

VIEWS & VOICES

OUR VIEW

Rail struggles along

Honolulu's \$9.2 billion rail transit project, long beset by delays and money problems, now must contend with the coronavirus pandemic. No surprise: The pandemic has caused delays and money problems.

Completion of the first 10-mile segment of the line from East Kapolei to Aloha Stadium, originally scheduled for October, will be delayed by about eight weeks, according to Honolulu Authority for Rapid Transportation executive director Andrew Robbins. The delay is "largely due to the COVID-19 but also just normal operational issues related to making all the technology functional," Robbins said.

And the city, which had forecast opening the line to riders by December, has pushed that date back to next March. (On the getting-it-done side, the Honolulu Rate Commission finally signed off on new rates for bus and rail riders, sending them to the City Council for approval. They would go up a bit, but not exorbitantly).

More troubling is the financial picture. Ruth Lohr, HART's chief financial officer, told the City Council Budget Committee on Tuesday that HART expects a loss of close to \$100 million in state hotel room and general excise tax dollars. And HART is still trying to pry loose \$744 million promised from the Federal Transportation Administration, which has cast a wary eye on HART's plans to engage a private vendor to complete the final leg of the line. And even those plans have been delayed for three months.

Given the vast impact of the pandemic on the state's budget — a \$1.5 billion deficit has been projected — HART's money woes won't go away any time soon. The agency will have to be aggressive in tapping available funds, particularly from the federal government.

Hawaii received \$107 million in CARES Act money earlier this month to support the state's transit agencies; Honolulu got \$90.8 million for its bus system. But Hawaii's congressional delegation will need to push for more.

A new \$3 trillion COVID-19 relief measure proposed by the U.S. House of Representatives includes about \$15 billion for state departments of transportation and an additional \$15 billion for transit agencies, according to an analysis by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.

The money is badly needed by Hawaii and other states, which have delayed transportation projects large and small because of the pandemic. The cost of building the rail project is massive; but with Honolulu's transportation future on the line, endless delays in its construction — or not finishing it at all — would cost far more.

Help for Hawaiians

The coronavirus pandemic shutdown has hit many in Hawaii hard — particularly so, Native Hawaiians, who overall are being negatively affected at disproportionate rates.

New data from the state Department of Labor and Industrial Relations indicate that Native Hawaiians are losing jobs during the pandemic at rates exceeding average. While Native Hawaiians are 19% of Hawaii's working-age population (over age 16), a quarter of jobless claimants in this year's first quarter identified as Native Hawaiian.

Such disheartening news makes it essential that aid be available to keep the disparity gap from widening. So it was good, and necessary, that both the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) have stepped up for their beneficiaries.

On Monday, DHHL, in partnership with Aloha United Way (AUW), launched the COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program for Native Hawaiians who have been on DHHL's waiting list as of Dec. 31, 2018.

Eligible beneficiaries will receive rental help from a \$7 million in Native Hawaiian Housing Block Grant. Among other conditions, applicants must have had a reduction of income or job loss due to COVID-19, and have a household yearly income up to 80% of area median income.

It's estimated that this program will prevent more than 2,500 Native Hawaiian families from slipping into homelessness, by avoiding eviction. (To apply, call AUW at 2-1-1.)

That certainly is a worthwhile goal, so outreach to affected and eligible households must be as robust and accessible as possible.

Also noteworthy are OHA initiatives such as its Kahiau Community Assistance Program, which under the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement provides grants of up to \$1,500 in one-time emergency aid to cover mortgage, rent or utilities for beneficiaries in dire straits.

These are but two programs trying to stave off hardships for Native Hawaiians. All who are eligible should be helping to help themselves, by checking out the myriad of aid at dhhl.hawaii.gov/covid-19 and oha.org/covid19.

While these programs are for indigenous Hawaiians only, it's important to remember that as a community, what helps one, helps us all. Besides the genuine relief of seeing many among us kept afloat, there is the practical positive that each household staying afloat means less strain on the homelessness and social-service safety nets.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Governor trying to get unattainable result

Gov. David Ige is destroying the Hawaii economy to achieve an unobtainable goal. The original intent of all the social restrictions was to "flatten the curve" so as to not overwhelm the health care system.

The governor seems intent on reducing the virus infection rate to zero. That is a goal that cannot be achieved in any realistic time frame.

Meanwhile the most vulnerable among us are losing their jobs, their savings, their health insurance and possibly their homes as well. The COVID-19 virus will not be eliminated until the majority of us have been infected, or receive some hoped-for future vaccination.

Richard Frey
Aiea

Protect our loved ones, not the almighty dollar

Oh, the almighty dollar and how powerful it can be. Some people, not most, would rather go to work, line their pockets and risk bringing home the deadly virus and spreading it to their family, friends and loved ones,

including their children.

Many people with COVID-19 died a lonely death, without a loved one holding their hand with loving compassion, or a sad goodbye when laid to rest. The mighty old dollar can't pay for a lifetime of sadness.

God bless the families who lost loved ones and the greatest of sympathy to all. Thank you, first responders, nurses, doctors and volunteers.

Ron Garcia
Ewa Beach

Better ways to solve Maui's water problems

Considering water and sewage fees paid by residents, tax dollars spent on litigation, and environmental damages affecting the public, response to the U.S. Supreme Court ruling regarding the Lahaina Wastewater Reclamation Facility (LWRF) should benefit the greater good ("In Maui sewage case, U.S. Supreme Court sees broad reach of Clean Water Act," Star-Advertiser, Top News, April 23).

Hurricane Lane's wildfire helped identify areas at risk, from Kaanapali to Launiupoko. To ensure public safety, irrigate these open spaces controlled by the state, Kaanapali Land Manage-

ment, Kamehameha Schools and West Maui Land Company.

Update existing LWRF infrastructure to pump treated water to reinstated reservoirs. Restore the Honokohau Ditch system to deliver the water for irrigation. As water percolates, it reduces impurities and enhances the aquifer. Irrigating farther away from the ocean protects coral reefs, recharges the groundwater, helps prevent erosion and fires, and fosters agriculture and reforestation.

Besides a healthy watershed, planting trees and vegetation has environmental, economic and social benefits, too. Solutions for the LWRF lawsuit could be a beautiful thing.

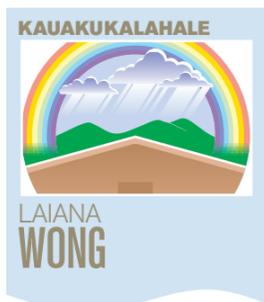
Michele Lincoln
Lahaina

Trump can get tested, but not the rest of us

President Donald Trump was correct when he said, "Anybody that wants a test can get a test."

It looks like what he meant was, for everybody in the White House. And the rest of us be damned.

Thomas Jech
Kailua



He ola anei ko ka virus? He make nō kā ka virus!

Synopsis: The way in which we refer to the coronavirus suggests that it is a living entity. Scientists generally consider it to be nonliving; somewhere between living and dead.

Aloha mai kākou. He au weliweli nō kēia e laha aku nei kahi ma'i e kaulana nei ma ka inoa COVID-19, i 'ō a i 'ane'i o ka honua me ka pepehi i nā hoa kanaka he nui. Eia kākou ke pa'ā nei i loko o ka hale, ke nalu nui

nei i nā 'ano kumuhana like 'ole e hiala'ai ai ka mana'ō. No'u iho nei nō, no ka 'upu wale mai o ku'u mana'ō no ia mea he "virus", noi'i noelo akula au i kona mana'ō ma ka 'ōlelo Hawai'i. Eia kā, wahi a Pukui mā, he "mea ho'oma'i" ia. Ua launa nō ia mana'ō. 'O ka mea 'āpiki na'e, he nui nō paha nā mea ho'oma'i like 'ole. 'A'ole paha he "virus" lākou a pau. Aia ka pono 'o ka loa'a mai he mau hua 'oko'a i mea e kuhikuhi aku ai i nā mea 'ino 'ē a'e, 'a'ole he "virus", akā nāna nō ka ma'i.

I nalu iho ka hana, hele a uluhua ka mana'ō i kahi ninau wāhi pūniu, a ho'oholo ihola au, maika'i paha ke kapa 'ana i ka "virus" he mea ho'oma'i kiko'i. Aia nō paha kekahi hua hou ma loko o Māmaka Kaiao. I nānā aku na'e ka hana, ua loa'a maila kēia hua 'ōlelo "mū hōlapu". 'O ka mea 'āpiki, he 'ano "virus" kēlā e ma'i ai ke kamepiula, 'a'ole ke kanaka! No laila, ua 'imi noi'i ihola au i ka mana'ō o "virus" ma ka 'ōlelo haole. 'Eā, e ke hoa heluhelu, 'a'ohe wahi 'ano o ke akāka!

Ma waena mai o ka nui o nā 'atikala a'u i heluhelu ai, e hoomaopopo mai ana nā

mea kākau 'a'ole ia he mea ola, a eia hou, 'a'ole paha ia he mea ola 'ole. He aha lā na'e ke 'ano o kahi mea ola 'ole? 'A'ole paha ia i make. Aia paha kona kūlana ma waena o ke ola a me ka make. A ma laila i huikau ai ka no'ono'o o kā 'oukou wahi mea kākau nei. Eia hou, 'a'ole like ke ola me ka "living". Wahi a ka po'e 'epekema haole, 'a'ole nō ka "rock" he mea "living". Ma ka mana'ō Hawai'i na'e, he mana ko pōhaku, a no laila, he mea ola nō ia! 'O ua mea nei he "mū", he mea mana nō ia, a no laila, he mea ola ho'i.

Mali'a, ma ka mana'ō Hawai'i, he mea mana nā mea ho'oma'i a pau, a no laila, he ola ko ua mea lā e kapa 'ia nei i ka "virus" ma ka namu haole. A ua 'ike 'ia kekahi mau 'ōlelo 'ana ma ka namu nāna e ho'ike ka mana'ō o ka po'e haole he mea ola ia. 'O ia ho'i, nui nā hana a ka "virus" e hana pū 'ia e nā mea ola haole. 'O ia ho'i, he hele ia i 'ō a i 'ane'i. He ha'alele iā Kina, kau i ka mokulele, a lele aku nō i nā 'āina 'ē. He ho'oma'i nō ho'i 'o ia i kāna mau luaahi. 'A'ohe ona nānā inā he kāne a he wahine, he Hawai'i a he haole, he 'ele-

makua a he keiki, 'o ia lele aku nō ma luna o ka luaahi. 'A'ole lā e lawelawe 'ia ua mau hana nei e ka mea ola 'ole.

No laila, no ka ninau no ke ola a me ke ola 'ole, me he mea lā, na ka po'e 'epekema haole wale nō ka hō'ole 'ana i ke ola o ia mea he "virus". 'O ka lehulehu o ke ao haole, a pau pū me ke ao Hawai'i, ke 'ike nei i ka 'ino o ia mea, a me ka hopena o kāna hana. He mea nō ia nona ka mana e lawelawe ai i kēlā mau hana i helu 'ia maila ma luna a'e nei, a me nā hana hou aku he nui hewahewa. Pehea lā ho'i e mana'ō 'ia ai 'a'ohe ona mana, a no laila, 'a'ole ia he mea ola? He ola nō kona, a he make nō kāna!

E ho'ouina 'ia mai na ā leka iā māua, 'o ia ho'i 'o Laiana Wong a me Kekeha Solis ma ka pahu leka uila ma lalo nei:

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Barney & Clyde >> By Gene Weingarten

