

**Central Oahu Sustainable Communities Plan Review
Transportation Discussion Group
Notes from September 3, 2008 meeting
Mililani Mauka, Recreation Center 6**

DRAFT FOR REVIEW

Present:

Pam Young	Neighborhood Board (NB) 35
Terry Kelley	Community
Dana Agader	NB 35
Dean Hazama	NB 35
Dick Poirier	NB 25
Lance Yoshimura	NB. 35
Melissa Vomvoris	CART
Alan Arakawa	Waiawa Ridge Development
Rodney Funakoshi	Castle & Cooke
Laura Kodama	Castle & Cooke
Dean Minakami	Castle & Cooke
Garret Matsunami	Castle & Cooke
Stephanie Whalen	Hawaii Agricultural Research Center
Mike Kido	Pacific Resource Partnership
Corlyn Orr	Helber Hastert and Fee
Gordon Lum	Oahu Metropolitan Planning Organization (OMPO)
Marion Yasuda	OMPO
Lori Kunioka	Councilmember Garcia's office
Keanu Young	Councilmember Dela Cruz office
Brennon Morioka	Hawaii Department of Transportation (HDOT)
Jiro Sumada	HDOT
Ken Tatsuguchi	HDOT
Glenn Yasui	HDOT
Richard Torres	Honolulu Department of Transportation Services (DTS)
Brian Suzuki	DTS
James Burke	DTS
Craig Chung	DTS
David Tanoue	Honolulu Department of Planning and Permitting (DPP)
Kathy Sokugawa	DPP
Mel Hirayama	DPP
Hal Senter	DPP
Shem Lawlor	University of Hawaii, intern with DPP
John Kirkpatrick	Belt Collins
Noa Ching	Belt Collins

DOT Current Activities and Long Range Planning

Short term projects that affect Central Oahu are:

- PM Zipper on H-1
- PM Contraflow design-build project, to begin in 2009
- Contracting for EA, then design and construction: Widening Kipapa Bridge (Kamehameha Highway between Waipio and Mililani)

DOT views H-1 merge points as the sites of major slowdowns affecting Central Oahu. Have been working on improvements at Waiawa; work to improve traffic flow in the Middle Street area will follow.

Long range highway plans are developed in collaboration with community and agency stakeholders through the Oahu Metropolitan Planning Organization (OMPO). The current long-range plan, Oahu Regional Transportation Plan (ORTP) 2030 can be viewed online (at <http://oahumpo.org/>). In order for a project to be eligible for federal funds, it must be consistent with this plan. OMPO will soon be updating the Plan. They hope to have a consultant on board by 2009. This effort is a 2 year effort to be completed by early 2011. The horizon for the plan will be updated from 2030 to 2035. There are several reasons to revise this plan. One is the cost estimates in the 2030 plan are out of date, given the steep rise in the cost of oil and materials. Additionally, state, city, and federal budget plans have changed. Since the ORTP has to forecast what can be built given available resources, these changes mean that all involved will need to review closely the listed projects and any additional projects that may be proposed for the list.

Pearl City flyover:

A flyover from the H-2 to the Pearl City complex near Sam's club is being planned by DTS. There will be a multistory parking facility lot for the rapid transit system. It will take off from the carpool lane on H-2.

Ewa Highway Impact Fee System.

The impact fees for highway improvements in 'Ewa were set in 2002. DTS is currently in the consultant selection phase for an update of the 'Ewa fee structure.

How does the city deal with traffic city impacts with new housing developments?

DPP reviews traffic associated with new projects, based on traffic consultants' reports. Works with developers to come up with traffic congestion solutions specific to project. These vary. Some projects are large-scale, such as Mililani Mauka, where the focus was on sizing the roadways to accommodate increased traffic load. Smaller projects such as a major shopping center demand more localized solutions (restriping, signals, etc.) For the

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larger projects, DPP has the developer do updated traffic studies, to see if the traffic projections were correct, and if the mitigations are having the expected impact. DPP can push to make mitigations happen sooner if need arises.

General Discussion

In reviewing the Central Oahu (CO) Sustainable Communities Plan (SCP), we need to know whether the community still supports the vision for transportation:

- Central O'ahu will be developed with a transportation system which provides easy access to transit, uses traffic calming design, and encourages people to walk and bike, reducing the need for use of the automobile.
- Public agencies will work with the community (residents, businesses, developers, and landowners) to address current deficiencies in roads, schools, and parks and to create adequate infrastructure to meet the needs of the residential and working population of the area.

Is this the vision? Is this the vision of the people who care about central Oahu with regards to transportation?

- The problem is that there is no planning for this region by either the county or the State. In addition, there is no money for planning, although there was \$1 million appropriated in 2005 for Central Oahu Transportation Planning which the Governor refused to release. We know that there will be disastrous consequences in putting another Mililani-sized town (up to 25,000 housing units) into Central Oahu without any transportation projects that add either lane capacity or regional connectivity. Isolated ad hoc projects address some traffic issues, but none of them covers it adequately. Need state, county, and developers to get together and plan things out under the leadership of State and county decision-makers.
- Is the answer to this problem to widen/increase roads? Alternative methods might be better. Example: offer free transportation to students and children. Many cities provide free transportation. Results: Keeps more cars off the road.
- Most of the plans we have in the state are based on 20th century plans which are based on cheap oil. Places like Suburban Central Oahu will be the hardest hit. Adding capacity on freeways might not be the best long term solution.

(What does the increase of gas do to future traffic planning?) Two things that affect people's travel decision: Cost and travel time.

- There are plans to put 24,800 Units in CO, but traffic has not been adequately considered by DOT. What are they doing to address future traffic problems?
- We do not need to undertake a CO transportation study that's going to tell us that we have traffic congestion along the H-1 primary corridor. We all know this, and a study would just be a waste of tax dollars that we don't have. What are the HDOT projects to mitigate congestion along the H-1 primary corridor?

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- H-2 capacity is not the bottleneck. Other areas will be the most affected.
- Will rail solve transportation issues?

No. Rail will not solve transportation issues, but it will decrease growth in congestion. There is no way to eliminate congestion. You can only manage congestion. The flyover is being planned as a way to limit congestion and encourage use of rapid transit.

- CO stakeholders have asked in the past for a transit connection, a spur in the H-2 corridor
- Plans are under way to build a 4th lane through Waiawa going west on H-1. This will hopefully eliminate much of the weaving of cars between lanes, reducing traffic. Will add capacity to westbound. Long range plan is to widen both sides. However cost is expensive. Waimalu stretch cost nearly \$70 million.
- Any improvement along the corridor will help. What about the Waipahu offramp? Both sides are now being widened.
- Central Oahu is ignored when it comes to transportation. A lot of the current projects benefit Kapolei. Central Oahu is going to have more homes and people than Kapolei in 30 years. But there are no transportation plans directly for Central Oahu. Even the Central Mauka Road project in the 2030 OMPO Transportation Plan is not a real project, and as such will never get built, since Federal highway funds cannot be used to construct it. Need big projects like Central Mauka Road and rail to address Central Oahu regional transportation problems. Also wants to see the construction of interchanges by developers done in one phase, (not 7 as proposed for the Waiawa interchange) so that costs are reduced and benefits are achieved when the houses are built and sold, not after. Otherwise, you won't be able to get out of your driveway.

Representatives from major developers were asked to contribute:

- Waiawa Ph. 1 – 5000 homes. Goes to H-2 freeway. Throughout their zoning process there have been quite a few studies and there are several improvements that are planned for Waipio interchange and H-2. Use outside traffic consultants to plan transportation improvements, however ultimately there is still going to be 5000 more homes.
- Castle & Cooke – strongly supports city and county transportation efforts. Strongly supports mass transit system. Long term it would be good to have a spur. Their Koa Ridge project they are trying to sustain a “Live/work/play” environment, where people living at Koa Ridge will not have to commute. Includes jobs, schools, hospitals, rec areas. Bike lanes and good bus routes to keep people close to home and off the roads.

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General discussion continues:

- Not enough money to fund transportation projects. Even if the project is in the ORTP, it doesn't mean it will be funded. Only projects that are in ORTP can be federally funded. Interchanges can be expensive.
- Other problems. Because of lack of planning no one is accountable. Developers can't be blamed. Environmental Assessment can't help if they can't control other variables. Schools, increased capacity roads, and any other additional infrastructure should already be in place before people move into new communities. Because of lack of planning, the traffic will be bad. Need to come up with a plan that makes sense with the community, developers, and state.
- Limiting factor for transportation is political, not cost. Example Salt Lake City. Fought rail for ten years. When the city got the Olympic bid they ended up building the rail. Rail became a big success. Now planning many different routes. If you increase the number of spurs and routes, this makes the rail project look more expensive and jeopardizes the whole project. Need contingency plans for expansion so it doesn't look expensive on paper.
- Kunia Road is a State road. It has become a thoroughfare between 'Ewa and Schofield. Bus service should be increased in that area. Widening the road will not help. The problem is that farmers can't get onto that road. Farmers need to drive onto that road to sell their produce at markets. Need to make transportation feasible for farming in that area. Agricultural lands need to be preserved. Bus service is needed on Kunia Road for the agricultural workers.
- A solution: traffic circles or "jughandles" (right side off-ramps to intersections, allowing those who want to make a left turn to wait for a light at the side). They decrease accidents and are relatively cheap. Example: Kamehameha Highway going down to Pearl City: if eliminate left turns can get rid of a lot of traffic. Less accidents. Should think about traffic circles in Mililani.
- Bus service in Central Oahu. Does not think bus is a total solution. Current CO residents are middle class. Still, there are lots of empty busses on other routes, but full busses in CO. We need a major overhaul for CO bus service.
- Part of the problem with Oahu's bus system tries to be point to point. Lots of routes crisscross. Rail will eliminate many of the routes in town and will pull busses out of town to service rail. This will make a difference and make busses more efficient.
- City of Pittsburg has a marriage between buses and rail system. People can get on and off rails and buses at the same station. Just a short walk between the two. A rail system can share facilities with a bus system if you make it easy for people to

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transfer between the two. It would help people from CO to have such a bus/rail system.

- Question about the Central Oahu SCP. Is it “just a plan”?

The CO SCP is a city ordinance. Parts of it direct city agencies and how they should act. It is not “just a plan”, it's both a planning document and a policy document. DPP looks at the SCP to determine if proposed new developments conform to the document. The plan is based around the ultimate goals or direction for CO. However, this doesn't mean all things in the plan will be implemented soon. The plan describes what the community and City government want to happen. Example: Kapolei rail plan has been in the GP during the 70's and it might only be passed now.

- So we can put in the CO SCP things that the community wants to see, recognizing that this doesn't commit the City to make them all happen. So we can push for improved connections to transit, e.g., for a spur line, but it's not meant to be just a “wish list”.
- Don't need a rail spur. With 12 percent grade, rapid transit will not be able to climb from Waipahu to Mililani. And we shouldn't push too hard for a spur when the City is instead willing to invest in the flyover. We need a flyover with dedicated bus lanes, and we need it sooner rather than later.
- Question: Money seems to be limiting factor for transportation projects. Are communities willing to explore finances other than state/government? There are many communities that have their own transportation fund/tax that it uses for small projects to improve transportation in their community. The government does not need to fund everything. (e.g., Community Facilities Districts).
- Lot of small projects communities can do with their money cannot actually change infrastructure so the changes are ultimately superficial.
- Do we have a timetable of all these projects that are coming in? Need a timetable of developers' projects with all phases, and traffic improvement plans being streamlined and timed so traffic impacts are a lot less.
- DOT's schedule is set. Short term is 6 year outlook. OMPO does long term planning.
- The ORTP 2030 estimated that Oahu could only afford to increase roadway supply by 7 percent between 2000 and 2030. However, demand for roadways will increase by 32 percent. Rather than spreading projects uniformly throughout the island, the ORTP 2030 focused its attention along the H-1 travel corridor between Ewa/Central Oahu and downtown.

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- During the update of the ORTP to the year 2035, public input will have an important impact on the plan".

Transit Centers in CO: Part of the transportation services is to develop a Wahiawa transit center. Planning and design is being done right now. Intent was to have bid documents awarded by 2009.

There is a transit center in Mililani...How is it working for the community?

- It would help if the buses have a time schedule. No one knows when the buses will arrive.
- Needs more information at transit center.
- Parking is not allowed.

Bikes: Lots of potential for biking in Mililani. Two things needed for cyclists. Sense of safety. Nice smooth path. Wider roads. Shortest path – this is bike commuting, not just recreational cycling..Don't care about views. Wide clean shoulders that have the same standards to roads.

A participant adds: There is not lots of potential for biking in Mililani. The roads in Mililani were not constructed with bike lanes in mind. Upper Meheula Parkway in Mililani Mauka is not able to handle bike lanes because all road lanes will be needed to accommodate traffic upon buildout. Likewise for Mililani town, a bike lane that would circulated the entire town was proposed. It wasn't workable as street parking next to parks would need to be removed. With Mililani being a strong community for organized sports, it just couldn't be done without an outcry from many parents.

The Oahu bike master plan is being updated now. An initial round of public meetings was held earlier this year; additional ones will be held soon. To learn more and to sign up, see www.oahubikeplan.org

Bus planning. Short range transit operations plan to accommodate the changes to Mass transit system. It's a 6 year plan. Have to plan bus system to meet bus demand that we currently have and to plan future impacts by mass transit system.

“Back to School Jam” issues. If the university changes their time from 9 to 6 with that help eliminate traffic?

- This solution will not work. DOT has talked with UH on many occasions about similar proposals. The two main issues are: Students will still arrive to school early to get parking spaces. And students work during the evenings and this schedule would hurt their ability to work. Being unable to work would prevent some students from enrolling at the UH.
- Computer classes. Can't students take computer classes instead of going to class?

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- The UH already has an extensive online program. Classes that can be taught online are already offered online.
- Converting traditional classes to online classes for the sake of reducing traffic congestion isn't practical. The quality of instruction suffers when classes are taught online. Class participation and student attentiveness drops in a virtual classroom. Ultimately, people attend the University of Hawaii for an education, and the quality of education should always be the top priority for the school and its students.
- Can cut down college students' auto usage by having all students get a bus pass paid out of their student fees

In sum -- Does the vision still reflect community and city views? We need a transportation system that works. Expanding capacity isn't the answer; it is only part of the answer. Do people still agree with the basic vision?

Generally, **yes, the vision is still valid**

Is the Vision being implemented successfully, fully? Well, that's not so clear.

Addendum One participant adds to notes: The vision is not adequate from the community viewpoint, in that it fails to relate what is planned for transportation to what is proposed to be developed and when. The revised Plan must reflect and include an operational version of "concurrency." In other words, the development to be allowed must be related to the planned availability or non-availability of adequate Central Oahu regional transportation infrastructure. Finally, from the community's perspective, concurrency is measured in terms of "travel time" to and from downtown Honolulu.

Another participant: I believe the COSCP transportation vision as stated and agreed by the group is valid and applicable. There are adequate plans and studies required by the land use process to address transportation issues within CO communities and I concur with HDOT's assessment that at current and planned levels of development, H-2 capacity is sufficient. The problem is insufficient capacity along the H-1 primary corridor.

(One agency participant asks:) Can we use your email to contact participants in this discussion for input on other projects?

- When we hold a discussion group we take notes, circulate notes, after revision will post notes on website and removes names. During circulation will ask if you have any objection to having email address shared for future projects.

We need another meeting to accommodate people from Waipahu, others who could not come to an afternoon meeting.

- At the next meeting, provide more proposals for the group to work on.

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What's the current status of Central Oahu SCP? What opportunities will there be for public input?

- In the process of writing the draft. A public review draft will be out sometime in December or January. There will be public workshops and a review period, after which the draft will be revised. Then it will go to Planning Commission and to City Council, where there will be further opportunity for public input.

For updates on the CO SCP: go to www.belcollins.com/centraloahu