



**O'AHU METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION  
POLICY BOARD**

Thursday, July 15, 2021, 11:00 a.m.

Email: [oahumpo@oahumpo.org](mailto:oahumpo@oahumpo.org)

**Re: Discussion on the Public Input Process for the Federal Fiscal Year 2022-2025  
Transportation Improvement Program**

Dear Chair Moriwaki and Members of the Board:

My name is Kathleen Rooney, and I am the Director of Transportation Policy & Programs at Ulupono Initiative. We are a Hawai'i-focused impact investment firm that strives to improve the quality of life throughout the islands by helping our communities become more resilient and self-sufficient through locally produced food; renewable energy and clean transportation; and better management of freshwater and waste.

Ulupono Initiative respectfully submits comments regarding the public comment process for the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2022-2025 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). While we appreciate the opportunity for the community to provide testimony, we find the limited opportunities provided for the O'ahu Metropolitan Planning Organization (O'ahuMPO) to fully engage with robust consideration and discussion concerning. Additionally, we are worried that the O'ahuMPO does not have sufficient time to fully assess and iterate with the community input and take action before the federally mandated deadlines in September 2021.

Broadly, we found O'ahuMPO staff engaged in public outreach, but we currently do not see a process where the staff and the Policy Board have the ability to fully consider said input as well as hear firsthand from the community before the presumed scheduled vote at the July Policy Board meeting. Given the magnitude and long-term implications of these decisions, we question if it is sufficient to discuss public and intergovernmental comments at the same meeting where the Policy Board will vote on the new TIP. Will this provide adequate time to really incorporate any comments and make any revisions to the TIP?

We believe a more thorough and transparent process would have been to hold a discussion of the public comments at the June Policy Board meeting, including any exploration of potential alternatives or solutions with staff along with adequate time for the Policy Board to explore other technical options.

As we shared in our public comments submitted to O'ahuMPO staff as part of the TIP public comment period (see attached), the outreach process appears to be focused on specific projects. However, Ulupono Initiative believes O'ahu residents would benefit from greater consideration and evaluation of whether the TIP can better serve ORTP goals. At \$2-3 billion, it seems important to

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allow for the exploration of different funding scenarios based on additional feedback and evaluation incorporating community input. Our public comments provide one proposal for reallocation of the TIP resources from identified expansion projects to existing safety and preservation, active transportation, and wayfinding, data, and operational improvements. However, we are confident that with Policy Board direction, the MPO staff could provide additional technical recommendations.

Recognizing the limited timeframe imposed by the larger federal process, we respectfully request that going forward additional time and consideration be made for more community input and dialogue with the O'ahuMPO Policy Board members so such input may be assessed and more fully incorporated into the decision-making process. Doing so will help ensure that the many diverse perspectives from within our community are able to inform the TIP, while reassuring residents that their voices are being heard.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on this important matter to the people of O'ahu.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Rooney", written in a cursive style.

Kathleen Rooney  
Director of Transportation Policy & Programs

Attachment (1)

\*\*\*Note that this testimony largely mirrors our testimony provided for the last Policy Board meeting held on July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021.



**O'AHU METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

707 Richards St., Suite 200

Honolulu, HI 96813

Email: [oahumpo@oahumpo.org](mailto:oahumpo@oahumpo.org)

**Re: Proposed Federal Fiscal Year 2022-2025 Transportation Improvement Program**

To whom it may concern:

Ulupono Initiative respectfully submits comments regarding the impact of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) with concerns over its misalignment with the O'ahu Regional Transportation Plan (ORTP) 2045 goals. Although O'ahu Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) staff accepted public comments through an online survey, the outreach questions and process appear to be focused on specific projects. Ulupono Initiative believes O'ahu residents would benefit from greater consideration and evaluation of whether the TIP can better serve ORTP goals.

As mentioned during the 2045 ORTP comment period, we continue to have concerns about the selected projects as a whole. Key concerns are outlined below:

- **Significant local resources are being dedicated to roadway widening and new lane-mile capacity projects.**
  - o \$308 million across eight projects will deliver an estimated 15 miles of new lane-miles/roads.<sup>1</sup> At this rate of new road investment, we will potentially see a 1.5% increase in vehicle miles traveled (VMT)<sup>2</sup> due to these projects alone—an estimated additional 65 million miles.<sup>3</sup>
- **Local resources are being used to accelerate new induced-demand projects.**
  - o Of the \$308 million, only \$12 million is from federal sources (4%). The funding sources for these projects are almost exclusively local, meaning they are currently relying on State of Hawai'i capital improvement program (CIP) monies and the rental car surcharge.<sup>4</sup> They in fact face very few statutory restrictions; they could be used for projects that reduce congestion and meet ORTP goals more effectively, not just new lane-miles.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on rough estimates provided in project descriptions. If not possible to determine, 1 mile was used.

<sup>2</sup> <https://t4america.org/maps-tools/driving-down-emissions/> "Driving increases in exact proportion with increases in lane-mileage—a 10 percent increase in lane miles can lead to a 10 percent increase in driving." Therefore, 15 new miles equals 1.5% of the total lane miles on O'ahu, around 1000 miles.

<sup>3</sup> High-level/sketch level estimate: 6,659 miles per capita in 2019 multiplied by our population of 974,563 = 6.5B VMT in 2019 on O'ahu of which 1% is 65M VMT. VMT per capita is available at: <https://resilientoahu.org/sustainability-report>

<sup>4</sup> Note that there appears to be no official project restriction on the rental car surcharge. Although the preamble of authorizing legislation (Act 174, SLH 2019) states the money should be used for "increase highway capacity and reduce congestion," there is no such restriction included in the Hawai'i Revised Statutes as far as we've been able to confirm. Accordingly, the revenues are just deposited into the state highway trust fund.

- **There is a lack of resources dedicated to the goals espoused in the ORTP, especially those regarding:**
  - o Safety (Goal #1)—2.4% of total expenditures;
  - o Active transportation systems (Goal #2)— 4.1% of total expenditures;
  - o Preservation and maintenance of the system (Goal #4)—13.9% of expenditures; and
  - o Improving air quality and protecting environmental transportation system (Goal #7)— 0.5% of total expenditures.
  
- **38.2% of resources requested by the State Department of Transportation’s (DOT) project development processes are for new roadway capacity.**
  - o These are almost equal to those resources identified for preservation and maintenance of the system (44.4%) by the state DOT. Under these circumstances, system expansion is prioritized on par with maintenance, even though the statewide maintenance backlog is 1:1 across all transportation projects.<sup>5</sup>
  
- **The aforementioned \$308 million for new roadways could otherwise implement the entire O’ahu Bike Plan.**
  - o Instead of covering 15 miles of new roads, those monies could cover almost 567 miles of new bike facilities.
  - o The economic impact could also be much greater. A study by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) cited that sidewalks and bike facilities deliver 17 jobs per million dollars spent, more than any other type of project including new road construction.<sup>6</sup>

To help address these issues and support the realignment of the TIP, UluPono Initiative proposes that the O’ahuMPO consider shifting any portion of the \$308 million in new roadway capacity to the following programs<sup>7</sup>:

- **Active transportation (\$92 million)**
  - o \$10 million to Intermodal Connectivity—TAC Set-Aside (O’ahuMPO) (OS-21-59)
  - o \$20 million to the Bikeways Improvement Program (OC2)
  - o \$15 million to TAP (MPO) Program at Various Locations (OC25)
  - o \$47 million to the State’s TAP Program, matching the City & County of Honolulu request (OC26)
  
- **Vulnerable users (\$40 million)**
  - o \$20 million to the Safe Routes to Schools Program (OC28)
  - o \$10 million on Transportation Assistance for the Elderly and Disabled (OS50)
  - o \$10 million on Bus Stop ADA access and Site Improvements (OC14)
  
- **Safety and preservation programs (\$131M)**
  - o \$10 million State Safety Oversight Program (OS68)
  - o \$20 million for Preventative Maintenance (OC20)

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<sup>5</sup> <https://ulupono.com/news-listing/report-examines-hawaii-s-21-8-billion-vehicle-economy/>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.railstotrails.org/resourcehandler.ashx?name=trail-investment-a-good-deal-for-the-american-economy&id=14132&fileName=RTC\\_Trail\\_Benefits\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_All\\_Use\\_v2.pdf](https://www.railstotrails.org/resourcehandler.ashx?name=trail-investment-a-good-deal-for-the-american-economy&id=14132&fileName=RTC_Trail_Benefits_Fact_Sheet_All_Use_v2.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> In addition to current funding requests

- \$20 million for Bridge Replacement Program, Various Locations (OS77)
  - \$20 million for Bridge Seismic Retrofit Program, Various Locations (OS78)
  - \$5 million for Bridge Inspection, Inventory, and Appraisal (OC3)
  - \$20 million for Shoreline Protection/Mitigation Program (OS79)
  - \$20 million for Bridge Rehabilitation Program, Various Locations (OS76)
  - \$16 million for Bridge and Pavement Improvement Program, O'ahu (OS1)
- **Wayfinding, data, and operational improvements (\$45 million)**
- \$20 million to O'ahu Traffic Signal Controller Modernization, Phase 2 for Phase 3, if possible (OC-21-55)
  - \$10 million for Traffic Improvements at Various Locations (OC8)
  - \$5 million for Destination Sign, Upgrade, and Replacement (OS12)
  - \$5 million for Traffic Counting Stations at Various Locations, O'ahu (OS63)
  - \$5 million for Traffic Signal Modernization at Various Locations, Ph1 (OS80)

With some exploration of these proposals, Honolulu could fund more active transportation and deliver a safer and well-maintained system. In addition, funds could go toward more projects to reduce VMT, protect vulnerable users, and generate more jobs. We realize these are high-level proposals, but we wanted to proactively offer solutions to the problems we see.

In addition, there are other types of projects not submitted but that can be explored through programmatic projects by the O'ahuMPO. These include:

- Makaha Road realignment study (if not funded through earmarks associated with federal reauthorization) and subsequent construction;
- Projects that submit for U.S. Department of Transportation's Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grants, such as the Ala Wai Bridge crossing or the associated application with the Makaha Bridge project (if not chosen);
- Community-based pedestrian and biking safety funding program (a grant program similar to the AARP community challenge grants to fund quick build projects by community organizations, such as those used on Papipi Road in 'Ewa Beach); and
- Others ideas to reflect ORTP priorities such as solidifying and expanding bikesharing options across the island.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments on this important matter to the people of O'ahu.

Respectfully,

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Kathleen Rooney  
Director of Transportation Policy & Programs

*Ulupono Initiative is a Hawai'i-focused impact investment firm that strives to improve the quality of life throughout the islands by helping our communities become more resilient and self-sufficient through locally produced food; renewable energy and clean transportation; and better management of freshwater and waste.*