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Ms. Katherine T. Kupukaa
95-685 Makaunulau Street
Mililani, Hawaii 96789

Dear Ms. Kupukaa:

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:

Your preference for HOT lanes has been noted. While each of the alternatives includes trade-offs between benefits and impacts, the Airport Alternative from East Kapolei to Ala Moana Center has been selected as the preferred alternative. The identification of the Airport Alternative as the Preferred Alternative was made by the City to comply with FTA's NEPA regulations that state that the Final EIS should focus on the Preferred Alternative (23 CFR § 771.125 (a)(1)). This selection was based on consideration of the benefits of each alternative, public input on the Draft EIS, and City Council Resolution 08-261 identifying the Airport Alternative as the Project. The selection of the Airport Alternative is described in Chapter 2 of this Final EIS. The discussion of the alternatives considered is included in Chapter 2 of this Final

EIS and the Alternatives Analysis. As discussed in Section 3.4.2 of this Final EIS, the Airport Alternative will carry the most passengers with 116,000 daily passengers and 282,500 daily trips in 2030, thereby resulting in the greatest transit-user benefits. The Airport Alternative will also result in the fewest vehicle miles traveled and vehicle hours of delay, as well as provide access to major employment areas including Honolulu International Airport, that will have substantially greater ridership than the other alternatives considered.

The Managed Lane Alternative was fully evaluated in the Alternatives Analysis. While the Managed Lane Alternative would reduce congestion (measured as vehicle hours of delay), it also would increase overall system congestion by inducing additional travelers to drive, which would increase congestion on arterial and collector facilities accessing the freeways and the managed lane. In addition, once a vehicle leaves the managed lane, that vehicle would still be subjected to congestion on surrounding roadways. As shown in the Alternatives Analysis Report (DTS 2006b), the Managed Lane Alternative would not eliminate congestion and bottlenecks on the H-1 Freeway. Table 3-12 in the Alternative Analysis Report shows that, under the No Build Alternative, there would be 18,049 vehicles per hour (vph) operating on the H-1 Freeway in 2030. Vehicle volumes rise to 18,327 vph (Two-direction Option) or 18,419 vph (Reversible Option) with the Managed Lane Alternative, while traffic volumes decrease to 17,209 vph with the 20-mile Fixed Guideway Transit Alternative. Accordingly, the Fixed Guideway Transit Alternative will reduce traffic volumes from those projected under the 2030 No Build Alternative.

The number of travel lanes along Kamehameha Highway in Pearl City (three lanes in each direction) will remain the same before and after construction of the fixed guideway. During construction, one lane may be temporarily closed during peak-travel periods and additional lanes may be temporarily closed during off-peak travel periods. Construction-related procedures that may require temporary road closures include those described in Section 3.5.3 of the Final EIS.

Conditions on the highway will be worse in 2030 under any circumstances and regardless of which solution is applied. As shown in Table 3-14 in the Final EIS, vehicle hours of delay will decrease by 18 percent with the Project versus without. Tables 3-9 and 3-10 in the Final EIS show traffic at each screenline (virtual lines drawn across the road network at selected locations to enable comparisons) will decrease with the addition of the Project compared to the No Build Alternative. Accordingly, traffic conditions will be substantially better with the fixed guideway than any of the other potential solutions studied.

As noted in Chapter 2 of the Final EIS, bus service will be enhanced and the bus network will be modified to coordinate with the rail system. Some existing bus routes, including peak-period express buses, will be altered or eliminated to reduce duplication of services provided by the Project. As stated in Chapter 3 of the Final EIS, with the Project, the rate of transfers will be higher than under the No Build Alternative because of changes in local bus service to maximize access to the fixed guideway system. However, because of the high frequency of the fixed guideway service (three-minute headways between trains during peak periods), riders transferring from buses to the fixed guideway will experience minimal wait times. Riders transferring from the guideway service to buses will benefit from improved frequencies on existing bus routes serving stations. In addition, several new routes with high frequencies will be provided as feeders to the guideway system. Since these routes will primarily operate in

residential areas, they will provide greater reliability versus routes operating along congested arterials. The travel demand forecasting model includes a time penalty for transfers. With these characteristics in place, the transit system with the Project will still have ridership levels 44 percent higher than the No Build Alternative. While people typically try to minimize transfers on any trip, the more fundamental criterion for making a trip decision is how long the trip takes. Rail will offer people a shorter overall trip time compared to other options, even with the transfers. As shown in Figure 3-7 in the Final EIS, transit travel during the a.m. peak period from Mililani to Downtown will take approximately 55 minutes with the Project compared to approximately 95 minutes without. Appendix D of the Final EIS describes the proposed changes to bus routes.

As the largest shopping complex in Oahu, Ala Moana Center attracts visitors from various locations on the island. In addition, with one transfer, those using the fixed guideway system will have access to other major destinations such as UH Manoa and Waikiki. Transit demand from Ala Moana Center to other locations in Oahu is also substantial in part due to the largest concentration of local bus transfers in TheBus system.

Figures 3-9 and 3-10 in the Final EIS show that there will be high fixed guideway ridership levels between stations in the Leeward area of the corridor. There will be over 8,000 riders traveling in the Koko Head direction after the Waipahu Transit Center Station during the a.m. peak period. The number of riders increases even more after the Pearl Highlands Station (over 13,000 riders during the a.m. peak period in the Koko Head direction). Ridership levels near Ala Moana Center will also be high, with over 7,000 passengers getting off the fixed guideway at the Ala Moana Center Station.

As a result of transit ridership, traffic volumes will decrease throughout the entire corridor. As shown in Table 3-9 in the Final EIS, there will be a 10 percent decrease in traffic volumes traveling Koko Head-bound at the Ewa screenline during the a.m. peak hour.

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