

The IOS/BRT Route E debacle

First, the basic concept was wrong.

It is not intelligent to reduce the highway capacity available to general traffic when the existing traffic is already congested.

The net effect of the narrowing of Kuhio Avenue from 57 feet to 44 feet, and the reduction of one lane on Ala Wai, was to reduce Waikiki's traffic capacity by 30 percent.

That you do not do this when traffic is congested is so basic that one has to wonder how on earth the Mayor could think this would be "sustainable," as he puts it.

All along the entire transportation industry tried to tell the Mayor that narrowing lanes and dedicating lanes to buses only would cause havoc with traffic. The State Dept. of Transportation tried to tell him. Professor Prevedouros tried to tell him. He cannot say he was not warned.

Let's lay out the result of it all.

This is precisely what has happened and at a very high cost to tourists, the visitor industry, Waikiki residents and the transportation industry:

- Traffic congestion is worse than even the transportation industry thought it would be.
- City buses are running significantly behind schedule because of congestion-caused delays. This affects local residents and hotel employees who must plan on taking longer to get anywhere. This is also driving up the subsidies for city bus operations.
- Morning rush hour traffic has spilled over from Ala Wai Boulevard to Kapahulu Avenue.
- As an indicator of congestion, taxi fares within Waikiki are reportedly 50% higher in the 4:00 PM to 11:00 PM time frame.
- The IOS/BRT Route E is presently taking 45 minutes from Aala Park to Kapahulu Avenue when only last week it was scheduled to take 30 minutes. [See City schedule](#) Of course, if it had any significant number of riders, they would have to load and unload at every stop and the bus would be even slower.
- The buses used for IOS/BRT Route E are hybrid-electric 75 passenger vehicles operating on a rather circuitous route. [See route](#). For most riders, those going from Downtown to Waikiki, the trip will take longer than would the City Express Route B which takes only 24 minutes. [See City Schedule](#). The other significant riders will be those going from Ala Moana Center to Waikiki and these may well find that Routes # 8, # 19, # 20 or # 42 suit them better because these buses have more closely spaced stops.
- The congestion and the new buses on Kalakaua Avenue are impeding the delivery of goods in Waikiki, which has an average visitor population of 90,000 visitors. These folks have to be fed and watered on a daily basis. Think of the thousands upon thousands of sheets, towels and pillow cases that have to be laundered and delivered. Hotels are constantly being remodeled and the goods and services for these must be delivered. Think of the food for the myriad restaurants to feed visitors who, for the most part, are eating out. Think of how many taxi rides and bus and van rides that are taken daily for shopping, to get to attractions, to attend conventions, to take a submarine ride, to go on a dinner cruise, to go around the island, etc., etc., etc. 90,000 visitors is a lot of people and the goods and services needed for them are presently costing far more than it did just months ago.

The only real benefit to most transit projects is that it generates significant campaign contributions from those consultants awarded non-bid contracts for the millions of dollars of planning costs. Virtually all of those consultants involved in Honolulu planning have been named, or are being investigated, concerning illegal campaign contributions.

The only other benefit of the IOS is that Kuhio will be prettier and thus will greatly increase the value of current hotel properties slated to be sold for time-share or condo developments.

In short, the In-Town BRT project had nothing to do with transportation or traffic relief.