

AIA Honolulu

A Chapter of The American Institute of Architects

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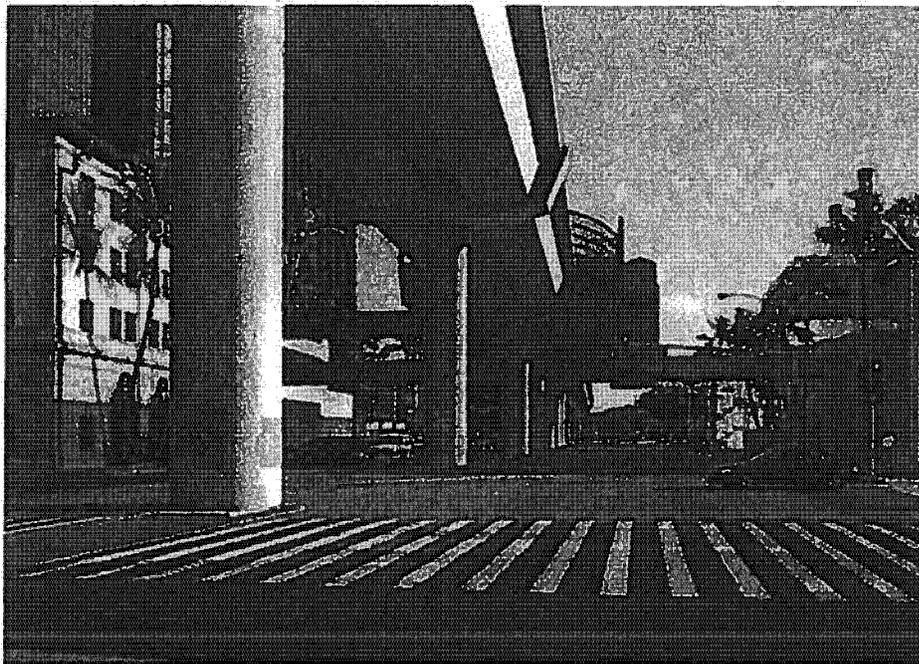
CITY CLERK
HONOLULU, HAWAII



TO: Honolulu City Council Regular Meeting, 21st Session,
Weds. July 14, 2010, 2 p.m.

DISCUSSION ITEM: Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project - Final
Environmental Impact Statement, June 2010.

TESTIMONY by: Spencer Leineweber, FAIA, President-elect, AIA Honolulu



Pictured: Simulation of the City's proposed downtown station at Bishop Street and Nimitz Highway along route to Ala Moana Center.

Is this our preferred future for Honolulu's waterfront?

The Honolulu Chapter of the AIA (American Institute of Architects) has for the last five years urged the City to consider a light rail system. The transit system should be flexible and contain both elevated and street-level segments. Light rail would cost \$2 billion less than the Project's proposed technology and would have far less environmental impacts. Together, we must look beyond a solution that focuses only on solving our transportation problems to one that addresses our long-term health, safety, welfare and economic well-being.

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The people voted "yes" on rail in 2008 but there was nothing on the ballot about what kind of rail - "only steel on steel." The Department of Transportation Services (DTS) wants to use an electrified third "heavy" rail technology that can only be elevated or underground.

Why not use more flexible Light Rail technology that can be elevated, street-level or underground? We could shave billions off the project cost by putting rail on the ground in certain areas, and by doing so we will protect our precious *mauka makai* view planes.

We could put Light Rail along city streets instead of elevating a system 35 feet overhead in front of our harbor and 85 feet overhead at Ala Moana Center. Light rail is used in 29 American cities: Seattle, Portland, San Jose, Los Angeles, San Diego, Phoenix, Salt Lake City, Denver, Houston and Dallas, to cite the closest examples.

A supplemental EIS would be required to study this substantially better and cheaper light rail alternative because this combination flexible system was not studied in the FEIS. We urge consideration of these other options before a commitment is made by the Mayor to buy heavy rail trains. Heavy rail trains are not flexible because of the electrified third rail. If we begin construction of the project using the current planned technology, we will be locked into a future our citizens of Hawaii cannot afford.

The Transit page at the AIA Honolulu website (www.aiahonolulu.org/transit) contains detailed reports and videos explaining the advantages of a flexible Light Rail system, as well as photo-simulations of elevated rail vs. light rail at key areas such as Chinatown, Downtown and UH.

Let's Do Rail Right! AIA is pro-rail and believes light rail is the right rail for Honolulu.

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