



MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT STREET LEVEL RAIL IN HONOLULU

Some of the things HART and others are asserting about street level rail in Honolulu are wildly inaccurate. Running street level rail from Middle Street through downtown can be done with the \$6.8 Billion in existing funding. There is no need for a GET surcharge extension to complete rail. Rail can be completed 4 years faster, with far less construction impacts, and lower operating and maintenance costs in the future if the elevated route connects to street level rail for the final section through downtown. This is not wishful thinking. It is based on current data from the 38 other cities in the U.S. using light rail.

Myth: *Street level rail would require the digging of a 4-8 foot trench 30 feet wide and huge construction impacts downtown.*

Fact: To lay a set of tracks construction would be 14 inches deep by 8 feet wide, which is the **same depth as normal road construction**. This would not require purchase of any additional land. Existing streets could be used. Because these streets have already been excavated, the issue of new archeological finds is not applicable. Street level rail stations are not bigger than a bus stop, requiring only a canopy for rain shelter and small ticket machine on an existing sidewalk.

In contrast, building elevated rail through downtown Honolulu would create enormous construction impacts since entire roadways will need to be cut open to pour underground spread foundations to support the weight of the elevated guideway. Constructing the football-field sized stations planned for elevated rail would create immense disruption to nearby structures, traffic and businesses downtown.

Myth: *Street level rail will be slowed to the speed of automobile traffic.*

Fact: The Middle Street-to-Downtown segment would be slower by 2-3 minutes (depending on length of final route). Signal synchronization can be used so that the street level trains can maintain 30-mile-per-hour speed through downtown, nearly the same speed as elevated rail. Managed lanes (for trains and busses only) keep trains running independent of automobile traffic speeds, and also greatly increase safety.

***Myth:** Changing the plan now would result in a loss of federal funding, and slow or halt the rail project.*

Fact: The FTA has already listed street level rail as an acceptable option to complete the route to downtown. The Recovery Plan sent to HART officials by the FTA in June 2016 lists six options for completion in order to receive \$1.55B in federal funding. The FTA does not dictate what rail technology is used. Option 2A in the Recovery Plan reads, “Build to Middle Street as planned and continue with at-grade rail system.” In September 2016 the FTA clarified that the route could extend to Downtown (Aloha Tower) at a minimum in order to qualify for federal funding.

With any major change in route, a supplement to the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is needed. However, this does not take the same amount of time as a full EIS. For example, in March 2010, the city changed the route of the rail at the airport because it was too close to the runways. The EIS was modified in a matter of 3 months and the revised EIS was submitted in June.

Even taking the time to make technical adjustments and put new plans in place, **the project could be completed 4 years faster** because of the speed with which street level rail tracks can be laid.

***Myth:** A street level system through downtown will result in loss of ridership capacity.*

Fact: Making a technical change to car design to have 3 instead of 4 cars per train can be made up for by increasing frequency at peak times to every 5 instead of 6 minutes.

A route through downtown Honolulu would deliver riders to their places of work. Instead of just a commuter rail, it would be a true urban transit system, attracting additional riders who want to travel through the city center’s intense employment areas. Very few commuters from West Oahu have an end destination of the few stops planned along Nimitz Highway or Ala Moana Center.

The mayor’s financial plan is for taxpayers to write him a blank check. In return, absolutely no public financial reporting has been released by HART, and cost estimates keep going up. Using the proposed street level route, the city already has enough funds to complete the project using existing GET surcharge money through 2027, without imposing more taxes. This would save 4 years of construction time and \$3-4 Billion dollars. It’s time to salvage the rail.

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