

RAIL SOS RESOLUTION

This resolution is a request for the Honolulu City Council and HART to complete the rail project by establishing transfer stations offering multimodal express service at Lagoon Drive and Middle Street. A thorough analysis of this option is needed to include in the Updated Financial Plan to be presented to the Federal Transit Administration later this year.

WHEREAS, It is clear we do not have the funding to build rail all the way to Ala Moana Center, with rail's deficit of \$3.6 billion. Many are suggesting that a shorter route is needed and can deliver a useful system, including our mayor, some HART board members, City Councilmembers, other politicians, and various media voices; and

WHEREAS, HART is preparing a Financial Plan, due by December, to explain to the FTA how rail will be funded and completed, which offers a chance to include this alternative solution for Honolulu's rail project. There is urgent need to look at this option now to get the system up and running as soon as possible with the existing budget to provide relief for Leeward travelers; and

WHEREAS, The situation is a blessing in disguise, allowing time to update critical projections on operating costs, climate change impacts, ridership, and more. It necessarily puts new focus on how far the tracks should extend and how to best continue travel service from an alternative terminus, none of which have yet been properly studied. Five different endpoints are being considered: Aloha Tower, Chinatown, Kalihi, Middle Street and Lagoon Drive; and

WHEREAS, Middle and Lagoon are ideal transfer stations because they are in good position to work together sharing the passenger load. Much to its credit, the rail can offer some relief by giving H-1 drivers an alternative way to reach the edge of town, then transfer to express buses and similar vehicles. Travelers step off the train at the multimodal station, ride escalators to transfer platforms, board express vehicles, then sit down for direct rides to their destinations; and

WHEREAS, Express routes along North King Street, Dillingham and Nimitz can take full advantage of our existing roads, which can be improved to enhance traffic flow, including some dedicated lanes and synchronized traffic signals. These routes can provide direct service to various destinations including Downtown, UH Manoa, Ala Moana and Waikiki. Our major rush-hour traffic problem is along H-1, not on the streets in the urban center, which have sufficient capacity to handle express buses; and

WHEREAS, This is not a proposal to "stop rail" or advocate for automobiles. It is a plan to increase the ridership and effectiveness of mass transit. Our goal should be creating the best multi-modal transportation system, with the largest total ridership, rather than focusing solely on rail; and

WHEREAS, Rail to bus service could begin within two years and fulfill the original goals of the project with a lower construction cost which could likely be paid for with current funding, requiring no further tax increases. It also has the flexibility to incorporate new transportation technologies, including electric autonomous vehicles of various sizes and routes that can be modified to meet demand; and

WHEREAS, If rail usage is high, and funding can be secured, future extension of the elevated train tracks is always an option, but expansion beyond Middle is not necessary or desirable at this time, and is faced with enormous problems of funding, construction, and aesthetics which would only add further delays; and

WHEREAS, The appearance of downtown would be marred by an elevated structure blocking views of the waterfront and Aloha Tower, and there is no good location there for a bus transfer station. Chinatown has the same issues, and extension to Kalihi, near the prison, is likewise unneeded. Infrastructure challenges along Dillingham have made these options extremely difficult. Fortunately, no contracts have been issued for any construction beyond Middle Street, so no work need be done there unless further studies warrant it; and

WHEREAS, The Federal Transit Administration is waiting for our Updated Financial Plan at the end of this year and by all accounts is fed up and deeply embarrassed by our prolonged problems but will surely show support by issuing remaining funds when a reasonable plan is presented. In 2016 the FTA said we could “make a fundamental choice to...reduce the scope of the Project... perhaps (establish) an interim terminus.”:

RESOLVED: We respectfully ask the Honolulu City Council and HART to establish transfer stations at Lagoon Drive and Middle Street to complete the rail project and efficiently extend travel services beyond those points with multimodal express service; and

RESOLVED: Study of this alternative shall include cost of construction and Operation & Maintenance, funding projections, determination of how far the rail line can be built with current finances, updated ridership projections and effects of telecommuting, autonomous self-driving vehicles, bus rapid transit technology, sea level rise and other relevant concerns; and

RESOLVED: No major new construction contracts or land acquisitions for the Middle Street to Ala Moana section shall be awarded pending results of the study; and

RESOLVED: Our congressional delegation should work with the Federal Transit Administration to determine how the existing Federal grant can be modified; and copies of this Resolution shall be transmitted to all the Neighborhood Boards, the Members of the Honolulu City Council, HART Executive Director and Board of Directors, the Honolulu Mayor’s Office, our Congressional delegation, and the Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration.