

Monday June 8, 2009

Mr. Todd Apo, Chair
Honolulu City Council
City Council Chamber, City Hall
530 S. King Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

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HONOLULU, HAWAII

Dear Chairman Apo and Honorable Council Members,

Please accept this testimony supporting approval of only Version "A" of Bill 16, CD2, FD1. My comments are limited to the item titled Project 2007005, "Honolulu High Capacity Transit Project."

I have vacationed in Hawaii and have also passed through your beautiful state on military travel. I have enjoyed the various islands by airline travel and by cruise ship and I always hope to return. Hawaii is one of the most beautiful states in the USA and I believe one of the most beautiful areas in the world. It would be a shame to have that quality decreased by an obtrusive transit system that creates considerable noise pollution and unnecessarily mars those wonderful views. Although safer than automobile travel, steel rail systems in general create additional hazards for pedestrians and commuters which simply do not apply to newer technologies that are available today.

Based on my own investigations of mass transit technology in general and elevated systems in particular, I have determined that elevated maglev and or monorail systems are greatly superior to elevated steel rail systems. More importantly, modern straddle beam monorail systems have carried hundreds of millions of passengers without a single fatality in other parts of the world. The design of both monorail and maglev technologies result in extremely quiet vehicles which do not disturb the adjacent properties and do not detract from the natural beauty of your city and state.

I agree that an elevated system is necessary for safety and efficiency. However, a monorail has only a relatively slender guide beam and with pylons that can be over 100 feet apart. The natural views from ground level are not blocked and the design of many monorail systems can be quite modern and pleasant. By contrast, elevated steel rail systems require massive concrete roadways and larger pylons placed much closer together simply to support the additional weight of the heavier steel wheel rail cars. The constant noise of steel wheels on steel rails would also be a continual irritant to your constituents.

The infrastructure chosen for your system will be expected to last 100 years. I recommend that you review the EIS statement for this project and consider technology which has a much lower environmental impact and also costs millions of dollars less to implement and to operate and maintain. Monorail system revenue can pay for their O&M costs. Steel rail systems will always require a permanent public subsidy.

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It might be appropriate to explain my investigation into monorail technology. While working for the Los Angeles County Flood Control District, I became concerned about the proposed costs of \$170 Million dollars per mile for surface rail implementation and of \$518 Million dollars per mile for subway construction. With a background in the civil engineering technician series and in eminent domain right of way acquisition, I was well aware of the advantage of using the existing 500 miles of flood channel corridors, where appropriate, rather than acquiring new rights of way.

I submitted a proposal to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors on this use and in return the Board requested a feasibility study performed by the Department of Public Works which supported the concept. I am continuing to investigate using other public rights of way to form a complete network of mass transit corridors.

In a related investigation I became familiar with various monorail manufacturers and their technical capabilities. I would suggest that you review the brochure (which is available for download at www.metro-rail.com) from the Metrail company. Their system is self propelled and eliminates the need for an expensive electrical distribution facility. The Metrail technology is also very environmentally correct.

I do not represent any monorail company and I have not been engaged to prepare this comment. Following retirement I formed ATCon, LLC to perform advanced technology consulting and I was also appointed as Technology Evaluation Officer of The Monorail Society.

I have studied aerial views of your lovely island and I have located corridors that I believe would be suitable for mass transit, airport connections, and as tourist attractions. It would be a shame to ignore the opportunity to improve the infrastructure of your island in ways that actually add to the desirability of the area. Please consider reopening the Environmental Impact Statement and including the most modern and most appropriate technology for your system. This is especially important when this technology also appears to be the least intrusive and least expensive alternative.

At Your Service

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