

Ho'opili Does Not Fit: Letter to City Council

Dear Honolulu Council Member,

As you know from reviewing various studies, traffic conditions are rated with a Level of Service ranging from A (very good) to F (very poor.) Freeway traffic conditions between Ft. Weaver Road and Aiea are at level F on any typical weekday morning. Then comes Ho'opili along with a number of other approved or planned developments for west Oahu.

I want to focus your attention on the H-1 Freeway, the main lifeline between west Oahu and Honolulu, which borders the project. While Ho'opili's revised Traffic Impact Analysis Report by Austin Tsutsumi and Associates is a little opaque about the derivation of growth rates because it works things out from a 2007 start, a 2010 base, a 2023 middle stage and a 2035 ultimate stage of full development, with some multiplication, the growth of traffic from 2010 to 2035 will be +43%. This is for Ho'opili plus all other scheduled development and growth in west Oahu. This is a staggering increase of traffic for a freeway that already operates at level F.

However, the list of recommendations in the report talks about a lane addition at the critical H-1/H-2 merge. So traffic lane capacity will improve from today's 5 regular plus 1 (zipper) lanes, to 6 regular plus 1 (zipper) lanes. This will produce a capacity gain of +17% which is far too small for the +43% growth in traffic. Due to the piers of overhead bridges and other obstructions, there is no possibility of adding any more lanes. Recall that due to these restrictions, my solution to congestion was reversible lanes from the H-1/H-2 merge to downtown because this part of Oahu desperately needs more lane capacity.

But of course one may argue that the rail will take care of the west Oahu public's need for travel. The traffic engineers who conducted the Ho'opili TIAR disclose that "rail transit trip reductions were obtained from ORTP [e.g., OMPO's Oahu Regional Transportation Plan] and the Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project Environmental Impact Statement [e.g., the rail's final EIS] and were applied to the Ho'opili project's trip distribution. Based on that report it was found that a trip reduction of 3.6 percent could be applied to/from work trips and 3 percent to/from commercial trips." (TIAR page 41.)

So rail, at best, will reduce the +43% of traffic growth to +39% which cannot be accommodated by the +17% increase of traffic capacity. So if today's traffic is bad, then in 2035 with Ho'opili and the rest of the planned developments, traffic will be severely congested.

You appear to be deliberately approving transportation and development projects that will yield a grossly substandard quality of life for all of west Oahu.

Yet the truth has been out there since 2008 and the City Council has deliberately ignored it. See the 2008 version (Sean Hao's article in the Honolulu Advertiser) which says that rail won't do anything for traffic (Appendic A). See the 2014 version (TIAR for B.R. Horton's Ho'opili proposal) that says that rail won't do much for Ho'opili and all the rest of the planned development in west Oahu. The TIAR says that the city and the state will need to add all the lanes that can possibly be added ... with or without the rail. Rail's traffic reduction is negligible. And traffic even with the added lanes will be terrible because the improvement on the H-1 freeway will be marginal and there is no parallel arterial to help the situation. If anything, the rail project will reduce the number of lanes on Kamehameha Hwy. in Pearl City and Aiea.

It baffles me beyond belief that you are serially approving future development and transportation projects that are certifiably calamitous for our island community.

Respectfully,

Panos D. Prevedouros, PhD

Professor of Transportation and Civil and Environmental Engineering Department Chairman

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The Honolulu Advertiser

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Transit system likely won't improve traffic

City projections show population growth will overwhelm system's impact

BY SEAN HAO
Advertiser Staff Writer

It's unlikely Honolulu's planned \$3.7 billion transit system will affect deteriorating peak-hour traffic conditions along the H-1 corridor, according to city projections. Potential gains in transit ridership are expected to be eclipsed by the added traffic that will come with rapid population growth in West O'ahu. Drivers commuting from the west to jobs Downtown will face significantly more hours on the road in 20 years, even if the transit system launches full service as planned in 2017. Projections from the city's Alternative Analysis Report paint a gloomy picture. Even with the transit system, there will

9,500	18,049*
Number of vehicles H-1 Freeway was built to handle per hour	2030 forecast vehicles per hour without transit system
10,960	
Actual average vehicles per hour in 2003	
17,209	
2030 forecast vehicles per hour with transit system	

*Assumes minimal improvements to H-1 Freeway
Figures plotted for H-1 Freeway Koko Head-bound near 'Aiea' during morning peak traffic
Source: City and County of Honolulu Alternatives Analysis Report

SEE TRANSIT, A3

- The City's consultant estimates that in 2030 rail will reduce traffic from 18,049 to 17,209 vehicles a reduction of about 4%. This is of course a "pro-rail" estimate and the reality will be about half those rosy estimates.
- Recall that *Tren Urbano* in San Juan, PR is the best example to compare with Honolulu's rail. It is fully elevated, in an island city, designed by Parsons Brinkerhoff and overseen by FTA. Identical to ours. They projected 100,000 daily riders. It opened in 2006 with 25,000 or so riders. Almost ten years later it barely serves 40,000 daily riders. Mind you people in San Juan make less than half the income and have less than 1/3 the vehicles of the average Honolulu resident.
- *Tren Urbano* had an approximate 100% cost overrun.
- *Tren Urbano* was one of the catalysts that led to this: "Puerto Rico is buried under at least \$73 billion in debt that has left its economy in a near perpetual recession..." <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2015/02/26/can-bankruptcy-save-puerto-ricos-state-run-corporations/>
- Hawaii's public employee pensions, EUTF, sewer consent decree and rail liabilities are comparable to Puerto Rico's on a per capita basis!

Appendix B

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following general roadway improvements are recommended:

- Base Year 2023 without Rail Transit
 - Widen Kualakai Parkway to six lanes as recommended in ORTP project 22 of the ORTP.
 - Construct the western portion of East-West Road to service the East Kapolei II development.
 - Widen Farrington Highway to four (4) lanes between the Golf Course and west of Fort Weaver Road as recommended in the ORTP project 20.
 - Freeway improvements similar to those discussed in Year 2023 with Project would likely be required by Base Year 2023.
- Base Year 2035 without Rail Transit – in addition to the Base Year 2023 recommendations
 - Widen Kunia Road in the southbound direction between Kupuna Loop North and near Honowī Street to four lanes
- Year 2023 with Project without Rail Transit – in addition to the Base Year 2023 recommendations
 - Widen the H-1 Freeway by one (1) lane in either direction between the Kualakai Interchange and the Paiwa Interchange.
- Year 2035 with Project without Rail Transit – in addition to the Base Years 2023, 2035 and Year 2023 with Project recommendations
 - Widen Farrington Highway to six (6) lanes between west of Kualakai Parkway and Old Fort Weaver Road (west).
 - Provide an additional westbound off-ramp lane at the Kualakai Interchange.
 - Widen Kualakai Parkway to eight (8) lanes between the Kualakai H-1 Freeway eastbound off/on-ramp to the DHHL access.
- Year 2023 and 2035 with Project and Rail Transit
 - With and without the Rail Transit, the recommendation would be the same as Year 2023 and 2035 with Project without Rail Transit respectively.

Also see Tables 4.3 4.5, 5.5 and 5.7 for a narrative of intersections improvements and Figure 5.5 for the recommended Freeway improvements.

For individual intersection improvements schematic refer to Table 8.1, which details the improvements for each alternative incrementally.

Due to the Project and other project's timeline, it is recommended that updates to this TIAR be performed to confirm or amend the recommended improvements listed in this report as the implementation of the RT or market fluctuations could affect the traffic volume projections. Furthermore, timing and construction of the surrounding projects can significantly affect the required improvements at the various intersections.