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STATE APPROVES RAIL PROJECT'S ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORTS

The State Historic Preservation Division (SHPD) has approved the archaeological survey reports for the Honolulu rail transit project, and cleared the way for permit applications, moving the project closer to resuming construction in West Oahu as early as September.

"This approval is a major step forward," said HART Executive Director and CEO Daniel A. Grabauskas. "We are now working with the city's Department of Planning and Permitting to submit the necessary permit applications to the City Council for their review and approval. Getting back to work after the year-long legal delay is essential to completing the project on time and on budget – that's our goal."

The Hawaii Supreme Court ruled last year that the archaeological survey work should have been completed for the entire rail route before construction in East Kapolei began. HART had completed the studies for the first half of the alignment from East Kapolei to Aloha Stadium and was in the process of completing studies for the remainder of the route at the time of the court's decision. HART temporarily halted construction on the project to comply with the court's decision and worked on completing the remaining archaeological studies.

Working closely with SHPD and the Oahu Island Burial Council, HART completed the archaeological fieldwork in January, two months ahead of schedule. Workers excavated more than 400 trenches along the rail route as part of the archaeological study, resulting in reports totaling more than 8,000 pages.

The archaeological survey reports were approved this week for the entire alignment and applications for the project's Special Management Area Use permit are being submitted to the City Council for review and approval.

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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