

Amy Ford-Wagner

From: OahuMPO <oahumpo@oahumpo.org>
Sent: Monday, March 7, 2016 10:31 PM
To: OahuMPO
Subject: New submission from General Comments

Name

John Book

Email

BooksMusica@gmail.com

Subject:

Miscellaneous

Description (optional):

Preventing development at the Hawaiian Railway Society

Comment

I have heard that there is a consideration of connecting connect Kualaka'i Parkway from Kapolei Parkway to Roosevelt Avenue, which would not only go through what exists but it would completely get rid of what is there, which is the property of the Hawaiian Railway Society. They are on the National Register of Historic Places and the train yard is on the State Register of Historic Sites. I am hoping that you will reconsider not doing this for a few reasons.

When I was growing up in Honolulu, we'd always go out to Nanakuli, Waianae, and Makaha to see family and one of the things I would do is go to the beach. One thing we would always do is go over to the beach but drive over an old railroad. For years I used to ask myself "why is there a railroad track when there are no trains here?" I did not realize there was a rail system before, one that made a lot of people travel to and from Honolulu out into the country and even towards Ka'ena Point, Mokule'ia, Hale'iwa all the way to the North Shore. Once World War II began, the military/government had taken over the rail system and when the war was over, it was never opened again to the public. It was closed down for good in the late 60's/early 70's so what I got to see as a kid was the remnants of what was, nothing but abandoned tracks taken over by new roads and properties.

I now live on the mainland but when I came back home in 1998, one of the things I wanted to do was, after finding out there was a train to ride, I wanted to go on it. In 90 minutes, I experienced something I have never felt before. It wasn't the Pearlridge Monorail, it wasn't the Ala Moana Shopping Center Christmas train, nor was it the Seattle Monorail or something you'd ride at Disneyland. I had a sense of history I had never felt before, and this was in my backyard. There is a ghost town there that had a history of people and workers and now it's just land. What I experienced was a sense of history I am glad is being preserved and while it may not get a lot of attention as other things in Honolulu or on Oahu, I am someone who spent a good amount of time up in Ewa and Ewa Beach since my uncle had lived there. I remember when it was nothing but fields and a long road that had a corner store that sold boiled peanuts and apple juice. It was my dad's favorite spot. The last time I was home in 2000, we drove up and I honestly didn't know where I was until I saw the old McDonald's and the laundromat and said "oh wow, we're in Ewa Beach?" My point is I want a sense of old Hawai'i, however small, to still exist, not only for today's youth but for the future and getting rid of it for the sake of doing so would diminish its history and importance.

Going to the Hawaiian Railway Society is as important as hiking Diamond Head or Koko Head, it's as important as going to the Arizona Memorial, as important as a visit to Matsumoto Shave Ice, as moving as driving near Rabbit Island or what I still call Chinaman's Hat. The longer I am away from home, the more I still want to see a few things that I remember. Without a sense of something as important as the old rail system of Oahu, how will anyone learn why it was important to so many people? Being able to travel today from the North Shore or Hale'iwa to Honolulu takes no more than 45 minutes if the traffic is good but back then, it had taken three to four hours, sometimes longer if things were on the tracks. My point is that there are many heritage trains across the U.S. I live in the Pacific Northwest where not only there are a number of heritage trains, but public transportation is not considered an "alternative", it is as important means to travel alongside buses, bicycles, taxis, and the latest methods such as using Uber and Lyft. In fact, there are sections of Portland, Oregon that are sophisticated with public transportation as they are in England and other parts of Europe. I am aware that there is a subway system developing on Oahu but rather than kill the old methods of transportation, there needs to be a reason not only to show why it was relevant, but why it can still be used in the 21st century and beyond.

The Hawaiian Railway System have people who make donations on an annual basis, volunteers who are more than willing to

make an effort in preserving not only the trains, but the railroads and the land they are on. It's a small piece of history that may be insignificant for some but it is something that represents a time when it was considered the most advanced technology on the islands, brought into fruition by Benjamin Dillingham. When he created the Oahu Railway and Land Company, he would take Oahu and the rest of Hawai'i to the next level of progress and it is something worth preserving and teaching today.

I am simply saying to please not develop over the land where the Hawaiian Railway Society is located. Please preserve something that has historical and cultural value to the islands so that many will be able to visit it for many years to come. Mahalo nui.