

Trip Report
Submitted by Breene Harimoto
NACO Legislative Conference
Washington, DC
March 5-9, 2011

I attended the National Association of Counties' (NACO) Legislative Conference held on March 5-9, 2011, at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel in Washington, DC. I joined Councilmembers Garcia, Cachola, Martin, Gabbard-Tamayo, and Chang at this conference. Councilmembers from Kauai, Maui, and Big Island were also in attendance, as were county elected officials and executives from across the country.

This was an excellent conference. It was a great opportunity to learn about issues faced by other counties as well as national issues, and to hear many perspectives of those issues. Here in Hawaii we are so geographically isolated that we tend to not understand that we share many issues with other counties on the mainland, and we can learn much from their experiences.

One of the biggest take-aways for me was that mainland counties do many things that counties in Hawaii don't deal with, such as county public health (clinics and hospitals), county jails, county courts and justice system, county sheriffs, county public defenders, local district schools, etc. Although I already knew this, it really hit home to me when I attended the sessions and listened to people from other counties struggling with these and other issues. This realization helps me to put our Honolulu property tax rates into perspective. In past years, it has been said that Honolulu's property tax rates are low in comparison to mainland cities and counties. While this may be a true statement, we must consider that Honolulu is not saddled with all the functions that mainland counties must provide. So with this perspective, I am not inclined to use the mainland property tax comparison to rationalize increasing Honolulu's property tax rates.

A second major take-away for me was that counties must rely more heavily on Information Technology (IT) to get through the budget crisis. There were three recurring themes related to this: 1) no longer doing more with less, but now doing less with less; 2) larger counties often have funding, staffing, and expertise that smaller counties may not have so there is synergy with larger counties working together with smaller counties; and 3) cloud computing can yield huge cost savings and efficiencies.

This was also a good opportunity for us to meet with our Congressional delegation to discuss issues of importance. I also had the opportunity to meet with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Director of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure to discuss Honolulu's transit project.

A third major take-away for me was that the FTA and Chairman Mica of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee remain committed to Honolulu's rail

project. Despite the uncertainties of the current Congress, it appears that our chances of obtaining our anticipated federal funding remain good.

To save on hotel costs, I chose to stay at the conference hotel only during the core conference days. Upon arrival in DC, I chose to stay at another less expensive hotel and walked and rode the Metro to get to and from the conference hotel for the IT Summit. For the nights following the conference, I chose to stay at a cheaper hotel at my own expense outside of DC and used the Metro to get around. These were for the days that I met with the FTA and Chairman Mica's office and spent the rest of those days sightseeing.

The following are highlights from the sessions that I attended. Best practices and key points are noted in bold print.

Saturday, March 5, 2011

Technology Summit: County Survival Strategies in Tough Economic Times
8:30am – 5:00pm

Note: I attended this all-day Summit because I am a former Information Technology professional and former Deputy Director of the City's Department of Information Technology. There was no additional registration fee for this Summit but pre-registration was required.

Overall, this was a good session that presented views from various perspectives – elected officials, county executive, and CIO. The only problem was that I was sitting at a table behind a pillar so I could not see the panelist on the stage. Although I could hear the discussion, it was difficult to determine who was speaking so my notes below may not have the proper speaker identified.

8:30am – 9:00am

Welcome, opening remarks, and introductions

Hon. Lenny Eliason, NACo President-elect & Athens County, Ohio, Commissioner

Hon. Helen Purcell, NACo Information Technology Committee Chair & Maricopa County, Arizona, Recorder

Hon. Webster Guiloory, NACo Essential County Technology Committee Chair & Orange County, California, Assessor

9:00am – 10:00am
Elected Officials Perspectives

Hon. Lenny Eliason, NACo President-elect & Athens County, Ohio, Commissioner
Highlights:

- Some counties have no written minutes of meetings; digital recordings of meetings are official minutes with index
 - Workload ↓, paper consumption ↓, storage space ↓
- **Emergencies – use of automated tools such as Nixle and reverse 911 is great to notify the public of emergencies**

Hon. Helen Purcell, NACo Information Technology Committee Chair & Maricopa County, Arizona, Recorder

- Implemented Call Center for public to call in to county
 - Centralized one-stop number to call
 - Reduced paper consumption by 77%
 - ✓ Originally used over 9 million pages of paper per year; now everything is electronic format
 - IT projects paid for by document fees, not general funds

Hon. Glen Whitley, NACo President & Tarrant County, Texas, Judge

- Never plan to decrease the number of employees via use of technology; it doesn't work that way
- New normal – doing more with less
- **Have an IT steering committee**
 - All major departments in city meet to prioritize needs collectively
 - No departments going rogue
 - Consolidate all IT into central department, including police
 - One thing we have is budget hammer
- Implemented SAP software
 - Smallest part of cost was the software
 - **If you change your existing processes to fit the software, you can save enormous costs to customize the software**

10:15am – 11:45am
County Executive Perspectives

Mr. Patrick Urich, County Administrator, Peoria County, Illinois

- IT was outsourced 12 years ago but brought it back in-house
- Now have centralized IT drawing funds from all departments being serviced
- **Off-the-shelf software from vendors saves much money**

Mr. Walt Ekard, Chief Administrative Officer, San Diego County, California

- **Get people online to get government services and information**
- Today's workforce is different – Millennials
- Board stays out of running government; board does policy
- Criminal justice system (prisons) is a big concern

12:00pm – 1:00pm

Luncheon Keynote Speaker

Steve Pociask

(Replacement for scheduled speaker Dr. Everett Ehrlich, President of ESC Company)

- Use of IT saves the environment
 - Work from home
 - Lessens traffic
- **Explosion in use of hand-held devices and broadband use; must embrace this trend**

1:00pm – 2:15pm

Chief Information Officer Perspectives

Mr. Phil Bertolini, CIO/Deputy County Executive, Oakland County, Michigan

- **Business process re-engineering is a must**
- **IT is strategic to maintaining resources (i.e., people)**
- **Cloud is solution; small government cannot afford big technologies**
- **Big governments can provide solutions to small governments**
- IT governance
 - **Need project management, ROI, strong executive sponsorships**
- Online discussions
 - Productive ideas
 - Don't post personal attacks
 - Net Volunteers
 - ✓ **Recruit cadre of volunteers to promote your agendas and to counter attacks**

Mr. Harold Tuck, CIO, San Diego, California

- Now in 2nd generation outsourcing
- Non-technical CIO
- **Greater use of IT will “recession-proof” the county**
 - Will yield cost savings and result in greater transparency

- **Implemented an Innovation Council**
 - Collaborative effort (managers, employees, major vendors & partners) to move on innovations
 - ✓ County employees nominated, CIO selected
 - ✓ It's not just sitting at table; they're part of the discussion & report to most senior county manager
 - Address low-hanging fruit & what's frustrating employees most

Mr. Jeffrey Porter, Platform Technologies Director, Fairfax County, Virginia

- IT manager must be innovator
- **Each department used to run its own IT; now centralized IT to save much money**
 - First had to gain trust and show benefits
 - Shrinking IT resources more available
- **Tech review board**
 - Must approve IT purchases and projects
 - Had 60 servers; now in Cloud to save money
- Goal is 60% county telework
 - Now 5,000 out of 12,000
 - Requires employee contract with supervisor
 - Helped with pandemic and snow storms
 - ✓ Business as usual; customers still serviced
 - Much cost savings
- **Mobility (iPad, etc.)**
 - Forced to allow remote computing
 - Allow as dumb terminals
 - Employees want to use their own devices instead of office computer
 - Employees want to work from home
 - People love what they do; empower them

Mr. Fafael Mena, CIO, Orange County, Florida

- “Working for the county is like being on a drug. We do everything from dogs to jails to dead people.”
- Each department was doing own IT and some had more IT money than others
- Took 3 years to consolidate IT
- 50% of taxes goes to public safety (including jails and public defenders)
- Talked at length about arrest data issues, arrest record, jail system, court system, etc.: huge issues for them
- Services local school district

- **Smaller counties don't have money or expertise or personnel to do it alone; bigger counties can support smaller counties**
- **Develop software in-house only when off-the-shelf software doesn't exist**
 - Some counties may have unique requirements

Discussion Q & A:

- Use Gartner – experts are available to discuss the issues
- **Engage the team**
- **Succession planning is a must**
 - “Diamond in the rough” is out there
 - Groomed and trained someone, then he left the company; always a risk
- **Need support of elected officials**
- If work from home goes astray and there are problems, it will be in the news
- Ask CIO why he's in IT
 - Move away from management of IT to management of solutions
 - ✓ Must change focus of technology
- FUD – Fear, Uncertainty, Doubt
 - Manage it; not reason not to do it

2:15pm – 3:15pm

GIS Manager Perspectives

Several GIS managers discussed GIS uses and challenges. This session was a too GIS-technical for my needs.

3:30pm – 4:30pm

Welcome to First Time Conference Attendees

This session informed attendees new to NACo about what NACo is and does. It was a good overview of NACo. We met the NACo President and Executive Director. We also had an opportunity to chat with other first-time attendees. (I left the Technology Summit early to attend this session).

Sunday, March 6, 2011

9:00am – 12:00pm

Transportation Steering Committee

This was a very interesting session that covered various aspects of transportation, including some discussion of issues relating to highways, rail, and transit. I gained much information especially from Jim Tymon, as noted below.

- There was a big push for us to attend the Rail Conference in Chicago but my understanding was that this conference did not appear appropriate for metro rail systems like ours.
 - Both for passenger and freight rail issues
 - Noted that freight rail is projected to double in the next 8 years
- Jim Tymon, Director of House Highway & Transit Oversight Sub-Committee (Chairman John Mica's staff member)
 - Mica's top priority – highways & train bill
 - ✓ Once election campaigning begins, “everything freezes up” in DC so time is of the essence
 - ✓ Pushing hard to get this passed in next 6-7 months
 - It typically takes 15 years to get major transportation project done (inception to permitting)
 - ✓ Goal is to cut this in half to accelerate delivery process
 - There is no financing plan for all transportation projects
 - Increasing the gas tax is not supported in DC
 - Will see massive revision of surface transportation programs
 - ✓ Began with only a few; now more than 100 exist
 - ✓ Need to simplify; no sacred cows
 - \$500 billion proposed by President but there is no plan for how to pay for it
 - New Congress – live within our means
 - Q & A
 - ✓ “streamlining the permitting process” by auto-approval if no action in x days
 - ⇒ If in existing right of way, should be simplified (no taking of land)
 - ✓ Light rail transit
 - ⇒ **New Starts – broad support in Congress**
 - Recommended that everyone meet with the newly elected Republicans; educational process for them
 - ⇒ **For the disabled and transit-dependent population, transit may be the only way for them to get around**
 - ⇒ Not only benefit to NYC, DC, etc., but for all areas
 - ⇒ **Mica is a big supporter of New Starts; he will fight hard for continued funding**
 - ⇒ He is hopeful that there will be adequate funding, but if there are cuts, there will be cuts in all programs (not just New Starts)
 - ✓ Gas tax
 - ⇒ Mica opposes increase in gas tax
 - ⇒ **Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is next generation of tax**

- But recognize that there are many obstacles and privacy issues
 - ⇒ Don't know if Indexing is acceptable
 - ✓ Transit will be more focused on rural and suburban areas and growth areas
 - ✓ Most important to get this done by this fall, before election season begins
 - ⇒ Else limp along for another 2 years
 - ⇒ Lack of predictability leads to uncertainty
 - ⇒ Need a 6 year bill
- President Whitley
 - Need to move away from gallon gas tax
 - **Not equitable with more electric and hybrid vehicles using the same highways but not paying gas tax to maintain the roads**
 - **Should move to VMT with safeguards for privacy**
 - **We're now collecting less money than in 2008 to maintain our highways**
- Transportation Committee Chair
 - Gas tax increase is off the table in DC
 - Needs vs. wants
 - ✓ In past, easy to fund programs with plenty of money available
 - ✓ Perception now is that there is plenty of money but we're not using it wisely
 - ✓ Light rail
 - ⇒ How can Feds be finishing touch instead of first 80%?
 - Prioritize
 - Fill needs closer to home
 - Use money more wisely
 - ⇒ Must convince 87 freshmen in Congress that even when doing this, we still have a huge gap to close
 - After September, forget it; it's campaign season for the next two years
- There was some discussion about freight and passenger railroad issues which are not applicable to Hawaii.
- Various sub-committees reported
 - Highways Sub-Committee
 - ✓ Reauthorization
 - ✓ Rail conference – multi-modal interests
 - Mass Transit/Railroad Sub-Committee
 - ✓ Rail conference
 - ✓ Effective advocate for additional funding
 - ✓ Looking at Indexing
 - Airports Sub-Committee
 - ✓ Reauthorization
 - Ports Sub-Committee

1:00pm – 4:00pm
Health Steering Committee

I attended this session because I expected it to be about health issues. However, the presentations and discussions centered around data and data collection pertaining to public health. I left this session early since this was not pertinent to us.

2:00pm – 5:00pm
Information Technology Committee

- National Broadband Plan released last year
 - Auctions off spectrum
 - NACo lobbied to keep spectrum for public sector
- Essential technology
 - **Large and small county governments helping each other**
 - **Social media – crowd sourcing; pyramid sourcing**
 - **Sharing public service software**
- Federal CIO Council
 - Fed CIO is big proponent of Cloud
- State of IT
 - Top issues: budget, consolidations (data, servers, staff, data centers, etc.)
 - **Cloud computing is top issue**
 - **Due to cost savings, IT is getting more authority to consolidate**
 - Cyber security risks
 - ✓ Survey – states invest less than 1% of IT budget in security
 - ✓ Digital ID is an issue
 - Social media
 - ✓ Survey 2/3 of states have no policy
 - Security and project management are hardest areas to recruit for in government
 - RFP consortium of states (Montana, Utah, etc.) for cloud computing is inviting other states to join in
 - 54% of state CIO's looking at cloud computing
- Sharing
 - Looking at outsourcing IT
 - ✓ Problem is that after training staff, they leave
 - Elected officials use email as their official form of communication but rarely perform data backups

Monday, March 7, 2011

9:00am – 10:15am

Cloud Computing: How It Improves Services and Reduces Costs

This was an in-depth discussion of cloud computing. There was an excellent presentation by Phil Bartinoli.

- Technology is easy part; business is hard part
- Cloud options – public, private, hybrid
- No value in managing technology; value is in delivery of services, not management of technology
- Why are we in the technology business? Let others do it; we concentrate on delivery of services
- **Cloud computing will save money and improve delivery of services**
- Technology + services = solutions
 - Money + Value = Benefits
- To begin, identify a couple of applications to try out
- Phil Bartinoli, Oakland County, Michigan, CIO
 - **Invest in technology in tough economic times**
 - **Government can't be all things to all people**
 - No longer doing more with less; now doing less with less
 - Use technology for strategic benefits
 - **Identify process changes (not just automating existing bad processes)**
 - Remember who you are building it for... the people
 - **Need partners to be successful (old days of stovepipe systems)**
 - **Shared services are future of government technology**
 - **Sustainable technology efforts require resiliency in leadership**
 - **You can be innovative and provide technology in tough economic times**
- Sharon Smith, Kenosha County
 - Assess why you want to build own cloud
 - They went with Microsoft – subscription-based model, estimate of \$20/user/month
 - Good results
 - Improved services, more efficiencies; rolling out services more quickly
 - **Big issue of who owns the data**
 - ✓ With MS, you own your data
 - ✓ With Google, Google owns the data put into their servers

10:45am – 12:00pm

Lessons Learned: What You Want to Know about Disaster Recovery

Judd Freed, Director, Emergency Management, Ramsey County, MN
Arrietta Chakos, Advance disaster Recovery Project, Harvard Kennedy School
Linda Langston, Supervisor, Linn County, IA
Lawrence Travis, Adjusters International, New Orleans, LA

This session focused on county readiness and response to disasters. Some good real-life examples of disaster readiness and responses were given, with lessons learned. Much of this applies to the county executive (in our case, the mayor, not the city council), but in many counties, it appears that the elected county supervisors function as the county administrator.

- **Must practice disaster plans; not good enough to merely have a plan**
- **Must review disaster plans annually**
- Know who your local FEMA director is
- Linn County flooding
 - Performed table top exercises, but never anything more
 - Was not fully prepared for their flooding disaster
 - People were desperate for information during the disaster
 - During the disaster, there was a great toll on the county executive as everyone had her cell phone number and everyone called her for help
- **Continuity of government (not operations) is a must**
 - Mayor/Council Chair were both out of town and unreachable when the disaster struck
- **Must be prepared to make difficult family vs. job choice**
 - Prepare your own family to take care of themselves so you can take care of county business during a disaster
- Communications are essential
 - **Coordinated responses to media**
 - ✓ **Various agencies and various public relations officers and administration and council must all be saying same things**
 - ✓ During the NYC 9-11 attack response, Mayor Guillian had a psychologist advising him what the public needs to hear and their reactions
 - ✓ **We should get crisis communication training**
 - ⇒ Example: a city council member trying to get publicity may make statements that will cause problems
 - ✓ **Need scripted statements**
 - ✓ **Essential for Mayor to be the leader making the public statements**
 - ⇒ **Have experts there to make supporting statements as needed (police, fire, EMS, civil defense, engineers, public works, etc.)**

- ⇒ **After 48-72 hours, have regularly scheduled daily news conferences around TV news time to give the public information**
- ✓ Nothing is worse than giving the wrong information
- ✓ During a disaster, community anxiety is enormous
- Other
 - Need recovery teams and a manager
 - Need recovery coordinator – a hands-on person
 - Need finance/accounting, legal, risk management, IT, engineers
 - Team must work closely with federal and state disaster people
 - Get stand-by at-will contracts ready before a disaster
 - ✓ During and immediately after a disaster, there is no time to secure outside assistance via normal procurement processes
 - Get agreements to pay management and staff overtime before a disaster
 - Faith-based organizations are encouraged to help during a disaster
 - ✓ Best to deal with one organized group to coordinate with others
 - During disaster, ensure that everyone follows the disaster plan (county and state)
 - Need a plan to manage volunteers
 - ✓ Many volunteers will show up to help
 - Improve disaster plans immediately after incidents
 - State and federal government may or may not show up to help
 - ✓ City and county must be ready to deal with disasters alone

1:30pm – 3:30pm

Opening General Session

Presiding: Hon. Glen Whitley, Judge, Tarrant County, Texas, and NACo President

Admiral Mike Mullen

Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

- Vets – days of moving military personnel to VA and communities is over
- We need to help them transition via education, health care, and employment
- Average military age is 20's; they are wired to serve
- Need inspired local leadership to make it work; must have some models
- Create opportunities to tap potential of young vets; but bring challenges; PTS – they've been to hell and back
- Homeless vets
 - Greater numbers than ever
 - DOD and VA in Washington; can't do it alone from DC
 - Have best practices, can share
 - Looking for local leadership to take this on
- Draft
 - Not in favor of reinstituting the draft

- Favors 2 years of mandatory service in something
- Suicides
 - Dramatic increases since 2005
 - Now in second year of 5 year study in Army
 - Significant issue in national guard
 - Key factors are relationships and financial
 - Over half of suicides had mental health appointment before entering military

Eric H. Holder, Jr.
US Attorney General

- Incorporate technology and science into decisions
- Juvenile justice – treat children how we would want our own children to be treated
- **Need to move from prosecution to prevention models**
 - Such reforms will save money
 - Ex: Miami Dade County
 - ✓ Instead of arresting youth for minor violations, putting them in programs resulted in lowering the recitivism?????? rate to 3%
- Justice, dignity, and equality

Joe Scarborough
Former Congressman (R-FL)
Featured on MSNBC Morning Joe broadcasts

Entertaining speaker about politics.

3:30pm – 5:00pm
US Department of Health and Human Services Funding Opportunities and Resources

This presentation and discussion centered around county public health. Although this does not directly apply to the City & County of Honolulu, it was an interesting session. There was a malfunction of the air conditioning and everyone in the room was freezing. One speaker said that this was an “experiment in cryogenics”. It was too cold for me to take my hands out of my pockets to take notes.

Tuesday, March 8, 2011

8:30am – 10:15am
General Session

Presiding: Hon. Glen Whitley, Judge, Tarrant County, Texas, and NACo President

Shaun Donovan
Secretary, US Department of Housing and Urban Development

This was a scripted and rehearsed presentation packed with data related to HUD issues and programs.

Paul D. Ballew
Senior Vice President, Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company
Formerly with the Federal Reserve

Mr. Ballew presented his thoughts about the economic outlook.

Chris Coons
US Senator (D-DE)

- Must grow the economy and cut the deficit
- Must not balance the budget by bankrupting counties and cities
- Most concerning is the cut to CDBG
 - Slash more than 62% is wrong (current budget draft)
 - Understand that all programs must be cut but 62% is too much
- Will work to restore and sustain partnerships – city/state/federal
- On Ray LaHood – passionate, almost combative

Greg Walden
US Representative (R-OR)

- Deficit is unsustainable and unprecedented
- Must get debt under control
- Not every problem needs federal solution

10:45am – 12:00pm

Daniel Troy, Commissioner, Lake County, OH
Joshua Gordon, Concord Coalition

- Social services, medicare, Medicaid – 3 biggest services
- Defense discretionary is 1/6th of budget
- Non-defense discretionary is 1/6th of budget
- What people want to cut – foreign aid, environment, mass transit, etc.
- National debt is at 14 trillion; projection is that it will double in 10 years at this rate
 - In 2021, amount spent on debt will be larger than spent of defense
- 50% of our debt is owned by foreigners
 - America is mortgaging our future to foreigners
- Fiscal Commission
 - Goal is to balance the budget by 2015
- Currently spend \$100 – 150 billion on wars
- Social security is very easy to solve mathematically, but difficult politically
- Health care is very difficult to fix

12:15pm – 2:30pm

Presiding: Hon. Glen Whitley, Judge, Tarrant County, Texas, and NACo President

John Mica

US Congressman (R-FL)

Chair, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee

- Key items left undone by last Congress
 - Aviation – expired in 2006; extensions since then
 - ✓ Reauthorization just passed out of committee
 - Highways bill – major transportation legislation
 - ✓ Tried to pass this 6 years ago but only did extensions
 - ✓ Expired in 2009; now on 6th extension
 - ✓ Last week President signed 7th extension to September
 - Speed up the process (this statement was met with huge applause from the audience)
 - ✓ Example: It took \$60,000 to build a foot bridge in 120 days; if Feds involved, it would take \$250,000 for a study before anything could be built
 - ✓ Bill would red line procedures that inhibit efficiency
 - ✓ Bill would take us to next 10 years
 - ⇒ A 6 year bill would take years to approve, so better to go with a 10 year bill
- Stabilized trust fund; have funding through September

- Will look at various accounts for unused money
- Only 30% of stimulus money was expended by October 1, 2010
 - Example: \$35 billion was allocated to railroads but not being used

Doc Hastings
US Congressman (R-WA)
Chair, House Natural Resources Committee

Congressman Hastings discussed various issues related to natural resources.

Dr. David G. Brown
Clinical Psychologist, Defense Centers of Excellence

- If you look for problems, you'll find problems
- If you look for solutions, you'll find solutions
- Some key factors to well-being
 - Resiliency
 - Knowing one's culture
 - Relationships
 - Unit cohesion
 - Social well-being
 - Community well-being
- Highest in well-being – Hawaii, Utah, Wyoming; what are they doing right?

2:45pm – 4:00pm

The New Political Landscape: What to Expect from the New Congress

Will ?

Speaker of the House Boener's office

- 86 new House members
- Budget
 - Horrible at federal level, horrible at state level
 - Spending problem must be controlled
 - HRI to fund federal government for rest of year – 600 amendments
 - What was doing in the past is no longer sustainable; need local level input into options

Wendell Primus
Minority Leader Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi's office

- We not only have a spending problem; we have a huge jobs deficit
- When Obama came into office, GDP was down 6 points
 - Now rebounding – 12 straight months of job creation
- Must keep an eye on jobs in all the budget cuts
 - HRI will result in more jobs lost
- We must all work together
- Taxes are part of the solution
- Must keep economic growth going; long way to go

Wednesday, March 9, 2011
Visit to Capitol Hill

Conference attendees from Hawaii made the rounds to visit with our Hawaii Congressional delegation. We met with each of our US Senators and Congresswomen in their offices.

We met with:

- Congresswoman Colleen Hanabusa
- Congresswoman Mazie Hirono
- Senator Daniel Akaka
- Senator Daniel Inouye

We discussed our concerns and learned more about what is happening in Congress related to those issues. One of our main concerns was the pending huge cuts to CDBG. We impressed upon our Congressional delegation that such cuts would have severe impacts to our counties. Councilmember Stanley Chang was our spokesman to relate our HISAC platform issues.

Most impressive was meeting with Senator Inouye in his palatial Senate Appropriations Committee office and meeting room in the Capitol building. The meeting room is cordoned off and off-limits to the public with a guard standing at the entrance.

Thursday, March 10, 2011

Meeting with FTA

Therese McMillan
Deputy FTA Administrator

I met with Deputy Director McMillan and about eight senior FTA staff members representing various sections of expertise within the FTA. We discussed the Honolulu rail project at length, as well as Congressional funding and FTA issues. This was a very enlightening meeting that clarified several key issues for me.

Here are the highlights of this meeting:

- **FTA assessment is that projects already the pipeline and committed are okay.**
The FY2012 budget is up in the air, but even with the worst-case scenario, projects in progress should be okay.
 - FTA is still optimistic that Honolulu will get the anticipated \$1.55B.
 - Important for Honolulu to submit grant requests immediately to encumber allocated funds.
 - The farther along we are on this project, the more likely it is that the project will receive the anticipated funding.
 - Honolulu's project is included in the President's budget; this is a big deal that gives our project more weight.
- Current Senate proposal is of concern, but not clear yet as to its ramifications.
- In the past, typically, Congress decides which projects to cut; different environment now; may be a lump sum so FTA may decide.
- Uncertain about New Starts funding in the new budget; may be a reduction of \$200M.
- FTA is expecting Honolulu's revised Financial Plan in April.
 - Risk Assessment in May.
 - Honolulu could update the plan before receiving final approval.
 - FTA must approve Financial Plan for Honolulu to go forward with Final Design.
 - FTA review again before Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA).
- Regarding the release of "draft" Financial Plan
 - **FTA never instructed Honolulu or any other jurisdiction not to release any documents submitted to the FTA.**
 - **FTA does not really consider anything submitted to them to be a "draft"; whatever document that is submitted to them is the document; the document may be revised as a result of FTA comments, and certainly may be revised for other reasons as time progresses.**
- Regarding our Kiewit contract:

- **FTA states that it is “not typical” to award what I call a “master contract”.** It is more typical to award separate contracts for each piece. However, FTA recognizes that going with a “master contract” is more expedient and allows us to move more quickly by simply issuing a notice to proceed (NTP) at each phase instead of going through the procurement process at each phase.
- Proceeding with the utility relocation work now is proper use of Preliminary Engineering funds.
- I have been let to believe, and I have been stating publicly, that we must keep this project moving to show progress if we want to secure the federal funding
 - **This is not an accurate statement according to the FTA.**
 - **FTA’s primary concern is that we are following the plan and schedule in our Financial Plan. They monitor our progress and performance based on the plan. The plan is the key.**
 - When we receive the FFGA, there will be a commitment to a begin service date.
 - Can Honolulu slow down its schedule?
 - ✓ **The schedule is a local decision not dictated by FTA. But FTA will monitor our progress against our schedule.**
 - ✓ **Federal funding normally would lapse after three years, so that may be one consideration in developing the construction schedule. But with the unknowns of what this Congress might do, it might be possible that this may change.**

Friday, March 11, 2011

Jim Tymon
Director of House Highway & Transit Oversight Sub-Committee (Chairman John Mica’s staff member)

Highlights of our discussion:

- **It is likely that both highways and transit funds will be cut by Congress.**
- It is difficult to say how Honolulu’s project may be impacted.
- **Chairman Mica is a “big fan” of Honolulu’s rail project; he understands the geography and transportation challenges of Honolulu.**
- **Honolulu’s rail project is so far along that he is hopeful that our project won’t be stopped.**
- **Cost of Honolulu’s rail project is so high that it may be a target of some new Republicans’ attempts to cut “unnecessary spending”; certainly, not from Chairman Mica’s perspective.**
- This may be the 3rd or 4th biggest public works project the federal government is involved with in next several years so it may be more of a target.

- **Congress makes cuts program by program, not project by project.**
 - New Starts, bus, etc., are programs.
 - Honolulu rail is a project.
- FTA determines projects.
 - **If Congress cuts program funding, it is likely that FTA will just stretch out timelines of projects and not cut projects that are in the works, but cannot speak for FTA.**
- High speed rail projects are altogether different from Honolulu's rail project
 - New Jersey's canceled project may be more comparable to Honolulu's rail project as opposed to Florida's canceled project.
 - He applauds New Jersey's and Florida's local decision-making to cancel their projects.
 - ✓ He emphasized that these were local decisions, not federal decisions, based on the individual state's assessment of their own project.
- New Starts program caps federal funding commitments.
 - **Clearly, it is up to local governments to fund project cost over-runs; no federal help there.**
 - ✓ New Republicans should really embrace this concept.
 - ✓ Good fiscal position.
- Chairman Mica's Office has heard from Honolulu rail project opponents.
 - **They listen to the concerns but still believe that our project is a good one and Chairman Mica still supports it.**

City Council
City and County of Honolulu

CLAIM FOR TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT

Date: 5/5/11

Traveler: Breene Harimoto
Event: 2011 NACo Legislative Conference
Location: Washington D. C.
Dates: From 3/5/11 To 3/9/11

Description	Amount	Notes:
1. Registration Fee	\$465.00	Online confirmation attached
2. Airfare	\$1067.91	Online confirmation attached
3. Hotel	\$1337.27	2 online receipts attached
4. Meals		
5. Ground Transportation	\$47.00	receipt attached
6. Tips		
7. Other		
Other		
Other		
8. Adjustment		
TOTAL REIMBURSEMENT	2917.18	

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:



Signature of Traveler

5/5/11

Date