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COUNCIL VICE-CHAIR PROPOSES CHARTER QUESTION ON RAIL MASS TRANSIT

HONOLULU, HAWAII, July 24, 2008 - Councilmember Todd K. Apo has submitted a proposed version of a charter amendment question to go on the general election ballot in November. The question will allow voters to decide whether the City shall move forward with a rail mass transit system and a transit authority to properly build and implement such a system.

“As was discussed in yesterday’s Council meeting, we have the opportunity to place a reasonable and understandable question on the ballot to decide whether or not we move forward with the rail mass transit project,” stated Councilmember Apo. “I remain of the firm belief that our island, and especially West Oahu, needs and deserves a mass transit solution to the hours that our residents spend sitting in their cars. Representing West Oahu, our residents need a significant solution to the growing traffic. As oil and gas prices continue to skyrocket, non-vehicular mass transit projects make even more sense today.”

The proposed amendments to Resolution 07-090 combine the concerns and discussion of the administration, Council, and public that have come forth in various public hearings. With regard to the creation of the Transit Authority, the revisions attempt to balance the semi-autonomous nature of the Authority with the desire for continued oversight and public input.

“I don’t know that anyone will call the entire document ‘perfect.’ However, I hope people will view it as a reasonable and necessary compromise that is sensible for all to support and move forward to the voters in November. I hope that both the pro-rail and anti-rail supporters can agree on this piece of legislation. That way, we can move away from a debate about what the process should be, and put the focus back on to the merits of the transit project and traffic solutions,” concluded Councilmember Apo.

Amendment Highlights:

- Charter question: “Shall the revised City Charter be amended to implement a rail mass transit system and create a semi-autonomous public transit authority responsible for the planning, construction, operation, maintenance, and expansion of such mass transit system?”
- Authority Board: Proposes two options for the composition of nine member Board that makes up the Transit Authority:
 - Option 1 – 3 appointed by the Mayor, 3 appointed by the Council, the State Dept. of Transportation Director, the City Dept. of Transportation Services, and a ninth member selected by the 6 appointed members.
 - Option 2 – 4 appointed by the Mayor, 4 appointed by the Council, a ninth member selected by the 8 appointed members, providing for the State Dept. of Transportation and Dept. of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism, to be non-voting, ex-officio members of the Board.
- Eminent Domain: Provides that the Council shall have 45 days to review and reject any planned eminent domain acquisitions before the Authority may proceed with such action.
- General Excise Tax Fund Use: The Authority will have control over the GET funds unless the Council, by a two-thirds vote, required prior council approval for the use of such funds.

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