



Testimony of Move Oahu Forward
Before the Senate Committee on Transportation & Energy
and Public Safety and Military
Monday, February 6, 2017 at 3:00 p.m. in Room 225

Move Oahu Forward (MOF) is pleased to provide comments on Senate Bill 1176, 1183 & 1276. We support the imperative need for a steady funding source for the Honolulu rail project to allow for the completion of a 20-mile, 21 station system, as envisioned in the Full Funding Grant Agreement between the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the City and County of Honolulu.

MOF was established in 2012 as an organization of Hawaii business and community leaders to support the completion of the Honolulu rail project – 20-miles and 21 stations – and its integration with TheBus for a quality, public transportation system on the Island of Oahu for residents and visitors alike. Today, we have more than 50 members, representing builders, landowners, small business advocates to hopeful users of a completed rail system - beginning on the westside and extending thru the end of the planned route at Ala Moana Center.

Like you, we had truly hoped not to find ourselves back at the Legislature asking for continued funding. The City and HART have and will continue to explain the likely reasons for the miscalculations and resulting shortfall. Senior officials have lost or left their positions as a result. Being too conservative or providing the “best case scenarios” did not serve the project well. We believe that important lessons have been learned and with the first 10 miles of guideway quickly nearly completion and 8 of the 9 stations starting construction, there is more clarity on what will be required for the remaining portion of the project.

We understand that it is early in the legislative process of briefings, hearings and negotiations. As such, we will not in this writing address the merits of the individual bills, other than to state that extending the ½% of general excise tax (GET) would be the cleanest and steadiest revenue source for the rail project. It is already in place and would not require legislators to find other monies that are important and needed for other priorities. This ½ GET could be shared with the Department of Transportation for their road priorities, should the Legislature in its wisdom, decide to pursue this avenue.

FTA has required HART to submit a recovery plan by April 30th. Its purpose is to ensure that HART take it seriously and pursue the securing of additional funds at the Legislature with vigor. This they have. The recovery plan need not be fully baked, with a passed/enacted funding measure by April 30th. But, it must provide milestones, active discussions and the possibility of a positive outcome.

The Full Funding Grant Agreement is an enforceable contract between the federal government and the City. Because HART is in a recovery stage, remaining federal monies are being held until parties can come to terms and agree on a workable plan moving forward. This is no different from what many other cities have experienced and worked thru for the benefit of their citizens. The most recent include Seattle and Los Angeles.

What does make it different is that we are between Administrations. As we all know, there are many changes afoot in Washington, D.C. Hence, we must be very careful about taking any action to alter the Full Funding Grant Agreement at this time which could change the responsibilities and obligations of the parties.

Enhanced mobility, equity for those in West Oahu, quick commutes to and from the airport from urban Honolulu, and between the UH campuses are important goals to strive for as we work together to establish a more livable city we can all be proud of.

No one said transforming how people get to work, school and play would be easy. Change and transformation are never easy. It takes vision, grit, a bit of risk taking, resilience and a good measure of optimism. We thank you for your leadership.