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**ISLAND VOICES**

**Rail will be catalyst for Oahu's progressive future**

By Donald T. Eovino

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I'm so glad to see the City Council approve the rail surcharge extension.

There is no turning back. We did that 20 years ago by one vote, when building it then would have cost us only 20 percent of what it is estimated to cost today.

Stop with the rhetoric about cutting it back to Middle Street. Traffic is nearly gridlocked everywhere when a minor accident occurs. People don't see the big picture.

There will be 21 stations and they will integrate all modes of transportation with a new efficiency for living.

New centers for housing will develop around the rail called transit-oriented development (TOD); this is a type of community development that includes a mixture of housing, office, retail and/or other commercial development and amenities integrated into a walkable neighborhood. This is in the works now.

These rail station areas also will produce opportunities for affordable housing, increase the tax base and create advertising income toward operating expenses.

The governor just announced an initiative to move the Oahu Community Correctional Center to Halawa, opening up that entire area, which is planned for a rail station and new development to create a revitalized Kalihi.

That means fewer cars on the roads, new bike lanes and better integration with the rail to buses, taxis, cars, bikes and walking paths.

Let's stop being the "crab in the bucket," screaming to stop anything new. Since I've lived here, protesters have wanted to stop the widening of the highway to Hawaii Kai, the airport viaduct and the H-3 freeway to Kaneohe. Yet today, these are greatly utilized by all.

The federal government is paying \$1.55 billion toward rail's development. The 8 million tourists to Oahu each year also are paying a great share of this through the 4.716 percent general excise tax. That's nearly one-third coming out of somebody else's pocket.

Oahu's west end needs this and this is where the Second City has been master-planned for the last 40 years.

There are many positive points about rail.

Look at the design; this is an engineering marvel.

Look at the fun cars and stations — rainbow colors on the cars, petroglyphs on the columns, sail-like tents at the stations. Bring bikes, coolers, surfboards, pushcarts on board.

Here are some of the stops: Kapolei, University of Hawaii-West Oahu, Ho‘opili, Leeward Community College, Pearl Highlands, Pearlridge center, Aloha Stadium, Pearl Harbor, Honolulu Airport, Chinatown, Downtown, Ward Avenue at what is now Sports Authority and Ala Moana Center.

The rail along Nimitz, Bishop and Alakea will pass the old Hawaiian Electric Co. site and views of an industrial harbor. These areas are not the most attractive commercial sites whose views would be destroyed.

At Ward is where all the new development of shops and restaurants are being done by Howard Hughes, Kamehameha Schools, etc. The rail will serve all these areas, as well as the nearby symphony hall, the Honolulu Museum of Art and Thomas Square.

Bike stations and walking paths will go down to Kewalo Basin, the old Fisherman’s Wharf, the UH medical school and the UH Cancer Center.

Adjacent is Kakaako Makai, being master-planned by the state Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

All stops will have bike stations, bike racks and bike paths.

This is exciting for a progressive Honolulu hub.

Think of the convenience, especially for the folks and the new youthful generation out at West Oahu.

We cannot stagnate as an island. Like it or not, we are a progressive and vibrant city, and we have to grow smartly and thoughtfully. The rail will help synthesize this.

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