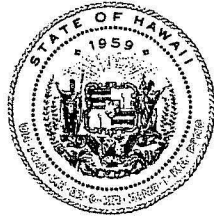
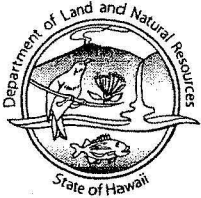


LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



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TESTIMONY OF THE CHAIRPERSON
OF THE BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

On House Bill 2527 – Relating To Smart Growth

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE

FEBRUARY 20, 2008

House Bill 2527 requires the Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) to establish a system of greenways and trails and requires the Office of State Planning to coordinate smart growth planning. The Department appreciates the need to pursue “smart growth” planning, but strongly opposes House Bill 2527 as currently drafted because the amendments to Chapter 198D, Hawaii Revised Statutes, in SECTION 2 of the bill are in inappropriate and vastly beyond the scope, intent, funding and staff’s abilities of the Department’s Na Ala Hele Trails and Access Program (NAH) to implement and would require significant additional state funding not in the Executive Supplemental Budget plan.

One of the goals of “smart growth” planning is to establish linear parks and greenbelts for pedestrian and bicycle use that are designed and planned as alternative urban transportation routes. *The primary intention is to reduce reliance on motorized transportation while also providing non-motorized urban recreational routes.* This type of urban feature and the related design specifications, construction and management has a clear nexus to state and county transportation agencies in coordination with state and county parks and recreation agencies. Urban greenway planning and development is vastly beyond the scope and intent of the NAH Program.

The NAH Program was established to 1) manage and improve typically remote, non-urban multi-use hiking trails in forest reserves, watershed and conservation land for recreational and hunting access, 2) restore public access to hiking trails either located on or bounded by private lands that have been closed due to liability concerns, and 3) document and protect and where feasible, restore managed public access to sensitive ancient and historic trails that may be under the Department’s jurisdiction. The NAH Program staff collectively manage and physically maintain approximately 367 miles of unimproved access roads and 309 miles of unpaved multi-recreational trails in rugged mauka watersheds, conservation lands, and culturally sensitive ancient Hawaiian and historic trails. Please refer to the 2007 NAH Annual Report to the 2008 Legislature for a complete list of trails and access roads that require constant stewardship for both resource management and public safety in generally remote areas.

The actions required to initiate and manage a complete new urban greenway system across the state requires an entire new program with dedicated funding and staffing trained in urban greenway planning, design, development and maintenance. This is considerably beyond the training and expertise of the 10 currently permanent Department Division of Forestry and Wildlife NAH staff and does not match the related job class series descriptions. A typical NAH trail dimension in a watershed area is 36 inches wide and is comprised of dirt. Management consists of re-digging and restoring the eroded or removing the accreted soil as necessary and systematically walking along the trails several times per year with weed whackers and chainsaws to keep vegetation from blocking the path. The Department's role in this "Smart Growth" planning and implementation is to coordinate the intersection of urban growth facilities with the existing mauka trails and access road network for integrated recreation and management and to be able to manage the NAH trail system in a sustainable manner.

In addition, the Department notes that there is no funding provision in this measure, and that NAH special and federal funding sources preclude using these funds towards the planning and subsequent development, construction and maintenance of urban greenways and linear parks.

In regards to SECTIONS 3, 4 and 5 addressing smart growth, the Department defers to the Office of Planning on the viability and application of these provisions.



**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS,
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM**

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Statement of
ABBEY SETH MAYER
Interim Director, Office of Planning
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Wednesday, February 20, 2008
3:30 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 308

in consideration of
HB 2527
RELATING TO SMART GROWTH.

Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee, and Members of the House Committee Finance.

The Office of Planning (OP) supports the intent of HB 2527, but we are concerned about the cost implications generated by the bill for OP as well as the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR). The bill would amend: (1) Chapter 198D, the Statewide Trails and Access System, by establishing a new statewide greenways program to be administered by DLNR; and (2) Chapter 225M, State Planning, to charge OP with advocating and coordinating smart growth principles in new and existing communities. No funding is provided. Our concerns are summarized as follows:

Smart Growth Functions. OP does not object to the amendments to Chapter 225M for smart growth coordination and technical assistance, since our responsibilities and functions under our operating authorities—225M as well as the Hawaii State Plan, the Coastal Zone Management Act, and the State Land Use Law—are founded on

comprehensive long-range planning and sustainable development principles that predate the packaging of smart growth principles. However, we are concerned that OP may be limited in terms of what it can do with existing resources and staffing levels.

Statewide Greenways System. We defer to DLNR as to the specific impacts the proposal has on its Na Ala Hele program, but we note that the statewide greenways system concept is much larger in scope and function than the Statewide Trails and Access System program. Trying to fit the two programs under the same umbrella may very well dilute the focus of the Na Ala Hele program and diminish both the resource management and recreational values derived from this small program. Furthermore, the greenways system concept has a very large urban component that will require the full cooperation and participation of the counties as well as a host of State and federal agencies, including the Department of Transportation, for the system to be realized.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



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February 20, 2008

The Honorable Marcus R. Oshiro, Chair
House Committee on Finance
State Capitol, Room 308
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

RE: H.B. 2527 Relating to the Smart Growth
Hearing Date: February 20, 2008 @ 3:30 p.m., Room 308

Dear Chair Oshiro and Members of the House Committee on Finance:

On behalf of our 10,000 members in Hawaii, the Hawaii Association of REALTORS® (HAR) supports the intent of H.B. 2527 which requires the Office of Planning to coordinate smart growth planning.

HAR served on the Interim Task Force on Smart Growth created pursuant to HR 259, Regular Session of 2007, and was very pleased with the high level of cooperation and discussion that occurred at all of the meetings. HAR strongly supports the ten smart growth principles that include creating a range of housing opportunities and choices, mixed land uses, and transportation choices. Uncoordinated and unfocused planning can be disastrous and smart growth seeks to approach planning as a collaborative effort among all stakeholders to ensure that mixed use and mixed income housing opportunities are available. A government agency needs to coordinate all the components of this effort. H.B. 2527 will assign this role to the Office of Planning to ensure that a comprehensive approach to land development complies with smart growth principles, which have been proven to make better communities and to improve the quality of life in all neighborhoods.

HAR looks forward to working with our state lawmakers in building better communities by supporting quality growth, seeking sustainable economies and housing opportunities, embracing the cultural and environmental qualities we cherish, and protecting the rights of property owners.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.