



CITY COUNCIL
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-3065 / TELEPHONE 547-7000

TOM BERG
COUNCILMEMBER
HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL • DISTRICT I
PH: (808) 768-5001
FAX: (808) 768-5011
EMAIL: tberg@honolulu.gov
WEBSITE: www.councilmanberg.com

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Contact: (808) 768-5020 or (808) 753-7324

CUTS TO CITY BUS SERVICE NEED TO BE RESTORED

In response to public protest over cuts in City bus service, Honolulu City Councilman Tom Berg (District 1: Ewa Beach, Kapolei, Waianae Coast) co-authored Resolution 12-173 to request Honolulu Mayor Peter Carlisle reverse the course that cut bus routes and refrain from further cuts being implemented.

“If we want to reduce traffic, enhanced bus service accomplishes that. Cutting routes, packing bus patrons in like sardines, making them wait longer at bus stops and forcing them to transfer, is not the answer. We need to restore bus service immediately,” stated Councilman Tom Berg.

Berg was the only vote against passage of Bill 14. This bill contained the funding for bus operations that was \$3 million short to cover fuel costs. “The council cannot trigger the mechanism that we reopen Bill 14 and restore the funds. The mayor however can and this resolution urges him to revisit his bus cuts and would reflect upon his passage, the council concurs cutting the bus service was a mistake needing to be corrected,” stated Berg.

Colleague and co-author of the resolution, Council Chair Ernie Martin said he hopes that the Mayor will direct his administration to seek other federal funding sources to restore bus services to a more acceptable level. “Rural communities have been especially hard hit. We should exhaust all potential funding sources that could be used to restore full service to these areas,” Martin said.

Discussion of cuts to bus service took place on June 28 at the council’s Transportation Committee where testimony from the public reiterated that the changes being implemented are causing hardship. “We are talking about finding \$3 million to pay for an increase in fuel cost to operate the bus fleet. This can be accomplished and the resolution will steer the powers that be that our buses are indeed a core function of government and cannot be compromised,” stated Berg.

(3) Pages to Follow - Resolution 12-173



RESOLUTION

URGING THE MAYOR TO FIND FUNDING IN THE CITY BUDGET TO RESTORE SERVICE CUTS INSTITUTED TO BUS ROUTES 55, 65 AND OTHER RURAL BUS ROUTES.

WHEREAS, on June 3, 2012, the Department of Transportation Services (DTS) instituted service changes for TheBus that modified routes, reduced services, lengthened wait times, and/or eliminated routes entirely for thirteen different bus routes, including the following rural routes:

- Route 55 (Kaneohe—Circle Island);
- Route 65 (Kahaluu—Honolulu);
- Route 52 (Wahiawa—Circle Island);
- Route C (Country Express Makaha to Honolulu); and
- Route E (Country Express Ewa Beach to Waikiki);

and

WHEREAS, these changes, and additional changes scheduled to take effect on August 19, 2012, are supposedly designed to make better use of limited transportation funds by tailoring service to actual usage, reduce operating expenses that are projected to increase by \$7 million, and avoid the need to raise fares while maintaining acceptable service; and

WHEREAS, while service changes are negatively impacting all bus riders around the island, riders in rural communities are especially hard-hit because of the significant reduction of viable alternatives now that the changes have been instituted, creating hardships that have effectively eliminated public transportation as a means of commuting and forcing many previous bus riders into cars; and

WHEREAS, the DTS director has testified against Resolution 12-66, which seeks to amend City policy regarding the bus fare ratio and allow for fare increases as a tool to address rising costs, stating that he was concerned about the economic impact on bus riders if fares would be increased; and

WHEREAS, eliminating the option of increasing fares when faced with expected increases in operating costs leaves only one other viable option—reducing bus services; and

WHEREAS, the Council has heard the uproar of bus riders over the already-instituted and additional upcoming service changes and does not believe that reducing



RESOLUTION

bus services has successfully precluded the need to raise fares while maintaining acceptable service; and

WHEREAS, the Council finds that DTS has lapsed operating funds of \$3 million in FY 2011 and \$5 million in FY 2010, so it remains unconvinced that the Department of Transportation Services has considered every option to fund bus operations in order to maintain the standard of service provided prior to the June service changes; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City and County of Honolulu that it urges the Mayor to find funding in the City budget to immediately restore service cuts instituted to bus routes 55, 65 and other rural bus routes; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council urges the Mayor to examine the sources of lapsed Department of Transportation Services funds in past fiscal years as one way to find funding to restore bus service cuts now; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council urges the Mayor, if sufficient funds can be found now, to restore bus services to all other affected routes, in addition to rural routes, and to cancel the planned service changes scheduled for August 19, 2012; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council urges the Mayor to seek federal funding, including rural assistance, Community Development Block Grant, and other federal funds, to help maintain the current level of bus services in the future; and

