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HONOLULU'S MAYOR ENDS PROPOSAL FOR RAIL LINE IN DOWNTOWN AREA

By WALLACE TURNER

Mayor Eileen Anderson has declined to accept \$5 million in Federal funds for an engineering survey, ending plans for a commuter rail system through downtown Honolulu.

"Why spend \$5 million on a system that won't be built?" Mayor Anderson asked recently in defending her position. "We don't need a \$5 million study to make our decision." She said she had decided to expand the bus system, adding 80 to 100 new vehicles to the 400 in operation.

In the decade when it was under consideration by the administration of the previous Mayor, Frank F. Fasi, the rail system became known as HART, an acronym for Honolulu Area Rapid Transit. Plans called for a system of various lengths, the greatest being a 23-mile run between Aloha Stadium at Pearl City and Hawaii Kai to the east, beyond Diamond Head.

Honolulu lies along the lower slopes of headlands so that traffic moving east and west must pass through narrow corridors. As a result the roads are extremely congested in the morning and evening. Cars Popular on Island

"There are about 400,000 vehicles on this island," said Roy Parker, the head of Honolulu's transportation department. "We are like Los Angeles about cars. Over one period, when we measured that the Oahu population had gone up 100 percent, we found that vehicle registrations had gone up 165 percent."

When Mayor Anderson took office in January, the issue was whether to do the preliminary engineering for the first stretch of HART, eight miles running through the downtown area from Honolulu International Airport to the University of Hawaii.

The Federal Urban Mass Transit Administration was ready to provide \$5 million for the preliminary surveys. The city would have had to spend about \$750,000.

Mr. Parker said that Federal officials were so enthusiastic about the rail system that they never required the city to show that it could provide operations and maintenance money for HART once the system was built. Several Factors in Decision

C. Max Gilliss, executive director of the pro-HART Transit Coalition for Honolulu, said that Mayor Anderson should have waited instead of ending the plan. He said, "I can't understand the Mayor's motivation, political or otherwise, for deciding at this time."

Mayor Anderson, who was the state budget officer before last year's campaign, said that several considerations shaped her final decision. One factor, she said, was the Reagan Administration's plan to end Federal financing for new rail construction.

The Mayor also said that no one had located a source for the \$50 million to \$60 million a year required to subsidize the rail system. Honolulu's highly regarded bus system, named "TheBus," currently uses \$20 million a year in the city's general fund revenues, about half the system's operating and maintenance budget.

Mayor Anderson said that she could not determine how any additional deficit in transit costs would be financed. Although Honolulu is the state capital and about 85 percent of Hawaii's population lives on Oahu, the state government has been careful not to pick up too many of the city's bills.

In addition, it has never been clear where Honolulu would get \$200 million for its share of the estimated cost of the railroad's first eight miles.

Mayor Anderson said that predictions indicating that the rail system would be heavily used might have been in error.

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