

Mr. Wayne Yoshioka, Director
Dept. of Transportation Services
City & County of Honolulu
650 S. King Street, 3rd Floor
Honolulu, HI 96813

**RE: Oahu's High Capacity Mass Transit Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
NOT IN SUPPORT of a STEEL ON STEEL RAIL TRANSIT SYSTEM**

Director Yoshioka:

My name is Daisy Murai, a resident of Kapahulu, which is next neighborhood to Waikiki, in the Primary Urban Center (PUC). My main mode of my transportation needs is serviced by the City's Public Bus System on a daily bases, unless I car pool, walk, take a taxi or trolley. I am fortunate that the buses in the Primary Urban Center come quite frequently within minutes of each other and very near to my home or destination(s), unlike other areas of the Island, where the bus stop is about ½ mile or farther away from homes and the service is 30 minutes to once an hour.

I enjoy and have had the experience of riding the Public Mass Transit Systems/Network in other Cities I have traveled, such as buses in New York City, St. John (New Brunswick), Japan and Las Vegas. I have also ridden the Staten Island Ferry in New York City (going to the Statue of Liberty), St. Charles Street Car in New Orleans and the Metro System in Washington D.C. The St. Charles Street Car (rail tracks are at street level) and Metro System of Washington D.C. (rail tracks are mostly underground -except for areas such as Arlington Station which is above ground), both of these systems use a steel on steel technology, which require huge areas of land for the tracks, transit trams and stations. I have found this system of steel wheels running on steel tracks also generates lots of noise, each time the trams starts up and stops on the steel tracks – and even making screeching noises when it stops.

The traffic congestion and gridlock facing Oahu drivers during the morning and afternoon Rush Hours from the West side to Downtown, is the reason for a High Capacity Mass Transportation System or some other Transportation Network System, which should alleviate traffic congestion and keep the traffic flow during these few hours of the day from Monday through Friday. The population base continues to grow on the West side of Oahu, as the City's Department of Planning and Permitting continue to issue Building Permits for future Residential and Commercial Development Projects, without increasing transportation infrastructural projects to meet population density increases.

The City's High Capacity Mass Transit or better known as "RAIL TRANSIT" Project is an elevated fixed guideway with a Steel on Steel Technology Transit System, of which the surface of the tracks will not be able to be utilized by any rubbernized vehicles, even emergency vehicles. The height of the fixed guideway with an elevation between 30 to 120 feet tall and support columns with a diameter of 6 feet wide and wider. It will be built in places with open lands of Kapolei as well as farm lands (Aloun Farms) and continue through the Primary Urban Center of Honolulu (building between existing buildings – including Historical areas), forcing the City to purchase private properties or even obtain the properties via eminent domain condemnation for the project, since Oahu is not as large as other places on the Mainland or the world.

The City's EIS does not address the complete Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) route selected and approved by the City Councilmembers, which should also address the University of Hawaii at Manoa and Waikiki segments. The current route chosen to end at Ala Moana Center's Nordstrom's Department Store is actually Mayor Hannemann's Minimum Operational Segment (MOS) route, which is only a portion of the entire LPA approved by the City Council. I feel the entire LPA approved by the Councilmembers should be in the EIS. The route has just been changed and approved by the City Councilmembers on January 28, 2009 with a portion going to the Airport rather than through the Residential Community of Salt Lake.

The planning, design, land acquisition and constructing of Oahu's largest public works project will certainly require years to complete and will exhaust the Rail Transit funds collected by the State of Hawaii through a ½% General Excise tax to the year 2022. Even if the Federal Government somehow manages to release \$ 1 Billion dollars for this ambitious public works project on such a small land mass area and small population base (with comparable Cities) on the island of Oahu, the amount collected on the ½% general excise tax alone is not enough. In fact, Mayor Hannemann's wish list from the State of Hawaii is the State's 10% administration fee for collecting the ½% G.E. tax for Oahu and money collected for Traffic Violations by the City. (Refer to the articles in our 2 daily Newspapers dated January 14, 2009).

There are portions of the Rail Line (Nimitz Highway) which is several feet away from the ocean. Halekauwila, Queen and Kona Streets are also close to the Ocean. The project developers, when digging the properties for the Rail Transit will at times stumble upon human bones, which is a common occurrence in Hawaii. There were several projects, such as the Super Center Wal-Mart/Sam's Club on Keeaumoku Street, H-3 Tunnel/Freeway and Whole Foods Structure at Ward Centre are just a few examples, where workers have uncovered human bones from old and unmarked burial sites. In the 1800's, the people of Hawaii would bury their loved ones close to the ocean or in the mountains in unmarked gravesites.

This project will require roughly 9 years for the first phase as mentioned at the City's Dept. of Transportation Services, presentation of October 29, 2009 at the State Capitol. By that time most of the current Baby Boomers will have retired, such as myself. If I were to utilize this Rail Transit System to get to Aloha Tower Station from my home in Kapahulu for example, I would need to catch a circulator bus from my home to Ala Moana Center, get off at Ala Moana Boulevard, walk across the Center to Nordstrom Department Store (10 minute walk), go up 30-80 feet (another 5 minutes) to ride the tram, get off at the Aloha Tower Station Transit Station, go down to street level and walk across to Aloha Tower Marketplace. If I caught the circulator bus, I would get off at the Aloha Tower Stop on Ala Moana Boulevard, (which is 5 - 7 minutes away from Ala Moana Center) and walk 2 - 3 blocks, which is a more direct route and get there much faster than the Rail Transit System.

The Rail Transit trams will be in operation 3-10 minutes apart and from 4 in the early morning to 12 midnight every single day. The 3 - 6 minute intervals between trams will make it extremely difficult for passengers with walking difficulties and wheelchair bound to board the ADA compliant trams during "RUSH HOURS" - even if the platform and boarding passageway are of the same level. The reason is due to the relatively short time of 3 - 6 minutes to board, settle and be secured in their seats. Not all handicapped & wheelchair bound passengers will be able to settle safely into their seats within 3 - 6 minutes. I have observed some of these passengers who use the current buses, require much more than 3 minutes to maneuver their wheelchair and be properly secured, once they have boarded the buses, Some of them require several minutes of back & forth movement of their wheelchair to be in the correct position for the drivers to secure their wheelchair. I also understand that bicyclists will not be able to board the trams with their bicycles during "RUSH HOURS", since they will slow down other passengers from boarding the trams, as mentioned by Outreach Coordinator Pat Lee. I did not witness any wheelchair bounded passengers ride the METRO System in Washington D.C. It could be due to the limited time required to board the trams since the trams run on a tight schedule, even if these passengers were able to get below street level to the platforms.

I have 2 friends who live on the Westside of Oahu and drive to work. They both are deadly afraid of heights to the point where they will, close their eyes, break out in a cold sweat and inch their way slowly while they hug the building walls without looking downward whenever they know they are several feet above the ground. These 2 will continue to drive to work, further adding to the traffic congestion. There are other drivers who are also deadly afraid of heights and probably continue to drive during "RUSH HOUR" than ride the Rail Transit.

The State's Director of Transportation (DOT) nor Governor Lingle at this time, have NOT approved the City using the State's Highways, Freeways and surface streets (H1, H2, Farrington Highway, Kamehameha Highway, Nimitz Highway, parts of Ala Moana Boulevard and other State owned roadways) for the City's Fixed Guideway Rail Transit project. These are crucial Right-of-Way roadways needed for the City's RAIL Project to reach Downtown and beyond. State's DOT Director Brennon Morioka and Governor Lingle announced 2 State High-way projects to

help relieve traffic congestion for motorists traveling to and from West Oahu. The Federal Government and the Governor have both released funds to start these 2 projects. Project No. 1 will replace the current morning zipper lane on the H1 Freeway with 2 contra-flow (East bound in the morning and Westbound in the afternoon between Keehi & Waiawa Interchanges) lanes during Rush Hours. The 2nd project is to widen the Middle Street merge going eastbound to relieve bottlenecks from Ola Lane to Vineyard Boulevard. Please refer to the State of Hawaii's web site (www.hawaii.gov) dated January 23, 2009 under Governor Lingle's press releases.

These are the reasons, why I feel other Transportation Alternatives needs to be re-visited for a better solution, than to totally rely on the "Steel on Steel RAIL TRANSIT" as the only source for traffic congestion relief. I would suggest:

- 1) Build an elevated EXPRESS Way for High Occupancy Vehicles (3 or more per vehicle) without charge, and charge other motorists with less than 3 in the vehicle. An electronic eye could monitor if payment is due. The payments collected would help pay for the operation and maintenance of this project.
- 2) The City's Dept. of Transportation Services mentions additional buses on the roadway will further compound traffic, causing gridlock on the roadways. The solution could be, keep the bus fleet at 525 buses, but change some of the routes to go into areas with new Residential Developments (not just keep it on the Main roadways), change 1 bus on the current route to an Express Bus, and change more routes to connect to other communities on Oahu. The Express Buses are well used by bus passengers, once they understand the route it travels. I usually take the Express Buses A, B, C and E unless I need to get off at a bus stop the Express Bus does not stop at. The Express buses on the whole are well utilized by the number of passengers I see riding them daily during Rush Hour. These buses are not as crowded at other times, but very convenient and a fast way to get to your destinations.
- 3) The power source to fuel the steel tracks & trams for the Rail Transit is electricity, generated by Hawaiian Electric Company (HECO) on the island of Oahu. Recently, HECO's system has been tested with an Island-wide (Island of Oahu) Black-Out situation – the October 6, 2006 earthquake and the December 26, 2008 lightning storm incidents (please refer to our 2 daily newspapers regarding information to the Island-wide black-outs at www.honoluluadvertiser.com or www.honolulustarbulletin.com for articles dated the following day of each instance). In both cases, the generators at the relay stations turned off automatically to prevent major damage to the system. In both instances, it took HECO several hours – even lasting into the following day to be back to full capacity. Even though HECO is looking into alternative energy sources for the future and is to be the sole provider of electricity, based upon its performance of restoring power to the 2 island-wide power black-out incidents, it will be several hours or days before the Rail Transit will be back in full operation. HECO needs to restore power to its customers – especially the Health-Care providers, Schools, Safety and other Emergency facilities, before restoring full power to the other customers and the Rail Transit System.

Upon completion of the project, the residents traveling during "RUSH HOUR" to Downtown and back to the West side will be the current younger generation of which many continue to travel via their own private vehicle rather than use the City's Mass Transportation System, further compounding traffic gridlock. I feel it would make more sense to build an elevated roadway for smoother traffic flow, charge for vehicles carrying less than 3 using the Express Roadway, and improve the current Bus routes would be a better system. This would not be as costly as the "Elevated Fixed RAIL TRANSIT". The businesses in the near future may even have their employees work from home to reduce traffic congestion. My cousin & his wife, who live in California, both are salespersons of major Corporations and both work from home, but will commute to their work place only when needed –which means 2 few cars on the roadway.

Thank you for the Opportunity to Speak. **I DO NOT SUPPORT a \$ 5 – 6 plus Billion Elevated Fixed Guideway with a RAIL STEEL ON STEEL Transit project for the Island of Oahu. I would appreciate the City and County of Honolulu to revisit other alternatives in the EIS, especially since the State of Hawaii auditor's report clearly shows grave over-sight on problems with of our Superferry, (a State of Hawaii project) which is showing up now – several months after the Superferry started operating between the islands of Oahu and Maui. The State did not do an EIS prior to the start of this interisland transportation system, which is clearly showing that impact problems should have been addressed in the EIS.** (Please refer to Honolulu Advertiser and Honolulu Star Bulletin articles dated from December 18, 2008). I was told by a testifier at the Public Meeting, that the City will allow only 1 testimony per person at any public hearing -even if there might be new information presented after the testimony, which I feel that the City is clearly inhibiting the general public's input – especially when the Impact of this project is so enormous and Most people on Oahu will be affected.

Daisy Murai
3039 Kaunaoa Street
Honolulu, Hi 96815
Dated: February 1, 2009

cc: Mr. Ted Matley
Federal Transit Authority, Region IX
201 Mission Street, Suite 1650
San Francisco, CA 94105

cc: Governor Linda Lingle
Hawaii State Capitol
415 S. Beretania Street, 5th Floor
Honolulu, HI 96813

cc: Councilmember Duke Bainum, District 5
City & County of Honolulu
530 S. King Street, 2nd Floor
Honolulu, HI 96813