

Rail work apace with cultural, design improvements

By Dan Grabauskas and Ivan Lui-Kwan

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Building Oahu's first urban transit system provides both the opportunity and the responsibility to do things right. While we may have missed the mark on occasion, we are increasingly working to do better, to do things with respect and by listening to Oahu's diverse communities.

The Supreme Court ruling provides a lesson and an opportunity to go beyond what is required and to do what is right. We have responsibly accelerated the archaeological surveys and have completed more than 80 percent of the work required. We have managed to keep the project within budget, and while the recent court ruling has meant a temporary delay on some project work, we remain on track to complete construction on time.

We are working closely with the State Historic Preservation Division (SHPD), the Oahu Island Burial Council (OIBC), and cultural and lineal descendants on our protocol for caring for iwi kupuna — and that is working well. But we want to do more.

Partnering with the Native Hawaiian community must be an integral part of what we do. In the spirit of partnership, we have implemented a cultural monitoring program. While there are similar programs throughout the state, HART's program is being designed to continue well beyond the archaeological survey work through construction.



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All of our cultural monitors receive safety training and serve as on-site observers of our archaeological work. The monitors include descendants of those families from the ahupuaa in which the work is being done. And they help ensure the work is done carefully, properly and with respect. We believe it's the right thing to do and fits with our goal of improving transparency projectwide.

Building a foundation of trust with all stakeholders and with the larger community is vital to the project's success. We are dedicated to setting the right course, and enhancing Native Hawaiian participation in the survey work is just the beginning. We are also working with several Native Hawaiian organizations, from the Native Hawaiian Chamber of Commerce to the leaders of Hawaiian homestead communities to Native Hawaiian cultural practitioners. We are in this together and for the long haul.

AS WE COMPLETE our survey work, we are continuing with design and engineering so we can hit the ground running when construction resumes next year. Train vehicles are being designed with 800 additional seats, and we will be back in the community to discuss our smaller, modular-designed stations.

As we move closer to the finish line, the project's details have become clearer.

With the half-percent general excise surcharge in place bringing in more than \$900 million in revenue thus far, and \$1.55 billion federal funds expected soon, this project's finances are on track and construction of the system will be paid for in full just three years after it opens.

The first half of the alignment will open in five years, with the entire system opening in 2019. In just seven years, we will have a safe, reliable transportation option that will be fast, efficient and easy to use. With trains arriving every three minutes during peak times, it will be convenient with no need for complicated schedules.

Rail is designed to serve as the backbone a complete transit system, which includes a more efficient bus system. A single two-car train holds the same number of passengers as more than five city buses. And with rail taking on the most heavily congested corridor, more buses can be deployed to areas currently underserved.

Because rail will be integrated with TheBus, fares for the rail system will be the same as the bus, and riders can use a single pass for both. A network of circulator buses will deliver passengers to stations; commuters can also park at one of four park-and-rides along the route.

We are closer than ever to making rail a reality. We are dedicated to being responsible and to protecting our island's limited resources. Working together and listening to each other, we can build a better rail system and a better future for Oahu.