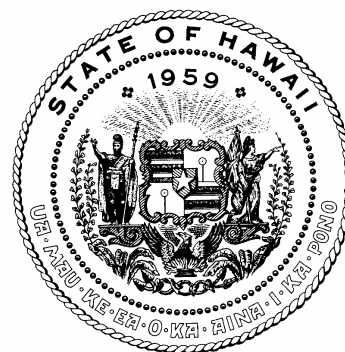


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MEDIA RELEASE

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SENATORS SUPPORT RAIL TRANSIT

Senators Will Espero, Ron Menor, Clarence Nishihara, and Mike Gabbard support rail transit for Oahu. The Senators also support the effort at the City Council level to put the question on the ballot, and are confident voters will approve rail if given the chance to vote.

As senators from west and central Oahu, they are fully aware of the growth and traffic issues that rail will help resolve. Senator Espero said, "Rail will give residents another option for commuting. Without rail, traffic will get worse much sooner. In time as people see the value of rail, more people will use it. The decisions we make today will affect our island tomorrow. Let's develop the urban core in a smart manner, and strive to keep the country country. Transit developments are part of the answer."

Oahu's population is expected to increase by at least 250,000 people over the next 30 to 40 years, with the majority of that increase settling in central and west Oahu. Land is needed for homes, schools, parks and businesses, and this leaves little space for building more highways. All those additional cars will further stress Oahu's already burdened highways. The confluence of population growth, traffic congestion, and the ever-rising price of gas lead the senators to believe that opponents' proffered alternatives encourage more driving and add more expense to drivers, at a time when we need to look hard at options that get people out of their cars.

Senator Gabbard pointed out, "Rail transit is working in cities all over the world and makes perfect sense for an island like ours. As we continue to deal with soaring gas prices and search for alternative energy, we should go forward with this important investment in public

transportation infrastructure. It will greatly benefit the people of West, Central and all of Oahu by taking thousands of residents out of the traffic gridlock and keeping our island greener over the long haul. As the largest public works project on Oahu, rail also has the added benefit of creating many construction jobs, which will be a big boost to our ailing economy."

Senator Menor added, "Rail will create numerous economic opportunities and enhance convenience in ways many people do not yet realize. In communities that have rail, small businesses that serve commuters have sprung up and thrived. Japan, for example, has bento-to-go and stand-up soba kiosks as well as other eateries conveniently located for people to enjoy while waiting for their train. Many stations have shops at or nearby the hubs. In addition to reducing traffic, using rail transportation will help residents save money and time. Riding the rail will be much cheaper than paying to fill up the tank, with the added cost benefit of less frequent car maintenance. Since rail is unaffected by cars, people can get to where they need to go without having to waste time sitting in traffic. Helping people cut their costs and get home earlier can improve their quality of life."

Opponents cite costs and ridership as reasons for being anti-rail. Senator Nishihara pointed out that the earmarked general excise tax will raise most of the funds needed for the project, and that local government will work with our Congressional delegation to secure hundreds of millions of dollars from our federal government. "Tourists' spending could pay up to 25% of the costs. The potential riders will not only be the 900,000+ residents of Oahu, but also the millions of tourists who visit Oahu each year."

"Some opponents say we cannot afford a rail system. I say we cannot afford not to build one," declared Senator Will Espero.

END