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May 21, 2010 RT2/09-298754R

Ms. Katherine 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:

The number of traffic 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 are described in Section 3.5.3 of the Final EIS.

As identified in the Section 3.2.1 of the Final EIS, transit ridership forecasts for rail and bus service are based on a travel demand forecasting model used by the Oahu Metropolitan Transportation Organization (OahuMPO) for the Oahu Regional Transportation Plan. The

OahuMPO model is based on "best practices" for urban travel models in the U.S. and is consistent with guidance from FTA. As indicated in the Final EIS, this modeling approach has been effective in estimating ridership levels in other areas such as Los Angeles County, Salt Lake City, and the Denver region in the last 10 years.

The travel demand forecasting model has been refined since the Draft EIS was published by adding an updated air passenger model, defining more realistic drive access modes to project stations, and recognizing a more robust off-peak non-home-based direct-demand element based on travel surveys in Honolulu. The Final EIS reflects updated ridership numbers resulting from model refinement.

The Project is one of the first in the country to design and undertake an uncertainty analysis of this type of travel forecast. The uncertainty analysis evaluates the variability of the forecast by establishing likely upper and lower limits of ridership projections. FTA has worked closely with the City during this effort. A variety of factors were considered in the uncertainty analysis. Given the factors considered, the anticipated limits for guideway ridership in 2030 are expected to be between 105,000 to 130,000 trips per day, bracketing the official forecast of 116,000 riders a day used for all calculations.

As shown in Table 3-14 in the Final EIS, the Project will reduce congestion (as measured by vehicle hours of delay) by 18 percent compared to the No Build Alternative. Tables 3-9 and 3-10 in the Final EIS show an improvement in vehicles per hour on Kamehameha Highway during both the a.m. and p.m. peak hour.

Travel lanes will not be taken away along Dillingham Boulevard as a result of the Project. As shown in Tables 3-9 and 3-10, roadway conditions on Dillingham Boulevard will improve as a result of the Project. As shown in Table 3-18 in the Final EIS, transit ridership will be 44 percent higher with the Project compared to the No Build Alternative. This includes ridership on the guideway as well as TheBus.

The modeling conducted for the Draft and Final EISs considered all roadway projects listed in the Oahu Regional Transportation Plan (ORTP), including a Nimitz Flyover and mitigation measures on the H-1 Freeway. Table 2-4 in the Final EIS lists committed projects from the ORTP that were included in all modeling results. As shown in Tables 3-9 and 3-10 in the Final EIS, roadway conditions will improve with the Project.

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