

The Friends of Makakilo
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December 1, 2009

Governor Linda Lingle
State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Aloha, Governor Lingle,

Re: Unaddressed Leeward problems with rail

We want to thank you for your decision to thoughtfully review the FEIS on the rail. We people of West O'ahu desperately need some relief for our unbearable traffic problems, but we want the system finally agreed upon to really *solve* our problems. This letter is to bring to your attention a number of major points about the rail that have come to light and that possibly have not been dealt with in the Final EIS. We ask that you not "receive the FEIS" until they are addressed.

1. Ho'opili station in the middle of an open farm field.

The petition of DR Horton to change the designation of 1555 acres of farmland to urban was declared to be deficient by the Land Use Commission in August, 2009. Conditions set by your State Department of Agriculture and State Department of Transportation seem insurmountable, and further pursuit of the Ho'opili development is not expected.

Keeping this land permanently in farming has overwhelming community support. It is the highest producing farmland in the state. Two top professors at the College of Tropical Agriculture attest that it is "the best farmland in the world." The Ho'opili rail station, as currently planned, will be constructed in the middle of this farmland in an empty farm field. The station needs to be removed from the plans. The route of the train also needs to be moved from the middle of the fields. It makes more sense for it to run alongside Farrington Hwy.

2. Rail is not an inappropriate use of land in an agricultural district.

"HRS 205-4.5 Permissible uses within the agricultural districts" limits permissible uses of lands for which the land bureau's detailed land classification overall productivity rating is A or B. The Horton lands are all A and B. Only uses specifically mentioned in article 205-4.5 are acceptable and rail is not one of them

3. No park-and-ride for thousands of commuters on Ft. Weaver Rd.

Ft. Weaver Rd. is *the* major commuter corridor to the freeway for residents in 'Ewa and 'Ewa Beach. Any hope of luring these drivers from their cars to the train depends on their passing an easily accessible park-and-ride before they reach the freeway. The West-Loch station, on Farrington Hwy. just inside Waipahu, which is well situated to serve this purpose and should serve this purpose, has zero park-and-ride stalls. It thus prevents ridership by these thousands of people, rather than encourages it. This contradicts the whole purpose of the rail.

4. Rail, as designed in this FEIS, is not being built to solve current traffic problems.

All four of the first stops for the rail are being built for new people who don't yet live there yet, to solve problems that their arrival will cause. The rail is *not* being built to solve the current traffic problems of the people who voted for it, who are paying for it, and who fully expected it to be directed to their needs.

- The first stop for the rail is the DeBartelo Center. This center does not yet exist, nor does the development expected around the station. The site for this station is now in the middle of open fields.
- The second stop is UH West O'ahu, which also does not yet exist.
- The third stop, Ho'opili, is in the middle of extensive farm fields.
- The fourth stop is the West Loch station in Waipahu which should draw commuters from Ft. Weaver Rd., as well as from Village Park and Royal Kunia, but has zero park-and-ride stalls.

Not one of the first four stops of the rail is truly being built for current West O'ahu people. Rail has been misrepresented as the solution to the traffic problems our people endure.

5. Have the people of Waipahu been consulted about the loss of their newly beautified main thoroughfare?

For decades, Waipahu was the ugly step-sister community on the island. The recent Farrington Hwy. beautification project, still reaching full grow-out, has transformed it into an attractive little town. The elevated rail will replace this beauty with ugly pillars inviting graffiti. Great effort has been made to inform the public about the rail, but people are busy and don't attend meetings. Have the people of Waipahu been adequately informed and consulted about their impending great loss?

6. UHWO park-and-ride needs parking structure to save priceless farmland.

One thousand park-and-ride stalls are currently planned at the UHWO station. These will spread across two five-acre lots. The soil on this acreage is top grade "A" soil as designated by Land Study Bureau soil survey of 1971. Parking structures should be built to conserve space, and the unneeded land kept in farming.

7. Train could be at-grade from DeBartelo Center to Stadium if ORL right of way was used.

There are many advantages to using the old ORL right-of-way

- Most, if not all, of the old ORL right-of-way from Nanakuli to the stadium still remains open. If necessary, pipelines beneath it could be moved to one side. Using it would shift the construction from busy main arteries to sparsely populated areas, and could save thousands of drivers from years of frustrating inconvenience as building the rail tears up streets and backs up traffic on the principal thoroughfare from the West end of Waipahu to the stadium. Running close to the ocean and lochs, the right-of-way crosses very few roads, and could possibly well accommodate at-grade rail for the entire distance.

- If the old ORL right-of-way became the primary rail route, a park-and-ride could be constructed where it crosses Ft. Weaver Rd., allowing the people of ‘Ewa and ‘Ewa Beach the access to the rail that they deserve.
- If the old ORL right-of-way formed the primary rail route, the extension West of the DeBartelo Center—through Kapolei and onto Nanakuli—would be uncluttered and easy to construct.
- If the old ORL right-of-way became the primary rail route, the problem of the rail passing through the Ho’opili farmland would be solved. Initially the train could start at UHWO, heading toward the De Bartelo Center, then follow the ORL line into the city. In future years, when the mainline would be extended West, through Kapolei and beyond, the UHWO segment could become a spur.

8. Loss of view-planes in downtown Honolulu

Above and beyond these points having to do with problems in West Oahu, the Friends of Makakilo wishes to express our great concern about the visual impact of the elevated train in the city. After having seen so many cities tear down elevated structures that for decades destroyed the character, beauty, and local sense of place, why are we, who live in Paradise, constructing a gross elevated structure that will destroy view-planes down every street in the city and lose for us what we consider most precious? This makes no sense when there are possible alternatives. At-grade light rail may be slowed somewhat by traffic, but it has been shown that time lost is fully compensated by the rail running through the center of the city, cutting time walking or riding from the rail to workplace.

9. Have the effects of rising seas caused by climate change been considered in the planning of the entire route for the rail in the FEIS?

It is likely that the FEIS does not take rising seas caused by climate change into consideration. Certainly, rising seas will cause tremendous impacts re-shaping communities through which it passes. A four and a half billion dollar project should not proceed without complete awareness of, and accommodation for, the reconfiguration of the island that must be anticipated over the next century.

The Friends of Makakilo believe that the problems mentioned above must be dealt with before construction of any system begins. We on the West side daily endure insufferable traffic problems which will be gravely compounded with construction of the 33,000 additional homes already zoned and fully entitled in our area. We need relief. But we also need the right kind of project, on the best path to the city, which won’t destroy Paradise in the process.

We very much appreciate your efforts to bring this about.

Dr. Kioni Dudley
President, Friends of Makakilo