



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STATE OF HAWAII
STATE CAPITOL
HONOLULU, HI 96813

January 8, 2018

The Honorable David Y. Ige
Governor, State of Hawaii
415 S. Beretania Street
State Capitol, Executive Chambers
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

RE: Lahaina Bypass - Honoapiilani Highway Proposed Changes Request for Executive Intervention

Aloha Governor Ige,

As the House Representative for the West Maui 10th District, it is with regret that I write this letter to you. I am officially requesting your office immediately intervene and call a temporary "time out" on a last-minute proposal by the Hawaii Department of Transportation (HDOT) to the Keawe Street intersection of the Honoapiilani Highway in Lahaina, Maui. This proposal, which involves essentially removing one of the existing northbound lanes from the highway, will have a detrimentally profound and negative impact that will result in more traffic congestion for the West Side of Maui. Not only will these modifications have immediate disastrous results for traffic, it was not part of any planning documents. The public therefore, was given no chance to comment and receive the responses they deserve for their concerns. In fact, the planning modifications were never discussed with the community or their governmental representatives until the last minute through the media. This rush to implement a lane elimination plan, and make other changes to the traffic patterns on Keawe Street, is why I am asking you to intercede. This will allow the Department to work with the community and formulate a better solution than the one being proposed. HDOT's insistence on pushing forward with these proposed changes makes it imperative that your office step in and halt any construction of these proposed designs until they can be vetted by the community and its impact discussed.

HDOT's proposal cordons off the existing northbound right lane of the Honoapiilani Highway for through traffic with hard barriers. This forces drivers to move to the left before the barriers or be forced in the opposite direction of where they are going and required to loop around the entire town of Lahaina to re-merge. Besides forcing all the two-lane traffic to one lane, causing gridlock on the heart of the town itself, the isolation of the lane for right turn traffic only does not address the underlying capacity issues that started this discussion.

The only discussions with HDOT about this area was based on residents' concerns that the existing right turn lane could not handle the traffic and now, without extra

capacity, it would bottleneck and back up into the shopping complex area. This simply revolves around the need for extra right turn lane capacity. At no time was the elimination of existing lane with cone barriers discussed. The "so called" community meeting that the HDOT had with a handful of residents and businesses was announced at the last minute. We received no notification about this meeting, and were told after-the-fact that it was pretty much presented as a "this is the way it's going to be" discussion. Yet, the ramifications of this decision are being completely ignored. This is very troubling because of the disaster that could occur if it continues to go forward. More troubling is the fact that this critical information was not included in the environmental impact statement, planning documents, or discussions until now. The concerns of the community residents and businesses are that the HDOT will push ahead with this despite opposition. And, once construction begins, it will be impossible to stop and craft a better solution to create more right turn capacity while preserving the existing lane for thoroughfare of the area. To shut down the entire right lane for those leaving Lahaina town, to create an entrance and exit to the Lahaina bypass on Keawe Street, is simply robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Despite numerous letters to the editor, media coverage, and meetings organized by the community itself to raise the alarm, your department seems compelled to push forward. All this despite overwhelming coverage about the impending problems this would create. Because of this headlong rush to judgment on both the lane realignment, as well as refusal to signalize the adjoining side streets on Keawe Street, that we petition you directly for a "cease-and-desist" on this controversial portion of the project, and to prevent a costly or impossible remedy.

For the purposes of public policy in planning, I am greatly concerned that both the environmental impact statement process as well as the federal design process, which requires public input response in community facilitation, has been completely ignored. Furthermore, this is being dropped on everybody's head at the 11th hour and 59th minute. Your kokua and leadership are needed to prevent the elimination of benefits this project is intended to have for the overstressed infrastructure of our neighbor island district. As you know, West Maui attracts thousands of daily visitors and generates millions of dollars in revenue for the state of Hawaii through taxes, fees, and economic activity. This situation can be remedied through the effective leadership of you and your office. You have the power to intervene to let the community be heard, and alternatives to be created that will provide the additional capacity and access to the area while allowing for more ingress and egress to the bypass for increased traffic.

I humbly look forward to your response to this urgent matter. Mahalo.

Respectfully submitted,



Angus McKelvey, Representative
10th District – West Maui, Maalaea, North Kihei