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Honolulu rail project passes

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HONOLULU (KHNL) - A victory for rail supporters. The controversial Honolulu rail transit system has passed.

Voters favor the \$4.3 billion rail project 50.9% to 45.5%.

The rail transit is a proposed 20-mile elevated rail line that will connect West Oahu with downtown Honolulu and Ala Moana and extend even further to Honolulu International Airport, Waikiki, UH Manoa and Kalaeloa.

The system features 200-foot-long electric, steel-wheel trains capable of carrying more than 300 passengers each.

Oahu residents explain why they support rail

Posted: Nov 3, 2008 09:59 PM EST

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By Leland Kim - [bio](#) | [email](#)

KALIHI (KHNL) - The Director of the Honolulu Department of Transportation Services says, there is a lot of misinformation out there about the release of the draft EIS and other aspects of the rail project. City officials say they want to "set the record straight."

They say the City can afford the project, and a homeowner who has to give up her home agrees.

Boulevard Saimin has been an island favorite for these customers for almost 50 years.

"Wonderful. We can enjoy. Our children have grown up," said restaurant customer Theresa Kojima. "The only place we know is Boulevard Saimin."



toru Hamayasu

The restaurant was flagged as a building that might be torn down because of the rail project, but it's been saved.

"That building was built in 1960, so by the time we start the construction in a couple of years, that's going to exceed the threshold of fifty years that would qualify for a historical significant building," said Toru Hamayasu, Transportation Services Deputy Director.



Wayne Yoshioka

Evelyn Kawano is a long time customer.

Her favorite saimen restaurant has been saved, but her Pearl City home is targeted to be razed.

"It's for the future generations. Not so much for us, but for future generations," said Kawano. "Because where are they going to move to?"

She says she doesn't mind making the sacrifice.

"You're okay with moving then?" asked KHNL.

"As long as it's fair compensation," said Kawano.

City officials they've taken painstaking efforts to minimize impact on Oahu homeowners, business owners and tax payers.

"We can afford the rail project. We can pay for this with the proceeds of the projected point five percent of the GET surcharge and then anticipated federal participation," said Wayne Yoshioka, Transportation Services Director. "No property taxes are needed to build this system."

City officials stand firm on rail for Honolulu, and some residents agree, the time is now.

"And it just got more expensive," said Kawano. "In the future, if we need, it's going to be more expensive.

City officials insist no property taxes are needed to build the rail project.

They also say it will create almost 5,000 construction jobs, and almost 6,000 indirect jobs.

Honolulu Mayor

Hannemann wins re-election with 58%

[By Laurie Au](#)

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Nov 05, 2008

Mayor Mufi Hannemann won re-election easily yesterday, beating City Councilwoman Ann Kobayashi in a race that largely centered on the city's planned \$5 billion rail transit system.

With nearly all the votes counted, Hannemann secured 162,740 votes, or 58 percent, with Kobayashi collecting about 118,102, or 42 percent.

Hannemann's victory, along with an approval by Oahu voters on a ballot question yesterday to build the rail line, paves the way for the city to break ground on the system as he planned late next year.

"Finally," Hannemann said in his victory speech at 10 p.m., "I want to say to Ann Kobayashi and her supporters ... to the other candidates that I am deeply grateful that they ran to give the people of Honolulu choices.

"I want to extend my hand out to all of those who voted for Ann and all of those who voted for someone else in the primary because if we can come together, good things can happen," Hannemann continued. "I want to give them the opportunity to earn their trust, their respect and their support because there are many challenges the city faces. Let's set aside our differences. Let's do what's best for the people of Hawaii."

Kobayashi, at her celebration party at the Japanese Cultural Center, conceded the race in front of about 130 supporters.

"It was very hard to counter a lot of things," she said. "We couldn't put out ads, we just had no money. I think we were able to get the word out the best we could that there are alternatives to rail that will be funded by the same funds for train."

More than 500 supporters at Hannemann's party were confident throughout the night that the mayor would win re-election, but many were fearful that a ballot question on his proposed rail transit wouldn't pass.

"We never had any doubts" about Hannemann's re-election, said Dean Okimoto, his campaign manager and longtime friend. "On rail, we were kind of worried, but this means that we have four more years to keep improving the city. We spent more money and time on the campaign than we hoped we would, but we succeeded by getting him back into office."

U.S. Sen. Daniel Inouye stopped by Hannemann's celebration party briefly to congratulate him.

"Here's a success story," Inouye said. "Born in Samoa, mayor of Honolulu, and this is just the beginning. He may go to Washington, he may go to Washington Place."

Hannemann has not committed to serving the full four-year term as mayor.

Kobayashi ran against Hannemann on the promise to give "open and honest" government, and more importantly as the candidate appealing to Oahu's anti-rail community with her opposition to the Hannemann's system because of its high cost.

In the end, Kobayashi always trailed as the underdog, struggling to raise about \$400,000 in four months while Hannemann pulled in \$3 million.

Kobayashi's late entrance in the race gave Hannemann the edge in fundraising and advertisements, outspending Kobayashi by nearly 4-to-1, including a flood of television, radio and newspaper advertisements.

Former City Councilman Duke Bainum, who lost to Hannemann in the 2004 mayor's race, will fill Kobayashi's seat. He ran unopposed but nearly 43 percent of voters left the ballot blank.

City Councilman Todd Apo, representing the Leeward Coast, also won an easy re-election against opponent Garry Smith.

Star-Bulletin reporter Rob Shi-kina contributed to this report.