The Honorable Ray H. LaHood
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

January 31, 2009

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Attachments to this letter contain my general and specific comments on the draft Environmental Impact Statement produced by the City and County of Honolulu for its High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project. The reason for sending these comments to you is not to just provide a courtesy copy but to make you aware of my belief that the local process violates the spirit, if not the letter, of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) guidelines for transit project competition. If you will note from the lead-in to my general comments, I was (and remain) a strong supporter of a much needed transit project. After listening to the Region IX FTA Administrator, Leslie T. Rogers, state the need for a local funding source for transit to obtain federal funding, I publicly supported a surcharge to the general excise and use tax that covers every facet of consumer spending on O'ahu. For almost three years I supported Honolulu's mayor, Mufi Hannemann, and his Department of Transportation Services (DTS) in whatever way I could help as a volunteer.

Through late 2007, DTS presentations on the transit project always covered four technologies: steel wheel on steel rail (SWSR), rubber tire on concrete, conventional monorail, and magnetic levitation (mag-lev). I was unaware of the HSST urban mag-lev until I read an article about the mayor's trip to Nagoya, Japan, in October 2005. After doing some research (e.g., "Googling" and contacting the HSST's supplier), I felt that it would be a strong competitor for the Honolulu project. As you can see from the attachments, the City has no desire for conducting an open competition and is "greasing the skids" for an SWSR system.

Please examine the attachments, Mr. Secretary. I am a (military) systems analyst, not a transportation expert, but I doubt that the Department of Defense would have allowed such an uneven project competition for any DOD contract. I believe that all of the companies that met the City's criteria in its request for information should be allowed to compete. Your support in this matter would be sincerely appreciated. As we say in Hawaii, Mahalo and Aloha.

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