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**Statement of Councilmember Nestor Garcia
Honolulu City Council Floor Leader
Chair, Committee on Transportation & Public Works**

Honolulu City Councilmember Nestor Garcia, upon learning of the remarks made by Stop Rail Now and former Governor Ben Cayetano regarding the Honolulu transit project, today said that it is unfortunate that transit opponents don't or won't understand the process we are undergoing.

As the City has said when we started this journey in 2005, the Federal Transit Administration's New Starts program is a competitively based funding program in which we have to compete with other cities for transit funding. The collection of the .05 percent General Excise Tax surcharge is a factor that gives Honolulu a significant competitive advantage over other cities. It gives us a fighting chance, but more than that, I am confident it will lead to our acceptance into the New Starts funding program.

The October 7 e-mail from an FTA official says only that nothing's been decided yet. Basically, it's too early to tell if any of the applicants will be accepted in the New Starts program. To use that as a basis for rejecting transit is disingenuous and uncharacteristic of the spirit of Hawaii's people, which is having faith in each other to get the job done.

What if the 2007 University of Hawai'i football team or the Little League teams from Ewa and Waipi'o adopted this attitude because someone told them there's no guarantee they would win? We wouldn't have a Western Athletic Conference football championship, a Sugar Bowl appearance, and two Little League World Series titles, that's for sure.

I'm also curious as to why a battler like former Governor Cayetano would toss in the white towel so quickly. This is a man known for taking unpopular stances because he believed it was the right thing to do.

I recall that when I served in the state House of Representatives, then Governor Cayetano came to the Legislature with a request for \$1 billion in capital improvements. This was needed, he argued strongly, to prime the pump of the economy and help Hawaii stave off the economic crisis triggered by the tragic events of 9/11.

(more)

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After the Legislature panned his request, he told the Honolulu Star-Bulletin (Sunday, Nov. 4, 2001), "I really feel there are too many of them that don't understand the gravity of the situation. I'm from the school that you prime the pump instead of watch an economic meltdown, and that is what is what is going to happen."

Ironically, Honolulu's elevated, fixed guideway project that he speaks against would accomplish exactly what he argued so strongly for back then. It will:

- Create jobs for both the short- and long-term;
- Spur investment in Hawaii; and
- Help cushion this State against this financial crisis.

I would be interested to hear his answer to the question that if government spending to lessen the impact of a financial crisis was a good idea back then, why isn't it a good idea now?

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