

**Councilmember Nestor R. Garcia**  
Floor Leader  
Chair, Council Committee on Transportation & Public Works

**TRIP REPORT**

RAIL•VOLUTION 2007  
Miami, Florida  
Oct. 30 to Nov. 2, 2007

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania  
Nov. 3 to Nov. 5, 2007

- Allegheny County Port Authority
- Bombardier Total Transit Systems

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**CITY COUNCIL**  
**HONOLULU, HAWAII**

**Introduction**

The City & County of Honolulu is undergoing an Environmental Impact Statement for its Locally Preferred Alternative – an elevated, fixed guide way project that will stretch some 32 miles from Kapolei to the Manoa campus of the University of Hawaii. Many view the fixed guide way as an alternative mode of public transportation, while others regard the project as an urban planning tool that will help determine growth strategies along the traffic corridor where some 60 percent of our island's population live, work, play and raise families.

**Rail•Volution 2007**

This year's annual Rail•Volution conference took place in South Florida, the fifth most populous urbanized area in the nation, according to the U.S. Census. Two of the most critical issues facing the region are the mobility of goods, freight and people, as well as the protection of the region's unique environment from sprawl and unbridled growth.

The above sounds like it could have been written for Honolulu as well.

The main points of the conference were as follows:

- to share ideas about, and learn best practices for, sustaining and maintaining livable communities;
- to demonstrate the absolute need to coordinate land use and transportation, and;
- to refocus on rail transportation as the key component in transportation infrastructure.

During the Morning Plenary Session on Nov. 1, emcee Allen Harper, the former chair of the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority, stated that there are three necessities for a livable community:

1. Economic Vitality (jobs, and the ability to effectively and efficiently move people, goods and services);
2. Social Justice (people barely eking out a living and are paid only when working, are unable to do so when spending too much time in traffic congestion); and,
3. Quality of Life (according to statistics in Miami, one spends about 2 weeks of the year stuck in traffic – time not spent with families, on the job, or pursuing other activities).

Also during the plenary, William Millar, the President of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), referred to the recently released study sponsored by the Smart Growth America and the National Association of Realtors, which concluded that an approach utilizing smart growth principles and a form of mass transit is better than constructing new roads.

Jim Wolfe, Secretary for District 4 (Florida decentralized its transportation governance into 7 districts and the separate Florida Turnpike Enterprises. District 4 includes such major cities as Boca Raton, West Palm Beach and Fort Lauderdale) stated during the plenary that the era of major road building is over – and that the emphasis nationwide now is reuse, instead of rebuild. He said urban sprawl, triggered by the network of freeways and highways over the past 25 years, is not working anymore.

Wolfe said the focus now is on two major elements: mass transit and patterns of land development. He said policy-makers have known this for some time now, and that their constituents are only now realizing how important these two elements are to creating livable communities. Wolfe cautioned, however, that it would take strong local support – in order to make local transit work.

### **Public Private Partnership**

Thursday afternoon's session was well-attended, a good indicator of the keen desire among conference participants to learn the latest in how to leverage financing from the private sector to help pay for public infrastructure.

At the conclusion of this session, I obtained a just-released study by a task force with the APTA, entitled "Public-Private Partnerships in Public Transportation: Policies and Principles for the Transit Industry." The study offered this over-arching policy statement:

*"A variety of opportunities for partnership between public authorities and private organizations exist to further the public interest. However, such partnerships cannot substitute for the necessary and appropriate role of public policy, public oversight and public resources in the provision of public transportation services."*

It added further that:

*"... policy control – or, at a minimum, policy oversight – of project development and service provision in public transportation should remain with the public or governmental authority charged with providing service in the public's interest. Thus, PPP structures should strive to maximize the benefits of private participation and investment without ceding policy control and ownership of the asset."*

Richard Steinmann, Senior Advisor to the Administrator, U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration stated that PPPs offer seven possibilities:

- lowers costs
- accelerates project delivery
- improves transportation services
- leverages public resources

- transfers risks to the private sector
- attracts private investment, and
- utilizes private sector expertise

Steinmann pointed to one of the earliest examples of a PPP: the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail line in New Jersey (which utilized a DBOM – design, build, operate and maintain model. NOTE: Honolulu’s last attempt to build a fixed guide-way was actually the first in the country to utilize this approach). He said since 1991, there have been \$53 billion of PPP projects, most of which have been for highway projects (44, as opposed to 12 for transit). He stressed that municipalities will need to make sure they have enabling legislation from their state legislatures in order to utilize this approach.

Steinmann stressed these factors in successful PPPs:

- visionary leadership
- popular support for project
- well-defined project scope
- revenue potential for private sector partners

Tom Rousakis is a vice president with Goldman, Sachs. He said that a common form of PPP is the concession approach where:

- the public partner leases the infrastructure to the private sector;
- the private sector, in turn, up-fronts cash to the public partner, for whatever uses it deems fit for its constituents;
- the private sector “takes a bet” that it will make its money on growth of revenues from the transportation infrastructure (e.g. tolls, fare box, etc).

In this, or any PPP scenario, it is vital that the public partner spell out the goals, objectives and performance standards of the private partner that is leasing the infrastructure. The public partner is the regulator that monitors performance and enforces the standards.

Rousakis said that when it comes to a PPP when transit-oriented development is involved, it could be difficult. He advises that attractive features in this scenario would include the following:

- the transit agency or public entity owns the land;
- there be clear development goals;
- the value of the development is apparent; and,
- there is advantageous timing to remove uncertainty with the development

### **Transit-Oriented Development**

The theme of this year’s Railvolution was “Building Livable Communities with Transit.” According to a report distributed at the conference entitled, “Realizing the Potential: Expanding Housing Opportunities Near Transit,” written by Reconnecting American’s Center for Transit Oriented Development, a non-profit research organization, the average American family spends more than half of their incomes on housing and transportation. The report says while families try to move to the suburbs or to exurban locations to reduce the cost of housing – the rising cost of transportation reduces much of their cost savings.

The report says location matters a great deal. According to the report, “while the average American family spends roughly 19 percent of the household budget on transportation, households with good access to transit spend just 9 percent.”

At the conference, I had the opportunity to twice hear presentations by Mr. G.B. Arrington, vice president with PB Placemaking, Portland, Oregon.

During his power point presentation entitled, “Making Transit Behave – Designing Transit for TOD,” Arrington stressed interesting points including breaking transit down to create a “place” (which is to say, designing transit for development in and around a station), creating “value” at these places, and turning around conventional wisdom by looking at “development-oriented transit”.

In Honolulu, the administration is viewing Waipahu as the first place where transit-oriented development (or should I say, development-oriented transit?) will be addressed – specifically at the two stations slated for the elevated, fixed guide way as it makes its way down Farrington Highway. There have been two workshops in Waipahu, led by consultants with Van Meter Williams Pollack LLP. Community based TOD planning is envisioned for all 19 transit stations along the guide way.

### **Port Authority of Allegheny County**

The trip to Pittsburgh afforded an opportunity to learn how a county transportation entity deals with its public transportation needs – especially in the face of a crisis with respect to its budget, and its inventory of assets.

The Pennsylvania state assembly created the Port Authority of Allegheny County in 1956. Its mission (slogan) is “connecting people to life.” The Authority is responsible for 825 buses, 48 mini-buses 83 light rail vehicles, two inclined planes and ACCESS (the nation’s largest paratransit system).

The Authority oversees 25 miles of light rail, and 18.4 miles of bus ways. The Authority is also responsible for bridges, tunnels, bus and rail stations, various buildings and facilities and parking facilities. The service area is 775-square-miles – serving all of Allegheny County and portions of neighboring counties.

During our visit with Authority officials, we were apprised of their budget woes for the current – and next – fiscal years. The Pennsylvania Assembly enacted a new state law, signed by the Governor as Act 44. The Act creates a Public Transportation Trust Fund that will generate a little more than \$1 billion statewide for FY 07 and 08, the money to pay for transit operations, asset improvements, capital improvements, new initiatives and programs of statewide significance.

The county match is 15 percent of the \$183,020,400 that the Trust Fund will provide the Authority in operating assistance – or \$27,453,060.

In its presentation to the Allegheny County Council on Nov. 2, 2007, the Authority projected an \$82 million deficit for FY 2008, with increasing costs for health and pension, diesel fuel, propulsion power and utilities and general inflationary increases and contractual pay hikes.

To trim expenses, the Authority eliminated 370 budgeted positions (there are some 26,000 employees in the entire system), 203 through layoffs. The Authority also adopted a regional fare collection system utilizing smart card technology, worked out new agreements for more money from the two biggest universities in the area (University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon), froze salaries, and cut health benefits for non-union employees.

The Authority is also continuing to pursue cost-saving initiatives with Local 85 of the Amalgamated Transit Union ahead of the contract expiration next summer.

To help the Authority to deal with the projected deficit, the Pennsylvania Assembly also enacted legislation to enable Allegheny County to impose, as options, the following:

- a drinking tax of up to 10%; and,
- a tax on rental cars of up to \$2 a day.

**The Authority also implemented 15 percent service cuts as of June 2007, and signaled that it would increase fares beginning January 2008.**

**The increases, which the Authority's Board of Directors approved on Nov. 21, 2007, hikes fares by 14 percent, to \$2 from \$1.75 in the base fare, or by a quarter for most rides in the city, and 35 cents for suburban trips. The Authority services about 230,000 riders a day – and anticipates a 2 to 3 percent drop in daily rider ship with the fare increases. The 15 percent service cut in June saw a drop of about 7,500 weekly trips.**

Our trip also focused on the Authority's bus and rail operations. The Authority operates three bus ways – the South (opened in 1977), East (opened in 1983) and West (opened in 2000) bus ways. The 5-mile, six-station West bus way was built using 50/50 federal/local match, at a cost of \$327 million. These bus ways are for Authority buses only – much like exclusive lanes for a BRT operation.

When I asked why not private buses, the Authority stated that you need special training to drive on the bus way. I was told that Greyhound, at first, was interested, but dropped the idea.

I was struck by the size of the elevated bus ways. Bus lanes are normally 11 to 12 feet wide. When it comes to a bus way, the roadways at bus stations are typically widened to 50 feet, to allow for express bus or skip-stop passing to reduce headways. At some stations, the total "envelope" could include four travel lanes, plus side platforms, for a total width of 75 feet.

**The Authority was able to build its bus ways via an extensive network of railroad right-of-ways.**

There is a proposal to convert the West bus way into a "hot lane" – but the Authority was not consulted on that idea.

The advantages of an exclusive right of way for buses and light rail transit in Allegheny Country are:

- safer operation;
- greater reliability of service;
- improved productivity;
- less wear and tear on equipment; and
- reduced travel time.

There are 187 bus routes in the Authority's service area, with an annual count of 60.3 million passengers, and 28 million vehicle miles a year, with 878 vehicles.

As for the Authority's rail network (the "T"), there are four rail routes covering some 25 miles, with 7.1 million passengers a year, 1.5 million vehicle miles and 83 vehicles. The Authority also went over plans to extend its rail network with the 1.2-mile North Shore Connector.

This \$390 million extension will connect the North Shore area where residential neighborhoods, the two professional sports stadiums, and the Carnegie Science Center are located (with a casino planned for the future!), across the Allegheny River to the downtown Gateway Center Station. There will also be a spur from the Steel Plaza Station to the soon-to-be-enlarged convention center.

The “T” and the bus ways all converge in downtown Pittsburgh – and is said to carry some 50 percent of the city’s work force to and from home.

### **Bombardier – Total Transit Systems**

Our trip to Pittsburgh also gave us an opportunity to see first-hand the capabilities of one of the world’s foremost suppliers of total transit systems.

Bombardier’s corporate office is located in Montreal, Quebec, and its Transportation Division headquarters is situated in Berlin, but the facility that develops, designs and builds turnkey transportation systems is in Pittsburgh. The Total Transportation Systems of Bombardier is total – it can also offer complete project financing, public-private partnership approaches and boasts 30 years of operations and maintenance experience. The company portfolio includes fully automated advance rapid transit, people mover and monorail systems, as well as guided light transit, light rapid transit and metros.

Total Transit Systems will supply the electrical and mechanical systems, plus full responsibility for project management, systems engineering and integration, and systems testing and verification. The company will also provide a full range of operations and maintenance services, as well as strategies to improve customers’ existing services.

The company provides operations and maintenance services to more than 20 active transit systems worldwide. The company can design, build, operate and maintain projects.

Total Transit Systems has about 2,200 employees worldwide, with about 700 in Pittsburgh. Bombardier Transportation has about 30,000 employees, with total revenues of about \$6.6 billion, and a backlog of about \$28 billion in projects.

During our guided tour, we walked through the factory where both the trains and the train signaling equipment are manufactured. At almost every stop throughout the factory, we saw displays of performance metrics – measures of various aspects of each department’s ongoing performance.

In the end, we addressed the manager’s meeting. I explained that while our proposed fixed guide way will offer not just an option to deal with our ever worsening traffic congestion, but will give the people of the City & County of Honolulu a valuable tool as we layout strategy for land use along the guide way’s critical traffic corridor.

-end-

City Council  
City and County of Honolulu

# CLAIM FOR TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT

Date: 1/25/08

Traveler: NESTOR GARCIA (District 9)

Event: RAIL-VOLUTION 2007+ (partial Pittsburgh)

Location: Miami, Florida

Dates: From October 31, 2007 To November 3, 2007

Description	Amount	Notes
1. Registration Fee	425.00	
2. Airfare	790.70	airfare + fees
3. Hotel	728.85	
4. Meals	5.19	
5. Ground Transportation	39.00	shuttles
6. Tips	1.00	
7. Other	.98	Local phone + taxes
Other		
Other		
8. Adjustment		
<b>TOTAL REIMBURSEMENT</b>	<b>1,990.72</b>	

This is to certify that the above data, based upon receipts submitted to Council Administrative Support Services via a CCLTRVL02 form, is accurate. Further, I am claiming reimbursement for expenses associated with a trip in which City business was conducted and personal funds were used to advance payment:

  
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Signature of Traveler

JAN 28 2007  
Date