



CITY COUNCIL

CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

Honolulu, Hawaii 96813-3065/Telephone 547-7000

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 4, 2007

Councilmember Charles K. Djou
Phone: (808) 478-0006

COUNCILMEMBER DJOU: OMPO STACKED TO RUBBER STAMP A 'NONSENSICAL' RAIL ROUTE

Today, the Oahu Metropolitan Planning Organization, a joint City and State organization that makes recommendations to the Federal government on funding of transit projects, is poised to ratify the nonsensical initial operating segment of the rail system that fails to connect the University of Hawaii and drops the Airport, Pearl Harbor and Hickam from its route. Instead, OMPO will likely rubber stamp the Honolulu City Council's decision to send the multi-billion dollar rail system down Salt Lake Boulevard.

"Today, OMPO will be nothing more than a rubber stamp. Virtually every independent member of OMPO has been kicked off this agency and I am disappointed that the result will be the de facto and foolish ratification of the City's nonsensical plan to take the rail system down Salt Lake Boulevard, avoiding the airport, Pearl Harbor, Hickam and the University of Hawaii. Earlier this year, the legislative leadership eliminated all of the state's Republican members from OMPO. Two weeks ago, Council Chair Barbara Marshall removed two of the City Council's critics of the Salt Lake Boulevard route, Donovan Dela Cruz and Ann Kobayashi. The result is a neutered agency that will question the City's route selection as aggressively as the old Soviet parliament questioned the Communist Party General Secretary," stated Councilmember Djou. "What's even more disturbing, while there are virtually no independent members on OMPO there are two Maui elected officials who serve on OMPO who will decide how Oahu's mass transit system will proceed."

The OMPO Policy Committee is a 13 member agency composed of six City and seven State members. OMPO approval is needed for the Federal funding portion of the Honolulu rail system.

The six City members are comprised of the five City Councilmembers who serve on the Council Transportation Committee plus the City Director of the Department of Transportation Services. Two weeks ago, Council Chair Barbara Marshall ejected Councilmembers Donovan Dela Cruz and Ann Kobayashi from the Council Transportation Committee and OMPO. Dela Cruz and Kobayashi are the two councilmembers who joined Councilmember Djou in a push to include the airport and Pearl Harbor in the initial rail operating segment. Councilmembers Todd Apo and Rod Tam replaced Dela Cruz and Kobayashi. Both Apo and Tam voted against including UH and for the Salt Lake alignment for the initial operating segment of the rail system.

The seven State members are comprised of three State Senators, three State Representatives plus the State Director of the Department of Transportation. Traditionally, the

Chair and Vice-Chair of the House and Senate Transportation Committees, who are Democrats, and the senior Republican on the House and Senate Transportation Committee are named to OMPO. In January, the Senate President and House Speaker refused to name any Republicans to OMPO. On the other hand, the Senate President and House Speaker did name Maui Senator Kalani English and Maui Representative Joe Souki, respectively, to OMPO.

Councilmember Djou added, “Even if you are a supporter of rail, you can not possibly be happy about the politics surrounding the rail system.” Councilmember Djou is a member of OMPO and the only individual on the 13 member panel who has ever publicly questioned the wisdom of proceeding with the \$6 bil. rail system.

OMPO meets this afternoon at 1:00 p.m. in the Honolulu City Council’s committee hearing room.

#