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## Will Republican House Fund Honolulu Rail Project? (KHON)

[KHON-TV Honolulu, HI](#), January 5, 2011

Incoming Speaker of the House John Boehner has made it clear the era of earmarks in Washington, D.C. is over and the first priority for the new republican majority will be to cut spending.

Rep.-elect Colleen Hanabusa, Hawaii democrat, says it's still unclear whether the GOP majority will target projects such as Honolulu's \$5.5 billion rail transit system to get federal spending under control.

"We're gonna have to wait and see exactly what is it that the republicans are looking to do; whether they're just looking to vote 'no' on things or to make the president look bad," said Hanabusa, during an interview Tuesday with Khon2.

Honolulu City officials, including former Mayor Mufi Hannemann and current Mayor Peter Carlisle, have said the city expects to receive \$1.55 billion in federal funds to help build the elevated heavy rail system from East Kapolei to Ala Moana, a 20 mile long route.

However with republicans in control of the House and both Hanabusa and fellow Hawaii Rep. Mazie Hirono being snubbed for positions on the all important Appropriations Committee, getting GOP support for Honolulu's costly rail project may prove difficult.

Conservative radio talk show host Michael Medved, who broadcasts his nationally syndicated show from Hawaii a few weeks every year, has been watching the debate over Honolulu's proposed rail system with interest.

"I think there's no chance that the new republicans in Congress will go for this rail project in Honolulu," Medved told Khon2. "There's just no chance at all."

However Hanabusa says Hawaii may hold the trump card over federal funding for rail in Sen. Dan Inouye, who chairs the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee and is the longest living member of Congress.

"I don't think Hawaii needs to be as concerned (over rail funding) because Sen. Inouye chairs Appropriations," said Hanabusa. "That's as powerful as it gets."

Still, Medved believes Inouye's influence over spending matters may only reach so far.

"He's a Washington fixture and he has as much clout as any single person in the Capitol but that only carries on one side of Congress," said Medved. "On the other side you've got a republican majority."

In a statement to Khon2 Sen. Inouye said he's committed to Honolulu's rail transit project and will do all he can to secure federal funding to ensure its timely completion.

Inouye went on to say that funding for rail projects usually don't fall under the purview of Congress and may not be part of the upcoming debates over federal deficit spending.

"Most of the federal funding for the rail project comes through a grant agreement between the Federal Transit Administration and the city that is separate from the debate that occurs in Congress," said Inouye.

While that has been true in past years when the emphasis on federal spending wasn't as hotly contested as it has been in the current political climate, republicans in the House could simply refuse to fund any agreement between the FTA and the City and County of Honolulu.

"Yes you could get this money from the Senate side, that's possible (and) I think that Sen. Inouye could deliver that," said Medved, "but I think the chances of Hawaii getting the money for the rail project from the House of Representatives are less than the Seattle Seahawks winning the Super Bowl."

Carlisle believes the city's rail project could be built with fewer federal dollars. However the mayor cautioned the project could be delayed or construction drawn out over a longer period of time if federal lawmakers don't deliver the \$1.55 billion that has long been anticipated.

"Then what we have to do is we have to make sure we have to stretch the project longer unfortunately because if you don't have the money to pay for it, then you're gonna have to cut back on how quickly it goes and all the rest of those things," said Carlisle.

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