



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION | KA 'OIHANA ALAKAU  
869 PUNCHBOWL STREET  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-5097

February 11, 2025  
3:01 P.M.  
State Capitol, Room 224

**LATE**

**S.B. 927 SD1  
RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION**

Senate Committee on Transportation and Culture and the Arts

The Hawaii Department of Transportation (HDOT) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony on **S.B. 927 S.D. 1**, relating to transportation. HDOT offers the following comments on specific sections of the bill:

**PART I – Emergency Charter Air Services**

HDOT notes that there is no commission referenced in Section 261E, making the language in this section unnecessary. HDOT already has the authority to utilize appropriated funds to contract for emergency charter air services and has initiated procurement for these services. We anticipate awarding a contract and having these services available by August 2025, contingent on funding availability.

If the establishment of a commission is required before HDOT can proceed with contracting, the process would be delayed by at least a year, unnecessarily prolonging the implementation of critical emergency air services.

**PART II – Air Noise and Safety Task Force (SECTION 3)**

This section proposes the creation of an Air Noise and Safety Task Force within HDOT. However, we note that a similar task force was previously established under Act 311, designating the Office of Planning and Sustainable Development (OPSD) as the responsible entity. Additionally, the FAA Reauthorization Bill (SEC. 364) incorporated provisions from Act 311, ensuring that air noise and safety concerns are already being addressed at the federal level.

Given these existing frameworks, we recommend reconsideration of this section to avoid duplication of efforts.

**PART III – Airports Advisory Council (SECTION 5)**

HDOT already has protocols in place with airline and concessionaire partners to accommodate travelers and employees during significant disruptions, emergencies, and unexpected events. Additionally, HDOT collaborates with DBEDT and HTA to coordinate support for travelers during major incidents.

Rather than creating a new advisory council, HDOT recommends enhancing existing efforts through the following actions:

1. Strengthen Stakeholder Coordination
  - Expand quarterly stakeholder meetings to increase participation and ensure diverse representation.
  - Improve public-facing reports on airport security measures and contingency planning to enhance transparency and preparedness.
2. Increase Public Awareness of Security and Emergency Protocols
  - Expand outreach efforts via HDOT's official website, government portals, social media, and mainstream media to keep travelers informed about security area restrictions and emergency response procedures.

To ensure continued progress, HDOT is prepared to submit an annual report to the Legislature detailing actions taken and policy updates related to managing disruptions and improving traveler support.

### **Designation of Airport Security Areas (SECTION 6 & SECTION 7)**

HDOT supports granting authority to adopt administrative rules to designate airport security areas within airport properties. This will enhance security measures and improve the overall travel experience for the public.

In recent years, there have been several reported assaults in airport facilities, highlighting the urgent need for stronger security protocols.

### **PART IV – Establishment of Positions (SECTION 8)**

HDOT appreciates the intent of this section in establishing key positions within the Airports Division. However, we note that some of these positions already exist within the current airport organizational structure.

For positions that are not currently established, HDOT believes it has sufficient vacancies that can be reclassified to meet the intent of the bill. Our approach is to work within existing resources rather than expanding the size of the agency, ensuring efficient staffing while enhancing services to meet current and future demands.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



Testimony of  
**ALASKA AIRLINES and HAWAIIAN AIRLINES**

Before the Senate Committee on  
**TRANSPORTATION AND CULTURE AND THE ARTS**

**Tuesday, February 11, 2025**  
**3:01 P.M.**  
**Hawai'i State Capitol, Room 224**

In consideration of  
**SENATE BILL 927, SD1**  
**RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION**

The Honorable Chris Lee, Chair  
The Honorable Lorraine R. Inouye Vice Chair  
Members of the Committee on Transportation and Culture and The Arts

**Re: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 927, SD1, Relating To Transportation (with comments)**

Alaska Airlines and Hawaiian Airlines appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 927, SD1 (SB 927 SD1), which aims to enhance Hawaii's air transportation system through several key provisions, including the establishment of an Air Noise and Safety Task Force, the creation of an Airports Advisory Council, the designation of airport security areas, and the addition of key positions within the Department of Transportation's Airports Division.

While we support the overall intent of this bill and recognize the importance of improving Hawaii's airport operations, we respectfully submit comments on specific provisions that may unintentionally create inefficiencies, slow down airport improvements, or require further clarification. We urge consideration of amendments that would enhance the bill's effectiveness while avoiding unnecessary complexities.

**Comments on the Air Noise and Safety Task Force (Part II, Section 3)**

SB 927 SD1 proposes changes to the Air Noise and Safety Task Force, but Act 311, SLH 2022, already formally established this task force. Rather than creating a parallel effort, we recommend that Act 311, SLH 2022, be amended to place the task force under the Department of Transportation (DOT) instead of the Office of Planning and Sustainability Development (OPSD). This adjustment would ensure that air noise and safety issues are managed by the agency directly responsible for aviation operations, facilitating more effective coordination, oversight, and implementation.

**Comments on the Airports Advisory Council (Part III, Section 5)**

While the Airports Advisory Council seeks to enhance stakeholder engagement, Hawaii's unique 15-airport system already operates within a highly structured framework, involving DOT-A, airlines, and

multiple federal agencies such as the FAA, TSA, CBP, and USDA. Airport management is subject to strict federal and state regulations, and additional advisory layers could inadvertently slow decision-making, create redundancies, and delay necessary infrastructure projects.

Additionally, because DOT-A operates as an enterprise fund, it must remain financially self-sustaining while meeting operational, safety, and security standards. Any new governance structure should be carefully considered to avoid adding inefficiencies that could hamper airport modernization efforts.

### **Considerations on Proposed New Positions**

We appreciate the attention to staffing and leadership roles within DOT-A, as strong planning and oversight are essential for effective airport operations. However, further clarity is needed on how the five proposed Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) positions—Chief Airports Planner, Chief Airports Architect, Chief Landscape Architect, Planning Expert, and Branding and Marketing Expert—were identified.

- Two of these functions (Chief Airports Planner and Chief Airports Architect) already exist, raising questions about their inclusion in this bill.
- Additionally, there should be further discussion on whether branding and marketing functions should be housed within DOT-A or if they fall more appropriately under the Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA), which already leads marketing efforts for Hawaii’s travel industry.

A clearer justification for these roles would help ensure that the most critical staffing needs are prioritized.

### **Addressing Procurement Challenges for Airports**

One of the greatest operational challenges for Hawaii’s airports is the complexity of the state’s procurement process. While other procurement-related bills are under consideration, SB 927 SD1 presents an opportunity to address airport-specific procurement inefficiencies.

Delays caused by stringent procurement policies frequently slow down necessary aviation-related contracts, maintenance, and infrastructure projects. We encourage the Legislature to consider adding provisions within this bill to create a more efficient procurement framework for airports, allowing for timely and effective project execution.

### **Support for Key Provisions**

While we recommend modifications to certain aspects of SB 927 SD1, we strongly support the following provisions:

- Designation of Airport Security Areas – Enhancing security through designated restricted areas will help protect travelers and airport personnel, minimize disruptions, and ensure compliance with evolving federal security requirements.
- Ensuring Proper Staffing for DOT-A – Strengthening airport leadership through well-planned positions will enhance long-term infrastructure planning and operational efficiency. However,

further evaluation is needed to ensure that these positions align with the department's most pressing needs.

### **Recommended Amendments**

To improve the effectiveness of this measure, we respectfully request the following amendments:

1. Amend Act 311, SLH 2022, to place the Air Noise and Safety Task Force under DOT for better administrative oversight.
2. Include provisions addressing procurement inefficiencies specific to airport operations to streamline project execution and infrastructure improvements.

### **Conclusion**

SB 927 SD1 represents a valuable opportunity to enhance Hawaii's aviation infrastructure, but it is crucial to ensure that proposed changes support efficiency rather than introduce unintended complications. We urge the Legislature to consider our recommendations to optimize governance, staffing, and procurement processes, while maintaining Hawaii's airports as safe, efficient, and competitive travel hubs.

**Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony.**

## AIRLINES COMMITTEE OF HAWAII



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**LATE**

Senator Chris Lee, Chair  
Senator Lorraine Inouye, Vice Chair  
Committee on Transportation and Culture and the Arts

February 11, 2025; 3:01 p.m.  
Conference room 224 & Videoconference

### **RE: SB 927 SD1 Relating to Transportation – Comments**

Aloha Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye and members of the committee:

The Airlines Committee of Hawaii (ACH), comprised of 20 signatory air carriers that underwrite the State airport system, appreciates the opportunity to offer comments on SB 927 SD1, which 1) requires the Air Carrier Commission to enter into a contract with a qualified charter air service provider to secure emergency air transportation services in cases of emergency when no other air service is available, 2) establishes the Air Noise and Safety Task Force, 3) establishes the Airports Advisory Council, 4) authorizes the Department of Transportation to adopt administrative rules to designate an airport security area within an airport property, 5) establishes positions, 6) requires a report to the Legislature and 7) appropriates funds.

Part II, Section 3 of SB 927 SD1 is in direct conflict with Act 311, SLH 2022, which formally established the Air Noise and Safety Task Force. We recommend amending Act 311, SLH 2022 to place the Air Noise and Safety Task Force within the Department of Transportation instead of the Office of Planning and Sustainability Development (OPSD) for administrative purposes.

Of particular concern is Part III, Section 5 of the bill. The ACH and the State Department of Transportation – Airports Division (DOT-A) coordinate closely on all aspects related to the development, operation and maintenance of the airport system. Multiple federal agencies, including the FAA, TSA, CBP and USDA, are also involved to varying degrees in their respective areas.

*\*ACH members are Air Canada, Air New Zealand, Alaska Airlines, All Nippon Airways/Air Japan, Aloha Air Cargo, American Airlines, China Airlines, Delta Air Lines, Federal Express, Fiji Airways, Hawaiian Airlines, Japan Airlines, Korean Airlines, Philippine Airlines, Qantas Airways, Southwest Airlines, Sun Country Airlines, United Airlines, United Parcel Service, and WestJet.*

Senator Chris Lee, Chair  
Senator Lorraine Inouye, Vice Chair  
Committee on Transportation and Culture and the Arts  
February 11, 2025; 3:01 p.m.

The customer experience, safety and security are always top of mind for the airlines; our goal is to provide a safe, inviting, and pleasant travel experience to all. However, Hawaii's uniquely complex 15-airport system makes it very challenging to efficiently operate and maintain as compared to a single airport.

In addition, unlike other State departments, the Airports Division is an enterprise fund that must be self-sustaining and meet stringent operating, safety and security standards.

While well intended, establishing an Airports Advisory Council will add another layer of oversight and will likely disrupt and delay the completion of airport improvement projects without much benefit.

The ACH is in support of Section 6 of Part III, which designates an airport security area within airport property.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. The ACH asks for your consideration in amending Act 311, SLH 2022 and deleting Part III, Section 5.

Sincerely,

ACH Executive Committee



Brendan Baker



David Sellers



Elizabeth Loomis



Randall Fiertz



Richard Ide

**SB-927-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 8:09:33 AM

Testimony for TCA on 2/11/2025 3:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Austin Johnasen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support