

February 17, 2008.

“9,100 may find jobs working on the rail” is today’s head line in the Advertiser. It does not say so, but we hear that not all of the jobs will be with Parsons Brinckerhoff — some may be construction jobs.

But any coverage of the transit proposals by Hawaii’s media is welcome and we are grateful for it. However, we must make the some comments on their coverage today.

Advertiser: “The transit system is not expected to improve traffic conditions.” They forget that last Sunday (2/10) they wrote, “By 2030 there will be nearly 600,000 more vehicle trips a day on O’ahu than in 2005. The impact of the transit system will be overwhelmed by the impact of more drivers.” In other words, traffic congestion will be far worse than it is today. So why not say so? Even PB’s Mark Scheibe, in Sunday’s (2/17) Advertiser letters wrote those magic words, “Traffic conditions in 2030 will be worse than today.”

It is enormously important that Honolulu taxpayers grasp this preeminent fact: That after spending billions of their tax dollars on rail transit the net result will be traffic congestion that is far worse than it is today.

Advertiser: “The transit project will likely provide an economic boost especially in the 19 communities that will host transit stations.” The fact is that Transit-Oriented Development is an economic drain on a community, not a boost. There is not a single Mainland TOD we can find that is not heavily subsidized by the taxpayers of that city and/or state. And are we to have TODs (Transit Oriented Developers Subsidies) at all 19 stations including those at Ala Moana Center, the Federal Building, Bishop Street, and so on?

Advertiser: “[Rail’s] Potential positive economic impacts include: Reduced automobile usage and lower parking requirements. Environmental benefits such as reduced emissions.” Go back three paragraphs to the Advertiser’s own statement about vehicle trips overwhelming any impact of transit. How can it result in reduced auto usage? As for emissions, they follow energy usage, which is, on average, higher for rail transit than it is for automobiles (if we exclude the energy-efficient New York City subways).

Advertiser: “The lifeblood of these communities would be the elevated transit system capable of moving up to 9,000 passengers per hour.” Such capacity discussions are ridiculous when we are unlikely to get anywhere close to them. For example, peak hour passenger loads on the Portland line is 1,980 and for Sacramento it is 1,310 and both these cities are much larger than ours.

<http://www.honolulutraffic.com/passperhour.htm>