



# AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION HAWAI'I CHAPTER



Celebrating 50 Years  
**1962 - 2012**

## Classic Cases in Hawai'i Transportation Controversies

Today, Hawai'i boasts a modern multi-modal system of transportation facilities which serve the needs of its people. For the air system, there are five primary airports and ten secondary airports. There are ten commercial harbors on six islands, serving cargo imports and exports as well as a thriving cruise passenger business. On the land-side, the state owns 2,450 miles of paved roadways. Every island now has a bus system, and there is grassroots support for the "Complete Streets" movement which seeks to make room for pedestrian and bicyclists on all roadways.

The rudiments of the road system, railroads, and the harbor system have been around for over one hundred years, serving both the original settlers of the island and economic industries of sandalwood, followed by sugar cane and pineapple. One does not need to look far to see remnant pieces of the original infrastructure.

### Reef Runway

The first major runway in the world built entirely offshore on an underwater coral reef. One of the first projects to ever have an EIS, which was challenged in three courts, ultimately ending up in the U.S. Supreme Court which ruled the EIS to be adequate. The runway was completed in 1977 at a cost of \$81 million. Hawai'i's airports handle over 290,000 operations each year, including cargo and nearly 20 million passengers



### Hanalei Bridge

Two thousand twelve marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hanalei Bridge. This historic one lane Pratt truss bridge crosses the Hanalei River into a world from the past. Preservation of this and the other one lane bridges along the ten-mile Kuhio Highway in Kauai has been accomplished due to the quiet tenacity and commitment of a vigilant group of local citizens who hold the State accountable. Versions of this controversy have lasted the last four decades, but were especially intense in the mid-eighties to mid-nineties when the bridge was threatened with demolition and replacement.



### Honolulu Rail

Dreams for a fixed guideway/rail system in Honolulu began in the sixties, when disenchantment with highway expansion was in full bloom throughout the country. The Makai Freeway was abandoned. Instead, rail studies were conducted throughout the 1970s and 1980s and an EIS issued in 1992 after which a Design Build contract was awarded. That ended when the City Council failed to enact a general excise tax surcharge to pay for construction. From 1998-2004 the City worked to create a Bus Rapid Transit system, a plan abandoned by the next administration. From 2005 to today, the City has worked to complete the planning, environmental review, and design of a 23-mile rail system from Kapolei to Ala Moana. Construction started amidst political and court challenges.

You write the ending of this story...



Since statehood in 1959, State of Hawai'i moved aggressively to build and upgrade its airports and airfields, to dredge harbors and add or convert pier space and warehouses, and to carve out roadways which could serve a growing outside interest in Hawai'i. A blossoming tourism economy was made possible by modern air capacity to reach Hawai'i in less than a day versus the time on sea being five days. State of Hawai'i leaders made sure that the infrastructure was ready to serve this need. For the most part, this change progressed smoothly as resources allowed.

Controversies often accompanied the building of this new infrastructure, giving rise to several planning and environmental debates that lasted more than a decade and which carry over to today.

### H-3

Thirty-seven years in the making, this 15 mile road and tunnel through the Ko'olau Mountains was the last segment completed in the interstate system. Legal challenges and community protests were overcome when Congress passed an exemption from environmental laws as a rider in the Department of Defense budget. Supporters hail the project as an engineering wonder and praise its beauty and natural vistas.



### Superferry

Private steamships and ferries were once the only way to travel between the islands. Superferry was to be two catamarans running between O'ahu, Maui, Kawaihae (Hawai'i) and Nāwiliwili (Kauai). The service only operated for 15 months from December 2007 to March 2009. Legal issues over the need for an EIS and local protests led to a Hawai'i Supreme Court ruling that the law granting EIS exemption was unconstitutional. Four months later, the company declared bankruptcy and its two vessels were purchased by the U.S. Maritime Administration.

