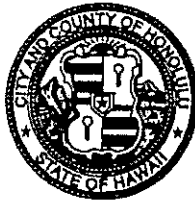


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MUFI HANNEMANN
MAYOR



January 11, 2008

Mr. Peter Vincent
President
American Institute of Architects
119 Merchant Street, Suite 402
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Mr. Vincent:

Thank you for your letter of December 28, 2007, regarding the Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project. I appreciate the American Institute of Architects Honolulu Chapter's support for a rapid transit system for Honolulu and hope that you and your members do all that you can to join me in making mass transit a reality for our residents.

In response to your comments regarding an elevated fixed guideway system, the primary goal of a system is to move people in a way that is efficient, reliable, and predictable. We estimate that Honolulu's fixed guideway line will carry 90,000 people daily by 2030, with rapid transit vehicles having a capacity of 300 riders a vehicle running as frequently as every three minutes during peak demand periods.

Operating this system at-grade along with automobiles and pedestrians would create a significant negative impact on surface traffic congestion, owing to the elimination of traffic lanes on already congested streets and the frequent street crossings and turning movements of mass transit vehicles. The city's current bus system, TheBus, is a prime example of a well-run, well-used transit system that nonetheless regularly gets stuck in traffic because buses do not run on dedicated lanes.

At-grade options for the mass transit route were considered during the rapid transit Alternatives Analysis (AA) conducted during 2005-2006. These included surface options along King and Hotel streets and in parts of West Oahu. There was significant public review and input during this phase of the project, and the Honolulu City Council and its Transportation Committee held 13 meetings to receive public comment before Council members selected Honolulu's Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) in December 2006. Based on the studies undertaken and comments received, the LPA selected by the Council states that the rapid transit alignment shall be elevated. Of the nearly 3,000 testimonies received, it does not appear that an official position or indeed any commentary from AIA Honolulu was ever received.

Regarding your observations on transit systems built in the United States within the last 10 years, note that most of the surface light rail system mileage you cite has been built within existing or abandoned railroad rights-of-way. Honolulu does not have any existing rail corridors on which we can place a surface rail system, necessitating an enormous acquisition of private property to build a street-level mass transit system and/or the appropriation of existing traffic lanes. Neither the increased cost of such property acquisition, nor the reduction of moving lanes for automotive traffic, is likely to be acceptable to the general public.

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You also mention examples of cities where overhead transit structures were removed. However, both of these were elevated highways rather than transit lines and each was between 100 and 200 feet wide. Honolulu's elevated transit line would only average about 25 feet in width. Also, note that the San Francisco Embarcadero example you cited was removed because of earthquake damage, not in response to public concern over visual impact.

I, and virtually all residents of Oahu, share your desire to preserve the beauty of our island and our remarkable views. To that end, rest assured that the Environmental Impact Statement now underway will consider and address visual impacts. AIA Honolulu, other professional and interest groups, and all residents of Honolulu will have ample opportunity to share their concerns at that time. Furthermore, I also invite you and your colleagues to apply your creativity by helping to develop urban designs that will enhance the visual elements associated with an elevated mass transit line.

As I stated before, the AIA Honolulu had ample opportunity during the lengthy and well-publicized comment process to offer its comments on the elevated guideway recommendation. You chose not to participate. You and your members could have requested a meeting with me to share your collective concerns. Instead, you chose to offer your 11th hour opposition to the elevated guideway through the news media. I fail to see how that is productive or conducive to a frank and open discussion between parties who, in essence, share a common goal.

In closing, while I appreciate your concerns, I must balance myriad interests, including the desire of countless numbers of Honolulu residents who wrestle daily with traffic conditions that rob them of time with their families, diminish their overall productivity, and adversely affect their quality of life.

Sincerely,


Mufi Hannemann
Mayor

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