

Dear President Trump,



As a lifelong Democrat and former Governor of Hawaii, I opposed your candidacy. I must admit, however, that you are on the right track scrutinizing wasteful spending on pork barrel projects.

Massive cost overruns and inflated ridership projections are the norm in rail projects, but Honolulu’s 20-mile elevated rail system tops them all. Initially estimated to cost \$5.28 billion, the projected construction cost is now \$10 billion or \$500 million per mile, the most costly in the world.

City officials initially promised that rail would reduce the current level of traffic congestion dramatically. However, the Final Environmental Impact Statement concluded that rail would reduce traffic congestion by less than 2% and that “traffic congestion will be worse in the future with rail than what it is today (without rail).”

Currently, the City does not have the funds to complete the 20-mile system, falling at least \$3 billion short and six years behind schedule.

How did this debacle happen? Frankly, like Alaska’s infamous “Bridge to Nowhere,” Honolulu’s rail project was driven more by politics than by objective engineering and planning.

The rail project exists today mainly because the FTA buckled under pressure from U.S. Senator Daniel K. Inouye who was then chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee. The powerful chairman famously declared “it would take World War III to



stop the rail project!” Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood praised Inouye as its “absolute lynchpin”.

Internal emails among FTA staff revealed there was much doubt and cynicism about rail and the City’s multi-million-dollar public relations campaign. Yet the FTA did nothing and is now on the verge of providing the remaining \$800 million of the \$1.5 billion grant.

Honolulu’s rail project does not deserve a single dollar more from the federal government. It has become a poster boy for how politics, incompetence, disinformation and outright lies are at the root of wasteful rail projects which do little for the public except raise taxes.

The FTA should terminate its Full Funding Grant Agreement with the City, keep the \$800 million, and use it for a worthy transit project. This would require the City to seriously consider some of the less costly alternatives to complement the rail system.

You and I met in 1998 when your Miss Universe Pageant was held in Honolulu. I recall you commented on the beauty of Honolulu and how you felt it was the perfect venue for the pageant. The rail project plans include seven massive elevated rail stations 50-60 feet high and the 35 foot high elevated rail line through the heart of downtown Honolulu. If built, this will change the beauty and ambience of the city forever.

Respectfully Yours,

Benjamin J. Cayetano
Governor of Hawaii (1994-2002)

