



CITY COUNCIL

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COUNCILMEMBER DJOU LET THE PEOPLE DECIDE ON RAIL

Honolulu City Councilmember Charles K. Djou (Waikiki, East Honolulu) commended the city council for joining him to place a question over rail on this fall's ballot. Resolution 08-166, introduced by Councilmember Djou, will ask Oahu voters if they approve the establishment of a "steel wheel on steel rail transit system."

"I am happy that Honolulu will finally give Oahu voters the final say on rail. Every other U.S. city that has done rail has given its voters the final word, and Oahu's voters deserve the same respect," stated Councilmember Djou. "While I have consistently opposed rail as too expensive, I have also consistently stated the best way to bring legitimate closure to this three-decade long dispute over rail is a vote of the people. I look forward to hearing the people speak on this issue on election day and I will respect the voters' decision."

Since entering the City Council in 2003, Councilmember Djou has waged a lonely effort to allow the people of Oahu a vote to settle the issue of rail:

East Honolulu Councilman Charles Djou said he wants to put the transit tax hike issue to voters instead of deciding on it himself. "Raising taxes [for a rail system] is never a good idea and perhaps if this went to the voters, via initiative or referendum, and the voters speak, then so be it. That's the way the voters want it," Djou said. . . [H]e believes the rail system is such a big project, everyone should have a say on it.
KITV 4 News, October 28, 2003

This is the same argument Djou has consistently raised during this current rail vote debate in 2008:

“Virtually every other city that has done a rail system since World War II has done a ballot question,” said council member Charles Djou, who opposes the project. “It is highly unusual that Honolulu is moving forward with this rail system without a vote. If we don't put this issue on the ballot, this issue will never be resolved. This project will always be controversial.”
Honolulu Advertiser, June 29, 2008

“The best way to bring a legitimate democratic closure to this rail debate is a vote of the people,” said Djou
Honolulu Advertiser, July 24, 2008

Unlike Djou, almost every other City elected official has opposed a public vote on rail:

Mayor Mufi Hannemann

Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann and Councilmember Gary Okino, undoubtedly the two biggest supporters of the proposed steel wheel on steel rail project, essentially made the same statement to the press after the rally: They are opposed to the public vote because the public has already had input on the project through their elected representatives and community meetings. “If they don't like their representatives' vote on the rail project, they can vote against them in the next election,” Okino added.
KHNL, April 22, 2008

In April, supporters of rail, including Hannemann and pro-rail council members, argued against the Stop Rail Now ballot initiative, saying the public has had a say on the project via elected representatives, extensive hearings and talk-story sessions.
Honolulu Advertiser, July 25, 2008

Hannemann declined comment yesterday on the council's vote. He has opposed a separate attempt aimed at forcing an anti-rail ordinance on the November ballot.
Honolulu Advertiser, July 24, 2008

Councilmember Rod Tam

“Right now I don't see in terms of basis as why it [rail] should be on the ballot,” said Councilmember Rod Tam, a rail supporter.
KGMB, July 18, 2008

Councilmember Todd Apo

“There's no way for the Council to put any question on the Charter that hasn't been already discussed,” said Councilman Todd Apo, who represents Kapolei and supports rail transit.
Honolulu Star Bulletin, July 16, 2008

City Councilmember Todd K. Apo, who supports rail, said he doesn't think the Council would do what the lieutenant governor is suggesting [a public vote on rail]. "I assume you need six votes to put the question on (the November ballot) and I don't believe there would be six votes to do that," said Apo, speaking by phone from Providence, R.I.

Honolulu Advertiser, July 17, 2008

Councilmember Apo said, "This isn't something you fool around with your charter about. You don't try and throw something in (the general election) last minute because this group's petition issue got screwed up."

Honolulu Advertiser, July 17, 2008

Councilmember Barbara Marshall

"Many people now seem to be telling us they want more than a voice, they want a vote and I understand that. I'm sure other council members feel the same way," Marshall said in an e-mail. "This goes beyond whether we should have steel-on-steel and to the heart of the project itself. That said, I'm reluctant to see the charter, which is intended to be a broad document establishing government structure and procedure, used to settle what is ultimately a political decision. It seems to set an unhealthy precedent, at best."

Honolulu Advertiser, July 19, 2008

Councilmember Gary Okino

Gary Okino, one of four pro-rail council members, echoed Hannemann's sentiments, saying elected officials have access to crucial information needed to make an informed decision. "The decision for the people is electing your representatives," he said. "It's a more sensible form of government rather than a government that's run by emotion."

KHON 2 News April 21, 2008

City Councilman Gary H. Okino said the public does not have the access to the information or the expertise that the Council does and that "preposterous" information is being spread by Stop Rail Now, a group opposed to the project.

Honolulu Advertiser, July 19, 2008

Councilmember Nestor Garcia

"You have to be careful when you deal with the Charter," Garcia said. "You don't want to fall prey to the whims or the emotional furor over an issue and amend constitutions or charters willy-nilly."

Honolulu Star Bulletin, July 24, 2008

Today, the Honolulu City Council unanimously approved Reslution 08-166, introduced by Councilmember Djou, giving the people of Oahu the final say on rail. Resolution 08-166 will ask voters, “Shall the powers, duties, and functions of the City, through its director of transportation services, include establishment of a steel wheel on steel rail transit system?” Even council members who have consistently opposed allowing for a vote on rail now voted to support Djou’s resolution. Djou’s resolution calls for this charter amendment to be placed on the ballot only if Stop Rail Now’s rail transit petition is not placed on the ballot.

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