From: Eckmann, Alex (FTA)
To: Day, Elizabeth (FTA)
CC: Holland, Tonya (FTA); Nelson, Ketrina (FTA)
Sent: 2/16/2010 7:22:35 AM
Subject: RE: Contact Us Comment on Honolulu

Beth,

I'm glad the summaries are helpful.

Ketrina sent an e-mail to all Contact Us responders telling us to send responses to the writers saying that we will need more time to answer their questions if our answers will be delayed due to the snow (or for other reasons?). Would this be advisable in the case of Honolulu-related letters, considering the sensitivity of the issue?

Alex
-----Original Message-----
From: Day, Elizabeth (FTA)
Sent: Saturday, February 13, 2010 8:10 AM
To: Eckmann, Alex (FTA)
Subject: RE: Contact Us Comment on Honolulu

Thanks Alex -- this is very, very helpful. Don't worry about answering these. Just keep forwarding what you get to me. Jim Ryan, Susan and I will work with Ketrina to draft a standard response for all of these Honolulu contact us items per Dave Longo's request. The project is very hot politically in Hawaii because the Mayor and Governor are arguing about the project. Peter wants to review everything that goes out related to the project. It's too lengthy a story to get into in an email. We will handle it and let you know what the standard response will be.
Thanks,
Beth

-----Original Message-----
From: Eckmann, Alex (FTA)
Sent: Fri 2/12/2010 6:08 PM
To: Day, Elizabeth (FTA)
Subject: RE: Contact Us Comment on Honolulu

This is my attempt to summarize the Honolulu letters so far, by common themes for possible standard responses:

Correspondence #1:

· Opposed to "white elephant" that will bankrupt the city.

· City needs other improvements more than the transit project.

· Visual impacts on city will diminish tourist value of the city and state.

Correspondence # 2:

· FTA report concludes project is based on overly optimistic financial projections while ignoring downside risks.

· Shortfall in revenues will require additional revenue (local tax increases).

· GET surcharge revenue (?) has consistently been less than forecasted. Financial plan may fail.

· City's forecast of GET surcharge is 36% higher than Council on Revenue's recent forecast.

· If project costs more than estimated, project will be insolvent.

Correspondence # 3:

· Project cost is too much for too little result.

· Too much money is going for PR efforts rather than for honest information.

· Project politics are personal and petty.

· Mayor relies on "out-of-control bullying of critics."

· Lack of objectivity will lead to irrational decision-making on most expensive public works projects in Hawaii's history.

Correspondence # 4 (same author as Correspondence #3, above):

· City failure on the project would reduce financial condition of entire state.

· DEIS is months behind city's project schedule; raising doubts about mayor's intention to start construction before end of his term (in 2011).

· New governor, mayor and city council (in 2011) recommends against moving ahead with spending on the project in 2010.

Correspondence # 5 (same author as Correspondence # 2, above):

· State construction jobs will not go to state workers.

· FTA funds will be used for "foreign suppliers" (non-Hawaiian suppliers?).

· GET funds(?) would be better spent to build a proposed West Oahu "Second City" as a transit oriented development rather than build the transit project.

Beth, I need to talk to you about answering these questions.

I don't see how we can write generic answers without responding to specific issues raised.

I think we need participation from someone who is more familiar with the project.

I spoke to with Ketrina Nelson about "standard answers" to Contact Us questions. She says TCA does not have "standard answers" to questions unless the offices assigned particular questions prepare them.

I don't know what "positive support" for the project Dave Longo would like to see in the response(s), since I was not at the NS press conference and did not hear Peter's statement about the project.

Alex

From: Day, Elizabeth (FTA)
Sent: Friday, February 05, 2010 12:42 PM
To: Eckmann, Alex (FTA); Ryan, James (FTA)
Cc: Borinsky, Susan (FTA)
Subject: RE: Contact Us Comment on Honolulu

Alex and Jim -- Dave Longo asked Ketrina Nelson to work with TPE on crafting a "canned" answer we can use for the many contact us statements on the Honolulu project we are receiving similar to the one in the email chain below. We will work on that together on Monday. Jim's points are correct that we shouldn't claim we will take these comments into consideration in our process since the DEIS public comment period is closed. While there is a public comment period on the FEIS, we should talk with TPE-30 to determine if we even want to bring up that in our response.

From: Longo, David (FTA)
Sent: Friday, February 05, 2010 7:46 AM
To: Nelson, Ketrina (FTA)
Cc: Day, Elizabeth (FTA); Borinsky, Susan (FTA)
Subject: Honolulu Contact Us Inquiries

Ketrina,

Please work with Beth Day and Susan Borinsky to develop a standard response for the Honolulu questions. I'd prefer it contain positive support for the project to symbolize Peter's statements during the New Starts press conference, the fact that we are working with the City and County to move the project forward and that all decisions concerning the alignment are made by local officials.

I'd like to review it before we send to anyone.

Thanks.

From: Ryan, James (FTA)
Sent: Friday, February 05, 2010 11:12 AM
To: Eckmann, Alex (FTA)
Cc: Day, Elizabeth (FTA)
Subject: RE: Contact Us Comment on Honolulu

Alex:

We must some standard response to contacts like this. I remember when the Hiawatha light rail line in Minneapolis was approaching decision time, we were flooded with postcards from an organized campaign of opposition -- and had some standard response that we used in reply.

Regarding your draft, I don't think that we have any mechanism that considers comments like this one in FTA decisionmaking. We say, and believe, that project selection is a local matter. We deal with project sponsors and have specific mechanisms -- New Starts ratings, NEPA, and MPO endorsements -- that define the rules for those interactions. We anticipate that individuals will participate in local decisionmaking rather than in our evaluation of proposed projects.

So, I think that our reply has to be less specific about the impact of the incoming comment in future FTA review of the project. And that doesn't leave much other than "thank you for your comment" which is, obviously, not very satisfying.

Jim

From: Eckmann, Alex (FTA)
Sent: Friday, February 05, 2010 10:56 AM
To: Day, Elizabeth (FTA); Longo, David (FTA); Ryan, James (FTA)
Subject: FW: Contact Us Comment on Honolulu

How about this ?

Thank you for your comments on the Honolulu High Capacity Transit Project. Your concerns will be taken into consideration in the review of this project in the future.

Alex

From: Eckmann, Alex (FTA)
Sent: Thursday, February 04, 2010 2:35 PM
To: Longo, David (FTA)
Subject: Contact Us Comment on Honolulu

Dave,

How extensive a response must we provide to comments received through Contact Us like the one below on Honolulu? Would it be enough to say "thank you" and not much else?

Alex Eckmann

View Contact Us Request

Requestor:

Demarcj49@hotmail.com <mailto:Demarcj49@hotmail.com>

Date Submitted:

02/03/2010 04:18 PM

Status:

New

Category:

Planning & Environment

Question:

The majority of people do not want rail, please stop funding this white elephant that will eventually bankrupt the city of Honolulu and destroy the environment. Honolulu's streets are composed of potholes, our sewers need 1 billion dollars in repairs. Fees are being imposed for city services that once were paid for by our taxes, and the end result will be a three story rail eclipsing our beautiful mountains and valleys. How do you sell a concrete paradise to a world that is on the brink of economic disaster? You can't, you either have to keep the island beautiful and try to promote tourism or you can develop it until it looks like the island of Manhattan and produce something else. But please don't expect tourists to fork over their hard earned dollars to come and look at a twenty mile wall stretching from Kapolei to Ala Moana covered with graffiti. Mayor Hanneman is building this rail purely for political reasons. It is against the people's will. Please stop funding now!!!

Sincerely,
Joseph DeMarco