A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO HIGHWAYS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that Farrington highway is the sole major roadway on Oahu's leeward coast and it is also the sole access route that links the Waianae district to Ewa and points east, including metropolitan Honolulu. Although west Oahu has experienced exponential growth and development over the last twenty years, transportation infrastructure has not kept pace. Traffic volume on Farrington highway has increased from an average of twenty thousand vehicles per day in 2000, to fifty thousand vehicles per day in 2016. Although planned rail and other public transportation expansions, such as more robust bus service, may alleviate some traffic congestion once fully implemented, a solution that depends solely on public transportation is too far in the future and inadequate. Traffic conditions continue to worsen and frustrated Leeward motorists are caught in gridlock traffic conditions on a daily basis. The community applauds efforts to address this pressing problem by implementing a contraflow lane, constructing a turn lane,
installing infrared sensors and traffic cameras; however,
Farrington highway continues to experience lane closures or
complete shutdowns on numerous occasions due to road work,
traffic accidents, severe weather, and other emergency
conditions.

The legislature further finds that in a coordinated effort
between numerous departments and agencies, plans have been put
in place to use existing roads as an emergency access and bypass
route into the Waianae area during emergency highway closures or
other emergency situations. The system of roads, known as the
Waianae Coast Emergency Access Road System (WCEAR), consists of
gated roads that are under the jurisdiction of the department of
emergency management of the city and county of Honolulu that can
be opened when it is deemed necessary or when requested by the
Honolulu police department. While use of WCEAR has provided
needed relief during recent emergency situations, improvements
are still needed. The residents of the Waianae district bear
the largest burden of the current infrastructural insufficiency
since they must contend with daily commutes of up to two hours
each way for jobs or school. Additionally, the lack of any
alternate route leaves leeward residents more vulnerable to harm
in an emergency situation. There is currently no available route that can be used as an alternative to Farrington highway during times when Farrington highway is impassable. Coastal residents are at the mercy of traffic conditions for travel within and out of the Waianae district and may be unable to reach emergency services or to timely evacuate the area if the sole available route both through and out of the district is impassable due to storm damage, severe vehicular accidents, or even daily rush hour traffic.

The legislature additionally finds that any project to alleviate traffic congestion on Oahu's west side must first avoid exacerbating the problem through ongoing lane closures or other disruptions caused by road construction. It is critical that any project to supply alternate transportation corridors must minimize or, ideally, altogether avoid creating additional transportation barriers for residents of west Oahu and must be completed in a timely manner.

Therefore, to expedite improvements, the purpose of this Act is to exempt changes and improvements to existing portions of the WCEAR from environmental assessment requirements under chapter 343, Hawaii Revised Statutes.
SECTION 2. (a) Changes and improvements to existing portions of the Waianae coast emergency access road within the Waianae district of Oahu shall be exempt from environmental assessment requirements under chapter 343, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

(b) For purposes of this Act, "Waianae district" means the leeward coast of Oahu from Nanakuli to Kaena point that is enclosed by the leeward slopes of the Waianae mountain range.

SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

INTRODUCED BY:  

[Signatures]

JAN 22 2019
Report Title:
Waianae Coast Emergency Access Road; Environmental Assessment; Exemption

Description:
Exempts changes and improvements to existing portions of the Waianae coast emergency access road within the Waianae district of Oahu from environmental assessment requirements under chapter 343, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

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