DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

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May 21, 2010 RT12/08-291201R

Ms. Kiersten Faulkner, Executive Director
Historic Hawaii Foundation
680 Iwilei Road, Suite 690
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817

Dear Ms. Faulkner:

Subject: Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project
Comments Received on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement

The U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the City and County of Honolulu Department of Transportation Services (DTS) issued a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project. This letter is in response to substantive comments received on the Draft EIS during the comment period, which concluded on February 6, 2009. The Final EIS identifies the Airport Alternative as the Project and is the focus of this document. The selection of the Airport Alternative as the Preferred Alternative was made by the City to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations that state that the Final EIS shall identify the Preferred Alternative (23 CFR § 771.125 (a)(1)). This selection was based on consideration of the benefits of each alternative studied in the Draft EIS, public and agency comments on the Draft EIS, and City Council action under Resolution 08-261 identifying the Airport Alternative as the Project to be the focus of the Final EIS. The selection is described in Chapter 2 of the Final EIS. The Final EIS also includes additional information and analyses, as well as minor revisions to the Project that were made to address comments received from agencies and the public on the Draft EIS. The following paragraphs address comments regarding the above-referenced submittal:

The City appreciates the continued interest and participation of the Historic Hawaii Foundation throughout the Section 106 process, including previous input to the eligibility and effects determinations and consultation throughout the development of the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement. The Program-matic Agreement is included as Appendix H to the Final EIS.

~~Per the notification to the State Historic Preservation Division of the use of 36 CFR Chapter 800.8(c), comments received on the Draft EIS were also considered as comments on the Section 106 process.~~

~~**Concern about combining Section 4(f) and Section 106 reviews within the NEPA process**~~

Previous comments by the Historic Hawaii Foundation and other consulting parties regarding combining Section 106 with the NEPA process as permitted in 36 CFR Chapter 800.8(c) were considered and addressed at the time. ~~-~~ No party provided a substanative reason why the project should not ~~be merged. and NEPA~~ Per the notification to the State Historic Preservation Division of the use of 36 CFR Chapter 800.8(c), comments received on the Draft EIS were also considered as comments on the Section 106 ~~process.~~process. This is an accepted process to provide better integration of historic preservation and environmental policy review and reduce redundancy of public involvement activities.

Based on concerns raised by Section 106 consulting parties, including Historic Hawaii Foundation, preliminary effects determinations as shown in the Draft EIS were reevaluated as part of intensive-level assessments and documented in the Historic Effects Report: Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project (April 2009) issued by FTA on April 14, 2009. Both direct and indirect effects to historic properties were reconsidered in this report. These include, as appropriate under effects criteria, the visual effects on historic properties and landscapes. Following consultation, which included participation of Historic Hawaii Foundation, the State Historic Preservation Division (SHPD) concurred with all 22 adverse effect determinations and also provided comment that project impacts be considered as adverse effect to 11 additional resources. The Project accepted these recommendations. These determinations of effect are documented in Section 4.16 and Appendix H of the Final EIS. Chinatown and U.S. Naval Base, Pearl Harbor National Historic Landmark are among resources to receive an adverse effect determination. The Historic Effects Report is available on the project website (www.honolulutransit.org) and from the Department of Transportation Services.

~~Table 4-10 of the Draft EIS generally addressed the project's visual impacts. Section 106 evaluations regarding visual impacts assess the project's effect to historically significant settings with integrity and/or visual characteristics of historic properties. If a historic property does not retain historic setting and/or historically significant visual characteristics, visual impacts to the property may represent an effect but may not be considered adverse.~~

Table 4-32 in the Draft EIS corresponds with Table 4-34, Historic Properties within Project's Area of Potential Effect, in the Final EIS. In the Final EIS, this table presents the determination of effect and a brief description of the effect. The determination of effect was made with consideration of input from the consulting parties and ~~was concurred to by~~ theconcurrence by SHPD. More detailed descriptions of the properties and the effects determination is presented in the Historic Effects Report: Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project (April 2009).

After a collaborative re-evaluation of historic properties and potential impacts presented in the Draft EIS, consulting parties, including historic, Native Hawaiian and federal interests ~~agreed to~~participated in ~~approximately~~ 101 meetings as part of ~~in~~ the development of ~~a~~ the

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Comment [fc1]: They wrote a letter expressing concern in 2008 about combining processes. Would be good for this letter to explicitly address that - or include a differentiation b/c the two - physical use versus broader impacts - and then state up front that HHF participated in all of the 106 re-evaluations for the project (if that is in fact the case).

Comment [fc2]: Including HHF

Comment [fc3]: Which included HHF

Comment [s4]: The response letter provides information on the work completed after the comment letter.

Comment [fc5]: Is this the latest determination? The comment letter totally rips into the sorry state of 106 findings . . . I think that this language reflects the extent of the re-evaluation.

Comment [fc6]: Would be helpful to reference any mitigation agreed upon in this reference to a full document.

Comment [s7R6]: The effects report does not include mitigation.

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Comment [fc8]: Is this necessary, could we delete it?

Comment [s9]: correct

Comment [fc10]: So the info in these tables should be different even if the title is the same, so they're not the SAME table, the FEIS table is an updated version.

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Programmatic Agreement that describes measures taken to avoid, minimize, and mitigate historic properties. Historic Hawaii Foundation was involved in the development of theis agreement. The Programmatic Agreement is included in Appendix H, and a summary of these measures has been included in Section 4.16.3 Environmental Consequences and Mitigation [Archaeological, Cultural, and Historic Resources] in this Final EIS.

Request for further documentation for Ewa Field and Barber's Point

As currently conceived, the Project will not extend to Ewa Field or Barber's Point, therefore those sites do not require further analysis. In the case that a future extension would be located within proximity to these historic resources, a full evaluation would be completed at that time.

TheThe final Project alignment, as configured in the Final EIS has logical termini at East Kapolei and Ala Moana Center and independent utility from any extensions that may be constructed in the future. The Potential future extensions to West Kapolei, Salt Lake Boulevard, Waikiki, and UH Manoa are discussed in the cumulative impacts sections of Chapters 3 and 4 of the Final EIS. However, the future extensions are not part of this Project; thus, they are not required to be evaluated under Chapter 343 of the Hawaii Revised Statutes and NEPA. Under NEPA, environmental analysis is only required when there is a proposed action by a Federal agency. Here, because the future extensions are not proposed for implementation at this time, they are not part of the Project studied in the Final EIS. It would be premature to undertake an environmental analysis of the extensions (beyond the cumulative impacts analysis) because they are not part of the proposed action to be taken by the City and FTA. If the future extensions are eventually proposed for implementation in the future, full environmental analysis of the extensions and appropriate alternatives will be undertaken at that time. The potential future Kapolei Extension, including areas Ewa of the proposed East Kapolei Station, Marine Corps Air Station Ewa Field, and Naval Air Station Barbers Point, is not included part of this in the Project. Therefore, Nno further analysis of the Kapolei Extension will be conducted at this time. If the Kapolei Extension is considered and studied in the future, potential project impacts to historic resources identified in this area will be addressed at that time.

Based on concerns raised by Section 106 consulting parties, preliminary effects determinations as shown in the Draft EIS were reevaluated as part of intensive-level assessments and documented in the Historic Effects Report: Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project (April 2009) issued by FTA on April 14, 2009. Both direct and indirect effects to historic properties were reconsidered in this report. These include, as appropriate under effects criteria, the visual effects on historic properties and landscapes. Following consultation, the State Historic Preservation Division (SHPD) concurred with all 22 adverse effect determinations and also provided comment that project impacts be considered as adverse effect to 11 additional resources. The Project accepted these recommendations. These determinations of effect are documented in Section 4.16 and Appendix H of the Final EIS. Chinatown and U.S. Naval Base, Pearl Harbor National Historic Landmark are among resources to receive an adverse effect determination. The Historic Effects Report is available on the project website (www.honolulutransit.org) and from the Department of Transportation Services.

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Comment [fc11]: Is this the latest determination? The comment letter totally rips into the sorry state of 106 findings . . . I think that this language reflects the extent of the re-evaluation.

Comment [fc12]: Would be helpful to reference any mitigation agreed upon in this reference to a full document.

Field Code Changed

~~*Table 4-10 of the Draft EIS generally addressed the project's visual impacts. Section 106 evaluations regarding visual impacts assess the project's effect to historically significant settings with integrity and/or visual characteristics of historic properties. If a historic property does not retain historic setting and/or historically significant visual characteristics, visual impacts to the property may represent an effect but may not be considered adverse.*~~

~~*Table 4-32 in the Draft EIS is Table 4-34, Historic Properties within Project's Area of Potential Effect, in the Final EIS. In the Final EIS, this table presents the determination of effect and a brief description of the effect. The determination of effect was made with consideration of input from the consulting parties and was concurred to by the SHPD. More detailed descriptions of the properties and the effects determination is presented in the Historic Effects Report: Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project (April 2009).*~~

~~***Concern about visual, atmospheric, and audible Project elements***~~

The island's unique visual character and scenic beauty was considered in the visual and aesthetic analysis presented in the Final EIS. The Project is intended to protect the overall visual character and scenic beauty of Oahu in the longer term by enabling future development to be more densely concentrated in existing urbanized areas and on land adjacent to urbanized areas, rather than replicating auto-centric sprawl that plagues many Mainland communities.

The Project will be set in an urban context where visual change is expected and differences in scales of structures are typical. In addition, viewers in upper stories of some buildings would be affected by light and glare from trains traveling on the guideway.

The overall objectives and design guidelines for the neighborhoods with planned stations will be addressed during the ongoing station areas planning process. This process involves numerous aspects of transit system design with focus on characteristics and preferences of the communities adjacent to stations. In addition, the Final makes the commitment that the following measures will be included with the Project to minimize negative visual effects and enhance the visual and aesthetic opportunities that the Project creates:

- *Develop and apply design guidelines that will establish a consistent design framework for the Project with consideration of local context.*
- *Coordinate the project design with the City transit-oriented development program within the Department of Planning and Permitting.*
- *Consult with the communities surrounding each station for input on station design elements.*
- *Consider specific sites for landscaping and trees during the final design phase when plans for new plantings will be prepared by a landscape architect. Landscape and streetscape improvements will serve to mitigate potential visual impacts.*

Comment [fc13]: So the info in these tables should be different even if the title is the same, so they're not the SAME table, the FEIS table is an updated version.

Comment [fc14]: The commenter uses the terms "atmospheric" and "audible" - I don't know if atmospheric means air quality - if so, I don't think this project has air quality issues.

This response does not address noise. Reading the comments, it's clear that the HHF was really most interested in the visual impacts, there was no discussion of noise even though it was listed.

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The policy documents that identify significant views and vistas include the Ewa Development Plan *(DPP 2002),* Central Oahu Sustainable Communities Plan (DPP 2002), and Primary Urban Center Development Plan. *These documents are referenced in the visual analysis in Section 4.8 of the Final EIS. The visual effects on Honolulu's Downtown, including the Dillingham Transportation Building are discussed under the Kalihi to Ala Moana Center Landscape Unit heading starting in Section 4.8.3 of the Final EIS. In addition, please refer to Section 4.16 of the Final EIS for a discussion of the historic resources qualities of this building ~~and Chapter 5 (Section 4(f) Evaluation) for further discussions of the Project's visual effects~~.*

In addition to the information about Vvisual effects in Section 4.8 of the Final EIS ~~as they pertain to historic resources in particular are discussed, in~~ the Historic Effects Reports, discusses effects by resource in greater detail.

Pearl Harbor National Historic Landmark

As referenced above, the Pearl Harbor National Historic Landmark is among resources to receive an adverse effect determination. The Historic Effects Report is available on the project website (www.honolulutransit.org) and from the Department of Transportation Services.

The Pearl Harbor National Historic Landmark is discussed in Section 4.8.3, [Visual Effects] Environmental Consequences and Mitigation, and in Section 4.16.3 [Archaeological, Cultural, and Historic Resources] Environmental Consequences and Mitigation. The Final EIS documents the SHPD's opinion that the project would have an adverse effect to the landmark.

The assessment of the visual effect (in Section 4.8.3, [Visual Effects] Environmental Consequences and Mitigation of the Final EIS) notes that the existing viewshed includes transportation infrastructure, namely the Kamehameha Highway.

Chinatown Station

The visual effects of the Chinatown Station are discussed under the Kalihi to Ala Moana Center Landscape Unit heading starting in Section 4.8.3, Environmental Consequences and Mitigation [Visual] in this Final EIS. The discussion notes the station and guideway will be the dominant features in views along the Nimitz Highway and that distant views over the Nuuanu Stream and Honolulu Harbor will be partially blocked. The overall objectives and design for the Chinatown District will be addressed during the ongoing station areas planning process. This process involves numerous aspects of transit system design with focus on characteristics and preferences of the communities adjacent to stations. Coordination with SHPD has included the Chinatown District. Following consultation, SHPD concurred with the effect determinations on the Chinatown Historic District and the Hawaii Capital Historic District. These determinations of effect and the SHPD's concurrence are documented in Section 4.16 Archaeological, Cultural, and Historic Resources and Appendix H of the Final EIS.

~~A Programmatic Agreement describing measures taken to avoid, minimize, and mitigate historic properties has been agreed upon by consulting parties. Historic Hawaii Foundation was involved in the development of the agreement. The Programmatic Agreement is included in Appendix H, and a summary of these measures has been included in Section 4.16.3~~

Comment [fc15]: Does 4f deal with visual effects? I thought it just has to do with physically taking and using protected properties?

Comment [fc16]: Are these in the FEIS?

Comment [s17]: After the strange behaviour of the NPS, I think it is better not to expand beyond the direct quesiton. Different groups within NPS asked for enhanced service to and complete avoidance of the NHL.

Comment [fc18]: Does the FEIS call Pearl Harbor a "NHL of great importance to the nation" and the world? Maybe we can say the project will help people access this important place.

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Comment [fc19]: Is this the latest determination? The comment letter totally rips into the sorry state of 106 findings . . . I think that this language reflects the extent of the re-evaluation.

Comment [fc20]: Would be helpful to reference any mitigation agreed upon in this reference to a full document.

Comment [s21R20]: The effects report does not include mitigation

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~~*Environmental Consequences and Mitigation [Archaeological, Cultural, and Historic Resources] in this Final EIS.*~~

The FTA and DTS appreciate your interest in the Project. The Final EIS, a copy of which is included in the enclosed DVD, has been issued in conjunction with the distribution of this letter. Issuance of the Record of Decision under NEPA and acceptance of the Final EIS by the Governor of the State of Hawaii are the next anticipated actions ~~and will conclude the environmental review process for this Project~~.

Very truly yours,

WAYNE Y. YOSHIOKA
Director

Enclosure