U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Transit
Administration**

The Deputy Administrator

400 Seventh St., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

The Honorable Mufi Hannemann
Mayor of Honolulu
Honolulu Hale
530 S. King St.
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: Alternatives Analysis Initiation Guidance

Dear Mayor Hanneman:

As a follow-up to your recent meeting with Secretary Mineta, I am writing to reiterate several important points that were discussed with regard to your interest in undertaking a Federally-supported major capital investment transit (New Starts) project in the Kapolei/Downtown Corridor in Honolulu.

As the City and County of Honolulu begin the process of Alternatives Analysis (AA), it is important to remember that this is a critical step in project development. This is time when local decision-makers can and must compare the benefits and costs of a full range of investment strategies to meet their locally-identified transportation needs.

FTA technical assistance is available to support of your efforts, and I urge you to contact our Regional Office in San Francisco for assistance. We have found that early FTA involvement in the project's development helps avoid problems that could occur later, when resolution is much more difficult and expensive. Additionally, FTA's early assistance can help ensure that you have collected and prepared the information necessary to advance a locally preferred alternative into Preliminary Engineering under the New Starts program. This, in turn, helps shorten the project approval process. FTA's major investment planning and project development webpage also provides useful information about Alternatives Analysis. It can be accessed at http://www.fta.dot.gov/grant_programs/transportation_planning/9924_ENG_HTML.htm.

As you begin Alternatives Analysis, FTA requests project sponsors to submit three *start-up* statements that will initiate the systematic documentation of your project planning process. These three statements are:

(1) Transportation problems and needs in the study area;
(2) Conceptual alternatives to be evaluated in the study; and
(3) Preliminary measures for the evaluation of alternatives.

I encourage you to submit this information to FTA as early as possible. FTA's review will facilitate the development of a Purpose and Need Statement for the project and will assist in the itemization of transportation alternatives, both of which will later be required to approve the project's Baseline Alternative. FTA's review will also facilitate sound travel demand forecasting that will yield reliable estimates of transportation benefits for purposes of financial planning, capital operations cost estimating, and assessing environmental impacts. It has been our experience that the success of proposed projects depends in large measure on the quality of the technical work performed throughout the New Starts process, and I urge you to make the necessary investments of time and resources now to avoid problems later in project development.

Finally, as I mentioned in the meeting with Secretary Mineta, I would urge you to reconsider your plan to construct a segment of the project using local funds prior to the obtaining the necessary Federal approvals for entire project. You are likely to find that the project that emerges from the rigorous New Starts planning process is somewhat or even substantially different than the one you currently envision. It would be unfortunate to invest precious local funds in a project that is less than fully compatible with the project that is ultimately approved.

If we can be of assistance or if you have additional questions, please feel free to contact me or the FTA Region IX Administrator, Leslie T. Rogers, in San Francisco at (415) 744-3133. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Robert D. Jamison