

Preface

Purpose of the Final Environmental Impact Statement

The purpose of this Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is to provide the City and County of Honolulu Department of Transportation Services (DTS) Rapid Transit Division (RTD), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and the public and interested parties with the information necessary to make an informed decision about undertaking the Project based on a full and open analysis of costs, benefits, and environmental impacts of alternatives considered. Prior to this EIS, the Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project Alternatives Analysis Report (DTS 2006b) was completed in 2006. After review of the Alternatives Analysis Report and consideration of public comments, the Council of the City and County of Honolulu selected the Locally Preferred Alternative to be a fixed guideway project from Kapolei to the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UH Mānoa) with a connection to Waikīkī. The City Council directed the first construction project to be fiscally constrained to anticipated funding sources. Approval of this EIS is not an Administrative Action (as defined by 23 CFR 771.107) and

does not commit FTA to approve any future grant request to fund the Preferred Alternative.

This document builds on the findings of the Alternatives Analysis Report and the *Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Section 4(f) Evaluation* (RTD 2008u), follows FTA planning and guidance, and provides information on the preferred Fixed Guideway Transit Alternative via the Airport (Airport Alternative) and the No Build Alternative.

This document is a joint National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Hawai'i Revised Statutes Chapter 343 (HRS 343) Final EIS. It is intended to provide decision-makers and the public with information on the Project's environmental impacts and benefits. It also serves as documentation of the coordination conducted in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and the Section 4(f) Evaluation prepared pursuant to Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966.

The HRS 343 EIS preparation notice was issued for this Project on December 8, 2005. The Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS was published in the *Federal Register* on March 15, 2007, which began the NEPA scoping period. The Draft EIS was distributed for public and agency review beginning in November 2008 with the Notice of Availability published in the *Federal Register* on November 21, 2008, and in the State of Hawai‘i Environmental Notice on November 23, 2008. Public hearings were held to receive comments from the public and agencies, and comments were accepted until February 6, 2009. The Notice of Availability of this Final EIS was published in the *Federal Register* on [REDACTED].

This Final EIS identifies the Airport Alternative as the Preferred Alternative and responds to the comments received. No sooner than 30 days after publication of this Final EIS, the Governor of Hawai‘i will accept the EIS and the FTA will sign a Record of Decision. The Record of Decision will summarize the alternatives considered, factors that support selection of the recommended alternative, and commitments to measures that mitigate substantial environmental impacts.

Should any construction phase of this Project explicitly proceed without Federal funding, the mitigation measures contained in this document and the subsequent Record of Decision for that phase of the Project may not be enforceable by FTA. However, it is true that Congress seeks to foster in public transportation law the development and revitalization of public transportation systems that, among other goals, “minimize environmental impacts.” Development and revitalization of public transportation systems is seen as including the minimization of environmental impacts as a shared responsibility among Federal, State, and Local governments and the people. The mitigation measures contained in this document would continue to be enforceable under Hawai‘i state law.

The Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project will provide high-capacity transit service in the travel corridor between Kapolei and UH Mānoa on O‘ahu. This corridor includes the majority of housing and employment on O‘ahu. The east-west length of the corridor is approximately 23 miles. The north-south width is at most 4 miles, because much of the corridor is constrained by the Ko‘olau and Wai‘anae Mountain Ranges to the north and the Pacific Ocean to the south. This document provides detailed environmental analysis and documentation for the 20-mile Project between East Kapolei and Ala Moana Center. Future planned extensions from East Kapolei to West Kapolei, following Salt Lake Boulevard, and from Ala Moana Center to UH Mānoa and to Waikīkī are included in the Locally Preferred Alternative selected by the City Council and addressed as cumulative effects in Sections 3.6.2 and 4.19.3 of this Final EIS.

These planned extensions would be evaluated through a separate NEPA and HRS 343 process and designed and constructed once additional funding is secured.

Organization of the Final Environmental Impact Statement

This document is divided into two volumes. This volume contains the Final EIS, which consists of the following eight Chapters:

Chapter 1 discusses the Project’s background, describes the study corridor from Kapolei to UH Mānoa and Waikīkī, and explains the Purpose and Need for the fixed guideway project.

Chapter 2 details the alternatives and technologies considered during the screening and selection process and summarizes the alternatives considered during the Alternatives Analysis and NEPA processes. It includes the basis for selection of

the Preferred Alternative and a description of the project design elements and operating parameters.

Chapter 3 describes existing and future transportation conditions in the study corridor, presents consequences, and discusses mitigation for potential transportation impacts.

Chapter 4 describes existing and future environmental conditions, presents consequences, and discusses mitigation for the potential environmental impacts caused by the Project and compares them to the No Build Alternative

Chapter 5 discusses the Project's effects on public parks, recreational areas, and historic properties to support determinations required to comply with the provisions of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (commonly referred to as Section 4(f)).

Chapter 6 presents the various funding sources and estimated capital and operating costs.

Chapter 7 summarizes the evaluation of the Project based on the information in Chapters 3 through 6.

Chapter 8 discusses the overall public outreach and agency coordination components and summarizes comments received on the Draft EIS and the responses to those comments.

Volume II consists of electronic files for the appendices referenced in the Final EIS, including comments received regarding the Draft EIS and the responses to those comments. The CD is located at the end of Volume I. Technical reports supporting the analysis presented in this Final EIS are available for review at the offices of the City and County of Honolulu Department of Transportation Services Rapid Transit Division and on the project website at www.honolulustransit.org.

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