council has a better strategy for constituting a politically balanced board, with city and state lawmakers and administrations sharing rights to name members. The administration's bill gives most of the appointment authority to the mayor.

The Denver board is one of only three elected transit boards in the nation. While those concerned about accountability should raise this possibility, Honolulu should hesitate before creating another elected entity, particularly one in which it's preferable to have members selected on the basis of expertise, not vote-getting skill.

- Should the authority have taxation powers? Some people might insist that unelected boards shouldn't be able to levy a tax. There are certainly examples in other cities, but there is no government body in the state quite like this.

The real question is: How can the authority be accountable for its financial management? Giving the council budgetary oversight would be one strategy.

- Should the authority be able to condemn property needed along the right-of-way? Some on the council are uneasy about that, but there are state and federal laws governing the eminent domain process. There's ample precedent for unelected agencies taking the lead in securing land for highways and other transportation projects.

Too much time has already lapsed between the initial council approval of the alignment and this crucial step in developing a transit system.

But rather than point the fingers of blame on that score, let's move off the dime. Voters need answers to key questions so they can confidently approve a charter change creating the new transit authority.

June 8, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

### **transit**

## **Property issue should have been addressed**

Last Sunday's article on the possibility of people's property being confiscated to make room for the rail project addressed an issue that should have been addressed long before the City Council voted to approve rail.

I have previously written letters, as have others, warning about the possibility of people being forced off their land to make room for the light rail. I also wrote letters to the mayor and my City Council representative on this issue.

However, we have been ignored by nearly everyone.

I'm not against the idea of a rail system. I am against the idea of people's property being confiscated to make way for light rail (or any other project), and it's a shame very few have addressed this issue.

Pablo Wegesend | Honolulu

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June 8, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

### **Traffic solutions cost less, preserve beauty**

Jay Fidell's June 1 Thinktech column "It shouldn't be that hard to ease our traffic woes" was spot-on.

What a beautiful compromise to help decongest our traffic woes islandwide, not just for the Leeward side — take what we already have that's good about TheBus and make it awesome.

At a fraction of the cost of rail, we could have the best bus system in the world. And, at the same time, help preserve the quiet and scenic beauty of our lovely island of O'ahu.

Stop Rail Now, take note. Mr. Fidell cited a myriad of strategies, including smartcards, cell phones, TV and wireless services, express routes with signal pre-emption, free daytime loop in downtown, etc. Why is this not being advocated by our representatives, the mayor and the City Council, if they really have our best in mind?

Gabrielle Savage | Kailua

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Vol. 13, Issue 160 - Sunday, June 8, 2008



## Transit Matters

Romy M. Cachola

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# Altered airport spur would cost much less than \$350M

Salt Lake's residents and community leaders are very pleased with recent events of the past few weeks, which include:

- » the mayor's state-funded proposal for a spur that would service the airport;
- » efforts by the city to plan for an airport spur that is both affordable and practical;
- » the mayor's commitment that Salt Lake Boulevard remains priority one to link the 20-mile minimum operable segment (MOS) from Kapolei to Ala Moana Center.

As Council member of the district, I also support the airport spur because it is an ideal opportunity for the city to partner with the state, which owns the airport. According to the city administration, the 2.1-mile spur would cost \$350 million and be paid for by either the airport special fund or a portion of the 10 percent fee that the state withholds for collecting the general excise tax.

Tapping into these funds seems difficult, since there is a perceived resistance from the state administration and the Legislature to fund this proposed airport spur.

Knowing their sentiments and in the spirit of cooperation with the state and the Legislature, I would like to offer a friendly suggestion. If at all possible, rather than construct the 2.1-mile spur from the airport to Middle Street, why not connect the airport to the nearest transit station on Salt Lake Boulevard at Ala Lilikoi Street, which would be about 1 mile long? This shorter spur could very well cut construction costs in half and cost the state between \$150 million to \$175 million, rather than the entire \$350 million airport-to-Middle Street spur.

The bottom line is that a shorter airport spur to Ala Lilikoi would be more acceptable to the state administration and the Legislature because it would cost way less and still service the airport.

Also, just recently, we were all encouraged to see private landowner HRPT Properties Trust offering to assist the city by providing land and spending its own money to build a passenger station in Mapunapuna. If the private sector is willing to step up to the plate, how much more for the state, which owns the airport?

Therefore, I urge state officials to carefully consider the benefits of partnering with the city for the construction of:

- » a proposed transit station at the airport, and ensure that it be built as close as possible to the passenger terminals;
- » an airport spur to Salt Lake Boulevard, which would dovetail quite nicely into its current billion-dollar airport modernization plan.

The state has a vested interest in improving services at the airport for visitors, local travelers and workers. This 1-mile airport-to-Salt Lake Boulevard spur, which saves taxpayer money, is a win-win solution, which I believe is fair and more acceptable to the state administration, the Legislature and taxpayers.

Romy M. Cachola represents District VII (Kalihi-Airport-Salt Lake) on the Honolulu City Council.

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Vol. 13, Issue 160 - Sunday, June 8, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

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[Write a Letter to the Editor](#)

### **Constant development eats up more energy**

The mayor would like us to believe that his monstrous rail project will "further protect our environment" because it will encourage "transit-oriented development" ([Letters, June 1](#)).

The mayor is right to believe that reducing time spent in cars will reduce Honolulu's overall carbon footprint -- but what he might have missed in the recent Brookings Institution report is that Honolulu's residential energy use is so much lower than other metropolises not for anything Honolulu does, but for something it doesn't do: burn heating oil. Despite that, Honolulu's residential energy use increased roughly seven times faster than the national average. So even if Honolulu isn't burning heating oil all winter, the thousands of new homes in the "transit-oriented development" areas will make up for that.

If the mayor really wants to "further protect our environment," he would be wise to do more of what made the city No. 1 in the first place: nothing.

Justin Hahn  
Honolulu

# Letters 06/08

What our readers have to say



## Leave Rail to the Experts

Rail opponents keep missing the point on rail transit. Rail is about growth management, not reducing traffic. One rail opponent asked why should we do it if it is not going to reduce traffic?

Here is why:

In Hawaii, we have to ask ourselves, How will we grow? On Oahu 3,500 to 4,000 new households are created each year. That means we will need to built 100,000 new homes over the next 25 years. Where will they live? “No growth” is not an option. We have an affordable housing crisis because we are not producing enough homes to meet the demand.

Shall we continue to build homes over our agricultural lands? We can build out (urban sprawl) or up (higher density in the urban core). I applaud our elected officials who have supported rail transit for choosing to protect our open spaces while keeping housing prices under control. Rail transit is a key infrastructure component that will allow us to build “up”. HOT lanes encourage urban sprawl. Tampa is a perfect example of urban sprawl and what we don’t need more of in Hawaii. Furthermore, if rail transit is planned with housing in mind, the city and state can trade land use and zoning entitlements in exchange for affordable housing along the route.

If we don’t plan for high density growth, the new housing supply will decrease and island-wide prices will increase. More and more middle-class people will be forced to get government subsidized housing or leave the island or be homeless. It costs about \$300,000 to subsidize one affordable rental unit. Multiply that by the 10,000 units the state says we are short. That’s three billion dollars of taxpayer subsidy and no solution to affordable housing or urban sprawl.

I have yet to hear one anti-rail person intelligently argue against rail when the discussion is framed around “growth” versus “traffic”. Maybe the anti-rail folks don’t care about protecting our open lands. Maybe they already own their homes and have forgotten what it is like to be a renter or first-time homebuyer. Too often those people are young teachers, fire fighters and police officers.

Maybe if everyone who votes goes to school to become experts in rail technology and urban planning, then I agree that we should allow the public to vote on these critical issues.

Otherwise, leave it to the experts.

**Craig Y. Watase**

*President, Mark Development Inc.*

*Honolulu, Hawaii*

*Via email*

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Want to submit a Letter to the Editor?

**[CLICK HERE TO FILL OUT OUR ONLINE FORM](#)**

June 9, 2008

## Rail's use of energy subject of debate

Savings depend on how many ride, type of fuel used to generate power

By SEAN HAO

Advertiser Staff Writer

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.

That shouldn't pose a risk of energy shortage and could lower transportation-related air pollutants and energy use as people switch from automobiles to trains, according to the city.

The potential positive impact on the environment is a key benefit of the \$3.7 billion elevated commuter rail line, said Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann.

"We are already a community that is 90 percent dependent on fossil fuels and this is all about reducing our dependence on that and using alternative forms of energy," he said. "We're putting Honolulu in a good place to continue to do our part to reduce global warming."

Environmentalists agree that mass transit can be a green transportation alternative. Whether rail is more energy efficient and reduces air pollution hinges on factors such as ridership and the fuel used to generate electricity.

"Based on the experience of Mainland cities and cities around the world, it seems certain that rail has been a good option for most of those cities," said Randy Ching, chairman of The Sierra Club O'ahu Group. "I would hope it would be similar here, but I haven't seen definitive numbers either way yet."

"If I were convinced that this would be well used and a lot of people would get out of their automobiles to ride the rail, then I think there's no question on a cost per mile, per passenger basis rail would be a more viable option than the personal automobile," Ching said.

The city plans to start building the elevated commuter rail line late next year, with the first segment from East Kapolei to Leeward Community College opening in 2012. The total 20-mile route to Ala Moana would open in phases through 2018.

In 2030, the train system is expected to consume an average of about 18.5 megawatt hours of electricity, according to New York-based Parsons Brinckerhoff, the project contractor.

The power needed could exceed 18.5 megawatt hours because that estimate does not reflect the energy used in the generation and transmission of electricity by Hawaiian Electric Co.

The power needed by the train is relatively small when compared with O'ahu's total daily peak demand of about 1,241 megawatts of electricity, according to HECO.

HECO said there should be no problem supplying the train with power, along with other potential new projects such as new housing developments and the planned University of Hawai'i West O'ahu campus.

The train "is a big project obviously," said HECO spokesman Peter Rosegg. But, "It would be wrong to see (the train) as some big gorilla coming down the road. It is one of the small monkeys and there are a number of small monkeys and they're going to get here at different times."

While the train's demand for electricity could be relatively small, peak transit hours — and electrical needs — are likely to coincide with Honolulu's overall electricity demand peak, which occurs in the early evening.

The added load from the train also is expected to come at a time when HECO forecasts reserve capacity shortfalls of as much as 130 megawatts in 2014, according to a report filed this year with the Public Utilities Commission. That's assuming the utility completes a 110-megawatt generator at Campbell Industrial Park sometime next year.

A reserve capacity shortfall increases the risk of generation-related power outages. However, that is not expected to be an issue on O'ahu unless HECO's two largest power generators are taken offline for some reason. Even then, HECO would hope to manage demand to prevent an outage, Rosegg said.

"We can and will accommodate the energy needs of the transit program," Rosegg said. "These needs will not be the driver for another power plant."

To help meet electricity needs, HECO is looking at renewable energy sources, including wind, solar, waste-to-energy and ocean power, the company said. The utility's new Campbell Industrial Park generator will use biofuels, which HECO said will only come from farmed palm oil plantations that haven't been cut out of native forests.

Whether rail is more "green" than other transportation modes also depends on how many people opt to park their cars to ride mass transit. Critics have questioned whether a Honolulu rail line can generate high ridership without serving Waikiki, UH-Manoa and Honolulu International Airport. The city plans to eventually expand service to those locations, but there is no money earmarked for such expansion.

Even without serving those areas, the commuter rail line is expected to attract more riders when compared with other alternatives studied, including expanding TheBus fleet or creating managed traffic lanes, according to Parsons Brinckerhoff.

When combined with TheBus, overall mass transit ridership is expected to increase to 7.4 percent of total transit trips in 2030, up from 6.1 percent projected if the commuter rail line is not built. The transit system also is expected to reduce daily vehicle trips by 45,000 on O'ahu.

Higher mass transit use could mean daily transportation energy consumed in 2030 would be about 3 percent less than if the city were to build managed traffic lanes, according to Parsons Brinckerhoff. The energy needed to run the commuter rail system or an expanded TheBus fleet would be nearly the same.

Rail energy reductions are based on the higher energy efficiency and passenger load factors of rail transit. Commuter rail requires 2,743 Btu of energy per passenger mile, according to the Department of Energy. A Btu, or British Thermal Unit, is equivalent to the energy needed to raise 1 pound of water by 1 degree Fahrenheit. In contrast, an automobile uses 3,445 Btu of energy per passenger mile.

City officials argue that transit ridership could outstrip expectations as gasoline prices rise and traffic congestion grows. However, higher gasoline prices also are expected to spur the development and adoption of more fuel-efficient autos. That means that, some day, autos could be more energy efficient than rail.

By 2035, the average auto will consume an estimated 2,500 Btu per passenger mile, according to an April article published by the libertarian Cato Institute. "A proposed light rail line that promises to save energy not only needs to be more efficient than today's autos, it must be more efficient than future autos," wrote the article's author, Randal O'Toole.

Any evaluation of the energy savings generated by rail also needs to consider the massive amount of energy required during construction, according to the Cato report. For example, construction of the fixed guideway will require between 3.7 trillion and 4.9 trillion Btu of energy, according to Parsons Brinckerhoff. That compares with the 3 trillion to 4.2 trillion Btu of energy needed to build a managed lane mass transit system.

Another issue for the rail line is its impact on air pollution. Regional emissions would range from zero to 4 percent less with the rail system or an expanded bus service. That compares with zero to 4 percent higher for managed traffic lanes, according to Parsons Brinckerhoff.

Further details about the project's environmental impact are expected to be disclosed in a draft study scheduled for release this summer. Local environmental groups said they're reserving judgment on endorsing the transit project for now.

"There are certainly some benefits of rail, but the aesthetics, the route, the amount of energy used — all of that plays a role," said Henry Curtis, director of Life of the Land. "Therefore I don't know of any environmental groups that have looked at rail and said yes or no."

June 9, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

### transit

## Rail system could harm Isle environment

Mayor Mufi Hannemann recently praised a Brookings Institution study that "underscores how important rail mass transit is to Honolulu's future." Perhaps he should read more carefully next time.

The Brookings Institution ranked U.S. metro areas in terms of carbon emissions per capita. However, the researchers excluded nearly half of carbon emissions nationally, including those from non-highway transportation. It is no surprise that cities with rail transit would fare well in the study when emissions from rail transit systems were ignored.

In contrast, a University of Hawai'i study led by Panos Prevedouros found that the mayor's rail system would only reduce traffic congestion by 3 percent, meaning it would consume more energy and produce more emissions than the cars it replaces.

Mayor Hannemann should also know that the study does not claim a correlation between rail transit and lower carbon emissions. While the authors highlight four cities that have high rail ridership and small carbon footprints, they note three other cities — Washington, Baltimore and Atlanta — that don't follow such a pattern.

So what is the answer to our traffic problems? High occupancy toll (or HOT) lanes, combined with necessary upgrades to roads, traffic signals and the bus system, would resolve 10 times more congestion than rail while reducing energy usage and carbon emissions, according to the Prevedouros study — all at a fraction of the cost of the mayor's \$6 billion train.

Contrary to Mayor Hannemann's claims, rail would not solve our traffic woes here in Honolulu — and could harm our environment in the process.

Jamie Story | President, Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

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Vol. 13, Issue 161 - Monday, June 9, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

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Write a Letter to the Editor

### **Honolulu has greater priorities than rail**

Priorities. A Hawaii is a state without valid, common sense priorities.

Here's a test we all need to take to find out what we "need" as opposed to what we "want."

Which is the smarter decision:

- » Rail or repair of streets and pot holes at a faster rate (Kaneohe Bay Drive, for example, has been put off for a whole year)?
- » Rail or a more rapid completion of our sewers (at this time, it is a stinking and sinking system)?
- » Rail or better school conditions (upgrade now rather than stretch it out for years; air condition now to keep students awake and alert)?
- » Rail or better, updated handling of garbage and trash?
- » Rail or better systems to protect our children and elders from traffic accidents?

It's a given that our needs probably cost a fraction of what the rail will cost.

Add your own list of priorities to those I have forgotten. Grade them from "A" to "R"ail.

**Don Neill**  
Kaneohe

June 11, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

### **pearl harbor**

### **Tunnel study funds should be released**

Gov. Linda Lingle has until the end of this month to release \$200,000 appropriated by the Legislature calling for a Pearl Harbor tunnel feasibility study.

While we wait, the latest in tunnel technology has numerous cities, such as Brisbane, Australia, going forward with tunnel projects that could be duplicated here.

Our topography in Honolulu is just like Brisbane's in that we lack land to expand our surface transportation network. In these situations, tunneling is the solution.

Since the tunnel concept through Pearl Harbor was last evaluated in 1992, when the technology to bore in muck was not perfected, today's proposal has merit in that the portals are to be located off military property and incorporate advancements in tunnel technology.

The University of Hawai'i Transportation Laboratory put the tunnel across Pearl Harbor at \$3 billion, the O'ahu Metropolitan Planning Organization at \$7 billion and the state Department of Transportation at \$9 billion.

Brisbane's proposed network of tunnels includes going under a river at less than \$1 billion per mile to construct and financed with a toll instead of taxes.

Our tunnel option could include a three-lane reversible expressway with a rail spur and bicycle lane. The best part is that there's no noise to contend with, no property to take, no views to obstruct and no traffic to impose upon during construction.

State Rep. Rida Cabanilla Arakawa | District 42

# MidWeek

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## Saluting Flag Day, Anti-Rail Folly

June 11, 2008  
By Bob Jones

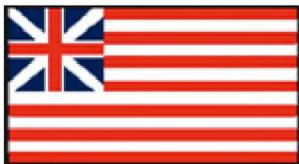
Current

Are you among those inclined to sign the Stop Rail Now petition because you've been told we can build a 12-mile, high-occupancy elevated highway for under \$900 million?

Check the morning and evening rush-hour traffic any day. Then imagine how many more vehicles will be on the road 20 years from now if there's no mass-transit alternative.

Even imagine a toll highway taking some cars over the H-1 on a second deck.

Now imagine *all* those vehicles, H-1, regular streets and HOT lanes *all* pouring into downtown or Waipahu, Pearl City or Kapolei at once. Chaos at the terminals.



Grand

That's why forward-thinking people are saying we must have the trains. Expensive and disruptive during the build-out but there's no other way out of our mess.

The only idea that's nuttier than another road is to build a tunnel under Pearl Harbor to bring more cars faster to downtown.

Want to rethink your signature on that no-rail petition?



June 12, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

### landowners

#### **Draft EIS will be more specific on rail impacts**

The city is being sensitive to the concerns of those who may be affected by the rail project, and is committed to meeting personally with property owners when a more precise analysis of potential impacts is complete.

Sean Hao's June 1 story about properties and the rail transit project was based on the two-year-old Alternatives Analysis (AA) study, which identified potential property impacts of all the transportation alternatives, so that one alternative could be selected. That was its purpose.

It was never meant to be the document used to identify the actual properties that might be acquired, since it was based on preliminary designs. The draft environmental impact study now underway will be more specific, and owners of property identified in that document as possibly impacted will be contacted when property evaluations are complete.

The article explained that the city is already notifying such landowners if they apply for building permits and concluded that this process "appears to have failed in at least one instance" because a lessee of one Waipahu property said he was not aware of the city's plans.

The process did not fail. That lessee did not and has not applied for a building permit.

DPP records indicate that the property owner has received notice of all meetings held to discuss the Waipahu Neighborhood Plan, which includes plans for rail. Our notification in Waipahu cast a wider net because we were interested in engaging property owners within a 1/4-mile radius of the proposed station there.

The city has worked very hard to involve the community in planning for the rail system and transit-oriented development, especially in Waipahu.

Henry Eng | Director, City Department of Planning and Permitting

June 12, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

### **rail**

## **Oahuans are paying for a white elephant**

Each resident of the City and County of Honolulu is buying a white elephant on the installment plan, whether we want it or not.

Every time we pay general excise tax on food, clothing, DVDs, lipstick, tires or gas, etc., this white elephant is being paid for. I'm talking about steel wheels on rail that will cost taxpayers \$3.7 billion or more.

According to an Advertiser article of May 30 — "State collects \$211 million in rail taxes" — city officials and the Tax Foundation estimate the surcharge costs for each household to be about \$365 per year, or approximately \$1 per day for the next 15 years. That totals \$5,475 per household.

If you are single, figure approximately \$100 per year or \$1,500 to buy something you may never use because it won't take you where you need to go.

The democratic way to have a voice in this matter is by signing a Stop Rail Now petition to place the transit issue on the ballot. Then you can exercise your right to vote for or against it.

Or we can vote Mayor Mufi Hanemann out of office to stop this costly project.

In the meantime, we are paying for a monstrous white elephant via the installment plan, an elephant most of us can ill afford.

Suzanne Teller | Honolulu



Vol. 13, Issue 164 - Thursday, June 12, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

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[Write a Letter to the Editor](#)

### **Sierra Club should get on board with rail**

As an environmentalist, I am greatly frustrated by the inaction of the Sierra Club on Oahu regarding Honolulu's rail project. In city after city on the mainland, the Sierra Club has championed the rail as a necessary solution to traffic congestion and a critical tool in the fight against climate change and a valuable addition to our quality of life.

In Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles, two of the most gridlocked cities in America, the Sierra Club is leading the charge to add more rail lines. In Georgia, the Sierra Club is aggressively pushing government leaders to provide more funding. In Charlotte, N.C., the Sierra Club actually led the fight to defeat an anti-rail campaign that got people excited about public transportation. Yet here on our island, the Sierra Club has offered only silence or lukewarm comments about rail -- a system that is energy efficient, reduces greenhouse gases and offers the promise of a 20-minute commute to the airport from Ala Moana Center. I believe it is a shame that the Sierra Club on Oahu is not stepping forward to embrace rail.

**Joe Lee**  
Honolulu

# Hundreds of Contractors Vying for Transit Jobs



Written by Tim Sakahara – tsakahara@kgmb9.com

June 12, 2008 07:13 PM

The City of Honolulu hosted an open house Thursday to court companies interested in building Oahu's rail transit project.

Hundreds of people with construction, engineering and architectural firms came to hear how they could get a piece of the \$5 billion project. The city says the first 20 miles of track will create 11,000 jobs a year and hopes to use both large and small companies for the jobs.

"We're always looking for new opportunities and new work that is out there and it sure appears there will be enough to go around," said Kenneth Quirin, Sr., QN Electric, Inc. President, based in Kailua.

"I have done quite a few train systems, I've done work in Portland and San Diego so I was interested and decided to come out and find out what your intentions are," said Siegfried Fassmann, David Evans & Associates, based in San Diego.

"I hope this is one of the events that is starting the excitement in the industry, this is real, it's coming," said Toru Hamayasu, Transit Project Manager.

The project manager says the bidding process will be based on federal and state laws and could start as early as the end of this year. The contracts cannot be awarded until the environmental impact statements are finished which will be the latter part of next year.

Meanwhile the Stop Rail Now campaign is ramping up its efforts to stop the project. Stop Rail Now needs to get more than 44,000 signatures to put the transit issue on the November ballot. It still needs 28,000 signatures so it paid \$12,000 to put the petition in each copy of the Midweek which goes out to 270,000 homes.

"Everybody can simply open up their Midweek and inside they'll find the petition and this is the official petition and we're urging people to sign it and mail it back to us," said Dennis Callan, Stop Rail Now.

The campaign says it gets about 500 signatures everyday. It must get the remaining signatures before august 4th.

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Last Updated ( June 12, 2008 07:23 PM )

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Close Window

# 'Stop Rail Now' Ramps Up Efforts; Needs 28,000 More



Written by KGMB9 News - news@kgmb9.com  
June 12, 2008 08:24 PM

Meanwhile the Stop Rail Now campaign is ramping up its efforts to stop the project. It's putting the official petition in every copy of this Friday's Midweek.

Stop Rail Now needs to get more than 44-thousand signatures to put the transit issue on the November ballot. Right now the campaign says it has 16-thousand.

It must get the remaining signatures before August 4th.

"Everybody can simply open up their Midweek and inside they'll find the petition and this is the official petition and we're urging people to sign it and mail it back to us," said Dennis Callan of Stop Rail Now.

The campaign says it gets about 500 signatures everyday. The Midweek goes to near 270-thousand homes. Stop Rail Now hopes many of those Midweek readers will boost the number.



Last Updated ( June 12, 2008 08:31 PM )

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# KITV.com

## Rail Opponents Take Petition To Newspaper

### *Group Must Acquire 44,525 Valid Signatures*

POSTED: 3:52 pm HST June 12, 2008

UPDATED: 4:05 pm HST June 12, 2008

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**HONOLULU** -- Opponents of rail transit are making a big push to get the issue before Oahu voters this fall.

The group Stop Rail Now has spent \$20,000 to get copies of a petition in MidWeek. The publication reaches more than 250,000 households.

So far, the group has collected 16,000 signatures to get the question on the ballot.

The anti-rail group said it averages about 500 signatures a day.

"A lot of the public think the mayor has been forcing this. This is our voice to make a statement to get the public involved, to take ownership of the government again," said Dan Douglass of Stop Rail Now.

Rail opponents are asking voters to mail the petition by Aug. 1.

The city clerk's office maintains the group needs 44,525 valid signatures to get the issue on the ballot.

#### **Previous Stories:**

- May 27, 2008: [Rail Opponents Face Signature Deadline](#)

- April 21, 2008: [Group Fights Oahu Mass Transit Project](#)

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June 13, 2008

## City rail transit workshop draws about 100 companies

*By Curtis Lum*

*Advertiser Staff Writer*

More than 300 people representing about 100 companies attended a workshop yesterday to learn more about the city's proposed rail transit system and the opportunities to work on the \$3.7 billion project.

The workshop was held at the Neal Blaisdell Center and outlined the project's schedule, as well as the work that would be available to designers, contractors, subcontractors and suppliers. The event also gave company representatives a chance to begin putting together teams for various contracts associated with the project.

Jennifer Russell of project consultant Parsons Brinckerhoff said about 10 large Mainland firms took part in the workshop, but most were companies from the islands.

Russell said the all-day workshop provided a good opportunity for the bigger companies and smaller Hawai'i contractors to "connect hands" so they'll be ready to put together packages when the city is begins to accept contract proposals.

"The way the project is, it's broken up into segments that are manageable by one general contractor. But the scope of some of them is larger than some of the larger firms here on the island are used to handling," Russell said.

The city wants to break ground on the 20-mile elevated rail system in 2009. The project is expected to create about 11,000 jobs.

One of the large Mainland firms that attended yesterday's workshop was URS Corp., a San Francisco-based engineering company with experience in light-rail design. URS has 50,000 employees worldwide and has an office in Honolulu.

Mindy Steckmest, URS Corp. project manager, said her company "definitely has a lot of interest in this project."

"It's getting to be known nationwide in the transit arena," Steckmest said. "We do design in all facets, but we do have expertise in light-rail design. We would team with the contractor and come in as the lead engineer."

URS sent her to the workshop to find out more about the project, as well as meet with representatives from local companies. She said her company believes the rail project can work in Honolulu.

"It looks like the city and county has done a great job of doing their homework and doing all of the upfront work, so it certainly looks doable," she said.

Rich Moran, president of Waipahu-based Corrosion Cops, said he attended the workshop to find out if the project's design will address corrosion prevention, as well as the impact seismic activity will have on the system. Corrosion Cops has been in business here since 1992.

Moran said these two issues need to be addressed in the design phase of the project. He believes the services of his company will be needed as the project moves forward, particularly if the proposed "steel-on-steel" technology is used.

"I believe with the technology that we offer that we will be an integral part of it," Moran said. "It's not a fact of whether or not we need it because corrosion is something that occurs in the state of Hawai'i on an ongoing basis. Federal government studies have shown that for \$1 invested in corrosion prevention, results in a \$23 savings in cost avoidance."

Moran added that the city was wise to put together yesterday's workshop.

"They're calling on the community as a whole to get the best minds together and by doing that the bottom line is going to be longevity, which the people really need in Hawai'i," he said. "We don't want another Aloha Stadium."

Yesterday's workshop for the contractors was the first of several planned by the city and Parsons Brinckerhoff.

June 13, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

### **waipahu**

### **Goal of TOD plan is to keep local character**

This letter is in response to the article "Hawai'i rail transit will remake Waipahu" (May 25).

Our firm has never spoken to Sean Hao, the writer of the article, and objects to any implication that what is being proposed is a version of downtown Honolulu.

In fact, 95 percent of the Waipahu plan is medium density and equates to about 50 percent of the density that is currently allowed under existing zoning.

The creation of the Waipahu neighborhood transit-oriented development plan has been a community-based process from the beginning.

The community has developed a series of principles with the overall theme of celebrating Waipahu. These principles guide the plan and provide the basis for strategies that allow areas of Waipahu to adapt over time from auto-oriented suburban zones into walkable transit villages.

The intent of the Waipahu plan is to encourage economic vitality while maintaining and strengthening the local character of Waipahu. The city is committed to working with property owners to enhance the green network of parks and gathering places, to create a safe, pedestrian-first environment, to provide mixed-income and affordable housing, and to develop a true inter-modal transportation network in Waipahu.

By planning for future change, we can focus on the preservation of the character that makes the neighborhood unique while ensuring a better future for both current residents and future generations.

Tim Van Meter and Adam Rosa | Van Meter Williams Pollack, San Francisco, Calif.

June 13, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

### gas prices

### Is there a plan for hike in ridership of TheBus?

In his June 5 Island Voices column, Roger Morton, president of O'ahu Transit Services Inc., said: "Today, we average about 25 to 35 times per day when drivers report that they are leaving passengers behind because the bus is completely full."

I can feel the anger of those who are tired after a full day's work watching their bus pass by without stopping. Morton also said: "More buses are not the best solution to our island's growing traffic congestion."

Does the city have any plans for the increase of bus riders when gas goes over \$6 a gallon? Will the city be able to keep bus passes affordable after being forced to buy more buses, hire more drivers and the skyrocketing cost of fuel?

Without more buses, many lower-income workers may have to drive themselves into bankruptcy. At least those of us on the Leeward Coast will have a train to ride, but at what cost?

Warren Fukushima | Pearl City

June 13, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

### **carbon footprint**

#### **O'ahu should rank last for rail funds priority**

In the recently released Brookings Institute report on the carbon footprint of metro areas, Honolulu ranks 51st out of 53 metropolitan areas. With its 900,000 residents, Honolulu is a small metropolitan area in the nation and a tiny one on a global scale.

Honolulu's carbon footprint per person is the smallest in the nation due to: (1) the relatively shorter trips made by its residents; (2) its vehicle fleet, which, compared to Mainland metro areas, consists of smaller and more economical vehicles and relatively few large trucks; and, (3) the minimal needs for heating and modest needs for air conditioning.

Honolulu's impact is larger if air and sea transportation is accounted for, but Brookings did not.

The Brookings report recommends rail systems as one of many actions for metro areas with large carbon footprints, but on the national priority list, Honolulu should rank last in priority of funding for a rail system due to its small population and tiny carbon footprint, which will grow larger if rail transit is installed.

Honolulu's carbon footprint can be reduced by adopting effective solutions to traffic congestion and promoting vehicle fleet renewal with diesel, electric, fuel cell, and hybrid power plants.

Panos D. Prevedouros | Professor, transportation engineering, University of Hawai'i-Manoa

June 13, 2008

## Stop Rail aims to double signatures

Petition copies to be in MidWeek; 16,000 names collected, 44,525 needed

By *SEAN HAO*  
*Advertiser Staff Writer*

Opponents of Honolulu's planned \$3.7 billion commuter rail system yesterday said they've gathered about half of the signatures needed to put an anti-rail initiative on the November ballot.

The group yesterday said that it has gathered 16,000 signatures since April 21. The group has set a goal of collecting 30,000 to 44,000 signatures by Aug. 4.

Yesterday officials for Stop Rail Now disclosed details of a new plan they hope will generate thousands more signatures. Copies of the petition will be mailed to about 270,000 Honolulu homes via the free MidWeek tabloid.

Those opposed to the project can sign the petition and pay postage to mail it back to Stop Rail Now.

"There's four lines on there so they can get their friends and family to sign in and send it back to us," said Dennis Callan, co-chairman of Stop Rail Now. "We're quite excited to see what kind of responses we get back. This is our effort to give the public the opportunity to participate in a direct way."

Mayor Mufi Hannemann hopes to start construction on the 20-mile commuter rail late next year. The system, which would connect West Kapolei with Ala Moana, is scheduled to open in phases between 2012 and 2018.

Stop Rail Now contends the public has a right to vote on whether the city should proceed with the transit project, which would be the largest public works project in state history. Rail proponents, including Hannemann and pro-rail council members, maintain a vote is not needed as the public has voiced its opinion on the project via elected representatives and public hearings.

Stop Rail Now wants the city to explore traffic-reducing alternatives such as high-occupancy lanes, toll lanes, overpasses and traffic signal optimization.

Studies show the commuter rail line won't prevent traffic along the H-1 Freeway corridor from worsening due in part to population growth in West O'ahu. However, the rail system was found to be the best alternative to reduce future traffic delays, according to the city.

The City Clerk's office says Stop Rail Now will need at least 44,525 signatures of registered voters to qualify for the November ballot.

Whether Stop Rail Now can muster the signatures of enough registered voters remains to be seen. The voter-initiated ordinance process has only been successfully invoked once. That occurred in 1988 and

dealt with preventing development of land near Sandy Beach.

Stop Rail Now has one key tool at its disposal that wasn't available in the 1980s — the Internet. The group has solicited donations and made the petition available for downloading via the Internet. Stop Rail Now's MidWeek insert will cost about \$20,000. That was funded by donations, Callan said.

Honolulu elections administrator Glen Takahashi said city rules don't appear to prevent such novel techniques.

"When the (city) charter was amended for this process (in the 1980s) it probably wasn't envisioning downloading from the Internet or doing it by mail so the charter is silent in that regard," Takahashi said.

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Vol. 13, Issue 165 - Friday, June 13, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

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[Write a Letter to the Editor](#)

### **Rail will make city No. 1 in tax burden**

So Mayor Mufi Hannemann wants to claim that Honolulu ranks No. 1 in the nation for clean air ([Letters, June 1](#)). He claims this partly based on the proposed rail project reducing pollution from the number of cars on the road. What he fails to mention is that we achieved this title from the Brookings Institution with our daily gridlock on the freeway twice a day, and without the rail in place.

The truth is that we are the only state blessed with the ocean on all four corners. This geological setting provides for the trade winds to carry the ambient course particles (EPA term for dust) away over the ocean.

P.S. Don't test the air during the southerly Kona winds that bring us the hazy vog over Honolulu. As far as I am concerned, this rail project will surely make Hawaii No. 1 forever for the taxes we will be paying to maintain this monumental endeavor. The mayor and the community should sit down and find a more cost-effective solution to easing the commute during rush-hour.

Michael Nomura  
Kailua



Vol. 13, Issue 165 - Friday, June 13, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

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[Write a Letter to the Editor](#)

### **Sierra Club has been active in transit issues**

I am a Sierra Club volunteer who read Joe Lee's letter to the editor yesterday with some concern. He does not seem aware that the Oahu Group of the Sierra Club has supported rapid transit for years, including regular participation at transit meetings, dialogue with city representatives and publicizing a supporting position in December 2006 (see [www.hi.sierraclub.org/oahu/](http://www.hi.sierraclub.org/oahu/)). In no way has the Sierra Club been "inactive."

It should be noted, however, that the city's proposed plan differs from the Sierra Club's recommendations because, among other things, it fails to connect to major destinations such as the University of Hawaii and Waikiki. The intent of the current rail project appears to be more focused on increasing development rather than servicing the already-populated urban core. For this and other reasons, you might hear more grudging support rather than actual enthusiasm for the project.

If Mr. Lee or others are interested in helping establish Sierra Club policy on this and other environmental issues, they are welcome to contact and volunteer with the Sierra Club at 538-6616.

Robert D. Harris  
Kahaluu



Vol. 13, Issue 165 - Friday, June 13, 2008

# Mayor expects jobs with transit plan

## Local firms hope to capitalize on smaller construction contracts

By Laurie Au  
[lau@starbulletin.com](mailto:lau@starbulletin.com)

The city hopes to attract more local companies to work on its \$4 billion mass-transit system by creating smaller contracts, as opposed to larger, \$100 million contracts that are typically awarded only to national and international firms.

At a workshop presented by the city for construction companies yesterday at the Neal Blaisdell Center, Mayor Mufi Hannemann emphasized the importance of the number of jobs mass transit would create that would help spur the slowing economy.

"This economy is starting to go south," Hannemann said in an interview. "I'm the eternal optimist, but what I don't see is alternatives to our sagging tourism industry. Fuel prices are going to continue to rise. ... To me this is the best news for the Hawaii economy. Over the next 12 to 15 years, we'll have steady employment, growing employment."

The 20-mile elevated mass-transit system running from Kapolei to Ala Moana is expected to create 11,000 jobs a year; of those, 4,700 are for construction. Groundbreaking is scheduled for late next year, with contracts to be awarded later this year or in early 2009.

"This will help the economy," Hannemann said. "It's not just about construction jobs. Construction jobs will start this going, but there's so many ancillary benefits ... that trickle down."

To help local companies capitalize on the system, the Hannemann administration will create multiple contracts, ranging from \$20 million to \$350 million.

In 1992 the city was ready to issue large contract awards that excluded many firms from

bidding on its rail transit system when the City Council refused to spend local funds, killing the project.

"Local firms were left at the mercy of large companies whether to hire them," said Toru Hamayasu, the deputy transportation director. "That was a lesson learned from 1992."

Professionals within the industry said yesterday they have been waiting for the city's project to begin.

"We've been eyeing this project for about 10 years now," said James Fea, vice president of Systra USA, a New Jersey-based company that builds transit systems. "It's the talk of the industry. Everyone wants a piece of it."

"Locally, we don't have the resources to build the project," said Frank Medrano, principal of the locally owned company Construction Management Resources Inc. "These small contracts open up the opportunity for small businesses like us."

Hannemann acknowledged a group of residents attempting to stop the project. "I respect the democratic process," he said. "But what is their alternative? It's not HOT lanes, toll roads, underwater tunnels or expanded bus routes. They cannot replace rail."

Stop Rail Now, an anti-rail initiative, has collected 16,000 of the nearly 45,000 signatures it needs to propose an ordinance on the November ballot, saying, "Honolulu mass transit shall not include trains or rail."

Stop Rail Now has recently placed two full-page ads in the Star-Bulletin and an insert in MidWeek at a cost of \$20,000, paid by donations and its core members of well-known, vocal opponents. Organizers say they hope this will bring them toward their goal by the Aug. 1 deadline.

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June 14, 2008

## City to audit rail transit contracts

### Five council members ask for probe of \$100M in awards, expenditures

By SEAN HAO

Advertiser Staff Writer

More than \$100 million in city rail transit contracts will be the subject of an audit starting next month.

The examination was on the city auditor's fiscal 2009 schedule released yesterday. The decision follows a March request for the audit by five council members, said City Auditor Leslie Tanaka.

The audit will probe contracts and expenditures, though the exact scope has yet to be determined, Tanaka said.

"Obviously everybody wants to know how the money is being spent," he said.

So far the city has awarded \$107.7 million in elevated commuter rail contracts. Most of that money — \$86 million — is going to New York-based consultant Parsons Brinckerhoff over a 2 1/2-year period. The firm also received an additional \$10.2 million to work on an earlier phase of the project.

The total project is expected to cost \$3.7 billion. Mayor Mufi Hannemann wants to break ground in December of next year with the 20-mile system opening in phases between 2012 and 2018.

So far the largest subcontractor of the Parsons Brinckerhoff contract is R.M. Towill Corp., which has been paid \$4.9 million, according to city records. SSFM International was next with \$1.88 million, followed by ControlPoint Surveying with \$1.85 million.

The state and the city of Honolulu are raising money to pay for the project via a 15-year increase in the state's general excise tax on O'ahu from 4.166 percent to 4.712 percent. The state began collecting the half-percentage-point general excise tax surcharge in January 2007 and \$211 million was raised in the first 16 months, according to state tax department records.

Tanaka said the audit would begin next month and take eight to nine months to complete.

"We haven't gone in yet so it's hard to estimate exactly," he said.

Hannemann has said he thinks such a probe is premature.

The five council members who called for the audit were: Barbara Marshall, Romy Cachola, Donovan Dela Cruz, Charles Djou and Ann Kobayashi. The group called for more transparency and accountability over the transit project, but did not allege any malfeasance.

Dela Cruz yesterday supported the decision to audit the rail project.

"There may be something to it (or) there may not be," he said. "If the audit clears it, then at least the public can have confidence in the project."

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June 15, 2008

## Transit redevelopment needs voice of the people

Once a community is established, the residents sometimes get a say in how it changes, but in piecemeal fashion: Should a shopping mall go here, a subdivision added there?

But now residents across many parts of O'ahu will have the rarest of opportunities: A chance to reshape large portions of their communities, from the ground up.

Transit-oriented development — known in urban-planning circles by the acronym TOD — offers a distinct upside to hosting a transit line through the community. In the process of bringing the rail through town, residents can participate in deciding what will be built around it.

So it's imperative that residents speak up about what they want in the "special district" that will emerge. These decisions will define a community's characteristics for generations to come.

Waipahu has already embarked on this process. It's the first community along Honolulu's planned transit corridor to hold community workshops and form a grassroots advisory committee to keep a finger on the pulse of the neighborhood.

Three community workshops have been held. The turnout was robust at first but then diminished; not everybody is inclined to go to town meetings. So the advisory panel is planning to meet July 16 with businesses that border the rail line and would be affected by redevelopment. That's the right move.

There is a good deal of anxiety among the businesses about how redevelopment will play out, and whether there will be enough incentives to make any investment pay off.

Other communities down the line are watching Waipahu and waiting for their own discussions to begin.

The City Council is still uncertain how much specific direction to put in the legislation enabling the planning process. The bill is still sitting in committee.

A generic blueprint might be easier, but it's best to let each community craft its own district plan, complete with the incentives designed to encourage the development that's right for that neighborhood.

The Waipahu plan is moving along — the goal is to submit the plan to the Planning Commission by the end of the year. The city should try to stick to that timetable so other communities can move ahead with their planning as soon as possible.

It's easy to postpone planning for rail redevelopment until it starts to look more like a reality. But here's a reality check: Just last week, hundreds of businesses hoping to take part in construction turned out for another city workshop.

It's closer than it looks.

Timeliness is of the essence, and the voice of Waipahu residents must be heard. The next large public workshop isn't set until October, but residents meanwhile can catch up on the process so far.

If Waipahu residents want to help direct the way their home will look in the coming decades, now's their chance.

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Vol. 13, Issue 167 - Sunday, June 15, 2008



## Transit Matters

Al Chase

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# Anti-railers' logic is as clear as the H-1 on a Monday morning

It was 8:30 Sunday morning and, as I sat down to read the Star-Bulletin, there was a knock at my door.

A lady, a neighbor, was standing there with a clipboard displaying that repugnant "Stop Rail Now" petition. Strike one.

She didn't know I grew up using commuter rail on a regular basis to go to and return from Boston, or that I think rail mass transit is the most sane way to get around any city in this country.

I told her there was no way I would sign that petition.

She then said that wasn't why she was there. She wanted my Star-Bulletin when I was done with it to read an op-ed piece by Jerry Coffee. Strike two for not even buying the S-B and Strike Three for even mentioning Coffee's name.

I said I save all those anti-rail, anti-progress articles that stab the citizens of West Oahu and the Leeward Coast in the back.

(I found out later that Coffee wasn't bashing rail this time as he did in five MidWeek columns, but was bashing the Star-Bulletin, Barack Obama and all of us who might vote for him.)

So, I asked anti-rail lady what she and her cohorts have against the people of West Oahu/ Leeward Coast who spend an hour or more getting into Honolulu, then an hour getting back. What is wrong with them having another transportation option?

She said, "The cost."

I said millions of dollars were spent widening Kalaniana'ole Highway twice to ease traffic to our neighborhood.

She said, "I have no problem with that."

That's when I figured the anti-rail letter writers from the Windward side probably had no problem with the millions - or was it billions - of dollars spent boring six holes in the Koolau Mountains for three highways and that everlasting footprint.

I asked anti-rail lady if she saw the national news story about commuter rail ridership being up 27 percent in Seattle, at a 24-year high in Chicago and up more than 10 percent in several other cities. Or that commuters made 85 million more trips in the first quarter of 2008 than 2007. (You can verify this at [www.apta.com](http://www.apta.com))

She said, "I didn't know it was that high in Seattle, but commuter rail is OK on the mainland."

So if it is OK for the mainland, why do the anti-rail people say it won't work here? They never give a reason.

When the anti-railers invade your neighborhood, ask them if they have done a comprehensive survey of, say, 50,000 or more homes in West Oahu to find out what those citizens think about the opportunity to have rail transit.

I then asked anti-rail lady why there has been a marked increase in the number of riders on the city ferry system.

She said, "Gas prices."

Right. Two words you never hear from the anti-rail lobby.

I asked if she knew there were 800 pass-ups by TheBus drivers in a recent month, most on routes from the very area the rail transit system's first segment will be built.

She knew a pass-up meant the bus was full and the driver did not stop to pick up waiting

customers. Her solution: More buses.

TheBus has 525 buses out on our streets now. The first one roars past my house up the hill at the end of Lunalilo Home Road at 5:20 a.m. and the last one clears the area at 1:10 a.m.

Oh yes, the full-page anti-rail ad in last Sunday's paper mentions there is no planned widening of the H-1 to accommodate growth in Leeward Oahu. There are already five lanes on both sides in some areas. What do these people want, five more lanes on each side?

Didn't Los Angeles try building freeway after freeway on top of freeway? Now there are leaders there who look forward and have started a rail system that should reach 400 miles by 2020.

If you have lived here as long as I have (the Pali Tunnels weren't open when I arrived), you are aware of the hatchet job done on Mayor Frank Fasi's attempt to build a mass transit system that set this city back 20 years.

If it weren't for a myopic few, some of whom are still around, the city would be looking at extensions to either Mililani/Wahiawa, the university or Waikiki now instead of trying to lay the first rail.

Think carefully about family, friends and fellow workers who have to battle a worsening traffic problem every day before signing any petition that will adversely affect their lives.

Better yet, ask the anti-rail people if they care about the citizens this system will serve.

Al Chase, a retired Star-Bulletin sports writer, lives in Hawaii Kai.

[Read 3 comments »](#)

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Vol. 13, Issue 168 - Monday, June 16, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

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### Japan should be role model for Hawaii rail

While Hawaii dithers over mass transit, on Saturday the last major underground rail line was scheduled to open in Tokyo. During the last 80 years, lines have been continually added, and the system now carries 8 million passengers per day over 200 miles of track to 300 stations.

The trains are fast, almost always on time, and much safer than a car. You can read the newspaper or listen to your iPod rather than pay attention to driving. It would cost me four times as much to travel a comparable distance by car in Hawaii. The newer trains use 1/20 the energy to transport a person than a car would.

Why has the system been constructed? Because these are volcanic islands without significant amounts of fossil fuel, like Hawaii, and because they know that the oil is running out.

Joel Muraoka  
Tokyo and Waipahu

June 16, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

### **rail**

## **Just small number of people in opposition**

Grassroot Institute President Jamie Story's June 9 letter attacking Honolulu's rail transit system underscored the incestuous nature of the organized opposition to this important action.

The story invoked a "study" by Panos Prevedouros to dispute a significant new report by the Brookings Institution that found that many cities with rail transit systems have lower carbon emissions.

While the story duly noted that Prevedouros is a professor at the University of Hawai'i, it failed to mention that he is also the president of the Hawaii Highway Users Alliance, an organization of taxi and tour bus operators, car dealers, road work contractors and other auto-based special interest groups.

Prevedouros is also a key member of Honolulutraffic.com, a group that includes many of the same people and promotes the same agenda as the Hawaii Highway Users Alliance.

And who is the driving force behind this group? It's perennial mass-transit opponent Cliff Slater, who has led much of the pro-freeway lobbying for the past two decades. Slater is also a board member of — you guessed it — the Grassroot Institute, as is Charlie's Taxi President Dale Evans, who is also a very vocal member of the aforementioned organizations.

It is time to cut through the shibai and understand that a small number of people, with interlocking memberships in groups formed to promote narrow agendas, are trying to drum up opposition to mass transit for their own selfish reasons.

Matthew Choy | Honolulu

# Honolulu Traffic Some of the Worst in U.S.



Written by KGMB9 News - news@kgmb9.com

June 18, 2008 07:02 PM

A new report says Honolulu has some of the worst traffic in the country. A Seattle-based company called INRIX says our freeway traffic on a Thursday afternoon between 5pm and 6pm is worse than any other roadway in the nation. The study also says we have two of the worst traffic bottlenecks in the country in Moanalua and Lunalilo. Overall Honolulu ranks 38th out of 100 U.S. cities for its traffic mess. The company gathered data compiled in 2007 from 31-thousand urban highways.



Last Updated ( June 18, 2008 07:16 PM )

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Close Window

June 18, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

### **rail**

## **Don't be fooled again, support rail transit**

I don't know whether to laugh or get upset when I read about Stop Rail Now advocates. Their voodoo math is comical. Don't be fooled.

They say there are better alternatives to rail, but offer no meaningful solutions. They want to stop the city's rail project to build toll roads and high-occupancy toll lanes instead. This would put more, not fewer, cars on the road. But they want you to believe this will solve traffic congestion and can be a viable alternative to rail. They say adding more buses would supplement the HOT lanes. Buses will only add to the traffic congestion. Does anyone like being stuck behind a slow-moving city bus?

They say their alternative will save tax dollars. But the general excise tax surcharge won't fund these HOT lanes, so how will we pay for these new highways? With new taxes? And who wants to pay \$10 each way on these toll roads after paying to build them? They call them "Lexus lanes" on the Mainland.

The Stop Rail Now group consists of four bus companies, taxi operators and automobile dealers, some of who opposed the light-rail project in 1992.

Local forecasts predict a slumping economy that will only get worse. Gas prices are over \$4 a gallon and rising.

The only bright spot is the rail-transit project, which will bring in new jobs, new investment and new economic development.

Rail transit is long overdue for Honolulu, and these same people want to stop it. Don't be fooled again.

Lei Matsuura | Honolulu



Vol. 13, Issue 170 - Wednesday, June 18, 2008

## Rail boosters launch media ads

### Two groups are trying to stymie an effort to put an anti-transit initiative on the ballot

#### STORY SUMMARY »

Several local organizations are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on advertisements supporting or opposing the city's \$4 billion rail transit system.

Two organizations, the Hawaii Carpenters Union and a new group called Support Rail Transit, have stepped up in supporting the city's proposed 20-mile elevated mass transit project in the face of a looming initiative by an anti-rail group to stop the system.

The ads, appearing on radio and television in the coming weeks, attempt to dispel messages placed by Stop Rail Now. The anti-rail group has collected 20,000 of the 45,000 signatures it needs by Aug. 1 to place a question on the November ballot.

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#### FULL STORY »

**By Laurie Au**  
[lau@starbulletin.com](mailto:lau@starbulletin.com)

Two organizations are launching aggressive television and radio advertisements endorsing the city's \$4 billion rail transit system, countering efforts by an anti-rail group that has been gaining momentum to stop the project.

The advertisements, paid by the Hawaii Carpenters Union and a newly formed group called Support Rail Transit, echo many of Mayor's Mufi Hannemann's views that a 20-mile elevated rail system from Kapolei to Ala Moana is the best option to alleviate the island's growing traffic

congestion.

Leaders of the two pro-rail organizations say they have been frustrated with recent coverage by the news media of Stop Rail Now, a nonprofit organization hoping to collect 45,000 signatures by Aug. 1 to place a question on the November ballot to block the project.

"The last thing we want to do is give the public the impression that the anti-rail minority is a majority," said Ron Taketa, financial secretary and business representative for the Carpenters Union, the largest construction union in the state with about 5,900 members.

Dan Douglass, a Stop Rail Now organizer, said he expects more advertisements countering their movement in the coming weeks. "That means we're making a difference," he said yesterday.

The purpose of the union's two commercials is to "dispel" messages promoted by Stop Rail Now, Taketa said.

The union contends that government has always paid for facilities and services all over Oahu, including the H-3 freeway. It also disputes comments that a steel wheel on steel rail system is noisy and says that steel systems are used all over the country.

The union has bought at least 260 commercial spots per month for three months that will air during prime-time morning and evening shows and sporting events. Taketa declined to give the total cost of the advertisements, though the total could add up to hundreds of thousands of dollars.

For example, KITV 4 charges about \$750 for a 30-second commercial during prime-time television hours during the summer, according to its vice president for sales, Bill Gaeth. The union's commercials are scheduled to run until the end of the summer, and television ads by Support Rail Transit are set to start tonight.

The state's largest public relations firm, McNeil Wilson Communications, created Support Rail Transit about two weeks ago after receiving messages from groups and individuals angered over Stop Rail Now's campaign, said one of the company's principals David Wilson.

Wilson said he does not have an exact figure on money spent on the radio advertisements but estimates the group has spent about \$5,000 so far. He also declined to say which organizations and individuals are associated with Support Rail Transit.

"The anti-rail side also neglects to say their solution will make you pay twice," the group's radio advertisement says. "First, the toll road would be built with your tax dollars, but you wouldn't be able to drive on them unless you pay a toll each way. And that's after you spend a fortune filling up your car."

Stop Rail Now spent \$20,000 recently to insert a petition in MidWeek, a sister publication of

the Star-Bulletin, and two-full page ads in the Star-Bulletin.

Douglass said the group has received several thousand petitions after these advertisements, bringing their total to about 20,000 signatures as of yesterday.

[Read all 31 comments »](#)

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Vol. 13, Issue 170 - Wednesday, June 18, 2008

## Honolulu's traffic among worst in U.S.

**Thursday rush hours on isle roads are the most congested in the nation, a study says**

**STORY SUMMARY »**

Forty hours sounds like a typical workweek. But that's how long motorists are stuck in traffic each week where Moanalua Freeway's eastbound lanes meet the H-1 freeway from the airport.

That logjam contributes to Honolulu's rating as the worst U.S. city for rush-hour slowdowns, according to a private survey released by a Seattle firm.

"If you happen to be driving on a Thursday from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. on its main highways, you're no longer in the Aloha State," says the report compiled by INRIX. "You're in the worst place and worst hour of any single roadway in the U.S."

The study looked at the prevalence of traffic congestion, ranking Honolulu 38th of 100 cities, and also at how much slower traffic was during congested times.

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**FULL STORY »**

**By Gene Park**  
[gpark@starbulletin.com](mailto:gpark@starbulletin.com)

Cities like Los Angeles and Chicago would top any list of the nation's worst traffic areas, including a study released yesterday by a provider of national traffic trends. But Honolulu?

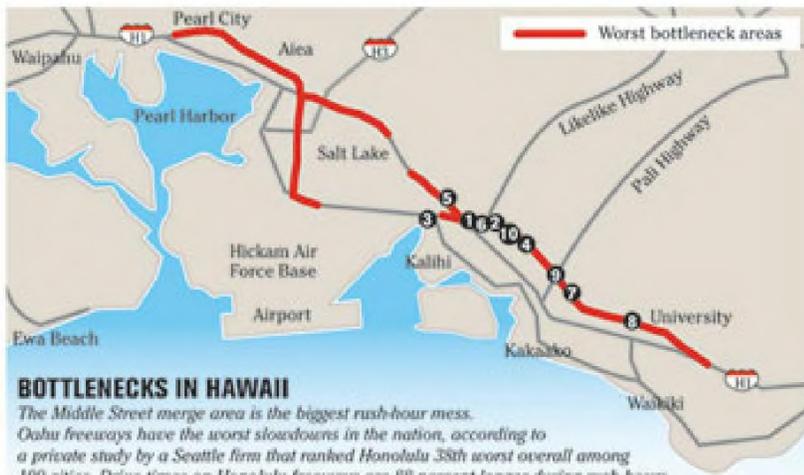
"If you happen to be driving on a Thursday from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. on its main highways, you're no longer in the Aloha State," according to the report compiled by INRIX. "You're in the worst place and worst hour of any single roadway in the U.S., taking 88 percent more time to get where you're going than if there were no congestion."

INRIX, a privately held Seattle-based corporation, yesterday released its National Traffic Scorecard, and ranked Honolulu as having the worst drive-time travel time in the nation.

### **LONGEST DRIVE TIMES IN THE U.S.**

*The top five worst drive-time travel time metropolitan areas in the United States:*

- |    |                   |
|----|-------------------|
| 1. | Honolulu          |
| 2. | Los Angeles       |
| 3. | Bridgeport, Conn. |



**BOTTLENECKS IN HAWAII**

The Middle Street merge area is the biggest rush-hour mess. Oahu freeways have the worst slowdowns in the nation, according to a private study by a Seattle firm that ranked Honolulu 38th worst overall among 100 cities. Drive times on Honolulu freeways are 88 percent longer during rush hours, the study found, a slowdown worse than even in Los Angeles.

Bottleneck Rank	Road direction	Segment/interchange	Hours of congestion*	Average speed when congested
1.	Moanalua Freeway (East)	H-1 freeway	40	8.0
2.	H-1 (Eastbound)	Kalihi Street	47	12.6
3.	H-1 (Eastbound)	Middle Street	35	8.5
4.	H-1 (Eastbound)	Liliha Street	47	14.9
5.	Moanalua Freeway (Eastbound)	Funston Road	19	7.3
6.	H-1 (Eastbound)	Palama Street/Olomea Street	41	15.2
7.	H-1 (Eastbound)	S. Vineyard Blvd./Ward Ave.	45	17.0
8.	H-1 (Westbound)	McCully Street	28	12.5
9.	H-1 (Eastbound)	Pali Highway	33	17.2
10.	H-1 (Eastbound)	Houghtailing Street	19	10.8

\*Bottleneck congestion is defined as times when average hourly speed is half or less than the uncongested speed for that road segment in hours per week. STAR BULLETIN

1. Los Angeles
2. New York
3. Bridgeport, Conn.
4. San Francisco
5. New York City

[ [click here to enlarge image](#) ]

"Travel time" means comparing the amount of time driving during a peak traffic period to a noncongested period. But the survey doesn't list Honolulu as having the worst traffic congestion: The city ranks 38th out of 100 cities surveyed.

Founded in 2004, INRIX provides real-time traffic information to more than 55 clients in North American and Europe, including various global positioning system companies, MapQuest and Microsoft. Its network includes more than 800,000 GPS-enabled vehicles and cell phones.

Honolulu also has two of the 100 worst bottleneck areas in the country. Ranked 41st are the eastbound Moanalua Freeway lanes by the H-1 freeway interchange, with an average congested speed of 8 mph.

And ranked 87th are the eastbound H-1 lanes by Kalihi Street, with an average congested speed of 12.6 mph.

Those spots are the worst and second-worst bottleneck areas in Honolulu.

The third-worst bottleneck, and the 104th in the nation, is the H-1 freeway eastbound near Middle Street.

"Regions like southwest Connecticut, Honolulu and Austin may not rank high in terms of overall congestion, but it's a safe bet that if you are on highways in these regions in peak hours, congestion is the norm," the report stated.

The company used 2007 data of about 31,000 urban highway roadway

**MOST CONGESTED**

The top 10 most congested metropolitan areas in the U.S.:

1. Los Angeles
2. New York

segments for its first-ever compilation of congestion data.

Although Thursday might be the worst drive-time day for Honolulu, Friday was the worst day nationwide.

Los Angeles, New York City and Chicago were the worst, second- and third-worst congestion areas in the country, respectively.

The Bridgeport, Stamford and Norwalk areas of Connecticut -- and Los Angeles -- followed Honolulu in having the worst travel times.

The company saw traffic congestion increase by about 2 percent from 2006 to 2007, but stated that rising fuel prices might stem the rate of growth.

"The worst traffic bottleneck in our city is directly across from our corporate headquarters, so we're definitely feeling the pain ourselves," said Bryan Mistele, INRIX founder, in a press release.

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6.	San Francisco
7.	Houston
8.	Boston
9.	Seattle
10.	Atlanta
38.	<b>Honolulu</b>

STAR-BULLETIN



Vol. 13, Issue 170 - Wednesday, June 18, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

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[Write a Letter to the Editor](#)

### **'Stop rail' critic failed to convince**

I cannot find even one clear, logical or convincing argument in Al Chase's article Sunday opposing the rail petition drive.

He says the petition is "repugnant," as though it is a foul deed for citizens to exercise their rights and duties under the law. Strike one.

He says those who oppose rail "never give a reason," are "myopic" and have done a "hatchet job." Chase cannot have done the slightest research on this question. Extensive work is documented at [honolulutraffic.com](http://honolulutraffic.com), [stoprailnow.com](http://stoprailnow.com) and in the research of Panos Prevedouros at the University of Hawaii. More efficient and less expensive alternatives are at hand. Who's wielding the hatchet? Strike two.

Worst of all, Chase questions whether petition volunteers, even care about their fellow citizens, while "invading" their neighborhoods to get signatures on a petition that will "adversely affect their lives."

In fact, the Stop Rail Now volunteers are giving their time and money to stop the biggest boondoggle, the biggest source of graft, the most expensive and least effective public works project ever put forth in Honolulu. Strike three, he's out.

Michael G. Palcic  
Honolulu

June 18, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

### **Opposition to higher taxes is narrow agenda**

A June 16 letter described rail opponents as having a narrow agenda and selfish reasons for trying to bring the issue to a vote.

The letter writer is correct. Opposition to even-higher taxes is a narrow agenda, but one that is at the heart of why it is so expensive to live here.

And, yes, it is selfish to want to keep more of one's own money. However, it is shibai to accuse citizens taking an active role in trying to protect Honolulu from a financially reckless project of some personal financial agenda.

One of the rail opponents mentioned owns a taxi company. A train would be great for that business!

Sally Youngblood | Hale'iwa

June 18, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

### **Rail will save our children time, money**

I travel to the Mainland monthly for business, and continue to choose rail transit when moving from airports to downtown areas.

Three weeks ago, I left downtown Portland and took the 20-minute ride on rail transit to the airport for \$2.05 and saw the most stunning view of Mt. Hood against a blue Oregon sky.

I hope my friends and neighbors can stop fighting this system, which will save our children valuable time and money. Remember, Rome wasn't built in a day.

Jeffrey Zimmerman | Honolulu

June 20, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

### **jobs**

## **Rail project will bring money into economy**

Reports from the University of Hawai'i Economic Research Organization paint a bleak future for our local economy.

Weaknesses in the visitor, retail and building industries are disturbing, with a prolonged slump until at least 2010.

At the same time, the city's rail-construction workshop revealed that the proposed rail-transit project is expected to create 11,000 new jobs, of which 4,700 are for construction. These are local jobs, and that is good news.

But, more importantly, the federal government would contribute at least \$900 million to the rail project. With the private sector pulling back in spending and investment, this infusion of federal dollars could soften the blow of an impending recession in the Hawai'i economy.

These federal dollars will be money in the bank to see us through the tough economic times that are coming.

So think about it before you sign those petitions to stop the rail project.

Jon Serikawa | Honolulu



Vol. 13, Issue 172 - Friday, June 20, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

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[Write a Letter to the Editor](#)

### **Real cost of TheBus is borne by taxpayers**

Bus fares remaining the same for five years is a policy that only a tax-collecting government can do in the face of fuel price hikes ("City plans no fare increase for TheBus," [Star-Bulletin, June 19](#)).

The focus on keeping the fare the same for five years being good news to residents fails to note that for every \$1 collected at the fare box; \$3 must be paid by city taxpayers (according to the story, the fare box collects only 27 to 30 percent of operating costs).

Just look at the tax and fee increases in Honolulu over the last five years and one can quickly understand how a \$125-plus million bus subsidy can be hidden by city politicians.

The media and the taxpayer just do not get it!

Feeling good by paying low bus fares out of one pocket while being nickel-and-dimed with high taxes and fees out of the other pocket is a politician's dream for getting re-elected. Maybe this is what is called public funding of elections?

Residents should look at the taxes and fees they pay as part of their rent, grocery or medical bills, sewerage and water bills, and property taxes to see if they really feel good about the bus fare staying the same for five years.

**Paul E. Smith**  
Honolulu

June 21, 2008

## From rail to ferry, and life in Isles

By David Shapiro

**fIASHback** — Transit honey and political money top our weekly "fIASHback" on the news that amused and confused:

- Some 300 company reps attended a city seminar on how to get contracts for the \$3.7-billion rail transit system. I'm glad I wasn't the guy who had to mop up the saliva from the floor after that.
- Barack Obama, nicknamed "Obomber" in his Punahou basketball days, missed the rim when he reneged on a pledge to accept public election financing. Broken campaign promises are such "Obummers."
- An international survey ranked Honolulu as the most livable U.S. city, partly because of our political stability. Yeah, the living is easy when elections are uncontested and you don't have to worry about voting.
- The Marines are circling the Humvees around the Privacy Act and refusing to say whether an Internet video of a Kane'ohe Marine throwing a puppy off a cliff in Iraq was authentic. The public relations dodge is code-named "Semper Fido."
- Hawaii Superferry is lobbying to make its ships more attractive to the military. Hmmm, a boat that can't get past a few kids protesting on surfboards isn't exactly battleship material.
- Environmentalists are "shocked" that solar energy companies oppose legislation that would make them money by requiring solar water heating in new homes. See what happens when you spend too much time in the sun?
- Gov. Linda Lingle signed a bill to deter prostitution by making habitual solicitation a misdemeanor. That's like battling obesity by letting off banana cream cheesecake as a light appetizer.
- The PUC wants to let Molokai Ranch double the water bills of local residents the company just laid off. What did these poor people do to deserve "kick me" signs pinned on their backs?
- HMSA says we'll have 24-hour access to our doctors with its new online system. Sure, the docs will get up at 3 a.m. to tell us how to stop our hammertoes from throbbing. More likely they'll teach their dogs to type.
- Lingle says high oil prices take \$7 billion a year out the Hawai'i economy and put it in the pockets of foreign governments. Well, the part of it that doesn't end up in Republican campaign coffers, anyway.

And the quote of the week ... from Honolulu police Maj. Frank Fujii, on dismal Hawai'i scores in a national drivers test: "Who can say whether people are not knowledgeable about the rules of the road or if they choose consciously to disregard the law?" Whatever, as long as they "Click It or Ticket," right?

David Shapiro, a veteran Hawai'i journalist, can be reached by e-mail at [dave@volcanicash.net](mailto:dave@volcanicash.net). His columns are archived at [www.volcanicash.net](http://www.volcanicash.net). Read his daily blog at <http://volcanicash.honadvblogs.com>.



Vol. 13, Issue 173 - Saturday, June 21, 2008

## OUR OPINION

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# Pro- and anti-rail efforts should spur taxpayer involvement

### THE ISSUE

Two groups have begun a media campaign in support of the city's rail transit project.

WITH so much at stake, it's no wonder that the city's rail transit project has drawn the attention and the financial investment of organizations that see opportunity in the venture.

The recent entry of an aggressive group opposed to the undertaking has prompted response from pro-rail contingents that will spend big money in media campaigns to get their point across.

None of this is improper. In fact, the activities might encourage indifferent taxpayers to explore the issue more deeply as the city moves forward with a project that will change land values, shift development and urban renewal, alter visible features of the island and shape the economy for years to come.

The Hawaii Carpenters Union has bought at least 260 commercial television spots per month for three months, generally to air during prime time and sporting events, to push for the \$4 billion rail system. The union's support is clearly in line with its interests; its 5,900 members will gain job opportunities as a result of rail.

Less transparent is Support Rail Transit, created by McNeil Wilson Communications, the largest public relations company in Hawaii.

One of the firm's principals, David Wilson, declined to disclose to the Star-Bulletin's Laurie Au who is behind the

newly formed nonprofit group. The group's Web site is equally vague, stating only that it "consists of a cross-section of Hawaii organizations and individuals who believe rail transit is an essential element in a sustainable Oahu."

While there is no suggestion of impropriety, the group's message will be clouded by the anonymity since people prefer to know whose endorsement they are hearing.

Both groups hope to counter Stop Rail Now's petition drive to put a question on the ballot of the November elections. The question's wording - "Shall an ordinance be adopted to prohibit trains and rail transit in the City and County of Honolulu" - doesn't exactly match the group's assertion that its purpose is simply to allow taxpayers a say in a decision on transit. Instead, it would ban the city from doing what elected officials, after years of debate and consideration, have chosen to do until the ordinance is repealed.

If Stop Rail Now succeeds in getting nearly 45,000 eligible voters to sign its petitions, it then will have to persuade a majority to approve the ballot question. In that case, a second wave of public persuasion efforts will begin. By then, we hope, taxpayers will have looked beyond polished ads and sound bites to make an informed choice about their city and their future.

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June 22, 2008

## Ancient burials likely in transit path

City expects to have to deal with burial sites, archaeological artifacts

By SEAN HAO  
Advertiser Staff Writer

The city's planned \$3.7 billion elevated commuter rail has a high potential of encountering Native Hawaiian burials and other archaeological artifacts once construction enters urban Honolulu.

Traditional Hawaiian burials are generally unmarked graves, and their locations have resulted in setbacks for developers and alarmed some Native Hawaiians and archaeologists. The issue of how to deal with the discovery of iwi, or burial remains, arose at the Kaka'ako Wal-Mart and Ward Villages projects and likely could reoccur if the city proceeds with plans to build a 20-mile rapid transit system linking East Kapolei to Ala Moana.

According to a preliminary study, there's a reasonable potential 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.

Other portions of the route along Farrington and Kamehameha highways and an airport spur have a medium potential of encountering such sites, according to an October 2006 draft environmental consequences report prepared for the city by Parsons Brinckerhoff, the New York-based project manager.

More details about the project's potential impact on archaeological resources are expected to be disclosed when the city releases a draft environmental impact statement later this summer. Moses Aiai, an attorney for the Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation, agreed the city could encounter iwi in urban Honolulu. That makes it critical that the city conduct archaeological surveys at each location where digging will occur, he said.

"I would expect some kind of an impact on burial sites or other historic sites in that area," Aiai said. "That's what's so important about doing this sort of analysis up front before you begin digging, because you want to still have the flexibility ... and you're able to look at design alternatives."

## Iwi instances

The Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation unsuccessfully sought to temporarily halt construction at both the Wal-Mart and Ward Villages sites after iwi were discovered there. The group, which represents people it says are descendants of those remains, contends that developers and the state don't conduct adequate research into the potential for disturbing iwi prior to construction projects.

About 42 sets of remains were found at the Ke'eaumoku Wal-Mart site after construction began in late 2002. The Wal-Mart now is open, but iwi that were unearthed during construction have not been reburied because of ongoing legal proceedings.

Separately, about 60 sets of remains were discovered at the site of General Growth's Ward Villages development, mauka of Ward Centre. Eleven sets of remains were noted during a 2006 archaeological survey of the site. Work, which was halted for a

time, resumed after the O'ahu Island Burial Council voted to allow the developer to move those 11 remains.

When workers went to remove the initial remains, more burials were discovered.

The finished project is to include a Whole Foods Market, a 17-story apartment building, retail shops and a parking garage at the diamondhead end of Auahi Street. The Whole Foods Market, which was to open at the end of this year, was slightly delayed and is now set to open in January. In addition, construction of the 218-unit rental apartment building is on hold following a state decision that 30 remains must be preserved in place. Thirty unearthened remains were recently reinterred in a nearby central burial area.

General Growth is looking at redesign options that will allow the apartment project to proceed, said Jan Yokota, General Growth's vice president of development. Developers need to be prepared for added costs and delays when dealing with archaeological sites in a culturally sensitive way, she added.

"It's often difficult to know in advance" what will be found underground, Yokota said. "It typically happens that it's during the construction process that you encounter the iwi.

"One thing that's important for all developers is to know, as best as they can, (is) to do as much proactive research initially and to continue to work with the families (if iwi are found)," she said.

## Consultations

Mayor Mufi Hannemann's office didn't respond to questions last week asking what the city will do if it encounters burials or archaeological items during construction of the rail system.

If iwi are found, they may be preserved in place, if there's flexibility in the rail's construction design, according to the city's 2006 environmental consequence report. Any human remains impacted by the rail project would be handled within applicable state and federal laws, the report said.

The report said the city will consult with the O'ahu Island Burial Council and the state Historic Preservation Division about the project's impacts on archaeological resources.

The Historic Preservation Division operates under the Department of Land and Natural Resources. The division said it responds to approximately two to three inadvertent discoveries statewide each week, and is involved in up to 250 burial cases annually. The division is charged with preserving and maintaining cultural sites, including management of burial sites more than 50 years old. The O'ahu Island Burial Council makes recommendations on how to handle inadvertent finds of burials on the island.

Factors that have been considered when deciding whether to preserve human remains in place include whether descendants can be located, the concentration of burials and the timing of the discovery of remains.

The Historic Preservation Division said it is in preliminary discussions with the city and project consultants regarding potential cultural and historic resources along the route.

"As the discussions are preliminary because the route has not been definitely determined, we have not made any determination as to the effect of the corridor on historic or cultural sites," the division wrote in an e-mail to the Advertiser.

According to the city's preliminary research, the Iwilei-to-Waikiki portion of the train route has the greatest potential for impacting archaeological resources because of the area's intensive land use through pre-contact and historical times.

## Making adjustments

The likelihood of encountering iwi depends on the depths, locations and amount of digging needed to build the elevated commuter rail, said Thomas Dye, president of the Society for Hawaiian Archaeology. Coastal areas with subsurface beach sand are more likely to contain iwi. That's because sand was the preferred location for burials. Remains buried in sand also remain better preserved than remains buried at higher, wetter elevations, Dye said.

"Presumably the (city's) archaeologists have been doing their homework and they know where to find the sand deposits and where burials are likely," Dye said. "Those kinds of things always pose some delays. They're usually not insurmountable though."

Ideally the rail project's footings can be moved to accommodate any historical or archaeological sites that are discovered, Dye said.

Design changes "happen very typically now in Hawai'i, where people will redesign something so that human burials can be avoided," he said. "That's becoming more and more common."

That's what occurred recently after three sets of human remains were discovered at the construction site of First Hawaiian Bank's new Kailua branch. The construction plans were revised following the discovery, said bank spokesman Brandt Farias. Those remains are being left in place and a monument was added to the site, he said.

Farias said he did not know how much the changes may have cost the bank.

"If there was additional cost, we're happy to do it, because it was the right thing to do for the families and the community," he said.

June 22, 2008

## Gas-hog owners can't sell them

Sales of gas-guzzlers by dealerships shrinking, along with trade-in offers

*BY RICK DAYSOG*

*Advertiser Staff Writer*

Tammy Fontanilla loves her red 2004 Dodge Ram pickup truck, but when gas prices began to soar last year, she felt she had no choice but to put it up for sale.

Problem is, there's little demand for a vehicle that gets 13 miles per gallon and costs nearly \$100 to fill up.

"Nobody is buying gas-guzzlers," said Fontanilla, a Salt Lake resident.

"I can't even trade it in for what I owe because dealers are telling me that it would be on the lot for a long time."

Once the symbol of middle-class comfort, sales of used sport utility vehicles and full-sized trucks in Hawai'i are tanking as gasoline prices have risen above \$4.20 a gallon, local car dealers said.

Despite a flood of attractive manufacturer incentives — such as zero-percent-down plans or low interest-rate loans — light truck sales are expected to drop by about 11.7 percent this year to about 29,000 vehicles, according to the Hawaii Automobile Dealers Association.

At the same time, used truck and SUV models are selling \$3,000 to \$5,000 below their blue-book value, local car dealers said.

For larger trucks, the discount is steeper. A Ford F-150 that sold for \$17,000 last year might fetch \$9,000 today, said Frank Caliri, owner of Franktheusedcarguy in Kailua.

The glut can be confirmed by looking at the classified sections in local newspapers and on the Internet, where there's no shortage of ads for Dodge Rams, Toyota Tundras, GMC Sierras and Ford F-series trucks.

"I've been in this business for 22 years and I've never seen anything like this. ... They have dropped like rocks," Caliri said.

"Three years ago, people who didn't even need a truck were buying trucks. Now they're getting rid of them."

For truck owners like Fontanilla, it's not easy to get rid of something that can weigh three tons or more. She said she's listed her Dodge truck for \$19,000 on the Internet for nine months but hasn't gotten a serious nibble.

Dealers are offering \$8,000 on a trade-in but Fontanilla still owes \$18,000 on the truck, which she bought four years ago for \$30,000.

"Not only are we getting screwed by gas prices but car dealers are also screwing us," she said.

## Luxury driving is dying

To be sure, local truck and SUV dealers are also feeling the pain.

Mike McKenna, owner of Mike McKenna Windward Ford, said he used to sell anywhere from 35 to 40 new trucks a month at his Kailua lot. Last month, he sold seven.

Given the low trade-in value, many truck owners are parking their rigs in their garages and doing most of their driving with a smaller sedan, McKenna said.

Buyers, meanwhile, can't get enough of more fuel-efficient cars and hybrids. McKenna said sales of Ford Focus and the smaller Ford Explorer SUV have done well at his dealership in recent months.

"I wouldn't say there's a mass exodus (from trucks and SUVs) but there has been a significant decline in value," added Greg Lelesch, special projects manager at Aloha Auto Auction in Mapunapuna. "People want fuel economy."

Sales of large commercial trucks also are hurting.

Conrad Feltro, manager of Trucks, Cars and Equipment in Mapunapuna, said sales of large flat-bed trucks, box trucks and other commercial vehicles were down about 30 percent last month because of soaring fuel prices and worries about the local economy among contractors and other large business customers.

"The guys who carry big trucks are hurting now," said Aaron Campbell, owner of E Cars Hawaii, who operates a used-car lot in 'Aiea and sells cars on consignment through the Internet.

Luxury trucks and SUVs, such as the Hummer, are probably the biggest victims of that shift.

Sales of Hummers, once a symbol of conspicuous consumption, are off more than 18 percent so far this year, according to figures compiled by the Hawaii Automobile Dealers Association.

Nationally, the decline is steeper, and General Motors Corp. earlier this month said it is reviewing its Hummer brand for possible sale or revamping.

One Kailua resident said she's been trying to sell her 3-year-old Hummer H2 for several months but hasn't gotten any offers. The owner, who declined to give her name, said she bought the vehicle new but can't afford the gasoline bills for a ride that gets only 10 to 12 miles per gallon.

"I can't even give it away," she said.

## Tipping point at pump

Peter Flachsbarth, a University of Hawai'i professor, believes that consumer spending patterns hit a major turning point when gasoline prices rose above \$4 a gallon.

Flachsbarth, a professor in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, said local and national polls seem to indicate that consumers are more willing to trade in, sell or downsize their gas-guzzling automobiles in recent months.

"There's a sense that this is a permanent shift," Flachsbart said.

Darin Asuncion said soaring fuel prices have prompted him to downsize. The Kapolei resident sold his 2005 Nissan Titan truck three weeks ago for \$18,500 and bought a Toyota 4Runner SUV, which gets much better gas mileage. Asuncion said he could no longer afford the \$85-a-week gas bill on his Nissan truck.

"It was a really good deal but I guess someone else can afford the gasoline bill," he said.

Ka'a'awa resident Dennis Hollier said he's also looking to downsize.

Hollier, a freelance writer, recently placed an ad on the Internet seeking to trade his 1998 Jeep Wrangler Sahara for a better-mileage SUV such as a Toyota RAV4 or Honda CRV.

Hollier said his Jeep, which gets about 15 miles per gallon, can go through more than \$40 a day in fuel costs.

"This definitely cuts into your earnings," he said.

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Vol. 13, Issue 174 - Sunday, June 22, 2008

## OUR OPINION

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# TheBus still a bargain in era of rising prices

### THE ISSUE

The city has no plans to increase bus fares as ridership continues to grow.

Honolulu bus fares appear to be bucking the trend of rising prices of almost everything in an economy buffeted by soaring fuel costs.

This might not last long, but for the time being, the city sees no need to pump up ticket fees, a good thing since more people are leaving their cars in their driveways to save money as gasoline gets more expensive by the day.

Ridership on TheBus in February hit the highest level since October 2003, which bus and city officials also attribute to increasingly crowded thoroughfares in urban Honolulu.

Even though diesel fuel is anticipated to cost \$4.44 next month, up from \$2.75 last July, officials say there are no plans to raise bus fares. The last increases came about five years ago when the City Council hiked single fares to \$2 from \$1.75 and monthly passes by \$10 from \$30.

Still, a \$40 bus pass is a thrifty buy because it allows riders as many boardings as they want through the period and that same amount of cash would pay for less than 10 gallons of gasoline at current prices.

Also, getting people accustomed to hopping a bus primes them for the rail transit system the city hopes to have running in the years to come and more riders gives officials impetus to add more vehicles and more routes to the network.

Fares cover only about 30 percent of the cost of bus operations. Like most other transit systems around the country, TheBus is heavily subsidized by federal and city funding. However, the public benefits are worth the trade when considering the impact of private vehicles on traffic and the environment.

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Vol. 13, Issue 174 - Sunday, June 22, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

### Federal money for rail will help economy

Reports from the University of Hawaii Economic Research Organization paint a bleak future for our local economy. Weakness in the visitor, retail and building industries are disturbing, with a prolonged slump until at least 2010.

At the same time, the city's rail construction workshop revealed that the proposed rail transit project is expected to create 11,000 new jobs, of which 4,700 are for construction. These are local jobs, and that is good news. But more importantly, the federal government would contribute at least \$900 million to the rail project. With private sector pulling back in spending and investment, this infusion of federal dollars could soften the blow of an impending recession in Hawaii's economy.

These federal dollars will be money in the bank to see us through the tough economic times that are coming. So think about it before you sign those petitions to stop the rail project.

Jonn Serikawa  
Honolulu

June 23, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

### transit

## Public transportation must allow for bikes

Jeffrey Zimmerman (Letter, June 18) smartly enjoyed his train ride to the airport from Portland, Ore.

Two years ago, my wife and I were driving through Oregon, along with our folding bikes. We took the train from neighboring Beaverton to Portland, hanging our bikes on hooks at the dedicated bike holds. Our two-hour bicycle tour of the city was one of the most exciting times we had.

We went back to Beaverton by train and had a scenic 20-minute bike ride from the station to the house hosting us. After that, we drove and biked through 16 states in 10 weeks before coming home to our bicycle-unfriendly state.

A few weeks ago, I rode TheBus, with my bike, from Chinatown to Kapolei to visit my son. When I returned, two buses, half an hour apart, passed me. The bike racks were fully occupied.

That was good. More people started bicycling.

It was bad. I couldn't go home. I had to bike to the Waipahu bus station to get a ride back home to Chinatown.

The train would give us more bicycle spaces as more people resort to bicycles for transportation. That is, if the trains will be equipped with bike holds. Promote bicycling. Burn less fuel. Burn more fat.

Ignacio A. Torres, M.D. | Honolulu



Vol. 13, Issue 175 - Monday, June 23, 2008

# Letters to the Editor

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[Write a Letter to the Editor](#)

## **Don't let naysayers derail our economy**

After decades of overcrowded roads, long commutes and now the increasing costs of gasoline and a slowing economy, Honolulu has a new opportunity to build a rapid transit system, supported by \$900 million in federal aid. It will provide thousands of jobs. Regardless of the type of rail system -- steel or rubber wheels, above or on the ground -- Honolulu must come to grips with the fact that something must be done and done now.

The Hannemann administration has offered us a chance to move forward and still remain flexible to the small additions and alterations it will take to make the program a success. Yet as with the Superferry, overall development and military expansions, a vocal minority seeks to derail the rest of the state and our image worldwide. If there is a lack of tourism and economic growth, we have nothing to blame but our own lack of aloha that drives away visitors and the investments required to provide us with a base for our own needs.

I support the mayor and his transit program and urge you, too, to look closely at supporting it within your circle of family, friends and community.

**Eric A. Kim**  
Honolulu



Vol. 13, Issue 175 - Monday, June 23, 2008

# Letters to the Editor

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[Write a Letter to the Editor](#)

## **Voters elected Council to decide rail issue**

I guess people who want the rail to be put on the ballot don't have much confidence in their elected officials. We elect our representatives because we have confidence in their representation and decision-making. We should trust that they know what is best for the community. Good politicians listen to the people they represent and make decisions based on the information presented before them.

Voting to go forward with the rail system was a decision that benefits the greater population of the City & County of Honolulu. If the signers of the Stop Rail Now petition don't trust the elected officials who represent them, they have the power to replace the incumbents with new representatives through the voting process.

A few decades ago, our elected officials failed to fulfill the needs of the people by voting down mass transit. Now, several billion dollars later, they finally agree mass transit is needed. Let our politicians do their jobs, or vote them out come election time.

**Steven S. Fukunaga**  
Mililani

June 24, 2008

## We can't build our way out of congestion

By William H. Hudnut III

World-class cities have world-class infrastructure. Katrina and the levee damage in New Orleans and the collapse of the Interstate 35 bridge in Minneapolis are tragic reminders that our infrastructure — so critical to the ability of our cities to grow and thrive — is often taken for granted until it fails.

A few weeks ago, the Urban Land Institute and Ernst and Young released a new report: Infrastructure 2008. Unlike other countries, America has no national plan for reducing congestion and improving the flow of people and goods throughout the country, no plan for integrating various transport modes — railroads, mass transit, highways, airports and seaports — into our land-use planning, no plan for linking global gateway cities, no plan for high-speed inter-city rails, no plan for accommodating population growth, and no plan for creating more sustainable cities and suburbs or for reducing our carbon footprint through enlightened infrastructure planning and land-use policy.

My attention was recently intrigued by a June 18 headline that proclaimed: "Honolulu's traffic among worst in U.S." The accompanying article noted that Honolulu ranked 38th worst among America's top 100 cities, and quoted a Seattle-based study (INRIX) that asserted: "If you happen to be driving on a Thursday from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. on (Honolulu's) main highways, you're no longer in the Aloha State...You're in the worst place and worst hour of any single roadway in the U.S." WOW! Talk about an infrastructure crisis!

Well, what's to be done? First, recognize that we cannot build our way out of congestion. In Montgomery County, Md., where I live, the director of planning, Royce Hansen, told me: "Adding lane capacity and even facilitating greater speeds on the overcrowded Rockville Pike is a losing proposition. What we need to do is to increase mixed-use density at key centers, which can reduce the carbon footprint of development, facilitate use of transit, walking and biking, and if well-designed with a good internal grid, actually reduce congestion."

Second, build more compactly. Higher densities do not mean warehousing people in high rises. Good design can finesse issues of density, as examples all around the United States show. Transit-oriented development could bring mixed-use compact development around transit stops, which would serve as a healthy, helpful antidote to sprawl.

Third, reduce dependence on the automobile. We need our cars, but with gas prices going through the roof and global warming threatening to burn the floor under us, alternative modes of transportation must be developed. That means light rail, buses, bus rapid transit and walking/biking trails, in my opinion, which ought to work well in a linear city like Honolulu. Construction will be expensive, as your readers know only too well, but cobbling together public and private sources of funds should be able to do the trick.

Freeways really aren't free, so why not put a toll bridge on some of our roads? Or institute VMT (vehicle miles traveled) pricing? Or try congestion pricing, as they do in London? To say nothing of that user fee known as the gasoline tax. Understandably, politicians don't like to raise taxes, fearing voter retribution. But consider this: The Federal Highway Trust Fund, the country's primary source of funding for roads and mass transit, will approach insolvency next year if the relatively paltry 18 cents per gallon federal gas tax isn't increased. Many Americans probably think the gas tax is too high already, but compare our total tax at the pump (about 40 cents per gallon) to those in Europe where gas taxes average \$4.75 per gallon.

No one wants to pay more for driving, especially when people depend so much on their cars to get around. Perhaps if we built

more compact, walkable, mixed-use communities accessible by transit, we wouldn't have to drive so much. After all, the most fuel-efficient car ever made is the one you don't have to drive.

*William H. Hudnut III is a senior resident fellow at the Urban Land Institute in Washington, D.C., and former mayor of Indianapolis. He will speak on this topic at the ULI Hawaii District Council tomorrow. He wrote this commentary for The Advertiser.*

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June 24, 2008

## Soon, you'll need 3 to take Zipper Lane

### Starting July 8, state raising minimum for H-1, Nimitz high-occupancy lanes

*By Mary Vorsino*

*Advertiser Urban Honolulu Writer*

In hopes of rewarding carpoolers with faster morning commutes, the state is increasing the number of people required in vehicles driving on the H-1 Freeway Zipper Lane and the Nimitz Highway contraflow lane from two to three — a move expected to decrease the number of cars in the lanes by about 300 daily.

The change will go into effect July 8, and comes as many Zipper Lane users are actually seeing longer morning drive times, by as much as 20 minutes, than those in the general lanes.

Brennon Morioka, state Department of Transportation director, conceded that the minimum-occupancy increase will likely inconvenience people at first, especially those who have to scramble for another passenger or face steering clear of the Zipper Lane.

But eventually, he said, "we believe we'll be able to move more people in fewer cars."

If the Zipper Lane change works, the new restriction could spread to other contraflow and high-occupancy vehicle lanes on Kalaniana'ole Highway, H-2 Freeway and Moanalua Freeway, Morioka added.

When it opened in 1998, the Zipper Lane required at least three people per car. The requirement was dropped to two people in summer 2005, after residents and lawmakers complained the Zipper Lane was being underused. The lane now carries about 3,800 cars every weekday morning (from 5:30 to 8:30 a.m.), up from about 2,300 cars in 1998.

Once the new requirement takes effect, the state expects to see about 3,500 cars in the lane.

## national trend

Panos Prevedouros, a University of Hawai'i professor who specializes in traffic engineering, said cities across the country are moving from traditionally two-person requirements for high-occupancy vehicle lanes to restricting the lanes to cars with three people or more, largely to improve the appeal of HOV lanes.

He said the lanes have become flooded under the two-person system.

Requiring three people per car often means the lanes provide a sure bet of a faster commute.

But some drivers aren't thrilled with the new rules. In Los Angeles, San Francisco and other large urban centers that are considering or have already moved to three-person restrictions, drivers are protesting the changes, arguing the benefits don't outweigh the costs to those shoved into the general driving lanes.

"Most of California is at two people per car. That is the standard," said Prevedouros.

"They are having resistance" in efforts to change it, he added.

## **mixed reactions here**

West O'ahu residents who use the Zipper Lane had mixed reactions yesterday about the switch.

Richard Oshiro, chairman of the Waipahu Neighborhood Board, said the HOV change will only further congest the other lanes.

"I think it works better the way it is," said Oshiro, who said he occasionally uses the Zipper Lane. "I think we should maximize all the lanes, then everybody saves more time. With the change, you're going to have more people in the other lanes and less, obviously, in the Zipper Lane."

Kurt Fevella, vice chairman of the 'Ewa Neighborhood Board, said he would support the change if the other HOV lane on H-1 Freeway west-bound, located next to the Zipper Lane, were converted into a general-use lane. It won't be, Morioka said, but cars with only two people will still be able to use it.

The Zipper Lane change is welcome news for James Gowler, a driver in the Vanpool Hawai'i program.

The 60-year-old Mililani resident said the Zipper Lane has become increasingly congested.

"When schools are in, driving in the Zipper Lane doesn't really make that much difference," he said.

Gowler has six people in his vanpool, all of whom work at Tripler Army Medical Center.

Morioka said the change was timed during the summer so commuters would get used to the new occupancy rule before thousands of students return to the roads. And he said he believes drivers will be more receptive to the changes now, with soaring gas prices spurring more people to carpool or take the bus.

The state also noted that taking the Zipper Lane isn't always paying off.

From 5:30 to 6:30 a.m., it takes about 50 minutes on average in the Zipper Lane from Kapolei to Kukahi Street in 'Iwilei, compared with 34 minutes in the general-purpose lanes. Starting out at 6:15 a.m. from Kapolei, it takes 80 minutes in the Zipper Lane to get to Kukahi Street, compared with 75 minutes in open lanes, according to state DOT statistics.

The Zipper Lane and Nimitz Highway contraflow lane stretch 15 miles from Waikele to Downtown.

Morioka said the state has been working with police to make sure the new rules are enforced.

Technically, officers will be able to issue fines for those with fewer than three people starting the morning of July 8. But Morioka said officers will be able to use their judgment and could issue warnings to those unaware of the change. As it is, police periodically patrol the Zipper Lane to make sure cars have at least two people.



Vol. 13, Issue 176 - Tuesday, June 24, 2008

# Mayor uses funds to back rail

## A rival decries using political contributions for an ad "full of lies"

By Laurie Au  
[lau@starbulletin.com](mailto:lau@starbulletin.com)

Mayor Mufi Hannemann has launched a series of ads using his campaign funds against a group attempting to stop his plans to build a \$4 billion rail transit system.

Amid a surge of recent television and radio advertisements by local organizations supporting and opposing a planned 20-mile elevated transit system from Kapolei to Ala Moana, Hannemann's campaign paid for advertisements that appeared in Honolulu's two daily newspapers with the title, "Getting Real on Rail: Setting the record straight on anti-rail misinformation."

In the 3/4 -page advertisement, Hannemann writes, "the city has been open and accessible, it is now also important that the public know all the facts, including those about the anti-rail organizers."

He goes on to say the anti-rail groups, started by vocal community members, are "the creation of ... people using smoke and mirrors" and that a petition to place a question on the November ballot to stop a rail project "just kills what most people feel is the best choice."

Leaders of the group organizing the petition, Stop Rail Now, rejected Hannemann's statements that the anti-rail effort is made of conservatives and that the city has accepted public input at numerous community meetings.

"It is wrong for this mayor to be using his huge campaign treasury to attack a citizen group who is working to put

### On the Net:

<http://www.supportrailtransit.com/>

<http://www.hawaiicarpentersunion.com/>

<http://www.honolulutrainsit.org>

<http://stoprailnow.com/>

the rail issue on the ballot for public vote, especially when his ad is full of lies," said Dennis Callan, co-chairman of the group.

Earlier this year, several City Council members criticized the Hannemann administration for spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on public relations for the project, which the administration says is required under federal guidelines.

Hannemann, who has no strong contender in sight in his re-election campaign this year, has raised more than \$2 million in campaign funds. According to Barbara Wong, executive director of the state Campaign Spending Commission, Hannemann's use of the funds is legal because candidates can use campaign funds for issues related to the office they are seeking.

Hannemann's campaign aides declined to comment on the advertisements, saying the mayor wants to address the issue when he returns today from a business trip to Miami.

In recent weeks, the state's largest construction union, the Hawaii Carpenters Union, and a newly formed group called Support Rail Transit have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on advertisements countering messages supporting the petition to stop the project.

Stop Rail Now has until Aug. 1 to collect nearly 45,000 signatures needed to place a question on the ballot that says, "Honolulu mass transit shall not include trains or rail transit." It has collected about 25,000 signatures so far.

Hannemann's advertisement directs readers to the Web site of Support Rail Transit, a nonprofit organization formed about three weeks ago by a large public relations firm, McNeil Wilson Communications.

David Wilson, one of the company's principals, said McNeil Wilson is not a part of the mayor's re-election campaign and started the group after hearing from pro-rail community members concerned with the petition initiative. Wilson declined to release the names of the individuals associated with the pro-rail group.

[Read all 85 comments »](#)

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**Name**

**(appears on your post)**



Vol. 13, Issue 176 - Tuesday, June 24, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

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### Write a Letter to the Editor

#### **Move elsewhere if you don't want to commute**

I signed a "no rail" petition Sunday at Hardware Hawaii in Kailua. At first, I ignored the people who were presenting the petition. As I was leaving, it hit me: We're all going to pay for this with our taxes, but very few on the Windward side and elsewhere are going to use it. That's not right. I should not have to subsidize those who choose to live in Ewa Beach and the Leeward side and work downtown.

I have been mostly unemployed for the past six months; there are plenty of jobs available downtown, Mapunapuna and Campbell, but I am unwilling to move. Therefore, I am seeking the right job on the Windward side to avoid the driving, traffic and parking nightmare and I will sacrifice the lost income to do so.

Either find a job close to home or move closer to your job. Everyone will pay for an extremely costly project that will benefit relatively few.

D.M. Jahn  
Kailua

# Star-Bulletin

mobile edition

Vol. 13, Issue 176 - Tuesday, June 24, 2008



STAR-BULLETIN FILE PHOTO  
The ZipperLane is removed as the Zipmobile moves a lane barrier on H-1.

## ZipperLane shift decried

**Politics are blamed for the state's decision to require at least three occupants per vehicle**

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

Motorists will have to scramble for a third person to ride in their vehicles if they want to continue legally using the ZipperLane.

Starting July 8, the minimum occupancy for the ZipperLane -- extra lanes created by contraflowing eastbound traffic in the westbound H-1 freeway lanes and Nimitz Highway from Waikēle to Iwilei -- will increase to three persons from two persons, according to the state Department of Transportation.

The change is to encourage carpooling and ease congestion .

In 2005, the occupancy changed from the original minimum three-person occupancy to a two-person occupancy. But state transportation officials said the change resulted in increased congestion in the ZipperLane compared with the other lanes.

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[FULL STORY »](#)

**By Rosemarie Bernardo**  
[rbernardo@starbulletin.com](mailto:rbernardo@starbulletin.com)

Some motorists aren't happy with the idea of having to get a third person to commute into town legally in the faster-moving ZipperLane.

North Shore resident and ZipperLane commuter Dawn Unga said it will be challenging to meet the state's new requirements. "I happen to be lucky that my neighbor starts the same time as me."

The occupancy change will not reduce traffic, said Unga, a sales assistant with Morgan Stanley Investment. "It's just going to remain the same."

Unga is not alone.

State Sen. Will Espero (D, Ewa-Kapolei-Ewa Beach) said he received several e-mails from constituents yesterday who are unhappy with the decision by the Department of Transportation, saying it will only worsen traffic in the regular lanes.

Starting July 8, the Department of Transportation will change the minimum occupancy for the H-1 freeway ZipperLane and the Nimitz Highway contraflow lane to three persons from two per vehicle.

Officials decided to make the transition in the upcoming weeks to allow motorists time to adjust before major traffic occurs in the fall with the return of thousands of students to school. The 15-mile ZipperLane is open to motorists from Waikele to Iwilei between 5:30 and 8:30 a.m. weekdays.

## Use of ZipperLane

**1998:** About 2,300 motorists use the ZipperLane per day when it first opens with a minimum of three persons per vehicle.

**2005:** About 4,100 vehicles use it after officials lower the minimum occupancy to two persons from three persons.

**Since 2005:** Use of the ZipperLane decreases to about 3,800.

Source: State Department of Transportation

Transportation Director Brennon Morioka said the state intended all along to require a minimum three-person occupancy lane, saying that the current minimum two-person occupancy was an experiment to see how it affected traffic.

- Department Of Transportation Makes Zipper Lane Changes



The State Department Of Transportation wants to move more people in fewer cars in less time.

[ [Watch](#) ]



By the state's reckoning, Morioka said, the ZipperLane is more effective with the minimum three-person occupancy.

About 2,300 motorists used the ZipperLane daily when it first opened in 1998 with a minimum three-person occupancy. Figures gradually increased until 2004, when daily usage leveled off to about 3,500.

In 2005, transportation officials reduced the minimum occupancy from three to two to encourage people to use the ZipperLane and monitor the effect on the general purpose lanes. A spike of about 4,100 followed, but it slowly leveled off to 3,800, Morioka said.

Transportation officials hope carpooling -- more people moved in fewer cars and in less time -- will increase with the change, especially as gas prices approach \$5 per gallon.

"Carpooling is the fastest and cheapest way to fight congestion, because all it is is someone jumping into someone else's car," Morioka said.

Eric Ryan, campaign manager for Stop Rail Now, an organization opposed to the rail transit system, said the city and the state are making it more difficult for drivers at rush hour, saying it doesn't encourage carpooling. It discourages those who already switched from being a solo driver to driving with a passenger, Ryan said.

"We have long believed that the state and the city, which have been pushing for a heavy rail system for decades,

have gone out of their way to make navigating roads as difficult as possible to ensure traffic congestion is as unrelieved as possible to justify funneling available tax dollars and more in the heavy rail project," he said.

In a written statement, Wayne Yoshioka, director of the city Department of Transportation Services, said the city has been instrumental in supporting carpooling programs for decades. Yoshioka said the city supports improving public transportation, including light rail, "which studies show is the best solution for reducing traffic congestion."

Those who violate the minimum occupancy rule face a penalty of \$75 for their first offense and up to \$200 for repeat offenses.

[Read all 30 comments »](#)

Type in your comments to post to the forum

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(appears on your post) You are currently logged in as . [Not ?](#)

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- Password

At least five characters (letters and numbers)

- Confirm Password

- Birthdate

June 25, 2008

## More park their car, take the bus

Less fuel being bought, traffic thinning, more bus passes being sold

*BY GREG WILES*

*Advertiser Staff Writer*

New numbers confirm what many Hawai'i residents already suspected: the surge in gasoline prices since late last year has persuaded car and truck owners to cut back on driving.

The amount of gasoline sold in the state between November and March dropped 15 percent compared with a year earlier, according to an Advertiser analysis of state Department of Taxation data.

Moreover, traffic figures show fewer vehicles traveling on H-1 Freeway, while bus pass sales are up.

It appears drivers are cutting back trips, using public transit, car pooling and taking other steps to reduce their gasoline use as they cope with prices that have jumped by more than one-quarter in the past year and passed the psychologically jarring threshold of \$4 a gallon in late May.

As of yesterday, the statewide average for a gallon of regular unleaded was \$4.366 — the fourth-highest average in the country. It has risen 30 cents in the past month.

The increase in gasoline prices comes as residents face a host of energy-related budget busters.

Hawai'i electricity prices are rising, as is the cost of bringing in cargo from the Mainland and delivering it to stores. Grocery prices are on the rise because of transportation costs and other factors. The University of Hawai'i Economic Research Organization earlier this month boosted its 2008 inflation estimate for the state because of oil-related price gains.

So it's not surprising that people are taking steps to cut back on gasoline purchases or get more out of each tank.

On O'ahu, there seems to be less traffic snaking through Hale'iwa on weekends, as some motorists are putting the brakes on their leisurely weekend jaunts. Tourism is also down from a year earlier, meaning fewer visitors circling the island.

"It's not jam-packed anymore," said Sean Mattox, manager at Surf N Sea, a busy ocean sports shop near the double-arched "rainbow" bridge in Hale'iwa, where traffic backs up on weekends. Mattox said he has noticed slightly less weekend traffic as he rides his bike to work. "In the last six months, gas prices have gone up ridiculously."

## Roads less crowded

Barney Robinson, operator of two Chevron stations, said it is difficult to remember lowering his gasoline

prices at any time in recent months, a period in which prices have breached a record set in 2005 and now reach new heights almost daily.

"I think our last decrease was around September of last year. Since then it's been a steady increase," said Robinson, who noted he has never seen anything like this stretch of price increases in his 30 years in the business.

Robinson also thinks traffic has thinned, noticing there is less traffic when he leaves his station near Honolulu Airport at 5 p.m. and heads for his home in East Honolulu. He said there is less stop-and-go traffic and he is at highway speeds more of the time. As such, he's getting better mileage in his Ford Explorer.

"It seems like there's less people on the roads," Robinson said.

The recent gasoline price increases mean most people are having to carve out a bigger portion of their budgets for gasoline. Compared with a year ago, a driver who travels 8,000 miles a year in a car getting 20 miles a gallon is having to pay \$389 more annually for gas. That's on top of the \$1,357 the motorist was already paying.

## **fuel tax revenue down**

The Advertiser analysis of tax department data involved looking at gallons sold by distributors and reported to the state. The period covered November 2007 to March 2008, when prices started marching upward. During that time, the total amount sold fell to 169.4 million gallons from 198.5 million in the same period a year ago. Data weren't available for more recent months when price records were set.

While there are questions about the accuracy of the tax department's numbers on gallons sold — they can swing dramatically month to month because of reporting vagaries — there is no question that state fuel tax revenues are off by double-digit percentages. During the five-month period, the fuel tax take fell to \$53.8 million.

That was \$7.1 million less than the same period a year earlier and has implications for roadway repairs, because much of the money is transferred to a special fund used by the state Department of Transportation.

Other data also point to a decline in driving. Traffic counters set up by the state Transportation Department on H-1 Freeway at the Halawa Interchange came up with a daily average of 124,903 vehicles traveling in both directions in March.

That was almost 19 percent below counts at the interchange a year earlier.

At TheBus, sales of monthly passes were up 4.3 percent through the first four months of the year. Bus drivers also have commented that traffic seems lighter, said J. Roger Morton, TheBus chief executive officer.

Last week, Morton played golf in 'Ewa Beach with three others. Usually, the foursome meets at the course. This time, they convened in town and car pooled to the course.

Robinson said he is hearing more about people car pooling and notes that people are talking about

families taking the higher-mileage car and leaving the SUV at home when they have to go someplace together.

"Bus ridership is up. People are bundling their trips and combining their runs," he said. "People are understanding that we need to be conscious about our energy consumption."

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June 25, 2008

## New Zipper Lane rule will ease H-1 crunch

It's hard to argue with the facts. The Zipper has lost its zip and needs commuter cooperation to do its job more smoothly.

The state Department of Transportation ran a test on the current rules requiring at least two occupants for vehicles in the Zipper Lane.

The results are clear: The 5:30 to 6:30 a.m. ride from Kapolei to Iwilei took 16 minutes longer in the Zipper Lane than the unrestricted-ridership lanes. East-bound commuters departing at 6:15 a.m. faced an 80-minute ride in the Zipper Lane.

That's only five minutes longer than the traffic in the regular lanes, but the point is, it should take less time, not more. Those who make the effort to share vehicles should be rewarded with a speedier commute.

So, although it's going to mean an adjustment for those arranging their morning drive time, the state is right to raise the minimum number of Zipper Lane riders to three.

And the department has resources to help riders find a match. Go online ([http://state.hi.us/dot/publicaffairs/rideshare/](http://state.hi.us/dot/publicaffairs/rideshare/index.htm) index.htm), or call 692-7695 for more.

It will save drivers on that \$4-plus-per-gallon gas bill, and some of their morning-drive sanity, besides.

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June 25, 2008

## Rail debate could be a pricey one

*By Jerry Burris*

Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann has raised close to \$2.5 million for his political campaign treasury, and he has no real place to spend it.

At the moment, there is no sign of an experienced or well-financed candidate to challenge Hannemann in his re-election campaign this year. That does not leave the mayor without political battles to be fought. In fact, he's facing one of the biggest political fights of his career: The decision about mass transit for Honolulu.

Hannemann has brought the dream of a fixed-rail system for Honolulu closer to reality than it has ever been. But he isn't quite there yet.

A divided City Council could still put a hitch in the plans, even though it is officially on record in support of transit. If this or a future Council gets cold feet before tracks are laid and trains are running, the project could get sidetracked. Delay is almost as dangerous as outright opposition at this delicate point.

And now Hannemann has to deal with a determined bunch of anti-rail folks who have rallied, under various names, to stop the project.

A petition drive is under way by a group called Stop Rail Now ([stoprailnow.com](http://stoprailnow.com)) to put a question on the ballot this fall: "Honolulu mass transit shall not include trains or rail transit." If that question gets to a vote and is approved, the project is dead.

No wonder Hannemann is not sitting back and enjoying the thought of a relatively easy re-election campaign. The whole thing would be ashes if he is returned to office but voters reject his dream rail project.

The counterattack to the rail opponents has become a very expensive proposition. Hannemann has already run big newspaper ads, paid out of his own campaign funds, that harshly attack the anti-rail folks as a deceptive group using "smoke and mirrors" to deceive the public. Expect more of these.

Others, including the Carpenters Union, which paid for its own series of pro-transit ads, have joined the counterattack. The union's interest, beyond its support for Hannemann, is obvious.

And a new group organized by McNeil-Wilson Communications, a veteran public relations firm that has done considerable political work, has also entered the transit battle.

This group ([supportrailtransit.com](http://supportrailtransit.com)) is funded by a number of as-yet-unnamed pro-rail groups and individuals in the community.

It's shaping up to be a very expensive, probably multimillion-dollar battle over an issue that supposedly was already settled by the elected members of the Council, the state Legislature and even Congress.

It's a taste, and a prophetic one, of what we will see if backers of a California-like initiative process ever see their ideas implemented in Hawai'i.

*Jerry Burris' column appears Wednesdays in this space. See his blog at <http://blogs.honoluluadvertiser.com>.*



Vol. 13, Issue 177 - Wednesday, June 25, 2008

## OUR OPINION

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# Requiring 3 in a car to use ZipperLane worth a try

### THE ISSUE

The state is raising the minimum number of vehicle occupants for the ZipperLane and the Nimitz contraflow lane from two to three.

The state Department of Transportation is hoping to decrease the number of cars that travel the ZipperLane and the Nimitz Highway contraflow track by requiring three occupants in each vehicle instead of two.

The plan could encourage carpooling by rewarding commuting threesomes with faster trips into town.

It also could do the opposite. It might discourage carpooling and increase the number of cars in regular traffic lanes if current duos are unable to find another person to share the ride, or if they decide to split up and go solo because they've lost the Zipper privilege.

Another scenario could have so many new carpools forming -- spurred by the zooming price of gasoline -- that the ZipperLane would be jammed, nullifying the department's goals. In addition, by summer's end, children can fill the trio requirement in their parents' cars as schools start up classes again, possibly raising ZipperLane congestion.

Transportation officials are surely aware that myriad factors determine driving habits and that they will have many elements to consider in figuring out if the change will turn out well.

About the only thing officials can count on is that drivers won't be happy with the increase that starts July 8, and about the only thing motorists can expect is that traffic volume won't ease unless some of them get off the roads.

The department's plan, however, is worth trying. If fuller cars increase ZipperLane use, the state could extend the three-per-vehicle rule to the H-1 HOV lanes, which currently require only two occupants. Though enforcement might be more difficult, adding the H-2, the Moanalua and Kalaniana'ole and other highways would encourage ride-sharing.

People who need help in forming carpools can sign up with the department for matches by locations and times. The state also provides links to Vanpools, an increasingly popular option. TheBoat and TheBus, an economical way to commute, are gaining riders as consumers seek to offset gasoline costs.

The department expects to cut 300 cars from the 3,800 that the ZipperLane carries every weekday morning. Whether the decrease will come from shifting cars to regular lanes, by getting more drivers into fewer cars or through some other dynamic is anybody's guess. The frustration of commuters, however, demands that something be tried.

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Vol. 13, Issue 177 - Wednesday, June 25, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

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[Write a Letter to the Editor](#)

### **3-person HOV lanes, transit make sense**

Regarding the HOV/Zipper Lane change: I've never understood how a carpool is less than three people. How is two people "high occupancy"?

Someone else mentioned the "slug" system used in D.C., an informal ride-share arrangement where riders and drivers gather and find each other by displaying signs stating their destinations. If a rider and driver are going the same way, they can ride together in the HOV lane. That really is something that should be looked into here.

Whatever mass transit choices there are, there ought to be park-and-ride facilities all over the place. Sure there's a sort of a hub-and-spoke bus system here, and for the most part it works well, but many have to transfer at least once to get to their final destinations.

I'm sure that if more people could take their cars to a central location and park, they'd be more than happy to catch a bus, train or carpool. Sure beats hoping that your first or second bus is on time so that you can make your final transfer.

Emika Celshall  
Aiea



Vol. 13, Issue 177 - Wednesday, June 25, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

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[Write a Letter to the Editor](#)

### Let 2-person vehicles use ZipperLane

Was the Department of Transportation's decision to increase the minimum number of riders for the ZipperLane to three ([Star-Bulletin, June 24](#)) an arbitrary decision or a decision based on studying the number of occupants in vehicles currently using the ZipperLane in the morning?

My wife and I enter the ZipperLane each morning from the first entrance after the Kunia interchange. The majority of vehicles we observe using the ZipperLane have only two occupants. I doubt that the price of gas will cause people to carpool and use the ZipperLane because the local mindset is set on driving and not the price of gas. The majority of vehicles in the regular lanes have only one occupant.

Because of the DOT decision, my wife and I will now have to contend with vehicles in the HOV lane with only one occupant because the minimum of two occupants is very difficult to enforce since there are no areas for police officers to stop and observe the HOV lane from the H-1/H-2 merge until you get down to the Radford High School area.

The logic of this decision is flawed.

Michael Tanigawa  
Ewa Beach



Vol. 13, Issue 177 - Wednesday, June 25, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

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[Write a Letter to the Editor](#)

### **Running more buses might boost ridership**

Honolulu has one of the best bus services I have had the privilege to use; however, there is still room for improvement.

I have visited two cities that left quite an impression on this subject.

Switzerland has a system that runs every 12 minutes, with time tables posted at every stop. They don't experience the traffic jams typical of Honolulu, but it runs like a Swiss watch.

In the other city, Quito, Ecuador, some of the five-lane streets have dedicated one lane for buses only, and separate it from the others using a small cement fence about two feet high. Mind you, Quito has traffic as bad as Honolulu, but the flow seems to be better than before.

By no means am I suggesting that we adopt a schedule that runs every 12 minutes, but it is very frustrating to miss a bus and have to wait another half hour for the next.

Al R. Silva  
Honolulu

# MidWeek

## Rail Problems, Tiger And Jimmy B.

June 25, 2008  
By Rick Hamada

I am hosting a weekly segment on my radio program called “Both Sides of the Rail.” It is, as the name implies, where representatives on both sides of the rail issue debate the merits and demerits of their opponent’s position. I know this appears to be a shameless plug, but (to my knowledge) this is the only consistent presentation of, well, both sides appearing on a regular basis via any media outlet. I mention this as the frequency and tone of various PR messages promoting rail are hitting the airwaves. The proponents of Stop Rail Now also have a TV spot. At least with both sides present taking listener questions, you can hear, as Paul Harvey says, “The rest of the story.” Why be interested? Sen. Dan Inouye commented recently that if the City and County of Honoulu were required to upgrade its secondary waste water treatment facilities to the tune of \$1 billion, it would bankrupt us. Consider the approximate \$5 billion price tag for the rail project. We may want to pay closer attention.

June 26, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

### **Going to 3-person minimum a mistake**

The Department of Transportation is making a huge mistake by changing it back to a three-person minimum for the Zipper Lane.

When we had the bus strike, Rodney Haraga changed it to a two-person minimum, and that was the best thing that ever happened to ease our traffic.

Now, Brennan Morioka wants to change it back to the way it was. Mr. Haraga lives in Mililani, so he knows what works and what doesn't.

I'm not sure where Mr. Morioka lives, but he seems to be clueless about the traffic from the west side.

If you want a compromise. I would say to keep the two-person minimum but do away with the H-2 access onto the Zipper Lane so that there is no backup in the Zipper Lane at the H-2 merge. People coming from the H-2 can access the Zipper Lane at the airport if they want to.

G. Yoshida | Mililani

June 26, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

### **traffic**

## **State's Zipper decision will penalize many**

Once again, the state has seen fit to dictate how and when drivers shall traverse our roadways to participate in the "reward" of a faster commute.

By dictating that three is the magic number of riders in a car, as many as 300 cars will be eliminated from the Zipper Lane, supposedly reducing travel time by 20 minutes.

Pity the poor mother who must now find another passenger to tag along while she drops off her infant at the sitter before she drops off her other passenger, on the way to her job. Despite the fact that she also pays vehicle taxes for the privilege of driving on our roads, she becomes one of the 300 unfortunate drivers who must drastically change their lifestyle to appease the masses and partake of the "reward" of a "faster" commute.

Shame on you, state of Hawai'i.

John Whitten Jr. | Kane'ohe



Vol. 13, Issue 178 - Thursday, June 26, 2008



## Transit Matters

Hawaii Highway Users Alliance

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# Expensive, polluting rail isn't Oahu's best option

Local bank economists and real estate developers openly admit that rail is about property development - not a transportation solution.

The Hannemann Committee ad in both dailies on Sunday was a diversionary tactic to deflect public attention away from important facts and issues:

» Rail is the most expensive, highest subsidized, most environmentally insensitive, least accessible and most crime-ridden of all transit systems.

» The open-ended subsidies required for rail and transit-oriented developments place enormous financial liabilities on present and future generations.

Potholes are symbolic of the mayor's failure to properly maintain and reconstruct our roads. Our infrastructure has deteriorated to unacceptable levels. Pavement management, sewer treatment and solid waste management will require billions to bring them

to a barely acceptable state.

And then there is traffic congestion that wastes time, fuel and adds to pollution. The mayor ridicules the suggestion of an elevated, reversible transit freeway to and from West Oahu that can offer more traffic relief than rail. Transit riders will enjoy shorter travel times from speeds of 60 mph for free. Under a toll system, regular motorists will fill unused spaces by paying a moderate toll to cover the cost of the highway's construction and maintenance. Dallas, Denver, San Diego, Orange County and Tampa use this concept successfully - to deliver more carrying capacity much sooner and cheaper than rail.

Dallas, Denver, San Diego, Orange County and Tampa use toll systems to deliver more carrying capacity much sooner and cheaper than rail.

Consumers prize personal independence, convenience, privacy and security. Automobiles serve diverse and indispensable uses. Buses carry more passengers than trains and planes combined. Taxis deliver passengers anytime, anyplace, when and where buses and trains don't go, and also complement bus and train service.

Rail is an energy hog and pollutes just as much during the 16 hours that it runs near empty as in the four hours it supposedly carries commuters. Furthermore, research shows that only 24 percent of riders in L.A. trains are former solo drivers. So in the peak hour, the train will carry roughly 5,000 people (of whom 2,000 will be standees), but it might remove only 1,250 vehicles from the entire corridor. That is a pittance that will quickly be replaced by about 2,000 new homes. In reality, many more homes are planned for the Ewa plain, so in 2030 congestion with rail will be much worse than it is today.

The community needs open public discussions of the various proposals. The mayor should not abuse the concerned and knowledgeable citizens whose views differ from his.

This commentary was submitted by the Hawaii Highway Users Alliance, whose officers include: Panos D. Prevedouros, president (professor of civil engineering, University of Hawaii-Manoa); Reg White, vice president (vice president of project development, Paradise Cruises); Dale Evans, chairwoman (CEO, Charley's Taxi); and Lawson Teshima, vice chairman (CFO, Kobayashi Travel).

[Read all 83 comments »](#)

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Vol. 13, Issue 178 - Thursday, June 26, 2008

## Mayor slams media and 'attack' over rail

By Laurie Au  
[lau@starbulletin.com](mailto:lau@starbulletin.com)

Mayor Mufi Hannemann criticized the media for doing a poor job of challenging opponents attempting to stop the city's planned \$4 billion rail-transit project, prompting him to spend campaign funds to take out advertisements.

In his first interview since ads ran in Honolulu's two daily newspapers last weekend, Hannemann said yesterday he stands by his assertions that the local anti-rail campaign is backed by mainland companies and individuals connected with the oil and automobile industries.

"This whole thing about it being purely grass-roots-driven and Hawaii-based is baloney," Hannemann said. "I don't think the media is challenging them. They pass themselves off as a free-spirited group of citizens out to do good, where they're doing great damage because they're not telling the whole truth on what they're all about."

Hannemann, who is seeking re-election as mayor with no major contender in sight, has spent about \$20,000 on seven ads from campaign funds that total nearly \$2.5 million.

"I'm under attack," Hannemann said in response to a question about using campaign funds instead of city money to pay for the ads. "I'm under attack for false reasons."

Hannemann contends that three outspoken, longtime critics of the transit system -- Cliff Slater, Dale Evans of Charley's Taxi and Panos Prevedouros, an engineering professor -- are controlling the anti-rail movement in Honolulu. The three are involved with Stop Rail Now, a group attempting to create an ordinance stopping the project through a petition initiative.

Slater and Evans -- members of another anti-rail group, the Hawaii Highways Users Alliance -- also are officers of the Grassroot Institute of Hawaii, best known for its opposition to U.S. Sen. Daniel Akaka's bill for native Hawaiian recognition. The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii has

recently announced it has a new president, Jamie Story, who worked for the Texas Public Policy Foundation, which describes itself as a nonprofit research institute.

Hannemann links Story to Wendell Cox, a public policy consultant based in St. Louis who has expressed opposition against Honolulu's project.

"There is a direct linkage from the Grassroot Institute of Hawaii, Hawaii Highway Users Alliance to ultra-right-wing conservative organizations that has been fighting mayors all over the U.S. on rail, and they are here in Hawaii," Hannemann said yesterday during the interview.

All three local rail critics denied Hannemann's assertions, calling them "ridiculous," saying they have not accepted any money from mainland companies.

"We have not received a penny that we did not raise locally," said Slater, a vocal critic of the 20-mile rail system from Kapolei to Ala Moana.

"I think he's scared he's losing the project," said Prevedouros, a University of Hawaii engineering professor who is considering running for mayor.

Story, who moved to Hawaii in March, said the organization has not accepted funds from oil or automobile companies.

Slater said he has given a "substantial" amount to help Stop Rail Now, which spent \$20,000 on ads promoting its petition to place a question on the November ballot that would stop the project.

Hannemann, who has pushed aggressively for this project and remains determined to begin construction next year, said he is "not worried at all" about Stop Rail Now succeeding in attaining the nearly 45,000 signatures needed to bring the issue to a vote.

[Read all 324 comments »](#)

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Vol. 13, Issue 179 - Friday, June 27, 2008

## Council explores downtown drive fee

### STORY SUMMARY »

Charging motorists to drive into downtown Honolulu would be studied under a resolution offered in the City Council.

The measure by Councilman Charles Djou hopes to alleviate Oahu's traffic congestion.

Several City Council members are skeptical of the idea, saying it would penalize drivers, would not alleviate congestion and would cause a public uproar, while others say it is worth looking into.

The practice, called congestion pricing, has been adopted in Europe, but no U.S. city has implemented it. London and Stockholm, Sweden, charge motorists a daily fee for driving into downtown areas using cameras capturing license plates of vehicles entering the pay zones.

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### FULL STORY »

**By Laurie Au**  
[lau@starbulletin.com](mailto:lau@starbulletin.com)

Oahu motorists would have to pay a fee to drive into downtown Honolulu during rush hour under a City Council proposal for a study.

The Council's Transportation Committee took a look yesterday at a resolution asking the Hannemann administration to study congestion pricing, which has been implemented in London and examined in

other U.S. cities to charge drivers entering a certain zone, usually in gridlocked downtown areas.

Councilman Charles Djou, who introduced the resolution about a year ago, said the city should at least study congestion pricing to see if it would help alleviate the gridlock during rush hour on the freeways.

"I want this to be used as more of a long-term planning tool for traffic alleviation. In my opinion, it's not all about rail," Djou said, referring to the city's proposed \$4 billion elevated rail transit system running from Kapolei to Ala Moana, a project he opposes.

The other members of the City Council's Transportation Committee were less than enthusiastic about the idea, some saying that it would penalize drivers. Others expressed some support for moving forward to study congestion pricing.

"We should discuss these other types of solutions dealing with congestion," said Councilman Nestor Garcia, chairman of the Transportation and Public Works Committee. "Everyone seems to think we're only looking at rail, but I'm open-minded."

"I certainly don't want to face the public outcry when we raise anything like that," said Councilman Gary Okino. "It's very regressive. Only rich drivers would be able to afford this."

Wayne Yoshioka, city transportation director, said there are concerns with congestion pricing in Honolulu since there are no other major transportation alternatives aside from TheBus.

"To implement congestion pricing without alternatives would be very harmful, especially to those with low-income jobs," Yoshioka said.

## **You are now entering the congestion charging zone**

London was the first city to implement congestion pricing, charging motorists a fee to drive into downtown beginning in 2003 after intense public outcry. The Honolulu City Council is considering a study on the feasibility of implementing a similar system here. Here is how it works in London:

» Motorists pay about \$16 a weekday to enter its "Congestion Charging Zone," which has recently expanded in its most congested areas.

» Motorists can pay online, at kiosks and even by sending text messages.

» Cameras monitor every entrance of the congestion zone, which records every license plate. If records show the driver has already paid or does not have to pay, the record is deleted. If not, the driver will receive a penalty charge.

Djou modeled the measure after London, the first city to adopt congestion pricing in 2003, charging drivers about \$16 daily to drive into its most congested downtown areas during certain times of the day. The mayor of London boasts that congestion pricing reduces traffic, helps the environment and brings in millions of dollars in revenue, while critics argue it hurts businesses and motorists.

Source: Mayor of London Web site

[www.tfl.gov.uk/roadusers/congestioncharging](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/roadusers/congestioncharging)

New York was the first U.S. city close to adopting congestion pricing after approving a similar plan, which was rejected by the New York Assembly earlier this year. Other places have also started studying congestion pricing, including San Francisco, Seattle and Connecticut.

Implementing congestion pricing in Honolulu would ultimately involve the state since many of the roads are its responsibility. Tammy Mori, spokeswoman for the state Transportation Department, said the discussion is "premature" since the state does not have the authority to charge tolls and has not been approached on this idea yet.

Yoshioka estimated a study to look into congestion pricing could cost as much as \$500,000 and would not be complete for another two years because of funding reasons. Djou said if the study costs that much, it would not be worth it.

The Council committee withheld action on the measure yesterday while it waits for Yoshioka to report back next month on more precise estimates of the study's costs.

[Read all 23 comments »](#)

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June 27, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

### **traffic**

## **New Zipper Lane rule will double commuting time**

The Department of Transportation's decision to increase the minimum ridership requirement for the Zipper Lane to three people comes with great disappointment.

I carpool into town with one other person and enter the Zipper Lane near the H-1/H-2 merge at approximately 7:15 a.m.

The entire trip from Mililani to Downtown takes no more than 45 minutes, even during the school year.

During this time, I rarely see vehicles with more than two people. The new restrictions will double my commute time, and provide no incentive for me to continue carpooling with someone who starts work an hour before me, which will add yet another car to the general lanes.

Does the DOT honestly believe that adding more cars into the general lanes will help ease traffic conditions for everyone?

Changing the requirements will only benefit bus riders and people who have the flexibility to use vanpools. People who currently carpool with two riders will be punished as will single-occupancy drivers, who will have additional cars added to their already-congested lanes.

Thank you, DOT, for costing us more time and money.

I can't wait to see the empty Zipper Lanes.

Nicole Patterson | Mililani

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Vol. 13, Issue 179 - Friday, June 27, 2008

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Vol. 13, Issue 179 - Friday, June 27, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

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[Write a Letter to the Editor](#)

### **Rail system foes ignore transit reality**

The very first sentence in the Hawaii Highway Users Alliance anti-rail column ([Star-Bulletin, June 26](#)) misstates the reason to build a transit system, which is to create an alternative to driving and contending with traffic.

The rail system will connect the Second City with Oahu's primary employment center and communities in between. Commuters will have a choice -- drive and eventually sit in traffic, or take transit and shave dozens of minutes off their travel times.

Next, the column's signers, who all depend economically on continued use of cars and buses, ignore the rising price of gasoline. The cost of driving is higher than ever, and the Alliance's solution -- regressive toll roads -- would increase the cost of commuting.

While brazenly claiming travel advantages for the companies they own, the writers ignore the obvious fact that buses and taxis are caught in traffic, too, something rail riders will avoid.

Their claim that rail is an "energy hog and pollutes" is so 20th century. Honolulu's rail project eventually will run on abundant renewable energy, including ocean thermal energy conversion. Think of it -- riding a train energized by ocean power.

Finally, the Alliance is shocked -- shocked, I tell you -- that "in 2030 congestion with rail will be much worse than it is today." With 200,000 more people living on Oahu in 2030 than in 2005, what would you expect?

Truly shocking would be cancellation of this rail project, which will let commuters avoid congestion by getting them out of their cars. It won't be for everybody, but for those who choose to ride, their quality of life will be dramatically improved.

Doug Carlson  
Honolulu



Vol. 13, Issue 179 - Friday, June 27, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

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[Write a Letter to the Editor](#)

### Why worry about Stop Rail movement?

Regarding the article "[Mayor slams media and 'attack' over rail,](#)" (Star-Bulletin, June 26): If Mayor Hannemann "is not worried at all" about Stop Rail Now succeeding in attaining the nearly 45,000 signatures, why is he making so much noise with his media blitz? Sounds to me like he's afraid to let the people make their own decision about rail.

Richard Sullivan  
Kaneohe



Vol. 13, Issue 180 - Saturday, June 28, 2008

# Letters to the Editor

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[Write a Letter to the Editor](#)

## **Rail opponents' ideas better than mayor's**

Our mayor has been on the mainland too long. He brought home paranoid ideas about the anti-rail folks.

He is not giving enough credit to Dennis Callan and Michael Uechi. Yes, Mr. Mayor, these two concerned individuals have headed the Stop Rail Now movement from the beginning. Their support has come from the dozens of concerned individuals who have been giving testimony for the last two years at the City Council trying to get traffic relief to be the focus of the High-Capacity Corridor Transit Project.

Stop Rail Now favors mass transit that reduces travel time for both mass transit and car commuters. The mayor's rail project will not reduce travel time for transit or car commuters.

The mayor's consulting engineers have told us H-1 is full during rush hour. The same engineers have told us that 79 percent of commuters in 2030 will use their cars. Traffic relief must come first.

Stop Rail Now's list of traffic improvements is better for city first responder vehicles, civil defense vehicles and business people who need their cars for work.

John Brizdle  
Honolulu



Vol. 13, Issue 180 - Saturday, June 28, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

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[Write a Letter to the Editor](#)

### **What is the purpose of the ZipperLane?**

Some years back the idea of the ZipperLane was dreamed up and put into effect. I thought I understood that it was to add another lane so as to relieve some traffic congestion. Our Fearless Leaders turned it around and made the use of it available to only those who carpool with at least three occupants.

Not getting the volume of traffic on it that our Fearless Leaders had hoped for (surprise), they reduced the required occupancy to two. Usage jumped.

Now our Fearless Leaders want to increase the minimum occupancy to three again. Are they actually expecting the traffic on the ZipperLane to increase? Is the ZipperLane there to relieve traffic congestion, or is it there as a reward for those who carpool?

Ted Chernin  
Aiea

June 29, 2008

## Fight rages over potential ballot issue

### Proponents fearful that transit project might not survive ballot vote

By SEAN HAO

Advertiser Staff Writer

Proponents of Honolulu's planned elevated commuter rail are stepping up efforts to prevent a citywide vote on the \$3.7 billion project.

Mayor Mufi Hannemann, construction workers and other pro-rail groups have launched a media blitz to prevent opponents from garnering enough signatures to put an anti-rail question on the November ballot.

Rail proponents may have a reason to be concerned about a public vote on rail. Major rail projects in Seattle, Miami, Phoenix and Austin, Texas, have suffered setbacks at the polls. In contrast, rail transit projects in Houston, Denver and most recently Charlotte, N.C., survived ballot votes.

Honolulu's rail backers don't want to risk the project's future with a public vote.

"If it gets on the ballot, then it becomes a political campaign — you just don't know" what could happen, said David Wilson of McNeil Wilson Communications. "It'll be a big fight."

Wilson and undisclosed backers recently launched a pro-rail advertising campaign featuring the new Web site [www.supportrailtransit.com](http://www.supportrailtransit.com) along with TV and radio ads. They're joined by the Hawaii Carpenters Union, which recently decided to purchase 280 TV commercial spots a month for three months.

The city already has an extensive publicly funded pro-rail marketing and education effort that includes TV and radio shows. Last week that effort was augmented when Hannemann opted to spend political campaign funds on several media ads attacking opponents of the rail project.

State House Majority Leader Kirk Caldwell, D-24th (Manoa) and a rail supporter, said now is the time to fight the ballot initiative. A vote on rail could signal the death knell for the project, he said.

"The real battle should be now to keep it off the ballot," Caldwell said. "Once it gets on the ballot, I think you're on the losing end. They'll vote to stop the rail system. It's easier to tear something down than to be constructive."

Hannemann hopes to break ground on the 20-mile East Kapolei to Ala Moana system in December 2009. Limited service between Kapolei and Waipahu would begin in December 2012, under city plans.

## right to vote

Those plans could be derailed by a campaign to put an anti-rail initiative on the ballot that kicked off in April. The grassroots group Stop Rail Now ([www.stoprailnow.com](http://www.stoprailnow.com)) set a goal of collecting the signatures of 45,000 registered voters by Aug. 4. The

city clerk's office maintains Stop Rail Now will need at least 44,525 signatures to qualify for the November ballot.

The group's backers include retired businessman Cliff Slater, Charley's Taxi President Dale Evans and Panos Prevedouros, a University of Hawai'i transportation engineering professor and president of Hawaii Highway Users Alliance.

Stop Rail Now argues the public has a right to vote on whether the city should proceed with what would be the largest public works project in state history. They want the city to explore nonrail road-construction projects that can reduce traffic congestion. So far the group says it has collected about 30,000 signatures and \$30,000 in contributions.

Rail proponents contend the public has had a say on the rail project via elected representatives, extensive hearings and talk-story sessions.

Anti-rail groups are arrayed against a host of parties pushing for the project including the city, construction trade unions and real estate developers.

"They are fighting the battle right now to try and prevent us from collecting signatures," said Dennis Callan, co-chairman of Stop Rail Now. But, "We're determined. We suspect that we've got 55 percent (of people) in our favor and the other side has got 45 percent. That's just a wild guess."

It's difficult to predict the outcome if the rail project were placed on the ballot. No major scientific polls have measured opinion on the project.

In terms of funding, the pro-rail groups seem significantly ahead of the anti-rail groups. The city spent \$1.4 million in taxpayer money from August 2005 through February 2008 on public relations and outreach efforts. Hannemann, who's running for re-election, had \$1.91 million in campaign cash as of Dec. 31. So far, no well-known candidate has stepped forward to run against Hannemann, giving the mayor the option of using his campaign money to support rail.

The Hawaii Carpenters, with 7,800 members, declined to disclose how much they are spending on their 280 pro-rail ads on TV. Ron Takeda, the carpenters business representative, said the ads are aimed at countering extensive media attention provided to Stop Rail Now.

The union acknowledged that the rail would provide significant economic opportunities for members. That, in turn, is good for the state, Takeda said.

"Certainly skilled tradesmen would get a lot of that work," he said. "You can't have a sick construction industry and a healthy economy."

## **another option**

The rail opponents have a fallback if they fail to reach their goal of 45,000 signatures by Aug. 4. That deadline is only the date necessary for getting on the November ballot. Stop Rail Now organizers have said, even if they miss that deadline, they will continue to collect signatures. If they get the required number of signatures after Aug. 4, the city would be required to hold a special election on rail.

The results of rail-related ballot issues on the Mainland varies even within the same community.

For example, in 1999 Dade County Florida voters rejected a sales-tax increase for expansion of the Metrorail system. Three years later voters approved a tax hike for transit. Similarly, Phoenix voters rejected a sales-tax increase for light-rail transit in 1997. In 2000 voters approved a tax increase for the project. In 2004 Phoenix voters also approved expanding the system.

In Austin, a light-rail project has been on hold since voters objected to the plan in 2000. Last year Seattle voters rejected a sales-tax increase for rail. Voters in Houston and Denver approved rail projects in 2003 and 2004, respectively.

This fall Santa Fe, N.M.; Kansas City, Mo.; St Louis; Austin and Seattle also may have rail-related ballot measures.

Recent record-high gasoline prices could help sway public opinion in favor of transit. At the same time a slowing economy could cause some voters to balk at paying the higher taxes required to fund rail transit.

Honolulu's rail project will be funded primarily via a 15-year increase in the state's general excise tax. That 12.5 percent tax hike is expected to generate \$3 billion out of the \$3.7 billion needed to pay for the project.

Unlike many Mainland communities, Honolulu's transit tax hike was never put to a ballot vote.

"Virtually every other city that has done a rail system since World War II has done a ballot question," said council member Charles Djou, who opposes the project. "It is highly unusual that Honolulu is moving forward with this rail system without a vote.

"If we don't put this issue on the ballot, this issue will never be resolved. This project will always be controversial."

June 29, 2008

## 'Hypocritical' attacks intensify rivalry

By SEAN HAO

Advertiser Staff Writer

Advertisements aimed at linking local anti-rail groups to Mainland special interests are generating their own controversy.

Mayor Mufi Hannemann last week spent campaign money on several ads attacking the Stop Rail Now movement, which wants to put an anti-rail measure on the November ballot. Those groups have since fired back claiming the ads are inaccurate and misleading. The ads also have been labeled as hypocritical by former Gov. Ben Cayetano.

Anti-rail groups want to prevent Hannemann from building a \$3.7 billion, 20-mile elevated commuter train linking East Kapolei to Ala Moana. Stop Rail Now said it plans to complain about the ads to the Federal Transit Administration and the Federal Trade Commission. The group's biggest beef is that the ads claim local anti-rail groups are allied with Mainland ultra-conservative groups, and oil and chemical companies.

"There's absolutely no money coming from the Mainland period, let alone from (petroleum) and chemical companies," said Stop Rail Now co-founder Dennis Callan. "Where's the proof? It would certainly undermine our credibility, if it were true."

Hannemann said, "The ad merely points out what's widely known on the Mainland, and confirmed to me by my fellow mayors, and that is that far-right so-called 'think tanks' are in fact behind the anti-rail movement all across the country."

The print ads say Honolulu's anti-rail effort is not broad based but is driven mainly by retired businessman Cliff Slater, Charley's Taxi President Dale Evans and Panos Prevedouros, a University of Hawai'i transportation engineering professor and president of Hawaii Highway Users Alliance. The ad notes the three are members of the Grassroot Institute of Hawaii.

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii's mission, according to its Web site, is to promote individual liberty, the free market and limited accountable government. The Web site lists Slater and Evans as board members and Randal O'Toole, a senior fellow at the libertarian Cato Institute, as a member of its Board of Scholars. O'Toole has authored numerous articles criticizing rail projects.

"The Grassroot Institute, the Hawaii Highway Users Alliance and the other anti-rail organizations are being coached by their Mainland counterparts," Hannemann said in an e-mail response last week. "It's ironic that a group that prides itself on defense of the First Amendment would run to federal agencies to try to suppress an opposing view. I'm sure any sort of complaint will be dismissed as baseless."

### **grassroot issue**

Hannemann's ad also links current Grassroot Institute of Hawaii President Jamie Story to her former employer the Texas Public Policy Center. The ad says the Texas Public Policy Center is a crusader for road-based construction, which has a consultant that advocated against rail projects in several cities. The American Highway Users Alliance has hired the same anti-rail consultant, according to the ad.

Callan, who launched Stop Rail Now with local physician Michael Uechi, acknowledged that some anti-rail supporters are

associated with the Grassroot Institute of Hawaii. However, there's no formal association between Stop Rail Now and the Grassroot Institute of Hawaii, he said. Story was unavailable for comment Friday.

Stop Rail Now needs to gather about 45,000 signatures to place an anti-rail petition on the November ballot. The group said it had collected about 30,000 signatures as of late last week.

Hannemann's ads attacking anti-rail groups prompted Cayetano to enter the fray and criticize Hannemann's handling of the project.

"Rather than attack the message — there are arguments to be made for this thing on both sides — the guy (Hannemann) is really trying to take the offensive and kill the messenger," Cayetano said in a phone interview Friday. "I don't think it's fair. It's like David versus Goliath, only this time Goliath is winning."

Hannemann countered that, "Everyone knows Ben Cayetano has been staunchly anti-rail throughout his career and fundraised and vigorously supported my opponent in the last mayoral election."

## **conflicts of interest**

Cayetano, who said he signed the anti-rail petition, raised questions about conflicts of interest relating to transit project contracts.

The project's largest contractor is Parsons Brinckerhoff, which has an \$86 million deal with the city. The other major contractor is InfraConsult LLC, which has an \$11.5 million deal to manage the rail project for the city. InfraConsult was founded in part by former Parsons Brinckerhoff employees.

The train project is run by the city transportation department, which is led by director Wayne Yoshioka, a former Parsons Brinckerhoff engineer. Yoshioka has promised to recuse himself from key decisions regarding his former employer.

"It's a bit hypocritical to attack these people personally as having a conflict of interest when the conflicts with the consultants are far greater in terms of its impact on public financing," Cayetano said.

Hannemann's ad also points out that Story, the head of the Grassroots Institute of Hawaii, is a former Miss Texas who "has just moved to Hawai'i." The anti-rail movement in Hawai'i is "part of a national effort to maintain the status quo," the ad says.

Stop Rail Now's Callan countered that Hannemann, who is funding the ads with campaign money, has raised cash from Mainland rail contractors.

Between November 2004, when Hannemann was elected, to December 2007 the mayor raised \$2.26 million for his campaign. About \$163,000, or 7.2 percent, has come from contractors involved in the planning of the rail project, their employees and families, according to an Advertiser search of Hawai'i Campaign Spending Commission records.

Employees of New York-based rail contractor Parsons Brinckerhoff contributed \$17,175 to Hannemann's campaign during that period. That figure includes former employees. Most of that money — \$16,750 — came from Parsons Brinckerhoff employees with out-of-state addresses.



Vol. 13, Issue 181 - Sunday, June 29, 2008



## Go Rail

Wayne Yoshioka

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# Isle commuters need choices, not distortions

It isn't surprising that the Highway Users Alliance advocates more highways as a solution to our transportation woes, but it is disappointing that the HHUA's column Thursday was full of pothole-ridden logic, touted poorly disguised opinions as "facts" and resorted to fear mongering.

» **Distortion No. 1** -- Rail is environmentally insensitive.

Because rail will run on electricity, it can make use of alternative and renewable energy sources like solar, wind or H-POWER. The same can't be said for cars or buses. In terms of a direct comparison, according to the U.S. Department of Energy's 2007 Transportation Energy Data Book, the average rail system in the United States used 2,754 BTU per passenger mile while the average passenger vehicle consumed 3,793 BTU per passenger mile. With cars consuming 36 percent more energy, it is clear that it is the behavior of continuing to drive cars in congested conditions that is environmentally insensitive.

» **Distortion No. 2** -- Rail is expensive.

From a consumer's perspective, using a private vehicle is more expensive. Considering maintenance and insurance costs, paying \$4 to \$5 per gallon of gas, and paying \$12 a day for downtown parking, driving a car is very expensive. If you add paying a nearly \$13 round-trip toll for a grade-separated viaduct, driving is a lot more painful to the pocketbook.

More and more people in Honolulu are discovering this and leaving their cars at home and turning to mass transit. From a transportation agency perspective, highways are expensive to construct and expensive to maintain. The HHUA column itself discusses the need for pavement management. Building more roadways increases this cost.

» **Distortion No. 3** -- Tolls will cover the construction and maintenance costs for an elevated, reversible toll highway.

Not true. In evaluating toll roads as part of the Alternatives Analysis process, we estimated that charging a peak hour toll of \$6.40 would generate only enough revenue to pay for maintenance and operating costs and 23 percent of the debt service payments on the bonds needed to pay for construction of the facility. This means that 77 percent of the construction cost of the toll highway needs to come from somewhere other than tolls.

» **Distortion No. 4** -- Buses and taxis are a more efficient way to move people.

The plain and simple fact is that a single train can move 300 people -- the equivalent of six buses or between 250 and 300 cars. A rail line with a single track in each direction can carry the equivalent of a six-lane freeway. Putting Honolulu's rail line on a dedicated, elevated guideway means passengers will know, every time, exactly when they will arrive at their destination. The concepts for HHUA's proposed elevated roadway all assume that vehicles will come back down to grade, mixing with at-grade traffic, and contributing to and being affected by the traffic congestion and the unpredictable delays that occur on the street network.

Rail transit is good for mobility, good for the environment, good for the economy, good for communities and good for all of Oahu's families. Honolulu's rail transit project is an investment in our future that enjoys the full support of Hawaii's congressional delegation, comes with the pledge of \$900 million in federal funding from the head of the U. S. House Committee on Transportation and is recognized by the head of the Federal Transportation Administration as one of the best projects in the country.

Unlike the anti-rail critics, those of us who support rail transit aren't against highways, or cars, or taxis or buses. We're simply for transportation choices that are reliable, predictable, environmentally sustainable and economically sound.

Wayne Yoshioka is the director of the city Department of Transportation Services.

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Vol. 13, Issue 181 - Sunday, June 29, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

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[Write a Letter to the Editor](#)

### **Mayor's ad maligned rail's opponents**

By now, most Honolulu residents have heard about Mayor Mufi Hannemann's purchase of \$20,000 of newspaper ads attacking me, the Grassroot Institute of Hawaii and a number of those who question the financial and environmental viability of the mayor's rail plan. Yet rather than use his advertisements to respond to factual criticisms raised by the Grassroot Institute and others, Hannemann chose to demagogue those of us who refuse to blindly follow his plan.

Hannemann stated that only four people are dissatisfied with his rail scheme -- when more than 30,000 have signed the petition calling for rail to be placed on the November ballot. He fabricated oil and chemical industry connections that simply don't exist -- and why would they, when the rail will consume at least as much energy as the marginal number of cars it helps to replace?

He also invoked the name of my former employer, the Texas Public Policy Foundation. If Mayor Hannemann wants to talk about Texas, perhaps he should know that the new rail line to Dallas/Fort Worth airport has run \$900 million over budget, the Austin commuter rail will carry only 0.5 percent of daily commuters and the Houston passenger train had 129 collisions with automobiles in its first 30 months.

On a good note, at least Mayor Hannemann did not use taxpayer money to fund the advertisement against me and fellow taxpayers. However, we should all question his, and his funders', motives for producing such a piece.

**Jamie Story**  
President  
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii



Vol. 13, Issue 181 - Sunday, June 29, 2008



## No Rail

Dennis Callan and Michael Uechi

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# We can find better ways to move people around

The recent newspaper ad "Getting Real on Rail," paid for by Mayor Mufi Hannemann's \$2.5 million campaign fund, is the latest in a string of disturbing developments by pro-rail forces. The Hannemann administration's steel-on-steel heavy rail system was ill-conceived from the start and the campaign to promote it has consistently tried to stifle the voices of anyone proposing an alternative.

The Hannemann ad, which has appeared in both dailies, would seem to be a parody if it weren't so unsettling. It paints, in Hunter S. Thompson style, a right-wing "extremist" plot to kill rail, masterminded by a Texas beauty queen and funded by the auto industry, petro dollars, urban sprawl developers and others.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Stoprailnow.com is a home-grown, grass-roots organization of concerned citizens from throughout the political spectrum. For example, of the authors of this piece, Callan is a progressive Democrat and Uechi is nonpartisan. More than 30,000 people have now signed the petition, with several thousand volunteers actively helping, and a large portion of the public agrees with this effort. To call this a small, secretive movement "fueled by ... special interest groups" is insulting.

Our primary goal is to let citizens vote on this issue, which has clearly resonated with the Oahu residents. The

mayor says rail is "what most people feel is the best choice" but he says that he will do everything possible to oppose putting rail on the ballot. If most people really did feel rail was the best choice, the mayor would welcome a vote to validate his choice of a multibillion-dollar rail project.

We are not against public transit -- on the contrary we believe there are better, less expensive and more environmentally friendly ways to move people. Stoprailnow.com believes the rail plan was flawed from the very beginning because it focused on rail to the exclusion of other solutions. The scheme will neither improve the commute nor offer a viable mass transit alternative.

Hundreds of thousands of dollars are being spent to sway public opinion on a rail system that by the city's own analysis increases transit trips by a mere 2 percent.

Meanwhile the city reckons that congestion on the H-1 will only continue to worsen. Why spend \$5 or 6 billion on a project that will have no discernable impact on highway congestion? And rail is an energy hog compared to bus mass transit and carpools.

We believe the study completed by Panos Prevedouros, a distinguished professor of traffic and transportation engineering at the University of Hawaii, deserves consideration. Prevedouros has come up with the most in-depth analysis of traffic congestion on Oahu which includes complex simulations of the benefits of rail, HOT Lanes and tunnels. This study didn't cost taxpayers a penny.

We believe the study is far more informative than the mayor's multimillion-dollar "Alternatives Analysis," and offers a solution that reduces congestion on a large scale, for about one-fifth the cost of the city's program. This alternative solution calls for new elevated lanes for express bus, vanpool and carpools, bypassing the Leeward congestion without extending any elevated portion through central Honolulu. Many other alternative road improvements, also part of this engineering plan, have been completely ignored by the city.

Instead of considering Prevedouros' detailed report, the mayor instead unleashed a barrage of propaganda through his proxies. In doing so, Mayor Hannemann not only denies citizens the benefit of a masterfully designed solution to a real problem, but drastically squelches public discourse.

In contrast to the million-dollar-plus TV advertising, public relations and print ads spent by the pro-rail juggernaut, SRN is an all-volunteer organization that has to date spent about \$30,000 -- most of it on one Midweek ad.

Stoprailnow.com, with its growing number of volunteers, has been collecting about 1,000 signatures each day but more signatures are needed to reach our goal of putting the issue on the ballot.

We believe Oahu residents should have the opportunity to vote on mass transit -- the largest public works in the history of our state.

Dennis Callan, a tour manager and president of Hawaii Geographic Society, and Michael Uechi, a urologist practicing in Honolulu, are founders of Stop Rail Now.

Article URL: <http://starbulletin.com/2008/06/29/editorial/commentary3.html>



## Old commuting idea gains a new following

Posted: June 30, 2008 06:49 PM

Updated: June 30, 2008 07:58 PM



By Leland Kim - [bio](#) | [email](#)

HONOLULU (KHNL) - As gas prices continue to climb, Hawaii drivers continue to look for more ways to cut commuting costs. Those who drive in from the leeward coast are some of the hardest hit at the pump, but an old idea is gaining a new following.

Most of us know all too well how congested the H-1 is, especially during rush hour traffic. One way to combat that is with the Hawaii Vanpool Program, which has been around for 14 years. But recently, it's seen a steady increase, and more people are expected to join as gas prices continue to climb.

Lokana Keli'ikoa-Pua is a pioneer of sorts. She's been vanpooling for 12 years, way before record gas prices forced commuters to rethink their driving habits.

"I live in Waianae, and we're talking a lot of miles," she said. "And with the vanpool, it offers you a shared rider, where you have shared cost."

The monthly cost for a vanpool van is \$385. If you have seven riders, that's only \$55 per person, plus the shared cost of paying for gas.

And the vanpool service pays for insurance and the cost to maintain the van. That means insurance and maintenance costs are included with the monthly fee. That translates to more money in your pocket.

As an average driver, you could save between \$500 to \$1,000 a month on car-related expenses. The vanpool service has seen greater interest, adding more than 300 participants in the past nine months.

And as the Department of Transportation changes its zipper lane occupancy from two to three people, van pool ridership is expected to increase.



Lokana Keli'ikoa-Pua



"I think it will impact it greatly," said Vicki Harris, the vanpool executive director. "You got people who now say, 'Gee, the only way I can get in the fast lane, I'm going to change my habits.'"

Changing habits to save time and money.

"But as they find with the high escalating gas costs, they may start reconsidering, giving up some luxuries for the ability of just riding in, sleeping, reading, or whatever," said Keli'ikoa-Pua.

"They're not behind the wheel anymore. They don't have to be frustrated with traffic anymore."

"How much less expensive could it be?" asked Harris. "Please consider it. It's like putting a vacation in your pocket."

The interest in vanpooling is so great, 15 people are waiting for vans right now. Vanpool ridership is up to 1,600 riders statewide.

To learn more about it, click [here](#) or the link on this page. Vanpool Hawaii can also be reached at 596-VANS (or 596-8267).



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June 30, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

### **rail**

## **Mayor should tone down transit rhetoric**

The mayor is running pro-rail ads (June 22, Page A37) full of mischaracterizations and antagonism.

The sad fact now is that rather than respond to the factual criticisms and concerns raised by the Grassroot Institute of Hawaii and many others, Mayor Mufi Hannemann has demeaned our organization and new president, Jamie Story. I would encourage the mayor and his staff to tone down the rhetoric and rancor.

I find it interesting that a few straightforward questions about the most expensive construction project in the state's history has our mayor lashing out defensively.

What does that say about those who support the rush to rail? It's also troubling that the mayor hauled out the same old tired "local against newcomer" mentality. Last I heard, a tax-paying resident of this state is entitled to voice an opinion and get involved in the community discussion.

Grassroot Institute is a private, independent, research and information source on important public policy issues.

We're nonpartisan and 90 percent of our funding and members are from Hawai'i.

We simply believe that all of the rail alternatives have not been fully explored, and with so much at stake the people should be allowed to vote on a project that will fundamentally change O'ahu forever.

Why is that so threatening to some people?

Tom McAuliffe | Director of communications, Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

June 30, 2008

## Letters to the Editor

### **Let elected officials do jobs, or vote them out**

I guess people who want rail to be put on the ballot don't have much confidence in their elected officials.

We elect our representatives because we have confidence in their representation and decision-making. We should trust that they know what is best for the community.

Good politicians listen to the people they represent and make decisions based on the information presented before them.

Voting to go forward with the rail system was a decision that benefits the greater population of the City and County of Honolulu.

If the Stop Rail Now group doesn't trust the elected officials who represent them, they can vote to replace the incumbents.

The people's voice should be heard in the election process and to vote on issues of governing, such as the Constitutional Convention.

We should let our elected officials do their jobs to decide on laws and other infrastructure issues, such as mass transit.

A few decades ago, our elected officials failed to fulfill the needs of the people with their short-sightedness by voting down mass transit.

Now, several billion dollars later, they finally agree mass transit is needed. Let our politicians do their jobs, or vote them out come election time.

Steven S. Fukunaga | Mililani

June 30, 2008

## City needs plan for burials, sites along rail route

The chance of the city's 20-mile transit project being built without disturbances to Hawaiian burials and risks to historic or architectural assets is about zero.

In most cases, ancient burials are unmarked. They are more frequently found in sandy soil near the sea or in caves, but families also were known to bury their loved ones near their dwellings inland.

That's why it's imperative for the city to develop a plan for responding to burial discoveries in a sensitive way that involves the community but sets out the circumstances in which reburial of the remains nearby would be the most rational course.

Fortunately, the city seems to be on this path already, having witnessed multiple cases that have sparked new controversies:

- The unearthing of numerous burials on the Wal-Mart Ke'eaumoku site, a dispute that, years later, still isn't resolved.
- Start-and-stop construction at the site of the Whole Foods market, where many more remains than anticipated were disturbed.
- Most recently, a Kaua'i homeowner who passed the reviews by the island burial council and secured the permits nonetheless was told to halt construction by Kaua'i Police Chief Darryl Perry, who cited burial desecration law. Since the homeowner had followed council direction to leave the burials in place and decided to build above them on post-and-pier supports, this decision is utterly incongruous.

Bottom line: If it's this difficult to build markets and single-family homes without unforeseen obstacles, it's going to be impossible to build the city's largest public-works project without a plan.

Grasping this reality, city transit planners have begun discussions with state historic sites officials and with the O'ahu Island Burial Council. The aim is to develop a memorandum of agreement that would involve stakeholders in laying out protocols for how to proceed with the project.

This is a smart approach. Because the rail project involves federal funds, the bar is set high for the protection of native burials as well as historic sites.

The city, the council and the state Historic Preservation Division should collaborate on alerting government agencies and community groups and individuals who want a voice in the process.

The discussions should begin as soon as possible, and it should include those with concerns about other historic artifacts and buildings.

This will become an increasingly heated issue as construction approaches the central urban core. But simply resorting to crisis management is not an option for a project of this magnitude. These are anticipated conflicts that could, and should, be headed off at the pass.

# HONOLULU RAIL TRANSIT PROJECT

## Construction Workshop: An Infrastructure Contractors' Open House

**Thursday, June 12, 2008**  
8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Neal Blaisdell Center, Pikake Room and Hawaii Suites • 777 Ward Avenue, Honolulu, Hawaii

### About the Project

The Honolulu Rail Transit Project (Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project) is a \$3.7 billion\* approximately 20-mile elevated rail system with 19 stations. It runs from East Kapolei to Ala Moana Center and will be constructed primarily in the median of existing roadways. The western-most 3.5 miles of the route are through currently undeveloped land and the eastern 16.5 miles are in areas of various residential and commercial density. Portions of this project will be delivered using the Design-Build project delivery method, including the final design and construction of a portion of the guideway and track and the maintenance yard/shops. Parsons Brinckerhoff is the General Engineering Consultant for the Preliminary Engineering/ Environmental Impact Statement phase of the project.

(\* represents 2006 Dollars)

### Workshop Details

The Workshop will outline the project schedule and opportunities for designers, contractors, subcontractors and suppliers. This Workshop will also provide opportunities for firms to begin teaming for various contracts associated with the Rail Transit Project. The Workshop will facilitate communication among the project team, contractors, subcontractors, and various groups within the construction industry.

### Workshop Topics

- Project overview
- Project implementation schedule
- Potential civil contract packaging and procurement process
- Contract components and construction features
- Additional City of Honolulu project opportunities

At the conclusion of the Workshop, Project team members will be available for consultation or a "Project Session" with individual companies.

### Project Sessions

- Procurement and contracting
- Guideway design and construction
- Yard and shops
- Stations
- DBE/SBE issues
- General comments

Each company will be required to choose only one of the above listed specialties or a "general comment" session. The specialists are experts in the designated areas, but will be able to answer other project questions. Signup for the individual meetings can be made by pre-registration or during registration at the Workshop. If a meeting is requested by pre-registration, the time assignment will be given during registration on the day of the Workshop. Each company will be given only one time slot for a Project Session.

Registration fee is \$25 and includes continental breakfast and box lunch. Seating is limited.



# Construction Workshop: An Infrastructure Contractors' Open House

## REGISTRATION FORM

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Suite # \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip/Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Attendee Names (for badges): attach separate form for additional names

Please do not include me in conference database

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### WORKSHOP INFORMATION

Registration Fee: \$25 (includes continental breakfast and box lunch) Space is limited.

Vegetarian meal required:  \_\_\_\_\_(quantity)

**PLEASE MAIL AND MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: LYCHEE PRODUCTIONS**

**MAIL TO: P.O. BOX 1478, HONOLULU, HI 96806**

### PLEASE INDICATE YOUR CATEGORY AND FIELD

General Contractor \_\_\_\_\_ (type)

Architect / Engineer \_\_\_\_\_ (specify)

Sub-contractor \_\_\_\_\_ (type)

Supplier \_\_\_\_\_ (type)

DBE/SBE/MBE \_\_\_\_\_ (type)

Other \_\_\_\_\_ (specify)

Project Session registration request (limit one session per company, indicate 1st, 2nd and 3rd choice). Individual company sessions are anticipated to be 15 to 30 minutes in length and will provide each participating company an opportunity to ask questions and provide comment on technical issues, contract packaging and procurement approaches directly with PB project team members. See information sheet for complete details.

\_\_\_\_ Procurement and Contracting \_\_\_\_ Yard and Shop \_\_\_\_ Guideway Design and Construction

\_\_\_\_ Stations \_\_\_\_ General Comments

Please list any ADA Special Needs: \_\_\_\_\_

**You may fax or e-mail completed registration form in advance to:**

**FAX: (808) 947-8728 • Workshop Information Line: (808) 535-6243**

**Email: projectsandevents@gmail.com • www.honolulutrainsit.org**

Honolulu Rail Transit Project Construction Workshop:  
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Registration forms are available at: [www.honolulustransit.org](http://www.honolulustransit.org).  
Workshop Information line: 808-535-6243