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Honolulu light rail prospects look positive

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USA: Hawaii's newly-elected Governor Neil Abercrombie has signed the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Honolulu's proposed \$5.3bn light rail project, clearing the way for final approval from the Federal Transit Administration.

The 32 km elevated line was stalled when Abercrombie's predecessor, Linda Lingle, refused to approve the FEIS because of questions over financing and environmental issues. Specifically, Lingle implied that there might not be sufficient local tax revenue to complete construction. But the new governor promised to sign the document if he found it had been completed according to law and let the city worry about the finances.

'The rail project EIS has been done prudently and is in compliance with state environmental law', said Mayor Peter Carlisle. 'Moving forward with rail transit creates much-needed jobs for our communities, provides long-term traffic relief and offers a dependable transportation alternative that starts us on the right path toward our preferred future.'

Several contracts have already been awarded for the project, including a \$195m design-build order for a depot and maintenance centre, a design pact for three stations and a \$483m contract with Kiewit Pacific Co to build the first 10.5 km section of the route. The next step will be receipt of a Record of Decision from the FTA, which is expected very soon.

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