



Advocating Accountability & Wise Transportation Solutions

The O'ahu Coalition for Affordable, Flexible Transit advocates construction of the most technologically advanced, affordable, flexible, convenient, and safest mass transit system within the limited means of O'ahu's small tax base. Recognizing the great cultural diversity of our island home, our coalition includes local organizations and individuals who believe that our rail system must be built in harmony with every rural community and urban area that it is intended to serve.

To ensure this harmony, our rail system must be capable of operating either at ground level (at-grade) or elevated. We believe that at-grade construction will be necessary in many areas, while other areas may require elevated construction, and that such a flexible system, using newer, proven, and readily-available light-rail technology could be built faster and at lower cost. In addition, this flexible system could eventually serve more communities, would be compatible with historic districts, would require less maintenance, and would enjoy a lower operational cost than the currently proposed all-elevated rail system.

We believe that such a flexible system would have the fewest negative environmental, social, and cultural impacts during and after construction, and that these attributes will also reduce the estimated \$5.4 billion (or more likely \$8 to 9 billion due to inevitable cost overruns and construction delays) economic impact of an inflexible, all-elevated rail system which cannot be safely brought to grade because of the high potential for human and animal electrocution by its outmoded "hot" third-rail technology.

We remain greatly concerned about the proposed all-elevated rail system due to its high costs, long construction time, immediate and future impact on adjacent agricultural lands, the likely disturbance of Hawaiian burial sites, massive cutting and displacement of hundreds of "notable" and other trees, physical damage to historic sites and their surroundings, obstruction of *mauka-makai* views, bisecting neighborhoods and divided towns, and impeding access to the Honolulu waterfront from downtown streets.

We are not alone in voicing these concerns, and the all-elevated rail system as presently proposed is heavily criticized in many-dozens of letters of comment made to the recent Draft Environmental Impact Statement including those from:

- The American Institute of Architects, Honolulu Chapter;
- The federal judges for the U.S. District Court for the District of Hawai'i
- Historic Hawaii Foundation;
- Kamehameha Schools;
- National Advisory Council on Historic Preservation;
- The Outdoor Circle, and
- Sierra Club Hawai'i Chapter, Oahu Group.

Moreover, additional concerns about the security and vulnerability of public buildings have been raised in writing by the U.S. District Court, the U.S. Marshal for the District of Hawai'i, and the U.S. General Services Administration. Additionally, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has raised significant questions about the project's impact on Oahu's water quality, aquatic resources, and important wetlands. These and the many other letters voicing similar concerns can be viewed at <http://belammc.com/pdfs/HHCTCPDraftEIS.pdf>

NOTE: This 1389-page file will take several minutes to load in your browser.

The proposed all-elevated rail system and its massive stations – all two-thirds the length of a football field and looming from 40 to 90 feet overhead – would be a visually intrusive, monolithic concrete structure extending for 20 miles, and eventually 29 miles, slicing through O'ahu's landscape. **Regardless of how these massive concrete structures are designed, painted, and decorated, they will require expensive, long-term maintenance and repair, similar to the Aloha Stadium.**

According to all available data, the proposed all-elevated rail system will cost \$270 million per mile to construct, while the at-grade system would cost \$70 million per mile. Using the newest light rail technology with its easily-accessible low-floor cars and its safe, new wireless intermittent electric power supply operating at-grade for one-half the 20-mile segment would save \$2 billion from the initial \$5.4 billion all-elevated system. In addition, future at-grade extensions could be easily extended to the UH and Waikiki as well as to areas like Ewa Beach, Ko Olina, Nanakuli, Mililani, and Wahiawa.

In addition, knowledgeable engineers advise us the at-grade rail system requires grading only 18” to 24” in depth to install, whereas the elevated rail construction requires excavation up to 10-feet deep and with very deep footings every 150 feet for support columns. These undertakings will likely disturb Hawaiian burial sites in addition to requiring the relocation and major reconstruction of existing utilities and roadways. This drastic course of action holds great potential to produce another Boston “Big Dig” mega-project financial fiasco, running years behind schedule and monstrously over-budget. O’ahu’s small population and limited tax base can ill afford this very-real risk.

Hawai‘i’s recent unfortunate SuperFerry EIS experience has sent a clear message that before the Honolulu City Council commits any of its citizens’ hard-earned tax dollars to pay for construction of any portion of the rail project, the Federal Transit Administration must first approve the City’s final Environmental Impact Statement and issue a federal Record of Decision on the project to demonstrate that the federal Environmental Impact Statement process has been completed. In order for the City’s expenditures on the East Kapolei to Pearl Highlands segment of the HHCTC Project prior to issuance of a Final Environmental Impact Statement and the subsequent entering into a Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) to be counted towards the local share, the FTA would have to issue a Letter of No Prejudice (LoNP) to the City and County of Honolulu. In short, circumventing this legally required process and beginning construction with no assurance of federal funds will ultimately jeopardize the envisioned future federal funds.

On Wednesday, June 10, the City Council is planning to move ahead with the proposed rail project without either the necessary federal environmental approvals or a written federal funding commitment. The result of this action would be that the issuance of \$1.1 billion in bonds, together with the future interest, would require repayment entirely by the O’ahu taxpayers, with a possible denial of any and all currently anticipated federal funding. **We believe that the following principles must be acknowledged by the City Council before any contracts are awarded by the City Administration, which would commit our small county’s future generations to a very expensive, irreversible, and inflexible course of action:**

- All available modes of transportation must be integrated to enable every community to select the most effective, efficient integrated transportation system that would best suit its own unique needs in order to provide improved alternatives to the automobile, including bus, rail, water, and pedestrian and bicycle paths.
- System routes and facilities must support sensible and protective land use objectives, including urban growth management and visual and physical protection of historic sites, and must have efficient, easily-accessed transit linkages and access to accommodate the needs of our aging, and physically-challenged residents and visitors. Such facilities must respect and complement the myriad cultural and natural elements which make Hawai‘i unique.
- Mauka-Makai view corridors must be preserved in accordance with the City & County of Honolulu’s Primary Urban Center Development Plan (PUC DP) and Land Use Ordinances (LUO), and all proposed transit systems and facilities must complement O’ahu’s remaining historic and cultural sites and districts.
- A federal Record of Decision on the project must be issued to demonstrate that the federal Environmental Impact Statement process has been completed and that federal funds have been committed before any local public funds are expended.

We fully concur with The American Institute of Architects-Honolulu Chapter Public Policy Statement on Transportation. <http://www.aiahonolulu.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=261>

This ethical, professional statement encourages providing and promoting the following:

- “the use of social, environment, and aesthetic criteria as well as economic efficiency in the design of routes and supporting facilities for all transit modes”
- “safe and healthy environments for transit passengers, pedestrians and neighborhood residents along the transit route”
- “safe and easy accessibility”

- “sustainable planning, design, and operation”
- “In keeping with sustainable practices, transit systems and facilities should offer the ability to meet present needs without compromising those of future generations.”

Current Coalition Members

At this writing, many other boards, executive directors, and individuals are deliberating joining us and we will be updating this list accordingly.

Hawai`i Advocates For Consumer Rights

<http://www.scottfoster.org/afcr/>

Hawai`i Independent Democrats

<http://hawaiiindependentdemocrats.org/>

Hawai`i League of Women Voters of Honolulu

<http://www.lwv-hawaii.com/honolulu.htm>

Hawaii's 1000 Friends

<http://www.hawaiis1000friends.org/>

Mr. Randy Ching

Mr. Geoffrey Paterson, AIA Emeritus

***Please advise Scott Foster fosters005@hawaii.rr.com
to add your name, title, and/or organization***

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