



ISLAND MATTERS *Mufi Hannemann*

Why It's Time To Jump Aboard The P3 Train

Honolulu Authority for Rapid Transportation held a conference Aug. 21 to examine rail transit public-private partnerships (P3), the term for the collaboration of government, business and private entities in developing public works and other projects for community benefit.

Sadly, this informative event was overshadowed by hurricane preparations and did not receive the attention it deserved. But the panel of experts invited to the conference was impressive:

Joshua Schank of Los Angeles Metro, Lecia Stewart of Vancouver Sky-Train, Lee McDonald from Australia, and Fred Maroudas of the United Kingdom. Each represented a country with major P3 experience, and they explained structuring P3 programs, design and construction, operations and maintenance, and project financing. They said a P3, if done right, will provide cost and schedule benefits for Honolulu. They also pointed out pitfalls to avoid based on the lessons they've learned in their respective countries through experience.

I've been a proponent of P3s for as long as I can remember because I believe all parties can benefit from government-private investment in a community's future. With regard to rail transit, P3 will also kick-start transit-oriented development along the rail route by spurring more housing, retail and commercial development, and

other opportunities. And, in my opinion, it would offset the penchant that the city government has been exercising during the past several years of always going to the Legislature seeking public monies to finance the rail project or to deal with shortfalls. A bold strategy of blending private monies with appropriate government incentives is what is needed to maximize the full potential of an integrated multimodal system that will eventually reach UH Mānoa.

HART executive director and CEO Andy Robbins, who's had professional experience with P3s, told the packed house of public and private sector stakeholders that his goal is to bring global best practices to the project. He pointed out that P3s have been widely used in Great Britain, Australia and Canada over many years, and are now, finally and increasingly, being used by state and local governments in this country, especially for major public infrastructure projects.

It's taken him a while to catch on, but Mayor Caldwell has finally jumped on board the P3 train by declaring his support for the HART initiative at its last board meeting. The leadership of Robbins and the HART board, the City Council, plus the support of key officials at the state and community leaders for P3s, should improve the prospects of rail being built in a more fiscally responsible manner.



HART's Andy Robbins is off to a good start in making the case for rail in Honolulu. **PHOTO COURTESY HART**

The NFL is Back

During the 30-plus years that Hawai'i hosted the NFL Pro Bowl and the time that I was involved, I tried to convince the state that it should use its leverage to cop a preseason game as well. That's exactly what

Orlando got when the NFL moved its all-star game to Florida — a preseason contest and the Pro Bowl in the same season.

At long last, it looks like we are going to get such a game. Hawai'i Tourism Authority and the Los Angeles

Rams recently announced that Aloha Stadium will be the site for a preseason skirmish between the Rams and a yet-to-be-determined opponent. It should be a boon to football fans and a special opportunity to see the pros in action again.

Sports is not only great for our local fans, but it helps the visitor industry because many fans follow the team, and what better place to enjoy the game than in Hawai'i?

The Los Angeles Lakers and recently the LA Clippers have held preseason camps on O'ahu. Maui would be an appealing training center for another NBA team to practice during the same time and then have both teams conclude their camps with exhibition games at the Stan Sheriff Center. Why not? I

hope that the Stadium Authority, with the help of HTA (despite the stadium's aging condition) steps up its efforts to pursue Major League Baseball to hold games here, as it last did in 1997 with the San Diego Padres and St. Louis Cardinals, and aggressively try to attract professional soccer, rugby and boxing matches to the islands.

In addition to ultimately replacing Aloha Stadium (definitely via a P3), we've got to show more creativity and determination in bolstering our sports offerings, both as entertainment and as an industry. There are too many missed opportunities in establishing our state as an international sports center in the Pacific.

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