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We were not called for comment on this story.

FTA gives the green light to City's rail transit project

Reported by: Marisa Yamane
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Last Update: 6/14 9:05 pm

The Federal Transit Administration has given the City's rail transit project the green light to proceed.

Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann made the big announcement Monday evening, after returning from his trip to the mainland.

In April, the feds approved the city's route change regarding the airport area, and that cleared the way for the feds to release the final EIS.

While this is a major milestone, the project is not a done deal yet.

"I'm happy to report that the Federal Transit Administration has said our final environmental impact statement is ready to go to Governor Lingle for her acceptance!" said Hannemann.

The Mayor made the announcement surrounded by rail supporters.

"Go rail go! Go rail go!"

"It's great to get to this point. There's many steps ahead this Council will continue to work with the Mayor, the administration that continues to ensure this project is what it needs to be. It's a broad range solution for this entire island," said City Council Chair Todd Apo.

The City's $5.3B elevated commuter rail system would run between East Kapolei and Ala Moana.

"Everything the City needs to do has been done it's now in the State's hands," said Hannemann.

And before groundbreaking can happen, there are two more steps needed.

First, DLNR Chair Laura Thielen has to sign off on a programmatic agreement, which establishes the framework for lessening the project's impact on historic resources.

And second, Governor Lingle has to accept the final EIS.

In February, the Governor's spokesman said Lingle "...will conduct a thorough review, as required by law, to ensure the final EIS satisfactorily describes all impacts." And that: "her review will also include a complete analysis of the project's financial plan."

"It's on the Governor's desk, and it's on the DLNR desk for them to move it forward. If they choose not to then Dec. 6 we'll have a new governor. And if we have to wait till Dec. 6 to get a new governor, who will appoint a new DLNR chair so we can move forward and do the will of the people that's what we will do," said Hannemann.

And as you know, Mayor Hannemann is running for governor this year.

His main opponents are Neil Abercrombie and Duke Aiona.

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