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Our comments on the City's latest glossy brochure

"Building rail transit now is the most cost-effective way to avoid even more congestion in the future."

This is plainly a misstatement at best, if not a lie. Clearly, using the city's own data, traffic congestion in the future with rail is going to be far worse than it is today.

"Is Honolulu 'too small' for rail transit? No. In fact, many communities that are successfully operating rail transit are smaller ... than Honolulu."

The city well knows that urban transportation comparisons are not made with "cities" but rather with "metro areas." These are contiguous urban areas that are logically connected for urban transportation. For example, while the city of San Francisco is smaller than Honolulu, the San Francisco Bay Area is nearly ten times our size.

Among U.S. metro areas, Honolulu is listed by the US Dept of Transportation as the 56th largest. And the majority of those that are larger than us do not have rail lines.

"Operating and maintenance costs, after fares, is [sic] \$40 million per year — about 2 to 3% of the City's budget."

Operating and maintenance costs for the \$20.7 mile line are shown as \$61.4 million in 2006 dollars. However, if we take the 1992 FEIS O&M costs for the 15.9-mile line of \$42.7 million in 1991 dollars and simply make the necessary adjustments for track miles and inflation we find that the 20.7 mile line should have O&M cost of \$81.5 million.

"All capital and construction costs will be paid for by federal funding and the existing ½ % GET surcharge revenue. No property tax increase will be required for construction."

The financial plan calls for \$1.2 billion in federal funds; no one even in the city is suggesting that this is a possibility. We believe the more likely amount is \$500 million, which is the only number that we have from the federal government in writing.

The surcharge revenue will be far less than currently projected because of the current economic downturn. From the Advertiser, we learn that, "in September 2006 the state Council on Revenues expected general excise and use tax

collections would grow by 7.3 percent in fiscal 2008 and 9.4 percent in fiscal 2009. Actual excise tax collections in fiscal 2008, which ended June 30, rose just 2.5 percent. Estimated excise tax collections in the current 2009 fiscal year now are projected to rise by less than 1 percent."

And operating losses will be paid by property taxes.

"Every dollar taxpayers invest generates \$6 or more in economic returns."

That is absurd. If it were true, we should just keep spending hog wild on public transportation so that it would make us richer and richer. It defies not only common sense, but also economic principle, that "investing" in money losing projects is the way to govern sensibly.

"In Los Angeles ... rail ridership is up over 15%. In Seattle, it's up 28%, in Charlotte 34%, and in Sacramento, rail ridership has increased 43% in just a year ... (To see the full APTA report go to www.apta.com/research/stats/ridership.)"

This is quite bizarre. Go to the website they suggest, click on 'agency totals,' and you'll see that:

- Los Angeles is only up 5%. Even worse is that the rail took it away from buses and so total public transportation ridership is DOWN -3%.
- Seattle's commuter rail (rail trains) is up 29% because of recently increased service levels. However, commuter rail is a tiny 1.4% of Seattle's public transportation. Better had they observed that Seattle's light rail transit is DOWN -1.8%.
- Charlotte only opened in November last year and so it cannot be up over anything.
- Sacramento is not up 43%; it is up 15% and that is largely at the expense of buses. And its total public transportation is only up 7%.

"Rail is more energy-efficient than single occupant cars and trucks."

The City knows full well that only when averages are computed that include New York City's subways does this hold true. When averages are computed using modern rail lines, the opposite is true. Autos are far more efficient than the average rail line and SUV's and light trucks have the same energy efficiency.

"This brochure is provided by the City as part of the public information program required by the Federal Transportation Administration."

It is not a requirement of the FTA that the City misinform Oahu residents about the rail transit line. On the contrary, the City is required to "involve" residents about the Project, which is a level of participation far higher than merely "inform," and certainly not "misinform."

October 20, 2008.