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May 18, 2015

The Honorable Anthony Foxx
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Subject: Support for the TIGER Grant Application submitted by the County of Kaua‘i

Dear Secretary Foxx,

The Kaua‘i District Health Office enthusiastically supports the County of Kaua‘i’s Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery (“TIGER”) grant application to assist in completing the Lihu‘e Town Core Mobility and Revitalization Project.

The Hawai‘i State Department of Health has partnered with the County of Kaua‘i on numerous health initiatives. Most recently, we worked together on our County’s Community Health Needs Assessment and the resulting Kaua‘i Community Health Improvement Initiative. These comprehensive plans identify changes to our built environment that will support active transportation modes. We firmly believe that these changes will improve the health of Kaua‘i County residents.

Lesser informed individuals than you may ask why is a Department of Health so interested in multi-modal transportation infrastructure. As progressive communities realize chronic diseases and premature mortality are merely downstream consequences of a conglomeration of midstream factors such as access to healthcare, health risk factors including the built environment, and poverty. Truly progressive communities and societies correct such adverse health and societal effects by addressing the upstream root causes, including socioeconomic conditions within the political and policy context.

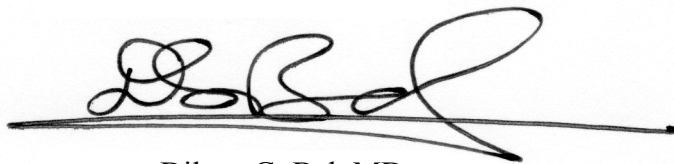
From our perspective and focus on health, community building is the process of involving local residents to create their desired environmental conditions for improving population health and wellbeing. On Kaua‘i, this entailed engaging hundreds of residents—including older adults, youth, various ethnic groups—as well as the business community, and other stakeholders, to identify priority issues, assets and strengths, and strategies in achieving a healthy community.

To reiterate, upstream conditions are the socio-economic and political contexts created by public health, educational, economic, housing, transportation, and other health-associated policies at the national, state and county levels. These policies lead to midstream effects at the neighborhood, family and individual levels, namely, access to health care, safe or unsafe living conditions (built environment), and health risk factors (smoking, alcohol, obesity, and other behaviors). The downstream consequences are the higher prevalence of chronic disease and premature mortality, especially among the high-risk, poorer, and lesser-educated population groups.

The following links provide access to .pdfs of the reports showing the sustained involvement of every segment of Kaua'i's society in this prioritization effort. [Kaua'i Community Health Needs Assessment](#). [Kaua'i Community Health Improvement Initiative](#). This application is not merely an effort by our planning cognoscenti, but represents the aspirations of sustained community-wide planning efforts led by our Mayor, our School Superintendent, College Chancellor, Hospital CEO, and myself, over the past several years.

In summary, our plea is that you fund this key transportation investment because it will be a key component of a community-wide movement to revitalize our downtown. This is not merely urban renewal, but is a rejuvenation of our town center in a rural island 2,500 miles from the mainland US and separated from our nearest neighboring island by a hundred miles of the Pacific Ocean. On Kaua'i we are addressing these complex yet interrelated societal concerns together and not from the siloed lenses of different disciplines and different bureaucratic departments. For us the cliché, "the whole is greater than a sum of the parts" is much more than a rhetorical aside. As our eminent partner in our enterprises to date, the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco has wisely articulated, "One's zip code is a much better predictor of good health than one's genetic code." Enough said.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Bal', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Dileep G. Bal, MD
Kauai District Health Officer