
From: andy.robbins@us.transport.bombardier.com
To: Hamayasu, Toru
Sent: 2/15/2005 12:27:03 PM
Subject: Houston Federal Funding Match Application

Hi Toru,

Here is a news story/editorial from Houston which you may find interesting. It has to do with using a locally funded project as a match for federal funds, which would allow the locally funded project to proceed faster. Related stories can be found on the internet.

While Houston's attempt was somewhat unique and apparently shot down for now, they may still be successful and it shows that other jurisdictions are being clever and have achieved some success. But you have to fight for it and luckily, Hawaii has a strong congressional delegation.

I still think there is some merit in planning a Phase 1 / Phase 2 approach for Honolulu with some of these ideas. One idea could be that Phase 1 is paid for locally, and then you use that project as the local match for federal funds for Phase 2. Perhaps this could speed up implementation of Phase 1 while you are working on the AA/DEIS for Phase 2.

Best regards,

Andy

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RAIL DOUBLE STANDARD

Congress and the Federal Transit Administration smile on San Francisco but give Houston Metro the cold shoulder. Why?

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The latest Federal Transit Administration's recommendations to Congress are generous to San Francisco and other cities, but again leave out Houston's Metropolitan Transit Authority's request. An understanding of how this came about requires a review of recent history.

During the campaign leading up to the 2003 referendum on Metro's mobility plan, U.S. Rep. John Culberson, R-Houston, asked Metro to spell out on the ballot exactly how it planned to expand its fledgling light rail system. Metro complied, and the voters approved. Both Culberson and House Majority Leader Tom DeLay of Sugar Land said they would drop their opposition to federal funding for light rail in Houston.

FTA Administrator Jennifer Dorn promises that her leadership will deliver high value and encourage innovative ideas and federal partnerships with local communities. Last summer, Metro officials asked the FTA to approve a rail funding proposal that would produce a citywide system quicker, more efficiently and with less cost to the taxpayers. Metro asked the federal government to pay 100 percent of two rail expansions, while Metro paid 100 percent of the other two – an arrangement that other metropolitan areas have been allowed to use.

Last fall, U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison of Texas introduced a rider that would let Metro take advantage of this innovative, money-saving method of financing. The rider was deleted in the House-Senate conference. A rider authorizing creative financing for San Francisco transit became law.

Culberson and DeLay say they opposed Hutchison's rider but did not cause it to be deleted. Perhaps they could find out who did.

The larger question, however, is why the Houston area's delegation in Congress did not fight fiercely to protect this region's interests. Culberson and DeLay say they do not approve of 100 percent federal financing for rail, but that's not what Metro proposed. At the end of the day, federal dollars would pay for only 44 percent of Houston's rail transit system.

Culberson said he was discouraged from supporting Metro's plan by House committee and subcommittee chairmen. Is it possible that the Republicans who control the House committee structure are more sympathetic toward the Bay Area constituents of House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi than they are toward the constituents of influential Republicans such as Culberson and DeLay?

If Metro's proposal would produce public benefits faster and less expensively, why would anyone object? Here is a chance to reduce the government waste that frugal taxpayers decry.

The voters have spoken. Houston needs mobility improvements that include an expanded rail transit component as well as one of the nation's better bus systems. The next time Metro and the majority of voters in its service area say "Jump," their representatives in Congress should ask, "How high?"