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March 15, 2006.

Mr. Gordon G. W. Lum  
Executive Director  
Oahu Metropolitan Planning Organization  
707 Richards Street, Suite 200  
Honolulu Hawaii 96813

Dear Mr. Lum:

Comments regarding the Draft 2030 Oahu Regional Transportation Plan (ORTP):

The Draft 2030 Oahu Regional Transportation Plan (Draft ) is defective as follows:

1. The Draft fails to inform the public that rail transit would have little impact on traffic congestion.
2. The Draft's rail capital costs are understated.
3. The Draft's rail capital costs are out of line with the size of our population.
4. The Draft's budgeted outlays are totally at odds with our needs.
5. The ridership projections are insufficiently detailed and do not match the experience of other U.S. metropolitan areas.
6. The Draft fails to inform the public about other opportunities that exist for a reduction in traffic congestion.
7. The Draft does not inform the public about the economic impacts of rail on the community's economy.
8. The Draft does not follow FTA guidance in its planning concerning the movement of goods, environmental effects and the conservation of energy.
9. The Oahu Metropolitan Planning Organization (OMPO) has not complied with the requirements of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) for public participation.

In addition to the above, we have attached hereto our letter to the City Department of Transportation Services dated January 9, 2006, regarding their December 15, 2005, Scoping Meeting. The comments and concerns expressed in that document are also applicable to the Draft and accordingly should be considered as an integral part of this letter.

1. The Draft fails to inform the public that rail transit would have little impact on traffic congestion.

Elected officials and transportation officials have led the public to believe that rail transit will relieve congestion. OMPO planners know what the traffic congestion outcome would really be, as do the City officials, all our elected officials, and the City's consultant, Parsons Brinckerhoff.

Instead of providing the public with full information on the issue, there is an unspoken conspiracy of silence among them to avoid telling the public the truth — *traffic*

*congestion will get dramatically worse if we build rail transit and do not expand highway capacity.*

Far from meeting the “proactive public involvement” requirement, the Draft attempts to disguise the outcome. First, the Draft details how bad traffic congestion will be if we do not “build new transportation facilities” — meaning rail transit:

“As we continue to grow, more people and more employment opportunities mean more and more traffic: more clogged roads and more delays getting to work, school, stores, and the beach. As an illustration of how congested the transportation system could become, a “Baseline 2030” analysis was conducted to estimate future traffic conditions if growth is allowed to occur but no new transportation facilities are built. The figure above shows significantly congested locations on Oahu during the morning peak period in the Baseline 2030 analysis.

The impact of the congested roadways corresponds to increases in travel time for all Oahu residents, huge increases for some depending on where they live and work. The figure below shows the projected travel time from each area on Oahu to downtown Honolulu for the Baseline 2030 if nothing is done. It can be seen that travel times in excess of 80 minutes are projected from Ewa, Central Oahu, and the Waianae Coast to downtown Honolulu during the morning peak period. This can be attributed to the growth targeted for these areas.” (Draft, p. 3.)

Then the Draft ignores the effects of traffic congestion if the city builds rail (even if Draft projections were to be realized):

“The projects included in the transportation Draft propose numerous ways to address the additional traffic congestion that is expected to increase along this travel corridor:  
At the heart of the ORTP 2030 is a rail transit system that will serve the corridor between Kapolei and Honolulu.

... The [Oahu Regional Transportation Plan (ORTP)] will advance us toward the vision for addressing growth and traffic on Oahu for 2030.” (Draft, p. 4.)

And,

“... the analysis indicates that the Draft would:  
reduce the number of miles and hours spent by people in automobiles to make trips;  
reduce delays for all modes of travel; and  
significantly increase public transit ridership.” (Draft, p. 6)

And,

“The number of congested roadways are forecast to decrease.” (Draft, p. 11)

When the above language is added to the chorus from our elected officials discussing the need for rail transit to address our traffic congestion problems,<sup>i</sup> it is clear that the general public has been, and continues to be, grossly misled.

Let us examine the effects on traffic congestion in the unlikely event that OMPO were to make its projected ridership for the rail scenario.

According to the U.S. Census, for every 100 Honolulu commuters in the year 2000, 80 commuted by auto, 8 by bus, and 12 used other means including walking, cycling, and telecommuting.<sup>ii</sup>

OMPO’s Draft projections are that population and commuters overall would grow by 27.5 percent<sup>iii</sup> and public transit commuters would increase by 75 percent.<sup>iv</sup>

If we assume that the 12 percent of commuters using other means would maintain the same percentage, then it means that two-thirds of the population increase would commute by auto — an increase of drivers by 23 percent as can be seen from the following table.

And that is only if the Draft projections were realized (we will detail later how unlikely that would be). If fewer motorists switched to public transportation than the Draft presently contemplates, the situation would be far worse.

**Projections per 100 commuters, 2000-2030**

	2000 Census		2030 Projected Census		Change in commuters
	Percentage	# Commuters	Percentage	# Commuters	
Total	100%	100	100%	127.5	+27.5
Auto	80%	80	77%	98	+18
Public Transit	8%	8	11%	14	+6
Other means	12%	12	12%	15.5	+3.5

2. The Draft's rail capital costs are understated.

The rail line contemplated in the Draft would run from Kapolei to the University of Hawaii (UH) and the Draft projects it to cost \$2.57 billion in 2005 dollars.<sup>v</sup>

The costs used in the Draft emanated from DTS as is detailed in the calculation kindly supplied to us by Mr. Melvin Kaku, its acting Director.<sup>vi</sup>

Essentially, the city Department of Transportation Services (DTS) took the cost of Vancouver's Millenium line and adjusted it for "geographical differences" and inflation using the *Civil Works Construction Cost Index System* and the *Price Trends for Federal-Aid Highway Construction*. This produced a cost of \$100 million a mile.

However, we do not believe this is the most accurate method to arrive at even a rough approximation of cost. There are too many differences between Hawaii and Canada, a foreign country with different labor laws and currency. Hawaii has far higher construction costs than other states — and certainly Canada. Hawaii's average cost per lane mile of highway, for example, is 2.5 times the U.S. average.<sup>vii</sup>

A far better method is to base calculations on the cost differences between the No-Build option and the 15.9-mile LPA option<sup>viii</sup> in the 1992 FEIS, which Parsons Brinckerhoff, the DTS's current consultant, produced. That forecast took into account — one assumes — the additional costs for rail feeder buses, and the high costs of Hawaii's labor laws and the political policies affecting construction that are peculiar to Hawaii. It may even have take into account land acquisition and relocation costs, even though they would have been much lower *at that time* than they would be today, even if we allow for inflation.

The inflation factor between 1991 and 2005 was 31.8 percent.<sup>ix</sup> Applying that to the \$1.85 billion cost brings it up to \$2.44 billion in today's money, or \$153 million per mile.

However, construction costs have risen far higher than inflation. Both the U.S. Government's *Price Trends for Federal-Aid Highway Construction*,<sup>x</sup> and the *Civil Works Construction Cost Index System* show a 49 percent increase in costs between 1991 and 2005,<sup>xi</sup> and applying that to the \$1.85 billion gives us \$2.76 billion.

In addition, we must allow for the additional 8 miles between Waikele and Kapolei. The 15.9 miles of the 1992 route costing \$2.76 billion in 2005 dollars, results in \$173 million per mile, or an additional \$1.38 billion for the 8-mile extension.

The base cost of \$2.76 billion and the \$1.38 billion for the Kapolei addition totals to \$4.14 billion for the full Kapolei to UH line. This amount is 60 percent higher than the \$2.57 billion shown in the Draft — before cost overruns.

A range of error at this stage of  $\pm 20$  percent results in a forecast of \$3.3 - \$5.0 billion, which gives a better idea of the financial scope of the project.

Whatever the exact cost would eventually be, it will be far higher than the \$2.57 billion shown in the Draft. OMPO must revise it and give the public an opportunity to comment on it in a new Draft.

In addition, there does not appear to be any provision for interest costs for the bonds necessary to construct rail, which will come as a great surprise to taxpayers. The 1992 FEIS, p. 6-8, showed accumulated bond interest of \$990 million through just the first six years of its financial plan.

Nor does the Draft warn taxpayers that virtually all of the rail cars, rail lines and other equipment will have to be replaced, or rehabilitated, within 25 years from start of operations as can be seen from the provisions made in other metro areas with rail as follows:

Chicago Transit Authority capital expenditure plan: “All rail cars rehabilitated at mid-life (12-13 years), overhauled at their quarter-life points (6 and 18 years), and either rehabilitated or replaced at the end of their useful life (25 years).”<sup>xii</sup>

Atlanta Transit Authority: “MARTA started work last year to rebuild and upgrade all 48 miles of track. It is an extensive project that will not be complete until mid-2007. Our trains have run every day for over 25 years – this work is necessary to keep the system strong for the next 25 years and beyond. The Track Renovation is part of a major capital program that also includes the overhaul of over 200 of MARTA’s rail cars.”<sup>xiii</sup>

Table from Transportation and Land Use Coalition<sup>xiv</sup>

Fig. 3: BART's \$6.8 billion in Capital Maintenance and Renovations Needs <sup>xv</sup> (all costs are in <b>MILLIONS</b> ) Source: BART Planning Department report to Board of Directors, November 9, 2000.				
Category	2001 - 2010	2011 -2020	2021 - 2030	Category Totals
Continuous Recurring Needs	\$370	\$430	\$470	\$1,270
Cyclical Fixed Facilities Renovation and Replacement Needs	\$790	\$770	\$1,190	\$2,750
Cyclical Transit Vehicle Renovation and Replacement Needs	\$600	\$852	\$1,364	\$2,816
Totals Over Time	\$1,760	\$2,052	\$3,024	\$6,836

BART began its first repair and rehabilitation plan in 1994 at a cost of \$1.2 billion within only 20 years of opening. There is no mention in the Draft of the future liability for what the Bay Area Rapid Transit District euphemistically refers to as “system reinvestment.”

There is no consideration for these future expenses in the financial data provided in the Draft and the public must be apprised of such future liabilities.

3. The Draft’s rail costs are out of line with the size of our population

The Draft does not tell the public that if we build a rail line we will be the smallest metro area in the country with a rail line — let alone one that is fully grade separated from highways.

The current smallest metro area with rail is Salt Lake City, which has a population at least 50 percent greater than Honolulu. They only spent \$300 million on their at-grade light rail line, a small fraction of what the city has in store for us.

We are planning a totally grade-separated rail line with power drawn from a third rail. The smallest metro area with such a system is Miami with a similar 21-mile rail line as projected for Honolulu. However, Miami’s metro area population is nearly five times that of Honolulu while its rail ridership is only about a quarter that of TheBus.<sup>xvi</sup>

Honolulu’s locally funded rail costs per capita will be easily the greatest of any rail transit line every constructed in the U.S.

4. The Draft’s budgeted outlays are totally at odds with our needs.

The highway miles traveled by Oahu residents on transit is only 4.4 percent of that carried by automobiles on our highways.<sup>xvii</sup> If the experience of other metro areas is any indication that percentage will only decline — with or without rail.

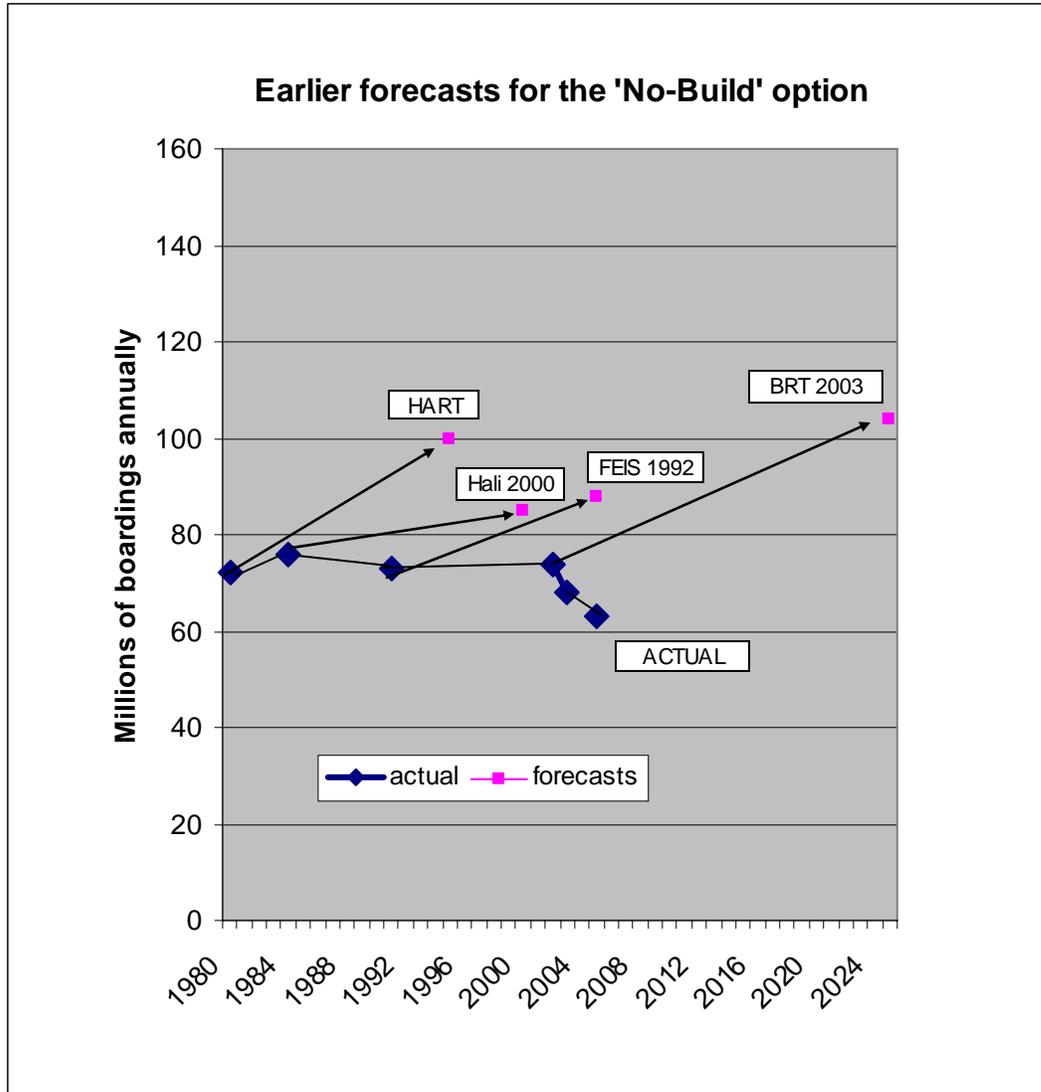
Yet of the Draft’s \$13.5 billion in total spending for Oahu, OMPO allocates 59 percent for public transportation and only 41 percent for highway related projects.

The only significant new Oahu highway capacity projects in the Draft for the next 25 years are: Widening H-1 by one lane eastbound from Waiawa to Halawa, widening Farrington Highway from 4 lanes to 6 lanes, widening Moanalua Freeway by one lane in each direction, and constructing the two miles of the Nimitz flyover.

Given the massive increase projected for auto commuters over the next 25 years this promises vastly increased traffic congestion.

5. The ridership projections are insufficiently detailed and do not match the experience of other U.S. metropolitan areas.

The Draft shows total ridership projections for rail from Kapolei to the University of Hawaii of around 345,000<sup>xviii</sup> average daily boardings, an increase of about 75 percent from current levels of 200,000.



The Draft shows ridership forecasts for transit are piggy-backed on top of inflated forecasts for the No-Build option.

This chart shows the actual ridership at the times the No-Build forecasts were made. The arrows start at the year in which the forecast was made and point to the forecast ridership numbers and year. Note that every forecast has always shown a large increase while the actual ridership has continued to decline. This has been necessary for planners to do since, if they did not, the rail forecast would not be sufficient to justify the funding. This is embarrassing for planners but they have no choice if they are to get the rail line built.

Rides per capita of population have declined from 96 in 1984 to 70 today — a 27 percent decline. Yet it appears that the Draft still projects public transportation use will grow directly with growth in households (a faster growth rate than population) when that has not been either Honolulu's experience, nor, for that matter, the nation's other metro areas.

What makes it worse is when we compare these *projected* outcomes with the *actual results* from other metro areas. First, the Draft calls for a 75 percent increase in riders

over the next 25 years against a 27.5 percent increase in population and commuters. That is a 35 percent gain in market share for public transportation. If it were evenly spread among commuters and other users, it would mean that 11.2 percent of Oahu workers would commute by public transportation up from 8 percent in 2000.

Compare that with the past 20 years of Census data showing that the only metro area with rail to show any increase at all in this percentage was San Diego where commuters using public transportation increased from 3.3 percent to 3.4 percent — in short, from nothing to nothing. All other metro areas with rail saw their percentage of commuters using public transit decline.<sup>xix</sup>

6. The Draft fails to inform the public about other opportunities that exist for a reduction in traffic congestion.

The Draft ignores the U.S. government's prevailing transportation agenda encouraging both value (congestion) pricing and public-private partnerships in highway construction.<sup>xx</sup>

In addition, the Annual Texas Transportation Institute Mobility Report for 2005 analysis shows that if the growth of highway construction matches the growth in travel, congestion levels will not increase thus negating the argument that highway construction merely induces additional travel growth.

The Report also says that, "Finding a way to incorporate a pricing mechanism into some travel corridors could provide an important option for urban residents and freight shippers."

Professor Cervero of UC-Berkeley has also refuted the argument that highways merely induce new travel in a new study. It shows that:

"... earlier studies had significantly overestimated the inducement effect and that it is closer to a 10 percent increase in highways inducing a 4 percent increase in traffic ... Road investments by themselves do not increase volumes. Only by conferring a benefit, like faster speeds, will traffic increase. Adding a twelve-foot lane along a congested urban corridor matters; adding one in a lightly trafficked exurban stretch does not ... Although I personally sympathize with the aims of many environmentalists, fighting highway projects, regardless what benefit-cost numbers say, is misguided. The problems people associate with roads—e.g., congestion and air pollution—are not the fault of road investments per se. These problems stem from the use and mispricing of roads, new and old alike. They also stem from the absence of careful land use planning and management around new interchanges and along newly expanded highways. Better road pricing and land use planning are more likely to achieve the aims of environmentalists than carte blanche bans on any and all road construction."<sup>xxi</sup>

Successes in London's cordon pricing scheme and Singapore's electronic road pricing are further indicators of congestion pricing success.

We have suggested that combining highway expansion and congestion pricing in the form of a Virtual Exclusive Busway (HOT lanes with bus and vanpool priority), would be the most cost-effective way to provide traffic congestion relief in the Leeward Corridor and give toll-paying motorists an option to bypass regular freeways when a time-sensitive necessity dictates it.

The Draft fails to inform the public of the existence of such alternatives to rail. OMPO must remedy that in a new Draft.

7. The Draft does not inform the public about the economic impacts of rail on the community's economy.

The Draft significantly understates all the rail transit costs, especially,

- The initial capital cost of rail, described earlier on page 2-5 of this letter, which should be approximately 50 percent greater.
- There does not appear to be any allowance for interest on the bonds necessary to construct rail. Using a construction cost of \$4.1 billion in 2005 dollars, 4.5 percent annual interest on bonds, 4.2 percent growth annual in tax revenues, \$80 million annually in 2005 dollars for operating losses, and inflation of 2.96 percent, results in \$2.2 billion in unredeemed bonds when the tax surcharge lapses in 2022 and interest costs also of \$2.2 during this period. The public should be aware of this overhang.
- The operating and maintenance costs (O&M) appear to be static from year to year in constant dollars where the experience of both Honolulu and the rest of the nation has been that O&M, even allowing for inflation, has increased greatly over time on a per rider basis. The 1992 FEIS for rail and bus combined forecast annual operating losses to be paid by local taxes for rail and bus combined of \$202 million,<sup>xxiii</sup> about \$100 million more than it is currently.
- There is no provision for a sinking fund to prepare for refurbishing of the system at the end of the 25-year period (see pp. 4-5). Even with one, it is important that the public know that significant and costly rehabilitation of rail transit equipment will be needed within a few years from the start of operations. For example, BART began a \$1.2 billion rehabilitation in 1994 — only 20 years after opening.
- There exists a strong likelihood for cost overruns for the project if only because elected officials will require changes that the public will inevitably call for.

There has been no attempt to make clear to taxpayers the size of the financial commitment they are being asked to make and the tax increases that will be necessary to meet it.

If we add the expenditures for all public transportation shown in the Draft, and then add to it \$1.3 billion for understated capital costs and another \$1.5 billion for interest costs, we show total expenditures of \$11.6 billion — before cost overruns. From this total we must deduct fare revenues, federal contributions and income from the ½ percent tax increase. Netting the total of these leaves \$6.8 billion still to be collected from taxpayers.<sup>xxiii</sup>

And this amount does not provide for any cost overruns, nor does it provide for the refurbishing of rail equipment we have shown earlier to be a necessary expenditure within the period covered.

Cost overruns for rail transit projects are well documented:

- A U.S. Department of Transportation study by Dr. Pickrell, DOT's chief economist, showed that cost overruns averaged over 30 percent when calculated from the time the decision to build was made.<sup>xxiv</sup>

- Dr. Martin Wachs, Director of the Institute of Transportation Studies at UC Berkeley, has written widely on cost overruns and ethics in forecasting.<sup>xxv</sup>
- Dr. John Kain, Chair Emeritus of both Harvard's Economics Dept. and its Urban and Regional Planning Dept., has also studied this problem.<sup>xxvi</sup>
- An extensive bibliography on forecasting and cost overruns is contained in the Flyvbjerg study. This recent study published in the American Planning Association Journal of over 250 international transportation projects by a team from the University of Aalborg, Denmark, found systematic and deliberate cost underestimation by officials in all countries and the U.S. was no exception. They found that the reason for such 'strategic misrepresentation' was that had officials provided accurate figures to decision-makers in the early stages, the projects would not have been built.<sup>xxvii</sup>

As we have noted earlier these costs — even before cost overruns — are far greater per capita than has been experienced by any other U.S. metro area.

8. The Draft does not follow FTA guidance in its planning concerning the movement of goods, environmental effects and the conservation of energy.

The federal government charges OMPO with transportation planning that *will*,

“support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area,” “increase the mobility options available to people and for freight,” “make the most efficient use of existing transportation facilities to relieve vehicular congestion and maximize the mobility of people and goods,” and “protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve quality of life.” [23 USC 134 (f)]<sup>xxviii</sup>

In addition,

“The following factors shall be explicitly considered, analyzed as appropriate, and reflected in the planning process products .... The need to relieve congestion and prevent congestion from occurring where it does not yet occur including: The consideration of congestion management strategies or actions which improve the mobility of people and goods in all phases of the Planning process ...” [23CFR§450.316]<sup>xxix</sup>

However, the Draft does not inform the public that rail transit will:

- Do nothing for the movement of goods and freight, which has enormous impacts on the quality of life for Oahu residents.
- Do little for tourism and tour operations, which has become the greater part of our economy.
- Result in vastly increased vehicular congestion from current levels.
- Impose the noise and visual blight of an elevated rail line going through the center of our city and harm our environment. It did so in other cities who have, for the most part, demolished their “els.”
- Result in greater use of energy than if the city did not build it, as was detailed by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB).<sup>xxx</sup> The 60 million kilowatt hours/year<sup>xxxi</sup> that rail transit will use undoubtedly requires a new power plant but this is not discussed in the Draft.

The Draft mentions the Transportation Equity Act but does not tell us whether the Draft complies with it. There are two issues that should be of concern.

First, any surcharge on the state's General Excise Tax is inequitable. It is widely regarded as a regressive tax in that it is more harmful to the less affluent since they spend a greater part of their incomes on taxable items such as rent, food, clothing and medical care.

Second, studies have shown that many new rail systems provide greater benefits to the affluent that it does to those who are transit dependent. For example, BART riders have average incomes greater than the average yet it is funded by a sales tax on everyone. Most commuter rail lines also benefit disproportionately those more affluent than the average.

The equity issue is not addressed in the Draft and the public should be aware of it.

Under *Goals*, on page 4, OMPO writes, "To meet our vision, the islandwide transportation plan for Oahu is defined by three overarching goals."

The first goal is to, "Develop and maintain Oahu's island wide transportation system to ensure efficient, safe, convenient and economical movement of people and *goods*." (emphasis added)

However, neither the word *goods* nor *freight* appears again in the Draft. This is a significant shortcoming since the delivery of goods is a major policy element given equal weight with people in federal, state and city transportation policies. The greater the traffic congestion imposed on goods vehicles the greater the costs incurred and these will be passed along to consumers in the form of higher prices for the goods they purchase.

On the other hand, the HOT lanes alternative would make a major contribution in reducing the cost of delivering goods and help reduce Hawaii's high cost of living.

OMPO's second overarching goal is to, "Develop and maintain Oahu's transportation system in a manner that maintains environmental quality and community cohesiveness. ... Minimizes disruption of neighborhoods, ensures compatibility with the physical and social character of existing development."

The Draft says that this is a goal but it does not reveal to the public any of the potential adverse environmental impacts effects of elevated rail.

Since OMPO is using costs from Vancouver's Skytrain, and DTS is using it as an example, it is only appropriate to cite the British Columbia government's Ombudsman's Report about Skytrain.<sup>xxxii</sup> Voters should read this document in its entirety. Here are some brief excerpts from its *Summary of Major Conclusions and Recommendations*:

- "Significant adverse effects of Skytrain on some adjacent residents are loss of privacy, excessive noise, and a decrease in property values.
- Where the track is elevated, the erection of more effective sound barriers on the guideway itself should be considered.
- In the future, wherever practicable, Skytrain should not operate on elevated guideways through residential neighborhoods.

- Noise levels emanating from Skytrain should be reduced, minimally, to 55 decibels.” (Estimated noise levels in the 1992 FEIS ranged up to 77 decibels. FEIS, Table 3.13).

During the 1992 rail discussions Hawaii architects expressed a great deal of concern over the impacts of an elevated rail line traversing the community and Seattle architects are now showing the same concerns with a potential monorail line.<sup>xxxiii</sup> The Draft should address these problems.

The Draft contains no mention of land acquisition costs or allows for the cost of necessary relocations of residences and businesses. In prior years, OMPO planning documents available to the public spelled out that such actions would be necessary.

For example, in 1973 the Oahu Transportation Planning Program, the predecessor organization to OMPO disclosed to the public that,

“Displacement of families and businesses is the ‘sore thumb’ of most public construction projects. The proposed rapid transit system is no exception. ... Preliminary studies indicate about 39 acres will be required, displacing some 884 households and 430 businesses — primarily in Kalihi, Moiliili and Kaimuki. ... cited the \$95.6 million price tag assigned relocation and right-of-way acquisition at [1973] prices.”<sup>xxxiv</sup>

The \$95.6 million in 1973 dollars would be \$401 million in 2005 dollars, just allowing for normal inflation. However, land values have increased far greater than inflation and so one would expect an amount even greater than \$401 million.

As another example, the 1976 PEEP II study, part of the planning for the 1980 Honolulu Area Rapid Transit (HART) study, contained a complete book-size Relocation Plan.

In OMPO’s 1984 Hali 2000 study, one which preceded the eventual 1992 FEIS, OMPO wrote:

“The rapid transit alternative could displace up to 5 acres of residential area, primarily at station locations. Approximately 15 acres of commercial property is likely to be displaced primarily in the central Honolulu area between the Civic Center and the University of Hawaii. The majority of the 35 acres of industrial land would be required for a rail yard.”<sup>xxxv</sup>

It is clear from the City’s own analysis, that the costs cited in the ORTP Plan do not include any allowance for acquisitions, relocations, and displacements. The Draft must give the public at least a rough estimate of what these costs might be.

In addition, OMPO has failed to warn in the Draft that the process is in violation of the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA)<sup>xxxvi</sup> in that the legislation authorizing funding precludes the use of funds for reasonable highway related alternatives. House Bill 1309 states:

"operating or capital costs of a locally preferred alternative for a mass transit project ... shall not be used to build or repair public roads or highways or support public transportation systems already in existence."

The alternative that virtually all the reviewers in the 1991 Evaluation of rail plan recommended that Oahu consider was busways. The alternatives chosen by other metro areas have been highway related such HOT lanes and busways.

The legislation that precludes the use of the county surcharge for any highway or bus alternatives was not an accidental oversight. Given the history of political campaign contributions associated with Honolulu's earlier transit projects it should not be surprising. During the Bus/Rapid Transit (BRT) process, Mayor Harris alone received \$435,000 from various non-bid consultants and that was a small project. The Conference Committee Report 186 on HB 1309 specifically stated:

"It is the intent of your Committee on Conference that the funds realized by a county surcharge on state tax initiated by the City and County of Honolulu be used first for the establishment of a fixed rail mass transit system."

9. The Oahu Metropolitan Planning Organization (OMPO) has not complied with the requirements of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) for public participation.

Metropolitan Planning Organizations are responsible for conducting the locally-developed public participation processes as required by the Joint Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)/ Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Planning Rule (23 CFR part 450, 49 CFR part 613). They require of the metropolitan planning process that,

"Public involvement processes shall be proactive and provide complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and opportunities for early and continuing involvement. The processes shall provide for: Early and continuing public involvement opportunities throughout the transportation planning and programming process." [23CFR part 450.212]<sup>xxxvii</sup> [23CFR part 450.316]<sup>xxxviii</sup>

There are also public involvement requirements at the state level: "The State shall ... provide for public involvement as required under §450.212." [23CFR part 450.214]<sup>xxxix</sup>

In addition, the Hawaii Information Practices Act<sup>xi</sup> states that:

"In a democracy, the people are vested with the ultimate decision-making power. Government agencies exist to aid the people in the formation and conduct of public policy. Opening up the government processes to public scrutiny and participation is the only viable and reasonable method of protecting the public's interest. Therefore the legislature declares that it is the policy of this State that the formation and conduct of public policy—the discussions, deliberations, decisions, and action of government agencies—shall be conducted as openly as possible."

Clearly, there are federal and state requirements for OMPO that require proactive public participation in the metropolitan transportation planning process, yet OMPO has not complied with that requirement. Instead, it has fought giving the public any real information particularly concerning ridership and cost projections, which are at the heart of transportation decision making. In addition, it has attempted to sway public opinion with biased polls.

For the last three months we have been attempting to gain access to the underlying rationale for ridership projections that we believe are grossly inflated and out of line with experience elsewhere. Only after gaining the assistance of the Hawaii Office of Information Practices do we appear as though we will shortly get this material.<sup>xii</sup> This is hardly "proactive public involvement."

As part of OMPO's efforts to drum up public support for rail, OMPO has devised surveys to show that the public supports rail.

For example, in December 2004, OMPO released to the media the results of a survey of public attitudes about transportation issues. It was a blatant effort to skew the responses to demonstrate support for a rail line among Oahu residents. Here's how:

It is easy to skew a survey by biasing the questions asked. Here's an example: Consider the following two hypothetical questions regarding someone choosing a car:

- Would you like a BMW? Answer: YES.
- Would you like a BMW if you had to make the \$800 a month payments and pay maintenance and insurance costs averaging \$2,500 a year? Answer: NO.

These are the kinds of responses obtained if the questions allude to the advantages of an investment without including any of the disadvantages.

The following two questions asked in the OMPO survey are typical of those asked:

Q4. Currently, it would be difficult and expensive to build new roadways or widen existing ones in the urban core of Honolulu. I'll read you three options to deal with congestion, and you tell me which you think is best. The first is ..." etc.<sup>xliii</sup>

Q9. Do you feel that a rail rapid transit system should be constructed as a long-term transportation solution for Honolulu? (Survey, p. 28) (emphasis added)

Note that highways are "difficult and expensive" while the rail system is "rapid" Those descriptions are misleading. The rail option is ten times more expensive than the reversible highway option to carry the same number of riders. And far from being "rapid," the rail line would likely operate at an average speed of 22.5 mph while the highway option would average 55 mph.

Even with the such misleading questions, the poll concludes that, "Oahu drivers – two-thirds of adults – favored making traffic flow improvements over encouraging more mass transit usage"<sup>xliiii</sup> and that more people support a tax increase for roads than they do rail.<sup>xliv</sup>

These and other actions by OMPO show clearly that the rail project will not stand on its own feet else, the public would not have to be manipulated to favor it.

#### Summary:

OMPO has flagrantly violated the requirement that they proactively involve the public in all aspects of the Draft including alternatives. To rectify this, they must begin to inform taxpayers more fully. OMPO needs, at a minimum, to include in a new Draft:

- A clear statement about future traffic congestion with rail and with alternatives.
- Results of an unbiased resident survey that details to respondents the total initial cost, the subsequent operating and rehabilitation costs, the effects on traffic congestion comparing the foregoing with the same details for alternatives — in particular the reversible HOT lanes proposal.
- Details of how the capital costs were calculated including the interest costs.
- Reconciliation of the ridership projections with the actual results of other metro areas with rail.
- Estimates of future rehabilitation costs.

- Estimates of future operating losses.
- The visual and noise impacts of the 'el' snaking through Honolulu, particularly the residential districts.
- A table of the largest 75 metro areas including Honolulu, by population size, showing those with heavy rail and those with light rail.

Had full information been supplied to the public it would have been obvious to them that a HOT lanes alternative would meet their needs better than a rail transit line.

OMPO must produce a new and more accurate draft ORTP with full disclosure of the financial and environmental problems and allow the public to comment on it.

Failure to do so will result in further credence being given to the old saw: "Transit agencies typically keep the public at bay by having only two phases for their projects: The first phase when it is just too early to give the public all the facts, and the second phase when it is too late to stop the project."

Sincerely,

HONOLULUTRAFFIC.COM



Cliff Slater  
Chair

cc:

Office of Environmental Quality Control  
Genevieve Salmonson, Director  
235 S. Beretania Street  
Leiopapa A Kamehameha, Suite 702  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Federal Transit Administration  
Region IX  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
201 Mission Street, Suite 2210  
San Francisco, California 94105-1839



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- xv BART: “If funding from Sec. 5307 and 5309 funds are held constant over the next ten years, then the average annual gap for BART is \$112 million. Seismic retrofit costs of \$610 million over the next ten years do not appear to be included in the BART Planning Department's figures above (figure 3).”
- xvi 14,318,000 for Miami annually. Source:  
<http://www.apta.com/research/stats/ridershp/riderep/documents/04q4hr.pdf>
- xvii <http://www.hawaii.gov/dbedt/info/economic/databook/db2004/section18.pdf> Table 18.7 shows annual vehicle miles traveled of 6,160.9 millions annually. This should be multiplied by 1.15 for the average occupants per vehicle of 7,085 million.
- The American Public Transportation Association at:  
<http://63.240.200.96/research/stats/bus/75largest.cfm> shows average annual passenger miles of 313,831,300.
- 313.8 million divided by 7085 million results in 4.4 percent, which is much higher than the national average of 1.26 percent.
- xviii The amount is only charted; no exact number is given.
- xix FHWA spreadsheet at <http://ryo-ohki.chrispy.net/pipermail/ctpp-news/attachments/20020604/3d791aee/msacomparison.xls>
- xx [http://www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/congestion\\_report/index.htm](http://www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/congestion_report/index.htm)  
[http://www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/congestion\\_report/executive\\_summary.htm#strategies](http://www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/congestion_report/executive_summary.htm#strategies)
- “tolling, road pricing, and public-private partnerships (PPP) appear to have risen to the top of the transportation agenda,” according to Kenneth Orski’s latest *Innovation Briefs* about the recent 2006 Annual Transportation Research Board Conference.
- xxi <http://www.uctc.net/access/22/Access%2022%20-%20004%20-%20Induced%20Travel%20Studies.pdf>
- xxii FEIS, p. 6-11, table 6.6, FY2005.
- xxiii
- |                    |          |                               |
|--------------------|----------|-------------------------------|
| Costs in billions  |          |                               |
| Transit O&M        | 4.675    | Draft, p. 11.                 |
| Rail capital cost  | 2.570    | Draft, p. 11.                 |
| Understated cost   | 1.570    | Our estimate.                 |
| Bond interest      | 2.200    | Our estimate.                 |
| Bus capital        | 0.619    | Draft, p. 11.                 |
| Total costs        | \$11.634 |                               |
| Revenues           |          |                               |
| Fed contrib        | -1.272   | Draft, p. 10.                 |
| Fares              | -1.403   | Draft, p. 10.                 |
| The ½% GE tax      | -2.123   | Draft, p. 10.                 |
| Total revenues     | 4.798    |                               |
| Net taxes required | \$6.836  | billion “costs less revenues” |
- xxiv Pickrell, Don H. Urban Rail Transit Projects: Forecast Versus Actual Ridership and Costs. U.S. Dept. of Transportation. October 1990.
- xxv Wachs, M. (1986). Technique vs. advocacy in forecasting: A study of rail rapid transit. *Urban Resources*, 4(1), 23–30.
- Wachs, M. (1989). When planners lie with numbers. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 55(4), 476–479.

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Wachs, M. (1990). Ethics and advocacy in forecasting for public policy. *Business and Professional Ethics Journal*, 9(1-2), 141-157.

xxvi Kain, J. F. (1990). Deception in Dallas: Strategic misrepresentation in rail transit promotion and evaluation. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 56(2), 184-196.

xxvii Bent Flyvbjerg, Mette Skamris Holm, and Søren Buhl. *Underestimating Costs in Public Works Projects: Error or Lie?* Journal of the American Planning Association. Summer 2002. Vol. 68, No. 3. pp. 279-295. <http://www.planning.org/japa/pdf/JAPAFlyvbjerg.pdf>

Excerpt: "Based on a sample of 258 transportation infrastructure projects worth US\$90 billion and representing different project types, geographical regions, and historical periods, it is found with overwhelming statistical significance that the cost estimates used to decide whether such projects should be built are highly and systematically misleading. Underestimation cannot be explained by error and is best explained by strategic misrepresentation, that is, lying. The policy implications are clear: legislators, administrators, investors, media representatives, and members of the public who value honest numbers should not trust cost estimates and cost-benefit analyses produced by project promoters and their analysts."

xxviii [23 U.S.C Sec. 134. Metropolitan Planning](#)

xxix [§450.316 Metropolitan transportation Planning process: Elements.](#)

xxx STATEMENT OF ALICE M. RIVLIN, DIRECTOR, CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE, Before the Subcommittee on Transportation Committee on the Environment and Public Works United States Senate on October 5, 1977 Excerpt: "In particular, new heavy rail systems appear much less energy-efficient than new bus services, when the energy needed to build roadways and track, the energy needed to manufacture and maintain vehicles, the energy used to heat and light stations, the energy required to drive to stations, and the directness of alternative modes of travel are taken into consideration. The principal reason for this is that the limited route mileage of rail systems necessitates a high degree of auto travel to and from stations, resulting in overall, door-to-door travel patterns that are less energy-efficient than rail travel by itself."

xxxi 1992 FEIS, p. 5-53.

xxxii

[http://www.ombud.gov.bc.ca/reports/Public\\_Reports/PR8\\_Sky\\_Train\\_Report/summary\\_of\\_major\\_conclusions\\_and.htm](http://www.ombud.gov.bc.ca/reports/Public_Reports/PR8_Sky_Train_Report/summary_of_major_conclusions_and.htm)

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[http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/printer2/index.asp?ploc=t&refer=http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/transportation/91672\\_architecture18.shtml](http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/printer2/index.asp?ploc=t&refer=http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/transportation/91672_architecture18.shtml)

xxxiv Oahu Transportation Planning Program, March 1973.

xxxv (Draft, p. 7-8)

xxxvi Sec. 102 [42 USC § 4332]. The Congress authorizes and directs that, to the fullest extent possible: (1) the policies, regulations, and public laws of the United States shall be interpreted and administered in accordance with the policies set forth in this Act, and (2) all agencies of the Federal Government shall ... (E) study, develop, and describe appropriate alternatives to recommended courses of action in any proposal which involves unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.

xxxvii [23CFR §450.212](#)

xxxviii [23CFR§450.316 Metropolitan transportation planning process](#)

xxxix 23CFR §450.214 Statewide transportation plan.

- x<sup>i</sup> <http://www.state.hi.us/oip/uipa.html>
- x<sup>ii</sup> Letter from Hawaii's Office of Information Practices dated 12/29/2005.  
[http://www.honolulutraffic.com/OIP\\_Slater-Lum.pdf](http://www.honolulutraffic.com/OIP_Slater-Lum.pdf)
- x<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.oahumpo.org/ortp/media/IssuesSurvey.pdf> Survey, p. 16
- x<sup>iiii</sup> <http://www.oahumpo.org/ortp/media/IssuesSurvey.pdf> Survey, p. 21.
- x<sup>iv</sup> <http://www.oahumpo.org/ortp/media/IssuesSurvey.pdf> Survey, pages 23-24.