

## Waimea Traffic—Help on the Way

The Waimea Traffic Circulation Plan has been completed and \$9.5 million in County funding has been dedicated to Waimea traffic circulation improvements for the coming fiscal year which starts on July 1st. When the County of Hawaii identifies areas in need of transportation improvements, a traffic circulation study is typically conducted to identify alternative solutions and a preferred plan of action. The County Department of Public Works then contracts out the design and construction of individual projects following the priorities in the plan. To this end, the County Planning Department retained a national transportation engineering firm with an office in Honolulu, Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade & Douglas, Inc. (often shortened to Parsons Brinckerhoff or PB), to prepare a Waimea Traffic Circulation Plan. The plan was intended to help the community and the County Council decide on short and long term priorities for solving Waimea's traffic problems and also includes recommendations on pedestrian and bicycle circulation and an in-town shuttle bus service.

In December, 2006, the consultant made a presentation of their initial findings to the Waimea community. After input from the community and the County, the plan is undergoing final revisions and is expected to be delivered to the County around June 15, 2007. (See [waimeaplan.org](http://waimeaplan.org) on or about July 1, 2007 to view the final plan)

For the short term, the plan recommends the following actions:

- Add traffic lanes to Mamalahoa Highway from in front of the hospital east to Fukushima Store and construct Road A from Luala'i subdivision to Lindsey Road extension
- Construct the Parker Ranch Connector Road from the racetrack to the vicinity of the Civic Center/ Kamamalu Street
- Prohibit left turns from Mamalahoa Hwy onto Lindsey Road after construction of Parker Ranch Connector and Lalamilo Connector to allow more fluid east-west traffic flow

- Construct the Lalamilo Connector Road from the Parker Ranch Connector Road at Mamalahoa Highway to Kawaihae Road
- Optimize traffic signal timing to let more traffic flow through town, after more road capacity is available

The County administration considers the Waimea Traffic Circulation Plan as an integral part of the Community Development Plan process. Do people in South Kohala care about road and traffic improvements? You bet! In the South Kohala small group meetings held to garner public ideas about the Community Development Plan Process, the top two categories in the Infrastructure category were:

- Fix Traffic! Build Bypass, Connector and Alternate Roads, and
- Upgrade Existing Roads to make it safer/better.

Fortunately for the Waimea community there is funding to implement many of the recommendations listed above. The County Council approves the capital budget on a yearly basis, so only projects that are listed for this fiscal year are guaranteed. For this fiscal year (beginning on July 1, 2007), \$9.505 million is dedicated to the Mamalahoa Highway widening project, which calls for five lanes from in front of the hospital to the civic center and four lanes from Kamamalu Street to 2,000 ft to the east. There is also \$0.75 million in the capital budget for this fiscal year to replace non-compliant sidewalks along Mamalahoa Highway from 300 feet west Lindsey Road to Kamamalu Street.

There is \$2.45 million slated for Fiscal Year 08-09 for extending the median in Mamalahoa Highway to prevent left turns at the Lindsey Road - Mamalahoa Highway intersection, plus traffic signal optimization at the east and west ends of the Parker Ranch Connector Road. The parking stalls in front of Waimea School will also be eliminated.

Working with the County Planning Department, Parker Ranch has agreed to design and build Phase 3 of the Parker Ranch Connector Road, which will extend from Mamalahoa Highway in the vicinity of the Vacuum Cooling

Plant on the southwest end, to Kaomoloa Street on the east end. Parker Ranch has executed an agreement with the Planning Department and posted a completion bond in the amount of \$4.5 million, to ensure that this portion of the connector road is completed within the next two years. A linear park with meandering path will be provided on the north side of the connector road. The timing of construction by Parker Ranch of the remainder of the Parker Ranch Connector Road and extensions southward of Lindsey Road and Pukalani Road is still uncertain. The Waimea Traffic Circulation Study recommends that all of these improvements, as well as an in-town shuttle bus service, be implemented as soon as possible.

The State Department of Education (DOE) is responsible for constructing Road A which will extend from La'ikealoha Street to the extension of Lindsey Road. Road A will divide the DOE parcel into a middle school campus and an elementary school campus and will allow for easier student drop off and pick up and increased student safety.

Looking forward to the 2009-2010 fiscal year, \$10 million is slated for the much debated Mamalahoa Highway - Kawaihae Road Connector Project (also known as the Lalamilo Connector Road.) An engineering firm, Belt Collins, has been hired to conduct an Environmental Assessment, which will help determine the alignment and design features of the road. The Waimea Circulation Plan calls for a trail to parallel the Lalamilo Connector Road that connects to the Parker Ranch meandering path on its south end and Waimea Trails & Greenways on its north end. The study also recommends that bike and pedestrian facilities be provided from along Kamamalu Street to Mamalahoa Highway and along Mamalahoa Highway to past Puu Nani Drive.

With cooperation among our County government, local land owners and the public, a near-term solution to Waimea's in-town traffic woes is in sight.

