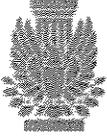


AIA Honolulu

A Chapter of The American Institute of Architects



9 June 2009

TO: Honolulu City Council Regular Meeting, 8th Session

ATTN: Todd K. Apo, Chair and Presiding Officer and Member of the Honolulu City Council

RE: Bill 16, CD2 Executive Operating Budget and Program (Item TF) Transit Improvement Bond Fund

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Testimony of Amy Blagriff, Executive Vice President, AIA Honolulu

My name is Amy Blagriff and I am here to represent AIA Honolulu as the organization's Executive Vice President for the past 7 years. As Chief Executive for our 800-member Chapter of design professionals, I have been actively involved in shaping AIAs local transit policies and working to advance our shared goals in support of the future health and well-being of our island communities and the citizens who live and work in Hawaii. We hope that our advocacy efforts will encourage continued thoughtful dialog that will result in informed and prudent decisions by policy makers such as yourselves—so that together we may arrive at the BEST possible solution for Honolulu, one that is both affordable and appropriate.

My testimony on Bill 16 CD2 focuses on the Council's consideration of the Transit Improvement Bond Fund. Specifically we are concerned with approval of the proposed \$1 Billion (\$1,000,000,000) transit debt obligation for the citizen's of Oahu—a debt that Oahu citizens are ill-equipped to bear. As you know, this mega project cannot be completed based on local funding alone. Approval of guaranteed Federal funding is critical to the success of this project, and we urge the City Council to refrain from approving this bond expenditure until Federal funding is secured. We instead urge your support the proposed Bill 16 CD2 FD1 Version B which will prohibit the City from spending any money to construct the project until a Record of Decision has been filed by the Federal Transit Administration.

I want to share with you information I gained in a phone call with the planning director of the Federal Transportation Administration, Region 9 on Tuesday, June 2, 2009. My purpose in asking the Regional FTA office to contact me (which they did) was to clarify important details regarding federal funding procedures for Honolulu's planned project. I expressed AIA's concern to the FTA regional planning director that Honolulu officials have already issued three detailed RFPS for construction, each based on the Administration's specific preference for a fully automated, fully elevated "hot rail technology. These RFPs have been issued by the City at a time when the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is still under consideration and while public comments have yet to be fully addressed.

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I asked: what would be the impact if the City awarded contracts before a Record of Decision by the FTA was reached? The FTA region planning director advised me that if construction were to begin before the Record of Decision (ROD), it would be impossible for Honolulu's project to receive federally funding via the New Starts Program. My follow-up question was to ask could the City award contracts before the ROD is issued, if local funding is used to fund the first portion of construction. The answer again was an emphatic "No." Honolulu would jeopardize Federal funding if contracts are prematurely awarded before the Environmental Impact process is complete, and a favorable ROD is granted.

On behalf of members of AIA and other concerned citizens of Oahu, we respectfully ask the City Council to insure that measures are put in place, such as proposed in Bill 16 CD2 FD1 Version B, to refrain from approving this transit bond appropriation until Federal funding is secured, and all viable alternatives and concerns have been addressed in the EIS process.

We must guarantee that the City Administration will not jeopardize federal funding by awarding contracts that have been put out to bid before the formal EIS process is complete and a record of decision, culminating in a full funding grant agreement, is awarded to Honolulu by the FTA. The people of Oahu are counting on your full accountability before giving a green light to expend significant taxpayer dollars towards this enormously complex transit mega project.

For additional information on AIA's position in support of flexible transit systems for Honolulu, visit www.aiahonolulu.org

Thank you.