HOUSE RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION CONDUCT A STUDY ON THE IMPLEMENTATION AND EXECUTION OF A FLEXIBLE LIGHT RAIL SYSTEM IN HONOLULU.

WHEREAS, the City and County of Honolulu is preparing to launch the largest and most expensive construction project in state history, a twenty mile elevated rail line that will connect West Oahu with downtown Honolulu and the Ala Moana Center; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of this project is to provide high capacity rapid transit to relieve congestion in the heavily travelled east-west transportation corridor between Kapolei and UH-Manoa; and

WHEREAS, the City and County of Honolulu has chosen to build an elevated rail system, consisting of steel wheel trains running on steel rails, that will run off electricity, and features trains capable of carrying more than 300 passengers; and

WHEREAS, the cost of building this proposed rail system is estimated to be $5.4 billion; and

WHEREAS, the City and County of Honolulu plans on paying to build this system through the 4% GET surcharge and moneys from the Federal Transit Administration's New Starts program; and

WHEREAS, tax collections for the rail have not kept pace with projections as evidence by the City and County revising down its projections for FY2010 from $198 million to $164 million; and

WHEREAS, to ensure the financial viability of its rail plan, the City and County of Honolulu is taking the
extraordinary measure of diverting $305 million in federal dollars meant for its bus system to build its rail system thereby endangering the reliability of the bus; and

WHEREAS, these monetary problems led the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to note that the rail project's financial plan did not "fare well in the stress test that [the] FTA will apply to evaluate robustness," and if the current plan was used to apply to advance the project into final design, "its weaknesses would likely cause [the] FTA to deny the request"; and

WHEREAS, the economic downturn has forced many public and private projects to make adjustments to their projects, yet the City and County of Honolulu has not made any changes; and

WHEREAS, Hawaii's gorgeous environment attracts million of visitors each year, generating revenues on which the State relies heavily as its main industry is tourism and the visitors' enjoyment of the scenery will be severely impacted by an elevated train system that interferes with their views; and

WHEREAS, Honolulu American Institute of Architects (AIA) is a chapter of the AIA and represents and services over 800 individual member architects, associates, and allied design profession who are working in fields allied to architecture; and

WHEREAS, Honolulu AIA is advocating for a flexible light rail system, which would allow Honolulu's train to run either at ground level or on elevated tracks, as appropriate; and

WHEREAS, through its research on a flexible light rail system, Hawaii identified a number of advantages of the system that includes the following:

   (1) Flexible light rail costs less, saving $170 million per mile built at street level, and would cost approximately $1 billion less than the City and County of Honolulu's proposed all elevated rail system; and
(2) Flexible light rail reduces construction time by only
taking four to five years to build, much less than the
nine to ten years it will take to construct the City
and County's elevated train system; and

(3) Flexible light rail can be built at ground level
thereby not blocking mauka/makai views, and allowing
easy access for the elderly, handicapped, children,
bicycle riders, and passengers with packages or
stroller; and

(4) Flexible light rail offers the flexibility of shifting
the routes to streets, which are not heavily populated
with iwi (Native Hawaiian burials); and

(5) Flexible light rail requires drivers on every train
and power sources either overhead wires or in-ground,
making it safer for passengers traveling via rail; and

WHEREAS, changes in profile from elevated to at-grade and
adjustments to the route will only require six to twelve months;
and,

WHEREAS, the money saved from building a flexible rail
system could be used to extend the system by an additional 8.8
miles at grade to include UH-Manoa, Waikiki, and West Kapolei;
and,

WHEREAS, major metropolitan cities such as Paris,
Barcelona, and Portland, have successfully implemented a
flexible light rail system that both serves its citizens and
preserves the beauty of those cities; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
Twenty-fifth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session
of 2010, that the Department of Transportation conduct a study
on the implementation and execution of a flexible light rail
system in Honolulu; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of
Transportation submit a report of its findings and
recommendations to the Legislature no later than 20 days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2011; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to Governor of the State of Hawaii, the Mayor of the City and County of Honolulu, the Director of the Honolulu Department of Transportation Services and members of the Honolulu City Council.

OFFERED BY:

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