From:	Carranza, Edward (FTA)
To:	Luu, Catherine (FTA); Marler, Renee (FTA); Matley, Ted (FTA); Sukys, Raymond (FTA); Tahir, Nadeem (FTA); Nguyen, Kim (FTA); Ryan, James (FTA)
CC:	Rogers, Leslie (FTA); Griffo, Paul (FTA); Longo, David (FTA); Borinsky, Susan (FTA); Bausch, Carl (FTA); Day, Elizabeth (FTA); Ossi, Joseph (FTA); Barr, James (FTA)
Sent:	1/4/2010 6:21:36 AM
Subject:	FW: Honolulu Advertiser - Hawaii will probably hold public hearings on Honolulu rail transit
Attachments:	Hannemann_FTA_12 31 09.pdf; Honolulu Advertiser - Honolulu rail behind schedule, with construction start unclear; Construction hasn't started — and it's unclear when it will

FYI and my take is we'll hear more "ripple" actions by our grantee and the locals as a result of the attached Administrator's letter of 12/31/09. The letter is a powerful cold water dose of reality to our customer on the island further emphasizing the point we've all preached to Toru and his group that "FTA will not compromise ANY Federal element of the NEPA and New Starts approval process". Stay tuned.

From: Longo, David (FTA)
Sent: Monday, January 04, 2010 6:31 AM
To: Rogoff, Peter (FTA); McMillan, Therese (FTA); Carter, Dorval (FTA); Welbes, Matt (FTA)
Cc: Biehl, Scott (FTA); Borinsky, Susan (FTA); Day, Elizabeth (FTA); List-FTA-TCA; Rogers, Leslie (FTA); Carranza, Edward (FTA)
Subject: Honolulu Advertiser - Hawaii will probably hold public hearings on Honolulu rail transit

January 4, 2010

Hawaii will probably hold public hearings on Honolulu rail transit

By Sean Hao
Advertiser Staff Writer

Supporters, opponents and others with something to say about the city's plan to build a $5.5 billion elevated rail will have a new forum to voice their opinions soon.

The state is expected to hold public hearings on the environmental impacts of Honolulu's planned rail project. Hearings on the project's final environmental impact statement aren't required. However, hearings are likely, said Russell Pang, spokes-man for Gov. Linda Lingle.

The hearings would give the public an opportunity to testify on whether the city's plans to mitigate the environmental impacts of the project are adequate. They're also likely to provide a platform for those opposed to the train as well as groups advocating alternatives such as street-level rail or elevated, managed highway lanes.

The state hearings follow numerous public hearings held by the city over the past three-plus years. The primary public input on the project came in November 2008, when 53 percent of voters approved the city's rail plan.

The process of the state scheduling and holding public hearings could delay by several weeks plans to break ground on the rail project.

When the hearings will take place is still unknown and depends on when the city receives federal approval to release the project's final environmental study. The city had expected to release the study last fall then break ground in December. Both deadlines were missed.

The state Office of Environmental Quality Control will most likely host the hearings, Pang said. He referred further questions to OEQC Director Katherine Kealoha, who did not return multiple messages seeking comment.

'opportune time'

City Transportation Director Wayne Yoshioka last month expressed concern that public hearings could delay the transit project. "Anything that affects the schedule would concern us, because we really think this is an opportune time to move ahead," he said. "The market conditions are good, and we want to take advantage of that."

Yoshioka also said that such hearings were unnecessary because the city held public hearings after it released the project's draft environmental impact statement last fall.

The project's final environmental impact statement will need to be approved by Lingle before the city can push ahead with plans to break ground on the 20-mile train from eastern Kapolei to Ala Moana. The city wants that approval to come relatively fast. However, Lingle has said she'll conduct a thorough analysis of the study to ensure that the project's financial plan is feasible and that alternatives were adequately considered.

$360 million short

Lingle's announcement is driven in part by a drop in tax revenues needed to build the train. A city financial plan for the rail project

released in September anticipates a $360 million shortfall in tax collections. Most of that shortfall would be offset by shifting federal money meant for TheBus to the train.

In addition, several environmental groups have expressed concerns about the aesthetic impacts of an elevated train. Separately , landowner Kamehameha Schools sponsored a recently released study that concluded that a rail system built at least partially at grade would cost less and have less visual impact.

The Honolulu City Council has not had a public hearing discussing the project's financial plan, which was revised in August, or the report conducted for Kamehameha Schools. Councilman Charles Djou welcomed the idea of pubic hearings on rail.

"The last time we really had a comprehensive discussion about the status of what's going on with rail or any kind of major public discussion — it's been at least a year," Djou said. "Obviously, the more transparent and the more open the government is with the public about the rail system, the better."

The city's Yoshioka and council members, including Todd Apo and Gary Okino, said they're confident that the city's environmental impact statement was conducted correctly and should be approved by Lingle.

"She can make a big issue out of this, but all it does is it's going to cost us more money in the end," Okino said.

"I don't think she's going to be able to stop it based on those things."

Additional Facts

MORE RAIL

Read all of our cover-age at www.honoluluadvertiser.com/railtransit

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