The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Inouye:

Thank you for your letter emphasizing the importance of the proposed Honolulu High Capacity Transit Corridor Project to Hawaii's economy, and asking for my involvement in resolving outstanding issues regarding the project alignment through Honolulu International Airport.

Please be assured that I appreciate the significance of the rail project to Hawaii's economy, its importance in addressing the severe traffic congestion on the south shore of Oahu, and its crucial role in supporting plans made by the city and county of Honolulu to focus future development around new rail stations. Using the project-justification criteria applied by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to evaluate major transit projects proposed for FTA New Starts funding, your proposed project amply qualifies. Consequently, we were pleased to include an initial funding recommendation for the project in the President's Fiscal Year 2011 budget.

Staff at both the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the FTA have been working diligently to bring closure to airport-related issues as efficiently as possible, consistent with the requirements placed on both Agencies by the National Environmental Policy Act. Both Agencies are coordinating their efforts to ensure that all necessary steps are taken to finalize this matter.

I am happy to report substantial progress. The FAA expedited its analysis of airport impacts and mitigation costs of the proposed on-airport alignment. The FAA and the FTA met with Honolulu officials to convey these findings and discuss alternatives. They offered a minor adjustment to the alignment to avoid conflicts with runway safety zones. The FAA expedited their analysis of the adjusted alignment and provided the necessary documentation for the Final Environmental Impact Statement. A statement will be ready for publication and public review very shortly.

If I can provide further information or assistance, please feel free to call me.

Sincerely yours,

Ray LaHood