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September 30, 2008

The Honorable Ann Kobayashi, Chair
Committee on Executive Matters
Honolulu City Council
530 South King Street, Room 202
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Councilmember Kobayashi:

Attached for your information are two lists of documented misinformation. The first list compiles misinformation from several websites such as fixoahu.blogspot.com and stoprailnow.com. The second list compiles misinformation from a Stop Rail Now ad that ran in the Honolulu Advertiser on Sunday, September 14, 2008. Together there are 33 items that serve as a sample of the many misinformation items that are being spread by anti-rail organizations.

We hope this information will be useful to you.

Very truly yours,

Wayne Y. Yoshioka
Director

Attachments

APPROVED:

Wayne M. Hashiro, P.E.
Managing Director

The City's listing of our supposed "lies and misrepresentations" are in larger type and flush left together with their comments.

Stop Rail Now's response is shown underneath each of the items listed in small type and indented. We have listed here only those "misrepresentations" attributed to Stop Rail Now.

Inaccuracies

Stop Rail Now Ad

Sunday, September 14, 2008 • Honolulu Advertiser· Page A25

1. "The recent GET Tax increase and federal funds will be insufficient to fund rail."

Through the financial plan in the Alternatives Analysis, adequate funding sources have been identified for the approved Kapolei to Honolulu route. The financial plan also includes almost $1 billion in contingencies. The financial plan was thoroughly reviewed by transportation experts with the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) prior to its release.

There are five reasons for believing the funds will be insufficient:

First, the projected revenues from the GE tax hike will most probably fall short over the 15-year life of the tax given the current state of our economy. They will certainly be no more than that shown as the lower of the three growth scenarios, the "Trend Forecast," in the AA, table 5-4 & 5-7.

Second, the Alternatives Analysis (AA) financial plan, Table 5-8 and the Financial Feasibility Report (FFR) p. 4-4, calls for $1.2 billion in federal funds for the 20-mile option using the Trend Forecast for GE tax revenues.

The fed does not deal in inflation adjusted dollars only nominal dollars. There is no likelihood of us receiving $1.2 billion. In fact, the only FTA assurance that we have in writing is the minutes of an OMPO Policy Committee Meeting (see http://oahumpo.org/PC/pc2004/pc04mm0323.html) where Mr. Rogers, head of FTA's Region IX told the Committee that, "The FTA program office is looking to limit any New Starts funding to no more than $500 million per project." The minutes were accepted as true by the Committee members. This is the only written assurance from the FTA of us getting anything.

An email of 10-7-2008, from the FTA's Paul Griffo to us, reads as follows: "It is far too early to tell whether Honolulu's proposed rail project will receive New Starts funding. The project hasn't yet been accepted into the New Starts Program. "

Third, the plan does not call for operating losses to begin until 2019 (www.honolulutraffic.com/FFR.pdf , p. B-4.). However, according to city officials, plans call for operations to start in 2012. If operations do begin earlier it will increase the subsidies shown in the financial plan.

Fourth, the capital cost estimate for the 20-mile line is about one billion understated and the 28-mile by $2 billion. See www.honolulutraffic.com/costunderstate4.pdf for a discussion of the 1992 rail project, the Miami Metrorail and the San Juan Tren Urbano all adjusted for construction inflation and location.

Fifth, there will likely be change orders and other cost overruns. The average of the most recent FTA evaluation of New Starts Actual versus Projections and Costs showed average cost overruns of 40 percent.

That the "financial plan was thoroughly reviewed by transportation experts with the FTA prior to its release" is no assurance to anyone who has the slightest acquaintance with the FTA's record. The last two rail lines to open, Charlotte and San Juan, both went over 100 percent over projected costs.

2. "For the beginning 20-mile line we are unlikely to get all of the supposed $900 million in federal funds."

The Federal Transit Administration would not have allowed the City to continue with the project if it were not a reasonable estimate. In fact, in the Alternatives Analysis, it was assumed that federal funds would total $700 million. If we receive more, it will be a bonus.

Congressman James Oberstar, chair of the U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee has twice told the local media he strongly supports this project and mentioned $900 million as a reasonable figure.

2. Dealt with above.

3. "This amount together with the operating subsidy will take at least a 40 percent hike in property taxes."

This is a scare tactic. The subsidy for rail could be funded without any increase in taxes, property or otherwise.

Our statement related to the full Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). We estimate that the City's projected cost of the Full Corridor Alignment at $5.1 billion in 2006 dollars (AA, table 5-1) is $2 billion understated (see www.honolulutraffic.com/costunderstate4.pdf) and to that must be added the airport spur bringing the total to $7.5 billion. This will take more than a 40 percent hike in property taxes.
See http://www.honolulutraffic.com/railfunding13.pdf which is a spreadsheet using an earlier estimate of $6.4 billion that resulted in a 40 percent hike in property taxes. If the City wishes to disagree, they should be specific.

4. "Automobiles are on average more energy efficient than modern rail lines."

According to the U.S. Department of Energy's 2007 Data Book, rail uses 36 percent less energy per passenger-mile than cars and trucks.

> This attempt to confuse the average of rail lines with the *weighted* average of all rail lines, which includes New York, is quite deliberate. They know that New York City's energy efficient subways provide 57 percent of the nation's rail transit ridership and dominate the *weighted* average. We should be comparing ourselves to rail technologies similar to what we would be getting. In fact, whether you take just modern rail lines, or all rail lines including New York City, but use a straight average instead of a weighted average the automobile still comes out ahead with Btu's per passenger mile of 3,445 versus rail's 4,337. They know we are right on this. See this web page: http://www.stoprailnow.com/nwsubenergyuse.pdf.

5. "The city admits future traffic congestion will be worse with rail than it is today."

This is a cleverly crafted statement that knowingly uses only part of the information available. The Alternatives Analysis shows that a fixed guideway will reduce future traffic congestion between Kapolei and Honolulu by 11 percent.

> This is pure spin. He is not denying that traffic congestion will be worse than today only that rail will reduce congestion by 11 percent from what it would be without rail.

6. "The city's own Parsons Brinckerhoff studies forecast that with rail, rush hour traffic will be 37% greater than it is today."

This is another cleverly crafted statement that uses only part of the information available. With the expected increases in population and employment in the future, rail transit promises the greatest reduction of this increased congestion.

> More spin; he is still not denying that congestion will be worse with rail than it is today.

7. "Bus Rapid Transit and autos on High Occupancy Toll 'HOT LANES' is [sic] the most cost-effective way to reduce congestion and thus reduce pollution and energy use."

This statement has no basis in fact. The Alternatives Analysis compared the costs per users of Managed Lanes and the 20-mile fixed guideway and found that the Managed Lane is between $63 and $50 per user, while the fixed guideway is about $21 per user.

In addition, Managed Lanes would provide approximately 2 million hours of user benefits per year. The 20-mile fixed guideway would provide approximately 12 million hours of user benefits per year. Page 6-6 of the Alternatives Analysis states, "The Fixed Guideway alternative is approximately four times as effective at

providing transit user benefits per annualized incremental dollar cost as the Managed Lane alternative."

> Our statement refers to the detailed findings of the UHCS Study, which the city has made no attempt to refute. All they have done is personally attack Dr. Prevedouros who led the study. Failing any significant analysis of the UHCS Study by the City we will continue to quote it.

GETTING IT RIGHT

Misinformation about rail

Below are inaccurate statements about rail transit and HOT lanes taken from their source websites. The statements are grouped by category: traffic congestion, financial plan-costs, Managed Lanes-HOT lanes, ridership, travel times, Environmental Impact Statement, population, train speed, route, environment, downtown and Phileas buses.

TRAFFIC CONGESTION

"You may be even more outraged to find that it has never been our elected officials intention to improve traffic congestion." (stoprailnow.com)

One of the goals from the beginning has been to reduce traffic congestion and improve **corridor mobility, which includes reducing travel times and improving travel time reliability.**

> Nowhere in the AA is there any sign of intent to reduce traffic congestion below current levels, only to “increase urban mobility” by which they mean by public transportation.
>
> These excerpts from a letter sent by DTS Director Melvin Kaku to Cliff Slater on June 20, 2006, show that the City did not have congestion reduction as a main requirement:
>
> “Projects with the purpose of providing roadway mobility for automobiles and commercial vehicles are outside of the authorization of Act 247; therefore, they will not be considered for the Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project …
>
> “While the transit system will reduce the number of drivers on congested roadways within the corridor, the corridor is expected to continue experiencing growth in travel demand. The transportation corridor between Kapolei and the University of Hawaii at Manoa will continue to experience substantial traffic congestion; however, congestion in the corridor is expected to decrease somewhat after the system opens, and grow at a reduced rate after that time because of automobile trips diverted to transit.”
>
> All the City hopes to do is to use rail to reduce congestion to levels below what they would be if we did nothing. The AA table 3-12 shows that present peak hour levels on the regular H-1 freeway lanes are 10,960 vehicles. If we build rail the city forecasts 17,414.

That will mean a considerable increase in traffic congestion relative to today's levels. If we do nothing (No-Build Alternative), the demand will only increase to 18,049.

FINANCIAL PLAN-COSTS

"Even if Honolulu receives $900 million in federal aid, all of it will be spent in foreign countries or on the mainland. No federal funds will ever reach Oahu." (stoprailnow.com)

This statement is absurd. The largest cost elements of the project are the construction of the guideway, stations and maintenance facility and associated costs for utility relocations and street repaving. All of this work, of course, will be done on-site in Honolulu, as will most of the professional service activities.

Stop Rail Now finds no record of us saying this. However, it may well be true it is just that we have not researched this issue.

The City cannot afford rail because it will cost $150 million a year to operate and maintain." (stoprailnow.com)

The estimated annual operating and maintenance costs for a fixed guideway are approximately $60 million. The cost of operating and maintaining a bus and rail system will be less than the cost of carrying the same number of riders on a bus only system.

We can find no record of us having said this. However, it may well be true; we have yet to research it.

MANAGED LANES-HOT LANES

"Engineers for the Tampa elevated toll lanes say an elevated toll road can be built in Honolulu for less than $1 billion." (stoprailnow.com)

According to an e-mail from Linda Figg, whose firm designed the Tampa project, "We (Figg Engineering) have not done any "detailed engineering studies" of what estimates of probable construction costs would be for the elevated structure."

"We simply took those actual cost figures (from Tampa) and escalated the costs to today's time and included the escalations that might be anticipated for construction in Hawaii. The values that Cliff Slater is referencing look like the ball park figures that we determined from that back of the napkin review."

What they precisely said was that they could not believe that it would cost as much as one billion dollars. Figg Bridge does other work in Hawaii and is familiar with geotechnical and labor conditions. They are also familiar with the proposed route of the HOT lanes proposal. Given that they are not going to perform "detailed engineering studies" for the city for free, their comments are valid and we think reasonable.

"In the 2006 AA, 10-mile Hot Lane performed only a little worse than 20 miles of rail line." (stoprailnow.com)

The fixed guideway is projected to reduce traffic congestion by about 11 percent in the study corridor. The Managed Lane-HOT lane option reduces future traffic congestion by about 4 percent. The fixed guideway is a more cost-effective solution per user benefit than Managed Lanes-HOT lanes (AA, table 6-1).

> We can find no record of this poorly written sentence coming from us.

HOT lanes pay for themselves with toll revenues and federal funds." (various)

Toll revenues would fund only about 20 to 25 percent of the cost of HOT lanes. No other funding sources have been identified.

> We see no reason why toll revenues cannot provide half of the $900 million capital costs and FHWA the other half. Even if FHWA did not fund it, the local taxpayer load $450 million is so incomparably small relative to rail transit that the city could have the state legislature amend Act 247 to allow its use for HOT lanes and still be able to terminate the tax in about four years.

POPULATION

"The rail project is totally out of line for the size of our community." (stoprailnow)

Honolulu is fifth densest among cities with populations of 500,000 or more. We are the only one without a rail system.

> More spin. No one compares "cities" but rather metro areas — contiguous urban areas with logical linkage for sharing urban transportation. Rather than San Francisco the federal government reviews the whole Bay Area. The USDOT's listing of metro areas has Honolulu as the 56th largest and most of the 55 that are larger than us have no rail.
>
> In addition, rail transit's cost per capita for Honolulu is at least seven times the next highest cost per capita among all metro areas and ten times the average.

TRAIN SPEED

"Train is not rapid." (stoprailnow.com)

Rail will achieve a top speed of 55 mph or greater between many stations.

> More spin. We, of course, only deal with average speeds from origin to destination. The city claims they will average 30 mph but that will be a reach and be, more likely, 25-28 mph. In any case, 30 mph is not rapid in comparison to uncongested highway speeds of 60 mph such as the HOT lanes would provide.

ROUTE

"Virtually everyone will have to use buses to get to rail stations. (stoprailnow.com)"

Rail stations will [be] accessible by automobile, bus, bicycle paths and walkways. In the transit corridor, 23 percent of the population and 38 percent of the employment will be within a 10-minute walk of a rail station.

> We do not find it credible that 23 percent of the corridor population will be within a ten minute walk from a station. We will ignore for a moment that a quarter mile is considered by the feds to be the maximum that people will walk to station or bus.
>
> However, we have not made a detailed study of this and if the city has, we will be happy to review it with them and concede that they are right should that turn out to be the case.

"They are delaying the theoretical opening until 2019." (stoprailnow.com)

The projected opening is 2018.

> The City's AA Financial Feasibility Report, Table B-4, shows that operating and maintenance costs for the 20-mile project begins in 2019, while the full length system begins in 2020 (Table B-5).

ENVIRONMENT

"The noise from steel on steel is an environmental blight." (stoprailnow.com)

Rail decibel levels are about the same sound as a city bus.

> Yes buses are noisy. However, rail has a particularly annoying sound that at 79 decibels @ 50 feet coming by every 1½ minutes, in addition to buses and other ambient noise, makes the situation far worse.