

Messrs. Michael Giannini &
Jeffery Berman
The Koʻoalani & 1133 Waimanu
c/o Koʻolani AOA
1177 Queen Street
Honolulu, HI 96814

Dear Messrs. Giannini & Berman

Thank you for your letter of October 29, 2009 commenting on Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement, November 2008 (DEIS).

The public comment period on the DEIS began with publication of the document on November 21, 2008. Due to the high degree of public interest in this project, FTA extended the public comment period on the DEIS from 45 to 60 days. Five public hearings on the DEIS were held at local venues during the public comment period. The public comment period closed on January 22, 2009. Public comments received on the DEIS are currently being incorporated into the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

Please note that the Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for High-Capacity Transit Improvements in the Leeward Corridor of Honolulu, HI (NOI) (March 15, 2007) describes alternatives to be considered in the DEIS to include the No-build and two Fixed Guideway Transit alternatives. Five other distinct transit technologies would also be considered, and the NOI states that, "... comments on reducing the range of technologies under consideration are encouraged."

Comments received during the public scoping period did not substantially differentiate any of the five considered technologies as being universally preferable to other technologies. Subsequent to public and agency scoping, a technical review process was completed by a panel appointed by the Mayor and the City Council which selected steel wheel operating on steel rail as the technology for the Build alternative. The local panel's findings are summarized in its report to the City Council dated February 22, 2008. Therefore, the analysis of the fixed guideway alternatives in the DEIS are based on steel wheel on steel rail technology. FTA believes that consideration of alternatives in the DEIS are consistent with 40 CFR 1501.7.

HTS can answer neighborhood stuff.

Many public comments were received on the Visual and Aesthetic chapter of the DEIS. Substantial changes are being made to this chapter in the FEIS that should closer approximate the visual impacts of the elevated guideway on the environment. FTA believes that viewer response to the proposed project by interested organizations, stakeholders and concerned citizens will be adequately reflected in the FEIS.

Noise and vibration assessments are key elements of the environmental impact assessment process for mass transit projects. A public transit system is by necessity placed in population centers and often causes impacts to nearby residences and other sensitive land uses. FTA believes that the DEIS was prepared following the direction presented in FTA's Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment guidance (April 2006). Some modifications will be made in the technical noise analysis presented in the DEIS. The FEIS will reflect those changes, and noise mitigation measures will be incorporated into FEIS that will successfully attenuate noise impacts.