



# The Right Track

Honolulu moving at the speed of rail transit

Honolulu's proposed rail transit system might have slipped temporarily out of the public buzz domain, overrun by news of the nation's economic implosion, severe declines in tourism and the completely-blown-out-of-proportion swine flu. But progress is quietly being made on the 20-mile elevated transportation alternative. The final Environment Impact Statement will be published later this summer and if approved by the Federal Transportation Administration, local construction crews will

be breaking ground in east Kapolei by the end of 2009 for the first leg of the route to Leeward Community College. The entire system will be elevated around 25 feet off the ground to separate the train from the traffic below. Passenger stations will have an open air design and utilize cooler, industrial fabrics instead of plastics or metals. The train's storage and maintenance facility is being designed to LEED Silver Certification standards and the project is directly and indirectly creating an estimated 11,000 jobs. Planners are looking at ways to allow riders to bring bicycles on the train and once the 20-mile stretch

to Ala Moana Center is complete, county bus routes will be reconfigured for lighter duty. The U.S. Department of Energy states that rail uses on average 25 percent less energy per passenger mile than cars and 40 percent less for trucks. With a projected ridership of 95,000 passengers per day, that's a significant energy savings. Couple that with the rail system's goal of being powered by alternative energies like solar, wind and hydrogen power, this mass transit system has the capability of decreasing Honolulu's carbon footprint in more ways than just reducing the number of cars on the road.