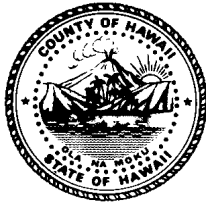


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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 10, 2008

Contact : Bruce C. McClure, P.E.
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County Plans \$5.5 Million in Improvements to Support Bypass Opening

The County Department of Public Works is proposing a multi-million dollar improvement package for Ali'i Drive and Haleki'i Street in Kealahou in anticipation of opening the Māmalahoa Highway bypass to the public on a trial basis this summer.

The Māmalahoa Highway bypass is a two-lane road that is being constructed midway between the shoreline and Māmalahoa Highway to give motorists an alternate route between North and South Kona. The Department of Public Works believes opening the northern portion of the Māmalahoa bypass, from the end of Ali'i Drive in Kealahou to the bottom of Haleki'i Street in Kealahou, will reduce traffic volume for southbound travel on Māmalahoa Highway.

The Hawaii County Planning Commission and ultimately the Hawaii County Council will be asked to amend the County ordinances to allow the use of Haleki'i Street in Kealahou, in conjunction with the opening of the northern portion of the Māmalahoa bypass in summer 2008.

The proposed short-term improvements to Ali'i Drive and Haleki'i would take approximately six to eight months to construct. This includes stop signs at key intersections along Ali'i Drive and adding two-way center lanes between Kamehameha III Road and Kaleiopapa, upgrading existing traffic signals at Kamehameha III Road and Kuakini Highway and at the top of Haleki'i Street, widening of shoulders and traffic calming devices. Eventually, a traffic signal would be installed at the "T" intersection of Ali'i Drive and Kaleiopapa Street (entrance to the bypass).

Long-term mitigation measures, taking between three to five years to complete, include traffic signals at Royal Poinciana, Lunapule and Hualālai; a pedestrian and bike path on the mauka side of Ali'i Drive, installing several smart signs and resolving encroachment issues. The traffic signal at the intersection of Haleki'i and Māmalahoa is also slated to be upgraded. Total cost for the proposed short-term improvements and long-term mitigation measures is estimated by the County at \$5.5 million.

"During the trial period this summer, bypass traffic would be restricted to one-way travel, headed south, between the hours of 3:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m., weekdays only, excluding holidays," explained Bruce McClure, Director of the County Department of Public Works. "Traffic will be monitored daily by Public Works, and special duty police officers will be present at the bypass entrance," McClure said. He added that other than those specific hours or during an emergency, the bypass will be closed and gated.

“We are trying to be sensitive to the residents and businesses located in Keauhou, along Haleki`i Street and within the Kona Scenic Subdivision,” said McClure, explaining that the limited hours would give the County a gauge of the traffic that flows through the subdivision at peak hours, making adjustments as needed.

An amendment of two County ordinances is necessary to allow Haleki`i Street to be used as a mauka-makai connector prior to the completion of the bypass. The request for consideration by the Planning Commission is the first step toward an amendment of the ordinances by the Hawai`i County Council.

For more information on the Māmalahoa bypass, visit the County's website, www.co.hawaii.hi.us; go to Projects Update and click on Māmalahoa Bypass. For rules and regulations about the Planning Commission or the agenda for January 11, go to the Planning Department's page and click on Planning Commission.