

HART unveils first rail column in East Kapolei

The 23-foot structure is one of 300 that will eventually link the area with Pearl City

By Star-Advertiser staff



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Mayor Peter Carlisle, left, stepped back and watched Saturday as Honolulu Authority for Rapid Transportation Executive Director Dan Grabauskas spoke with the media Saturday at the site of the first support column for the 20-mile rail system in East Kapolei.

The Honolulu Authority for Rapid Transportation unveiled Saturday the first of 700 massive concrete columns that will support the 20-mile Honolulu rail system.

The 23-foot column, off Old Farrington Highway in East Kapolei, is part of the first phase of construction for the multibillion-dollar project. Three hundred columns will be used to link East Kapolei to Pearl City.

Five truckloads of concrete were poured into a mold last week and cured over seven days to shape the column. The mold was removed and the column inspected and approved on Friday.

Previously, about 40 cubic yards of concrete was poured to form the foundation and another 15 cubic yards of concrete used for the column transition.

The transition zones for three more columns are scheduled to be poured this week.

Contractor Kiewit intends to complete several columns before building the guideway on top. The concrete guideway pieces are scheduled to be built at West Kalaeloa Business Park later this year.

The event was attended by Mayor Peter Carlisle and Dan Grabauskas, executive director of the Honolulu Authority for Rapid Transportation.

There has been significant movement around the embattled project in recent weeks.

Last month, U.S. District Judge A. Wallace Tashima ruled that the project will affect fewer than 10 recreational and historic sites, significantly fewer than the 40 locations claimed in a lawsuit filed by mayoral candidate Ben Cayetano, University of Hawaii law professor Randy Roth, former U.S. District Judge Walter Heen, anti-rail activist Cliff Slater and other plaintiffs. The city will seek to get the remaining claims dismissed at a hearing scheduled for August.

Cayetano, a former governor, has publicly committed to opposing the rail project should he be elected mayor.

If he is elected, it's possible that the existing rail infrastructure — including Saturday's column — will be torn down.

Yet to be decided is another suit brought forth by Paulette Kaanohiokalani Kaleikini, who is seeking to stop work on the rail system until an archaeological survey can be completed to determine whether Hawaiian remains will be disturbed. The suit alleges that the city illegally divided the 20-mile rail route into segments and launched the project before surveys on each of the segments could be completed.

Circuit Judge Gary Chang rejected Kaleikini's arguments in March 2011 and Kaleikini has since appealed to the state Supreme Court.

And on Wednesday, the Honolulu City Council approved Bill 37, which allows HART to borrow as much as \$450 million for the project. HART officials said the approval provides a safeguard to ensure full funding for the project.