

Honolulu City Council  
Bill 16 (2009), CD2  
City Council Meeting, June 10, 2009  
Letter of Testimony

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CITY CLERK  
HONOLULU, HAWAII

Dear Councilmembers,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify with serious reservation for City Council Bill 16, as related to transit funds. Please accept this letter of testimony on behalf of a group of young professionals, most of who were born and raised in Honolulu. As we continue to think about and discuss our future in Hawaii, this letter echoes our concerns about the planning, design, and construction of the Locally Preferred Alternative. This letter is neither for nor against transit; rather, this letter addresses concern and requests greater transparency in the process.

Our generation has witnessed transit surface every decade since we were alive – who can blame us for either being indifferent to the thought of implementation or so anxious and impatient we don't care how it is executed. We aren't the generation that saw Honolulu develop in the 70s, but the generation who has seen the aftermath of project after project go over budget, extend past deadline, or fall by the wayside. For us, the \$1.07 billion appropriation is our reality check that we will be paying for it, financially and visually, for the rest of our lives.

This letter touches upon valid concerns and unanswered questions regarding the cost, appearance, and practicality of the planning, design, and construction of the Locally Preferred Alternative.

#### COST CONCERN

In good or bad economic times, \$6,800,000,000 (\$5.4B for construction, \$1.4B for maintenance) is a lot of money for an island population of fewer than one million to stomach. For many long time residents, or those with long-time memories of government projects, most would feel greater comfort if they could see in more detail (such as station design limitations or construction budget break downs) how the City plans to spend the GET surplus (\$4.1B) from the goods/services we will be purchasing for 15 years. We would appreciate the details of alternative sources of income in the event the GET surplus doesn't reach its target income – much like this year. This request is good business practice and should be a standard for all project operations (lessons learned from the recent US economy). Without this, as a group with a large disposable income, we have fundamental concerns regarding the funding of the system for the next 15 plus years using our hard earned money that would otherwise go into other parts of the local economy.

Without transparency or clarity of the process, several questions arise:

- If the sole source of funding for the city, in addition to bonds, is the 0.05 percent GET surcharge, can you promise us the surcharge will be lifted as proposed at the end of

MISC. COM. 1151

COUNCIL

2022, even if the project isn't complete? Is there a Plan B? Can you guarantee the transit fare will be affordable for all users?

- In the short-term, what will happen if the city releases the initial \$1.07B funds today and the federal government doesn't contribute the share the Mayor has promised in 2011? Do we go for broke and just do um?
- Is there a contingency plan if we don't get Federal funding, the GET surplus is revoked, or the judges win their case? Maybe scaling down the project, funneling the accumulated GET surcharge to fast lane the Bike Master Plan, updating TheBus fleet, improving TheBus route, or paving a parking lot at the Kalaeloa harbor and giving TheBoat a real chance to succeed?
- Is it true that once we purchase this technology, we lose any sort of built-in flexibility for the future extensions?

#### Visual Concerns

In addition to further detailing the cost of the system, another major concern is the visual impact of a 50-foot high concrete track stretching 20 miles across Honolulu's world famous south shore. Unlike the generations before us, we have had the fortunate opportunity to travel extensively and experience a variety of innovative transit systems. We have seen clever station designs, well-placed routes, and the integration of activity with transit lines. So we hope, with the city's extensive travel to research transit systems, the final product will look and feel like many of the transit routes we have traversed over, reflecting the ingenuity found in other cities – while rooted in the values, uniqueness, and future growth of each community it passes through. Though the Locally Preferred Alternative offers the quickest and most reliable route, at what cost should we be willing to pay versus using another similar, perhaps less invasive system? Weighing intangible social, cultural, aesthetic, and future impacts to residents and visitors is a really tough responsibility – but it is also best practice.

#### Practical Concerns

##### *Accommodation*

Pragmatically, the transit seeks to move thousands of people daily. The second city of Kapolei, one of the primary communities to be served has a median age of 31.2 ([www.kapolei.com](http://www.kapolei.com)). As a community made up of young families, the daily afternoon routine most likely would include picking up the kids, shuttling them to their various activities, stopping by the market for dinner, and getting home to cook dinner hopefully before 8pm. If the goal is to take cars off the road, it is difficult to assume that all of these errands and activities are only a short walk from the proposed linear transit line. The limited and so-far nonexistent programming to accommodate the diversity of users seems to not have been thoroughly discussed.

##### *Safety*

For those of us who will be using the system in its late hours, safety concerns related to homelessness and crime at, or near, the stations and on the elevated platforms haven't been

solidly addressed. With the growing homeless population and violence occurring in the downtown (Chinatown) area, there will be added pressure on HPD and City Facilities and Maintenance to patrol and maintain these areas. What is the added tax payer cost, where will it come from, and will there be additional police substations on the station platforms?

*Disaster-proof*

On the flip side, as an isolated island, natural disaster is a constant concern, and thankfully a rare occasion. The severity of these disasters is quite different from other less isolated geographic locations. What will happen when energy services shut down as it did this past December, or an earthquake shakes up the concrete guide way or columns? Is the system only for 'the good times', or is there an emergency use for it? As we mull over the very possible scenarios, we express serious concern about the level of detail in this process.

Although the DEIS comment period has passed, and an historic decision was made through a twofold question on the 2008 ballot asking if we wanted steel wheel transit or nothing at all, decisions should not be made in haste nor with mediocre objective judgments. By the end of 2009, it will have been nearly three years since the mayor committed the city to building a mass transit. During this time and onward, other city and state agencies must concurrently be updating and reorienting their transportation related programming in order to seamlessly integrate and complement the rail. Improving other modes of transportation while transit implementation occurs will hugely begin to impact lifestyle and as a result, improve traffic, making transit the icing on the cake.

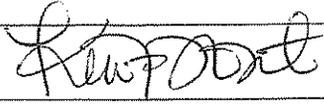
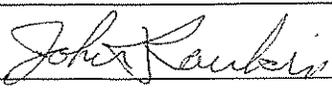
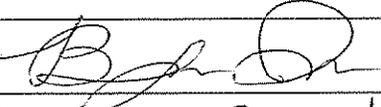
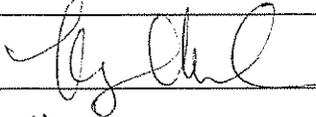
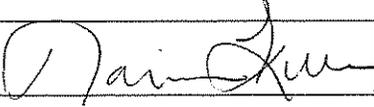
The Locally Preferred Alternative will be a permanent monument to our time and a permanent fixture in Honolulu. This letter is a voice of concern. If you are to approve the funds, please first know that you can answer the questions posed in this letter and make us more confident about what we are getting into. It is your responsibility to our community as well as our future to make a win-win decision, while transparently presenting the facts for the average citizen to understand.

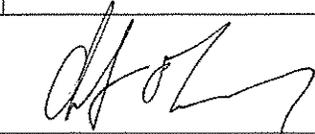
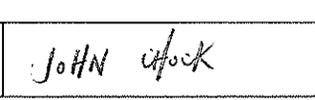
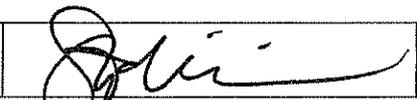
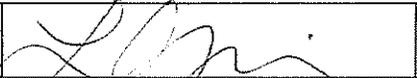
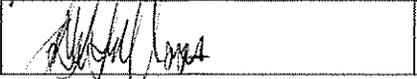
We thank you for this opportunity to testify with serious reservation.

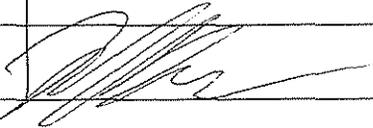
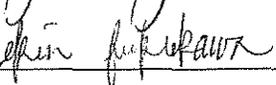
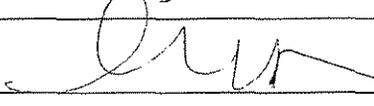
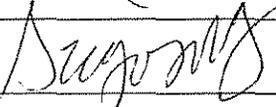
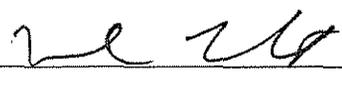
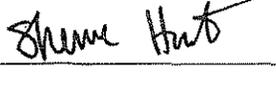
Sincerely,

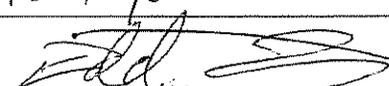
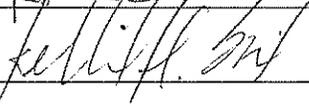
Tricia Dang

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(808) 542-9251

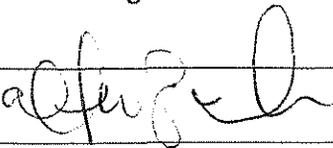
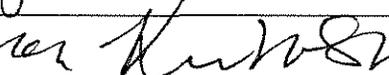
Name	Signature	Current Zip Code	Birth Year
Keri Tomomita		96744	1981
Comment. Can you please give more detail on your budget??			
Sohn Rautin		96816	1980
Comment. Hire the best people			
Leah Miyasato		96701	1982
Comment. More research needs to be done to ensure the best transit option!			
Sheryl Soriano		96701	1982
Comment. More transparency. Address environmental issues more!			
BRYSON IRIE		96817	1978
Comment. What about 96817? More information on the table for everyone to see. What's the big secret?			
Kaay Wekoha		96701	1982
Comment. More research, please!!			
Nainoa Kuma		96813	1983
Comment.			
JP Kennedy		96821	1984
Comment.			

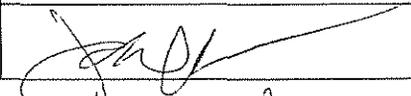
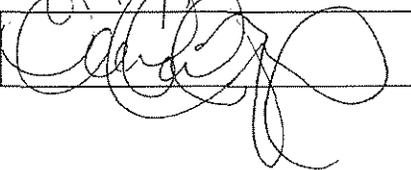
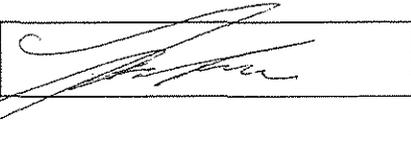
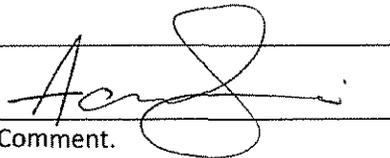
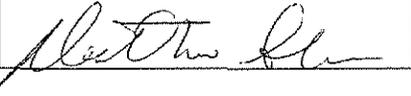
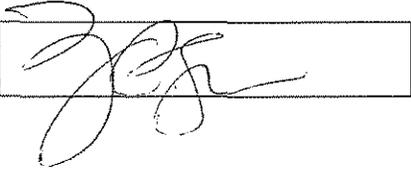
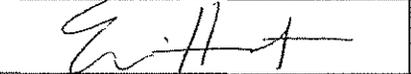
Name	Signature	Current Zip Code	Birth Year
Christine Shokorian		96797	1974
<p>Comment.</p> <p>Elevated transit I feel will cost more than any other system.</p>			
Christian O'Connor		96734	1978
<p>Comment.</p> <p>At grade <sup>rail</sup> through the urban core will be critical to the sustainability of the next generation of transit oriented development in Honolulu.</p>			
John Hook		96813	1983
<p>Comment.</p> <p>Real solution is to create more jobs outside Honolulu. What happened to the so-called "Second City?"</p>			
Kekuewa Kikioi		96822	1975
<p>Comment.</p> <p>Please protect the iwi kūpuna. mahalo nui loa.</p>			
Leslie Campaniani		96822	1982
<p>Comment.</p> <p>Please respect the voices and opinions of our generation, as policy decisions today will inevitably affect our future.</p>			
Joshua Cordwell, DDS		96816	1982
<p>Comment.</p> <p>Rail stations on the mainland and abroad transform its surrounding area into an unpleasant community. With rail stations in town how can you ensure this doesn't happen?</p>			
David Sun		96826	1978
<p>Comment.</p> <p>malama ka 'aina!</p>			

Name	Signature	Current Zip Code	Birth Year
Jeff Kikuchi		96826	1984
Comment. No Sked em go get em			
Erin Furukawa		96817	1980
Comment. Address noise, <del>and</del> environmental and <del>and</del> aesthetic impacts.			
Brett Chambers		96817	1980
Comment. serve drinks on evening commute			
LISA HA		96816	1985
Comment. <del>Be responsible</del> Be responsible!			
Gregory Wong		96819	1976
Comment. I love mass transit but make it work!!			
Michael Hirota		96734	1979
Comment. Make the system useful, ie go to areas that are needed like the airport.			
Sherrie Hirota		96816	1980
Comment. make transit safe and clean for all passengers, even during evening hours (no homeless, for transit/transportation use only not a sleeping place).			
Tricia Dang		96813	1981
Comment. how could you leave us w/ a rail that can NEVER be integrated on the ground - we have no option if this doesn't work!			

Name	Signature	Current Zip Code	Birth Year
Toby Tanaya		96814	1972
<p>Comment.            Rail will help small businesses in Hawaii, like mine.            Please do it responsibly. Thank you.</p>			
<p>The rail needs to go to Waikiki from the Airport.</p>			
<p>Comment.</p>			
Amanda Ross		96825	1978
<p>Comment.            The rail will be very beneficial if it is planned correctly.            The stops need to be beneficial to all, but it will definitely help            the traffic situation. The transit in Chicago is how everyone travels.</p>			
<p>Comment.</p>			
Eddie Trongkemsatya		96817	1971
<p>Comment. Just concerned with preserving natural            Hawaii beauty/scenery</p>			
Kea Asato		96822	1982
<p>Comment.            Hawaii has a great bus system... we should            improve on what works instead of investing in an            entirely new system.</p>			
KANOE SMITH		96701	1980
<p>Comment.</p>			
Faith Paekukui		96734	1975
<p>Comment.            Please consider safety @ Stations: well lit, no crime etc.</p>			

Name	Signature	Current Zip Code	Birth Year
Ken Kawachi	Ken Kawachi	96813	1970
Comment. This is going to be the biggest project in Hawaii for our lifetime and we will have to live w/it.			
BRYAN TANAKA	Bry	96817	1981
Comment.			
Ashley Nakamoto	Ashley	96822	1982
Comment.			
ELAN MARCOS	Elan	96813	1974
Comment. ARE U GOING TO RUN OUT OF MONEY. WHAT WILL WE HAVE TO MAKE UP \$ USE.			
Hannani Fujimoto	Hannani Fujimoto	96813	1979
Comment. Be transparent ... do due diligence & share plans to address concs.			
Amit Arora	<del>Amit Arora</del>	96813	82
Comment. WAAA We don't have enough money.			
Andrew Estes	Andrew	96816	1981
Comment. Do it! This is for the future of our state and traffic congestion			
Josh Stuppelbeen	Josh	96822	1981
Comment. Your solution sucks but its a necessary evil.			

Name	Signature	Current Zip Code	Birth Year
AETN IKEDA		96824	1982
Comment.			
SHANE ARAKAKI		96813	1974
Comment. HONOLULU DOES NOT HAVE THE INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT THIS TYPE OF RAIL AND WE SHOULD LOOK @ ALTERNATIVES			
Chris Letoto		96822	1978
Comment. Ua mau ke ea o ka iina i ka pono!			
BRETT LAU		96701	1980
Comment. Funding? Where is the \$ coming from. Are we forever going to be paying for this thing through increased taxes? What about our bike?			
Trislyn Ferris		96817	1982
Comment. How can this project be funded when we are already in the red on our budget???			
KRISHA SIMMONS		96813	1983
Comment. DTRANSIT IS NOT ON OF THE BEST THINGS FOR OAHU IT WILL DESTROY THE LANDSCAPE AND WILL NOT WORK. IT WILL TAKE MORE TAXPAYERS MONEY & THE CONSTRUCTION WILL NOT BE EFFICIENT. GIVE TAX CREDITS TO THE "SECOND CITY" INSTEAD!			
Daniel Lee		96813	1981
Comment. Rail/Transit, albeit a 15-20 yr project, is a short term solution to a growing traffic problem. Greater efficiency & effectiveness should come from creating solutions to our backward traffic system.			
Comment.			

Name	Signature	Current Zip Code	Birth Year
JAMES CHAN		96821	1980
Comment.	IT concerns me that a decision is being made so quickly a decision with such huge impacts.		
Michael Young		96828	1978
Comment.			
Kohi Hakamada		96822	1978
Comment.			
	AARON SASTRI		1982
Comment.	RAIL USE? ... POLYNESIANS, MICR'S, MINIMUM WAGE. NO DEALS! <del>WANT STAY</del> IN WAIANAE.		
MATTHEW ALICES		96816	1982
Comment.			
Morgan Kaya		96822	1982
Comment.			
Michael M. Soren	Michael M Sorenson	96706	1983
Comment.	more people from gen x / gen y who will financial grow project.		
Emi Hart		96828	1977
Comment.			