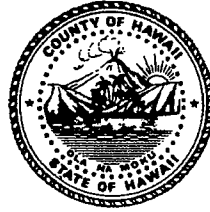


William P. Kenoi  
Mayor



LATE

William T. Takaba  
Managing Director

Walter K.M. Lau  
Deputy Managing Director

## County of Hawai'i

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February 9, 2009

The Honorable Senator J. Kalani English, Chair  
And Committee Members of the Senate Transportation,  
International and Intergovernmental Affairs Committee  
Hawai'i State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Re: Senate Bill 1018,  
MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR COUNTY OF HAWAII MASS TRANSIT

Dear Chair English and Committee Members:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 1018, which appropriates \$4,000,000 for the County of Hawai'i to improve its public transportation program. These funds will be used to purchase six 45-passenger, wheelchair accessible buses to expand the public transportation provided for the residents of Hawai'i County.

With the economic challenges we now face, it is imperative that we provide additional public transportation service to allow our residents to travel for work, afterschool, medical, and social purposes. Providing more bus service will not only reduce commuting costs for workers who frequently must travel 80 to 100 miles each way per day, but will also benefit the economy. Money that would be spent on commuting costs can be used for other basic necessities such as food and clothing.

It is also critical that we provide more services for our island's youth by expanding after-school transportation. Many of our youth in rural communities are unable to become involved in positive after-school activities because they have no reliable transportation when school lets out. Helping students to participate in afterschool programs at school or other sites provides a positive framework that allows them to further their education, participate in athletics, and learn new skills. It also reduces the number of "latch key" children, who arrive home from school to an empty house.

The County of Hawai'i has been a leader in reducing commuting costs for its residents. Since October, 2005, all users of our bus system have ridden free of charge, and our county provides the most extensive free bus service in the state. This has resulted in record numbers of people using our buses. For the period from July to December 2008, our bus ridership increased by more than 30 percent over ridership in the same period in 2007.

In addition to expanding our bus fleet, these funds would help the County to provide an administrative and maintenance facility for our transit agency. The Hawai'i County Transit Agency currently shares a baseyard in Hilo with several other County departments, and space is at a premium. An improved maintenance facility that can accommodate our vehicles properly will result in improved repairs and servicing of our growing bus fleet. Locating the agency's administrative functions at the new facility will allow us to better serve the public, since we will be providing transportation information and other services there.

Providing public transportation and reducing the cost of travel is one of the few ways we can reduce the cost of living for our residents and help them to weather challenging economic times. Passage of Senate Bill 1018 will improve the lives of the residents of Hawai'i County, and I ask for your support of this important bill.

Thank you for your consideration.

Aloha.

Billy Kenoi  
MAYOR