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Rail transit

Mayor has followed rules all the way

It seems fruitless to counter yet another Dave Shapiro broadside against Mayor Hannemann, particularly since he seems unwilling to do any research or examine the issues thoroughly — but I'll try.

His Jan. 20 essay was typical: exaggeration, personal invective against the mayor, ignorance of the facts, ad nauseum.

Yes, Mayor Hannemann plays tough, but that's what we expect of our leaders. And while he plays hard, he follows the rules. We would not have come this far in the process without following all the rules and taking into account all the concerns raised. I emphasize the word "process," because the mayor has insisted that we dot the i's and cross the t's every step of the way.

Shapiro really should be focusing on Gov. Lingle, who (a) reversed course on a rail project she first proposed in 2003, (b) flip-flopped on the tax surcharge to fund rail, (c) is going against a majority vote by the electorate in favor of a rail project — after calling for that very referendum, and (d) raising objections to a system at the 11th hour instead of getting involved from the beginning.

If there's anyone whose motives and actions should be called into question, it's the governor.

Kirk Caldwell
Managing director, City and County of Honolulu

Mode that alleviates most traffic is best

Street-level rail, why bother?

I read with much concern the article on the front page of The Advertiser, Jan. 19, "Architects urge rail change." If we are going to spend the money on a rail system, it should be one that alleviates the most traffic.

Building a rail system at ground level takes away already packed lanes of traffic and is a slower system. The result is less ridership, more traffic and added expense to an already expensive rail system. Any savings realized by changing the system to a street-level train would most likely be eaten up by the increased cost of delaying construction. If the state is concerned about the cost, then they should stop the delays and allow the city to get on with the project as proposed.

As far as aesthetics are concerned, a train is a train whether one looks at it at ground level or elevated. I personally think the elevated version looks more modern and less obtrusive.

Michael C. Soucie
Makakilo

Street-level capacity offers flexibility

As a former resident of the San Francisco Bay Area and employee of BART, the regional rail system, I am a big proponent of rail here and believe it would be good for Honolulu's future.

But let's learn from San Francisco. They had an ugly freeway running along their waterfront, and once people saw how big and ugly it was, many wanted to get rid of it. Only the Loma Prieta earthquake allowed them to remove the damaged freeway. In its place, a ground-level streetcar system was built, beautifying the waterfront, increasing the city's image and providing transit flexibility.

Let's not make the same mistake of building something that only after it is built will people see what an eyesore it is and not be able to get rid of it. We need the flexibility of a rail system that has street-level capability. And don't let that ugly overhead structure go into Waikīkī, which is sure to destroy its image. A street-level system there would work fine. A street-level system will also have the future capability to grow into our outlying neighborhoods.

That has been the story wherever rail has been built; extensions are demanded by the people.

John Post
Honolulu