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Sent: 3/26/2010 5:11:31 AM
Subject: Honolulu Advertiser - State calls for greater transparency in city rail project

Updated at 6:29 p.m., Thursday, March 25, 2010

State calls for greater transparency in city rail project

The state Department of Transportation called today for "a higher level of transparency for the proposed rail transit project" and said it would post all correspondence from the DOT to the city regarding the proposed rail transit project online at: hawaii.gov/dot/railtransit.

The state took the step following reports in The Honolulu Advertiser stating the city's proposed rail route runs too close to the state-run Honolulu International Airport and either the route must be changed or two runways must be moved. The airport issue could potentially delay start of construction on the project, which had been scheduled to commence in December.

"As early as 2006 we pointed out to the city that there are potential runway impacts near the Lagoon Drive side of the alignment," said Brennon Morioka, state DOT director, in a news release.

"As the correspondence reveals, the city has been made aware of this issue since the inception of the rail transit project and has had ample time to address it in order for EIS process to come to a conclusion," Morioka said.

The DOT said in its news release: "Following the most recent March 17 meeting between city, state and federal officials, each party involved mutually agreed that further engineering analysis would be necessary on specific technical issues before the route can be approved both federally and by the state. No timeline on resolution of these matters was decided upon but all parties agreed to work as expeditiously as possible."

At 6:10 p.m., city Transportation Director Wayne Yoshioka issued the following response to the state DOT news release:

"The City appreciates the posting of seven letters regarding the Honolulu Rail Transit Project by the State DOT. As Director Morioka correctly points out, the letters show the collaboration and cooperation that has existed for several years now between the City and the State regarding this all-important, voter-approved project. The City has worked to address the State's concerns.

"A couple of highlights worth noting: 1) There are no references at all to the Runway Protection Zone issue, which is now being resolved. 2) The August 9, 2006 letter states that the state prefers "the alignment with the transit guideway passing through HNL and along Aolele Street with one station near the airport

overseas parking garage and the other at the intersection of Aolele Street and Lagoon Drive." 3) The most recent letter posted, now nearly 5 months old, showed the State letting the Federal Transit Administration know it has signed off on the City's airport mitigation plan.

"One week ago, Mayor Hannemann worked with FTA Administrator Peter Rogoff to arrange a meeting that brought together the State DOT, the Federal Aviation Administration and the Federal Transit Administration to discuss further the technical issues that need to be resolved so that the FTA may issue the rail project's Final Environmental Impact Statement. Since that meeting, several discussions have taken place between the City and the FTA about the plan that should help resolve the Runway Protection Zone issue expeditiously."

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