

PA'IA RELIEF ROUTE PROJECT

Statement of Purpose and Need

Draft date: March 24, 2009

Background

Pa'ia – Haiku is a primarily residential and agricultural region located along the north shore of the island of Maui. Its characteristically scenic coastlines, broad expanses of agricultural lands interspersed with deep gulches and lush vegetation, the rural towns of Pa'ia and Haiku, and the various agricultural communities tucked into this bucolic landscape offer the low-key, relatively “uncluttered” ambience and “country” lifestyle its residents continue to value highly today.

The business and employment centers of Wailuku, Kahului, and Kihei to the west house primary income opportunities for many of the region's residents. Hana Highway serves as the principal and most direct vehicular link between the region and these economic centers. Over time, increases in population have resulted in higher traffic volumes, slower speeds, congestion, and consequently longer travel times along Hana Highway between home and work for area residents. Much of the congestion accumulates during the morning and afternoon “rush hours” at Pa'ia, at Hana Highway's intersection with Baldwin Avenue, which leads into Pa'ia's mauka residential areas. This has caused frustration for Pa'ia residents and businesses, and for Haiku residents as well.

Discussion over solutions to this situation has been ongoing for years, and has been included in several State and County projects. It has included explorations of alternative east-west routes to alleviate the congestion at Pa'ia and expedite traffic past this town to points beyond it. While consideration of such a bypass once posed a dilemma for Pa'ia businesses which have benefitted from visitor traffic along Hana Highway, the majority opinion among even this sector now appears to favor the development of an alternative route while taking care to maintain or improve current opportunities.

This project is directed at defining a solution which will meet the needs of all pertinent stakeholders. The following is a definition of its purpose, need, and objectives that need to be met to achieve a successful project solution.

Statement of Purpose:

The following is the Statement of Project Purpose and objectives that should be met to facilitate a successful project solution:

The purpose of the proposed project is to improve the east-west flow of traffic through the Pa'ia – Haiku region that will:

- *Reduce vehicle travel times*

- *Alleviate traffic congestion at Pa'ia*
- *Provide improved, more convenient access to the towns of Pa'ia and Haiku*
- *Support Pa' quality of life*

Objectives that Should be Met to Facilitate a Successful Project Solution

- ▶ Maintain Pa'ia Town country character; facilitate its further evolution as a safe, well-landscaped, walkable community with accommodations for various modes of transportation, ample parking and convenient coastal access.
- ▶ Consider project improvements which can safely accommodate multiple transportation modes.
- ▶ Emphasize the use of native plant material in landscaping and shading the relief route.
- ▶ Consider this project as one component of a comprehensive, integrated, transportation and land use plan which promotes logical patterns of land use consistent with the maintenance of country character and which balances the needs of the built environment with the needs for open space, public coastal access, and the protection of significant natural and cultural resources.
- ▶ Incorporate community values in the selection and shaping of alternative solutions
- ▶ Integrate the needs of the agriculture industry and its operations in the consideration and selection of alternative solutions.
- ▶ Consider existing roadway resources and previously proposed solutions in identifying alternative relief routes
- ▶ Expedite this effort to take advantage of existing and future funding programs.

Project Need

System Linkages and Capacity

Hana Highway is a vital link in the highway system linking the major Central Maui towns of Wailuku and Kahului to communities along the island's north shore. Congestion along this highway in combination with its current 2-lane width, its role as a scenic coastal drive as well as a transportation arterial, and its function as part of Pa'ia's Mainstreet at the point of most severe congestion has created demands for attention by Pa'ia residents and businesses and commuters who live to the east in Haiku.

An excerpt from a recent intersection capacity analyses (an analysis of the ability of an intersection to handle specific traffic volumes) produced in a memorandum in January 2009 cites LOS (Level of Service) readings at the intersection of Hana Highway and Baldwin Avenue as follows:

During the AM peak hour, the intersection of Hana Highway and Baldwin Avenue operates at LOS C ("average traffic delays") but its westbound left turn through operates at LOS E ("very long traffic delays") and its makai-bound left turn operates at LOS D

(“long traffic delays”). The mauka-bound Kala Road operated at LOS E (“very long traffic delays”).

During the PM peak hour, the intersection of Hana Highway and Baldwin Avenue operates at LOS D (“long traffic delays”) and its makai-bound approach and westbound left turn experienced serious queuing. The makai-bound Kupuno Street, makai-bound Lae Place, and the mauka-bound Kala Road operated at LOS E (“very long traffic delays”).

Given this information, it appears that a solution to traffic congestion, particularly to the situation at Pa’ia, is clearly needed.

Accommodation of Existing and Future Traffic Demand

Existing traffic demand clearly exceeds the capacity of Hana Highway to accommodate traffic smoothly on a consistent basis, particularly in the vicinity of Pa’ia Town. Given this situation, it can be expected that even the relatively modest population increases projected by current policy for this region will only exacerbate an already inadequate situation. A solution to this situation, consistent with community values and the qualities of the natural and cultural resources of the region, should be planned and designed immediately, and, optimally, implemented prior to substantial increases in the region’s population.

Social Demands and Economic Development

Current users of Hana Highway, particularly commuters from Central Maui employment centers living in Pa’ia and Haiku, have cited the unacceptability of the current situation. Pa’ia businesses along Hana Highway which benefit from visitor traffic along Hana Highway have also cited difficulties in customer acquisition during peak traffic hours. Pa’ia residents have cited safety issues related to traffic congestion coupled with dangerous street crossings and inadequate provision of pedestrian amenities.

Resident expressions of the need for safer conditions at Pa’ia and business needs for uninterrupted customer access and the maintenance of effective customer presence whatever the solution to the congestion problem may be are expressions of not only of a need for solution but suggestions of approaches to devising alternative solutions to current problems.

Safety and Roadway Design

If Hana Highway continues to be the primary east-west connector through the region, considerations of safety and its current design should be considered. As an undivided highway carrying not only periodically high volumes of purposeful commuter traffic but more leisurely, often less-focused visitor traffic as well, conflicts in manner of use which may result

in dangerous conditions are latent. If these conflicts cannot be resolved with design solutions to the existing roadway, alternative traffic solutions, including the consideration of alternative routes may have to be considered.

DRAFT