

Traffic forecast for North Shore unbelievable

Kuilima Resort uses questionable data and assumptions to predict traffic from Turtle Bay expansion

By Gil
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Unbelievably, the latest Traffic Impact Analysis Report from Kuilima Resort Co. concludes Kamehameha Highway near Waimea Bay will not exceed its carrying capacity by 2028, even with the full Turtle Bay Resort expansion.

Say again? Kuilima Resort Co. claims that new resort generated vehicle trips — thousands of cars per hour — added to future growth in North Shore traffic can be handled by the existing roadway. The report also claims the Level of Service will remain at E on a scale of A to F.

It is hard to imagine who could believe these conclusions. Anyone familiar with weekend gridlock at Waimea Bay and Laniakea (a.k.a. "Turtle Beach") knows that traffic volume on the North Shore exploded between 2000 and 2005, and nobody thinks that Kamehameha Highway can handle much more.

Not counting the astonishing growth in recent years, traffic volume has historically grown at a rate of 1.5 percent per year on the North Shore.

Incredibly, Kuilima Resort Co.'s report mixed data from unrelated sources to promulgate a much smaller 0.25 percent rate of increase in future years.

Using this unrealistic, low-growth factor and several other suspicious assumptions, the report renders a favorable result for the developer.

When asked to reconsider the methodology and study assumptions for

regional impacts in this report, the Hawaii Department of Transportation responded with a vague letter that failed to address any of the specifics cited by Keep the North Shore Country.

Allowing Kuilima Resort Co. to use an unrealistic growth rate is outrageous and results in conclusions that defy reason.

Suppressing background growth estimates so that the resort expansion impacts still fit within a highway capacity rating is unacceptable. Turning a blind eye to traffic volume that would likely exceed highway capacity could be disastrous. Besides continuous gridlock for passenger and working vehicles, emergency response would be severely impaired and there may be no chance to mitigate the problems later.

Informed decision making and proper planning require accurate information. The state Department of Transportation, as the agency responsible for public oversight and maintenance of the state highway system, must require the developer to revise the regional traffic projections with appropriate calculations.

The impacts of the Turtle Bay Resort Expansion are no small matter to the future of the North Shore. If not the state Department of Transportation or the city Department of Planning and Permitting, who is "minding the store" on behalf of the public's interests?

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