Preface

Purpose of the Final Environmental Impact Statement

The **Honolulu High-CapacityTransit Corridor Project** is the project name used for the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) planning and project development for New Starts Projects. The **Locally Preferred Alternative** (LPA), identified by the City Council at the conclusion of the Alternatives Analysis process, will provide high-capacity transit service on O`ahu in the travel corridor between Kapolei and the University of Hawaii at Manoa. It represents the City's long range plan for the rail system including potential extensions.

The **Project**, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Preferred Alternative, is a portion of the LPA that begins at the University of Hawaii-West Oahu (near the future Kroc Center), and proceeds via Farrington Highway and Kamehameha Highway (adjacent to Pearl Harbor), to Aolele Street serving the Airport, to Dillingham Boulevard, to Nimitz Highway, to Halekauwila Street, and ending at Ala Moana Center. This portion of the LPA provides a cost-effective solution with the greatest benefits and can function as a stand-alone project that is not dependent on any future segments being planned.

The purpose of this Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is to provide the City and County of Honolulu Department of Transportation Services (DTS), FTA, and the public and interested parties with the information necessary to make an informed decision about undertaking the Project based on a full and open analysis of costs, benefits, and environmental impacts of alternatives considered. Approval of this EIS is not an Administrative Action (as defined by 23 CFR 771.107) and does not commit FTA to approve any future grant request to fund the Project.

Purpose of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

The FAA is a cooperating agency on this EIS, in accordance with 40 CFR Part 1501.6(a)(1), since it has special expertise and jurisdiction by law to approve proposed development at Honolulu International Airport. The FAA is assigned responsibilities pursuant to 49 USC 40101 et seq., for civil aviation and regulation of air commerce in the interests of aviation safety and efficiency. As a cooperating agency on this EIS, FAA will use the EIS documentation to comply with its own requirements under the NEPA for Federal actions. The FAA will also use the EIS to support subsequent decisions and Federal actions, including unconditional approval of the portion of the Airport Layout Plan that depicts the Project, determination of eligibility for Federal assistance under the Federal grant in-aid program, approval of an application to use Passenger Facility Charges, and approval to grant right-of-way at the airport to carry out the Project.

Overview of the Final Environmental Impact Statement

This document builds on the findings of the Alternatives Analysis Report and the Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Section 4(f) Evaluation

AR00104426

(RTD 2008u), follows FTA planning and guidance, provides information on the preferred Fixed Guideway Transit Alternative via the Airport (Airport Alternative) and the No Build Alternative, and addresses agency and public comments on the Draft EIS.

This document is a joint NEPA and Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) Chapter 343 Final EIS. It has been compiled in good faith and sets forth sufficient information to enable the decision-maker to consider fully the environmental factors involved, to make a reasoned decision after balancing the risks of harm to the environment against the benefits to be derived from the proposed Project, and to make a reasoned choice between alternatives. It also serves as documentation of the coordination conducted in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and the Section 4(f) Evaluation prepared pursuant to Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966.

The HRS Chapter 343 EIS preparation notice was issued for this Project on December 8, 2005. The Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS was published in the Federal Register on March 15, 2007, which began the NEPA scoping period. The March 15, 2007, notice superseded the December 7, 2005, Notice of Intent to prepare an Alternatives Analysis and Draft EIS. The Draft EIS was distributed for public and agency review beginning in November 2008 with the Notice of Availability published in the Federal Register on November 21, 2008, and in the State of Hawai'i Environmental Notice on November 23, 2008. Public hearings were held to receive comments from the public and agencies, and comments were accepted until February 6, 2009. The Notice of Availability of this Final EIS will be published in the Federal Register.

HRS Section 343-5(f) and Hawai'i Administrative Rules (HAR) Section 11-200-25(b) both require State and Local agencies to cooperate with Federal agencies to the fullest extent possible to reduce duplication between Federal and State requirements. This includes preparing joint environmental impact statements with concurrent public review and processing. The governor has final authority to accept the EIS. At the time of submission to the governor, Hawai'i's EIS rules also require that the Final EIS be distributed to persons and agencies with jurisdiction or expertise in certain areas relevant to various actions and to Draft EIS commenters that request the Final EIS. The Final EIS will be submitted to the governor and distributed to the FTA. The FTA will issue a notice of availability of the Final EIS pursuant to its NEPA regulations.

No sooner than 30 days after publication of this Final EIS, the FTA will sign a Record of Decision. The Record of Decision will summarize the alternatives considered, factors that support selection of the recommended alternative, and commitments to measures that mitigate substantial environmental impacts.

The LPA includes the majority of housing and employment on O'ahu. The east-west length of the corridor is approximately 23 miles. The north-south width is at most 4 miles, because much of the corridor is constrained by the Ko'olau and Wai'anae Mountain Ranges to the north and the Pacific Ocean to the south. This document provides environmental analysis and documentation for the 20-mile Project as described in Section 2.5 between East Kapolei and Ala Moana Center.

Future planned extensions from East Kapolei to West Kapolei, following Salt Lake Boulevard, and from Ala Moana Center to UH Mānoa and to Waikīkī are included in the LPA and are addressed as cumulative effects in Sections 3.6.2 and 4.19.3 of this Final EIS. These planned extensions would be evaluated through a separate NEPA and HRS Chapter 343 process and designed and constructed once additional funding is secured.

Organization of the Final Environmental Impact Statement

This document is divided into two volumes. This volume contains the Final EIS for the Project, which includes a summary of changes between the Draft and Final EIS, explanation and analysis of design refinements to the Airport Alternative since the Draft EIS and responses to comments on the Draft EIS. It consists of the following eight chapters:

Chapter 1 discusses the background, describes the study corridor from Kapolei to UH Mānoa and Waikīkī, and explains the Purpose and Need for the fixed guideway transit system.

Chapter 2 details the alternatives and technologies considered during the screening and selection process and summarizes the alternatives considered during the Alternatives Analysis and environmental impact analysis processes. It includes the basis for selection of the Preferred Alternative and a description of the project design elements and operating parameters.

Chapter 3 describes existing and future transportation conditions in the study corridor, presents consequences of the Project and compares them to the No Build Alternative, and discusses mitigation for potential transportation impacts.

Chapter 4 describes existing and future environmental conditions, presents consequences of the Project and compares them to the No Build Alternative, and discusses mitigation for potential environmental impacts.

Chapter 5 discusses the Project's effects on public parks, recreational areas, and historic properties to support determinations required to comply with the provisions of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966 [commonly referred to as Section 4(f)].

Chapter 6 presents the various funding sources and estimated capital and operating costs.

Chapter 7 summarizes the evaluation of the Project based on the information in Chapters 3 through 6.

Chapter 8 discusses the overall public outreach and agency coordination components and summarizes comments received on the Draft EIS and the responses to those comments.

Volume II consists of electronic files for the appendices referenced in the Final EIS, including comments received regarding the Draft EIS and the responses to those comments. The CD is located at the end of Volume I. Technical reports supporting the analysis presented in this Final EIS are available for review at the offices of the City and County of Honolulu Department of Transportation Services Rapid Transit Division and on the project website at www.honolulutransit.org.

AR00104428