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HART BOARD APPROVES FUNDING FOR ADDITIONAL TRAIN CAR SEATS

Oahu commuters will see an increase in the number of seats available on the new rail transit system. The Honolulu Authority for Rapid Transportation's (HART) board of directors approved the funding to pay for 800 additional passenger seats for its railcar fleet—a 25 percent increase.

Members of HART's Finance and Project Oversight committees unanimously approved \$1.75 million to pay for the additional seating during a joint meeting today. The cost includes design changes to the train cars to accommodate the additional seating, as well as the fabrication, production and installation of the seats.

The additional seating will be paid for using existing contingency funds built into the budget and will not change the overall cost of the project. Each two-car train will now have 96 seats, with room for luggage, bikes and surfboards.

"We're building this system for our customers, and they've made it clear that they want more seats on our trains," said HART Executive Director and CEO Dan Grabauskas. "Adding more seating is part of our overall goal of making the transit experience as safe, reliable and comfortable as possible."

"The board's approval today for additional train seats ensures we have a high-quality finished product that is user-friendly and customer focused," said Damien Kim, chairman of HART's Project Oversight Committee. "In designing and building this system, we need to be flexible and open in making adjustments that are in the best interest of the riders and taxpayers."

Honolulu Mayor Kirk Caldwell said the additional seating is good news for the public. "My pledge as mayor has been to build rail better and smarter, and the decision to increase seating is part of that ongoing effort," Caldwell said. "We will continue working with HART to look at other areas where we can improve the design and operation of the rail system to make it more user friendly."

Honolulu City Council Chairman Ernest Martin said, “This is a good example of the importance of public input at the early stages of design and the decision to increase the number of seats demonstrates HART’s willingness to accommodate public preferences. More seats will likely attract more riders and ridership will ultimately determine the success of rail.”

The rail system includes 21 stations at key education, employment and retail destinations, including UH-West Oahu, Leeward and Honolulu community colleges, Honolulu International Airport, Downtown Honolulu, Pearl Harbor and Ala Moana and Pearlridge shopping centers. The first 10 miles of the rail system from Kapolei to Aloha Stadium is expected to open in 2017, with the full 20-mile line opening in 2019.

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