

Report of Public Input Received During
Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL)
Meeting #2 held December 5, 2018

Waimea Regional Safety Study

Prepared for
State of Hawaii
Department of Transportation



Prepared by
SSFM International, Inc.
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Introduction

The State of Hawaii Department of Transportation (HDOT), Highways Division is currently conducting a Planning and Environmental Linkage (PEL) study for the Waimea Regional Safety Project. PEL is a community involved process for identifying issues and then incorporating them into the environmental process (i.e., compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act [NEPA]). In a PEL study, the community helps to identify the purpose and need, which will be used to guide the identification of alternatives to be analyzed in the NEPA document. The end product of the PEL process is a PEL Document.

Tasks in the PEL process include the following:

- Identify the problems that “Need” to be addressed.
- Document those “Needs” with data.
- Meet with federal, state, and county regulatory agencies, including but not necessarily limited to the following:
 - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 - State of Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources
 - State of Hawaii Department of Health
 - State Historic Preservation Division
 - County of Hawaii Planning Department
 - County of Hawaii Department of Public Works
 - County of Hawaii Mass Transit Agency
- Develop the “Purpose and Need” statement and gain community and agency consensus.
- Identify “Alternatives” that meet the Purpose and Need.
- Narrow Alternatives to a reasonable number (typically no more than three build alternatives).

Initially, the topics identified for the first community meetings are planned to complete the PEL process. Additional meetings will be scheduled as needed.

- Meeting 1: Introduction to PEL and Discussion of Regional Setting and Needs
- **Meeting 2: Development of the Purpose and Need Statement**
- Meeting 3: Identify Alternatives
- Meeting 4: Narrow Alternatives to no more than three

This report documents the second community meetings that was held on December 5, 2018 at the Waimea Elementary School Cafeteria. The report is divided into four parts:

- Part One: Open House
- Part Two: Facilitated Discussion on Purpose and Need
- Part Three: Facilitated Discussion on who else needs to be involved in the process
- Part Four: Written Comments

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Part One: Open House

The second PEL Meeting started with an Open House to allow attendees to familiarize themselves with the project. There were two poster boards presented that showed the study area (Figure 1) and a summary of comments received regarding regional “Needs” identified at the first PEL meeting held on October 10, 2018 (Figure 2). No specific comments were received during the Open House portion of the meeting.

Figure 1. Study Area

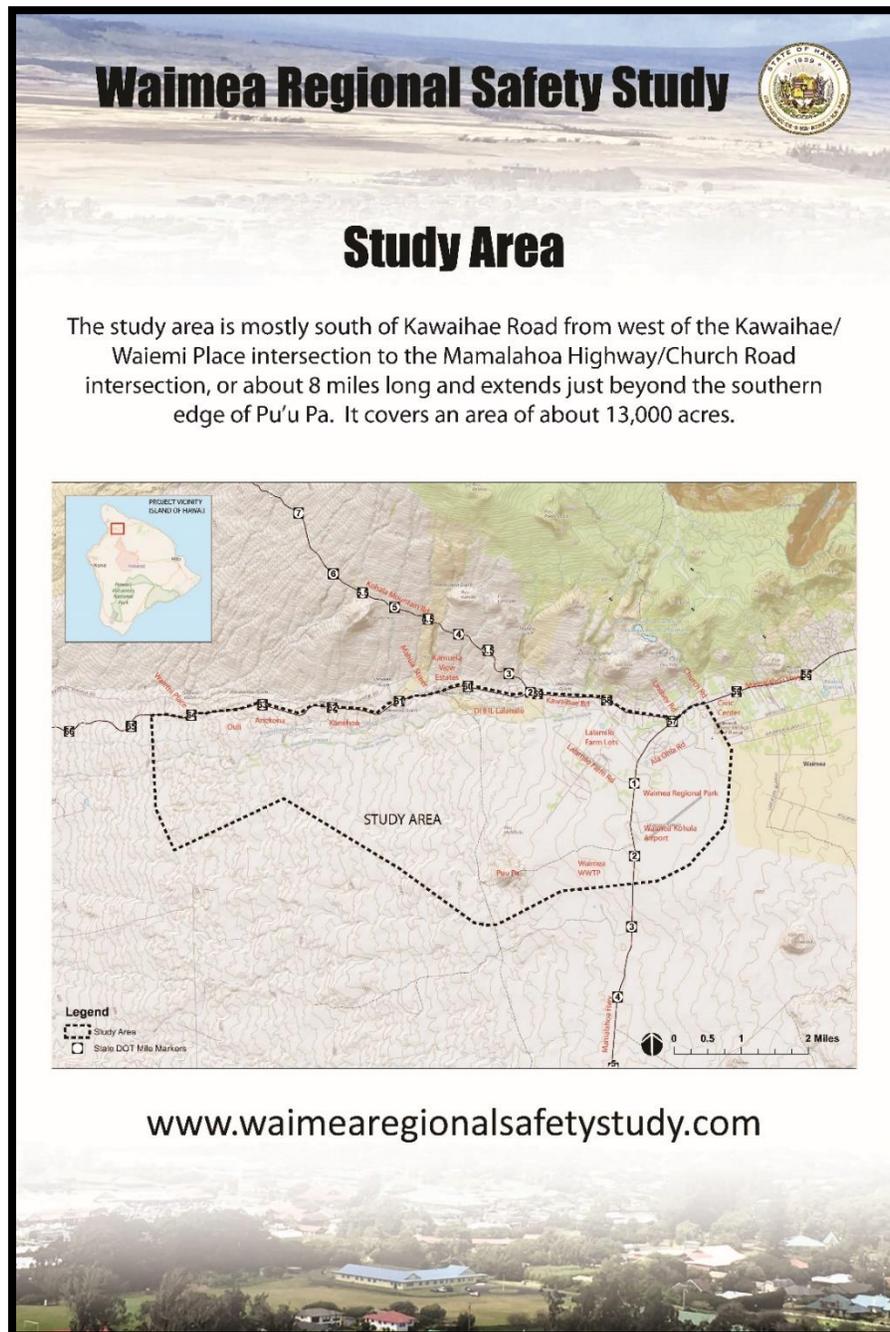


Figure 2. Comments Received During PEL #1 on Community "Needs"

<h1 style="margin: 0;">Waimea Regional Safety Study</h1> 	
TOPICS	NEEDS IDENTIFIED BY THE COMMUNITY AT PEL MEETING #1
Speed and Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children walking to school in and out of the school zone • Congestion at Lindsey Road intersection with Kawaihae Road due to before and after school drop off and pick up at Parker School as well as during Saturday's Farmers Market • Truck traffic through town • Speeding in school zones <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not safe for pedestrians due to lack of sidewalks and poor lighting • Kawaihae Road <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East of Police Station • Left turn lane at Long's • Questioned why developers are not responsible to improving roads to meet the needs of the development • Utility poles are in the way of expansion East of town Mamalahoa Highway • Vehicles stack up in the left turn lane from Mamalahoa Highway onto Lindsey Road and block the left turn lane into the school. People also drive in the turn lane to get around stacked vehicles • Too many plans/studies have happened without progress
Traffic Congestion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too many vehicles, too little public transportation • Congestion is less in the summer • Congestion around Waiaka Bridge • Congestion around transfer station • Additional housing being built will add vehicles to the roads • Cost of Kawaihae Road bypass was increased by phasing the multiple connectors to Kawaihae Road requiring bridges. Should have been handled like saddle road as one complete project • Mamalahoa Highway between KTA and Foodland congestion due to school traffic • Truck traffic going to Hilo; Why not ship directly to Hilo? • School bus stopping in lane of traffic to let kids on/off the bus. Need to work with DOE to mitigate this • There are 11 schools in Waimea, and they are all on the same schedule • Transport of agriculture products (produce and cattle) • Waiaka Bridge weight limit • Lindsey Road and Kawaihae Road intersection should be improved with a roundabout • Ala Ohia extension • Reduce truck traffic/slow down trucks • Waimea area is a major thoroughfare to the western part of the island (not just Kona) (Traffic study should separate local traffic from commuter traffic)
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trucks are wearing out the roads • Flooding at Waiaka Bridge area • Flooding by the Post Office
Bridges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing condition of Waiaka Bridge • Concerns about potential failure of the bridge at Lindsey Road connecting to Mamalahoa Highway because it would split the town • Need to regularly clean streams under bridges because streams become blocked by debris and cause flooding • Debris in stream above KTA a risk during flash flood events
Intersections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lindsey Road and Mamalahoa Highway • Mamalahoa Highway and Kipuupuu Street at the Hawaiian Homes subdivision • Kamamalu Street and Mamalahoa Highway • Kohala Mountain Road and Kawaihae Road • Any intersection where there is a school
Bicycles and Pedestrians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No sidewalks or bike lanes • Roads are too small to share with bikes and pedestrians • Lack of driver awareness of bicycles and motorcycles • People walk on roadway shoulders because there is no other safe place to walk • School bus stops and road crossings • Intersection at McDonald's and KTA is unsafe for pedestrians • Trails are not being maintained and are therefore not utilized • Suggest looking at historic trails

Figure 3. Working Draft of Purpose and Need Statement

PURPOSE AND NEED – WORKING DRAFT

Two primary purposes – Safety and Congestion

- Improve Safety for motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists
- Relieve Congestion on the regional network of roads

Additional Goals and Objectives

- Protect culture and values (Maintain the rural/paniolo character of the town center)
- Improve condition of roadways, intersections and bridges (Regional System Preservation and Asset Management)
- Provide an Alternate route for Truck Traffic and Emergency Vehicles (Security)

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Attendees were asked if they agree with or have comments on the working draft of the Purpose and Need statement. Because comments made included many that were not specific to the Purpose and Need statement, comments have been categorized into the following headings:

- Purpose and Need
- Study Area
- Study Methodology
- Alternatives
- Community Culture and Sense of Place
- Other

Purpose and Need

- Need to provide a transit system that includes small and large buses that can handle the hills (local and long-distance mass transit that complements each other)
- Need to serve regional growth
- Need to get traffic through Waimea safely and around Waimea safely.
- There is no way for traffic (including emergency vehicles) to move through community when highway is shut down (e.g., holiday parade).
- There is congestion because of truck traffic. The trucks go between Kawaihae and Hilo harbors to “save time” instead of container ships going to both ports.
- What is the cost to everyone for being stuck in traffic for so long (not be able to deliver goods, not be able to get through community)? If you mitigate the congestion, the majority of the rest of the problems would go away. Get the project built around the congestion, not into it.

- From 1960-2010, population of Waimea increased from approximately 700 to 9,212. Waimea is a crossroads. Any population growth from Hilo to Kona is going to impact traffic.

Study Area

- Study area is too limited because will dump traffic into an already congested area. Need to expand eastern boundary to Mud Lane.

Study Methodology

- In the commenter's experience, he feels past traffic counts were never taken during high season of Waimea (e.g., Friday afternoon at Queen K and Kawaihae Rd; week before Christmas through mid-April). There is a dramatic change between slow and busy seasons.
- "If something doesn't begin right, it doesn't end right."
- Quality of studies does not represent what will be, it represents what was.
- Need an overall plan that includes a small project as part of a larger project instead of just doing one small project.
- Can census data/population growth be included in the study?
- Should use this study as an opportunity to get something, and then be able to do something larger later. This is the first step to come together as a community and agree on something.
- The community is frustrated because of the number of studies that have occurred with no results.

Alternatives

- Where will the ends of the road go?
- Traffic starts below Waiemi on the straightaway and continues to Hawaiian Home Lands. Traffic studies have not considered Phase III of the Lalamilo Homesteads build-out. DHHL on Honokaa side contributes to traffic congestion.
- What about signage? Should have signs on every major highway to alert drivers (e.g., fatal accident on Saddle Road closed the road and traffic backed up to Hwy 19).
- Can we look at local, short trips? If pedestrian and bike infrastructure is improved within town, it could reduce number of cars in town. Would also help improve sense of place, strengthen community, and fit in with Blue Zones.
- Suggest alternative that goes from Kawaihae Road to Waimea Airport to avoid schools and Waiake.
- Ala Ohia was a small project, but has been successful (i.e., improvement). Need to consider small projects and not get bogged down on a big solution.
- On the west side, there is a road across from Puako Road that goes up almost to the wind farm. This road could be extended at less cost than building a completely new road (e.g., already graded, no archaeological sites, avoids Lalamilo). Waikoloa Village needs a second route, and this road extension could provide that.

Community Culture and Sense of Place

- Need to be cognizant of remnants from the previous culture. Alternatives should disturb as little as possible.
- Need to add Preserve Community Character as a primary Purpose to preserve Waimea's sense of place. That is the #1 land use policy of the CDP.

- Need to take the alternative out of town to preserve sense of place.
- Big Island has ahupuaa that are land-locked instead of going to the ocean because there are areas that can support themselves (other islands don't have that).

Other

- There is noise from trucks braking (air brakes).
- “Elephant in the room” is . . . If the state can't get DHHL on the path for their own development, then will never be able to get around Waimea.
 - Homestead Association and DHHL were key parties to killing the Waimea and Kawaihae Bypass projects.
- DHHL has no money, so lessees not able to move onto land.
- Waimea Bypass and Kawaihae Bypass are part of the County Plan and CDP.

Part Three: Facilitated Discussion on Who Else Needs to be Involved in the PEL Process

As stated in the **Introduction**, one of the steps in the PEL process is to consult with federal, state, and local agencies, as well as other stakeholders in the vicinity of the project. HDOT will consult with the following agencies:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- State of Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources
- State of Hawaii Department of Health
- State Historic Preservation Division
- County of Hawaii Planning Department
- County of Hawaii Department of Public Works
- County of Hawaii Mass Transit Agency

Attendees were asked to provide input on other agencies, organizations, or stakeholders that should be consulted. The following agencies, organizations, and stakeholders were provided:

- Department of Hawaiian Home Lands because they are going to continue to develop.
- Parker Ranch (large landowner)
- Department of Education (planning to build a school outside of town; currently working on a Facilities Master Plan)
- Department of Agriculture
- HDOT Harbors Division (Kawaihae Harbor)
- Fire Department
- Police Department
- Transportation Security Administration
- Hotels on west side of island
- Trucking community
- Homeowners' Association, including Lalamilo Farm Lots Homeowners Association
- Homestead Associations
- Waimea Nui
- Hotel & Resort Associations
- Waimea Lions Club
- Waimea Rotary Club
- Hawaii Preparatory Academy
- Parker School
- Waikoloa Villages Community Association
- All South Kohala CDP associations
- Agency that provides public transportation for hotel workers that live on other side of island
- Housing Developers
- National Trail organizations
- Honokaa Community Associations
- Large employers (e.g., hospital, observatories, KTA, schools)

- Residents along Kawaihae Road (subdivisions)

The consultant team is currently reviewing the list of agencies, organizations, and other stakeholders to determine the appropriate contact person/people, as well as the applicability to the current study. Consultation letters are expected to be sent in early 2019.

Part Four: Comment Forms

A comment form was handed to all attendees when they entered the meeting. The comment form stated, "Please provide input on the Purpose and Need and/or any environmental, economic, or community issues." A total of six comment forms were handed in at the end of the meeting. An additional written comment was also provided at the end of the meeting. The following comments were provided.

Comments Received at the PEL Meeting

Comment Form 1

Are we able to draft a regional plan for Phase I for regional buy-in with 1st phase focus supporting 1st phase?

Comment Form 2

- Microscope Map. Please enlarge label A
- A myriad of studies over the recent years:
 - To what degree have these reviewed, considered, and made as a part of this Waimea Regional Safety Study?
 - What archaeological firm is being used?
- Unfortunately, discussion became global i.e., DHHL, Island Wide Transport, Young Brothers, etc.

Comment Form 3

Look at the other options, such as legislative and logistics that can be done without changing infrastructure.

Comment Form 4

- Transportation connectivity within Waimea.
- Need for emergency routes around town.

Comment Form 5

- Please adjust traffic light at center of town. The pedestrian wait time to cross is unreasonably long and could be adjusted to let pedestrians cross with priority over right-turning vehicle traffic.
- Improving cycling/pedestrian infrastructure is a relatively inexpensive way to relieve traffic congestion as people have a viable safe alternative to short-trip vehicle trips. This is particularly relevant to the massive school congestion and has the added benefits of improving safety, improving community health outcomes and improving sense of community and preserving sense of place.

Comment Form 6

- Alleviate congestion through the center of Waimea town.
- Provide an alternative route for motorists.
- "Future proof" design and development to adjust and acclimate as the community and surrounding communities grow.
- Develop roadway that connects Kawaihae Road and Mamalahoa Highway within this study area with the intention of future connections and including sound recommendation for those future connections.
- Design/develop alignment at the furthest extent possible within the study area.
- Maintain character and sense of place at Waimea.

Written Comment

Measures of “Sense of Place”: Establish a baseline.

- # of open community meetings
- # of themed events (paniolo, sustainability related, Cherry Blossom Festival)
- # of themed places (paniolo)
- # of museums, art centers (Paniolo Preservation Society, local artists, local places)
- # of organizations that help preserve or make “sense of place”
 - UXO
 - Invasive species
 - Building State Library in Waikoloa region
- # school use of local “sense of place” (projects with food, sailing, astronomy, Polynesian Sailing Society, hula, kalua pork, Portuguese sasuage/beans, Thanksgiving turkeys, purple sweet potatoes, poi in valley [kalo])

Comments Received after the PEL 2 Meeting

In the days after the meeting, five additional comments were provided via email. The following comments were provided.

Emailed Comment 1

Aloha. Mahalo for inviting me to the December 5th meeting in Waimea. I would like to share my observations regarding this Study. I learned 2 things:

1. The Regional Study does not expand far enough
2. The community needs a better circulation of traffic because the problem is at the Lindsey Road/Mamalahoia intersection.

I would ask that the SDOT consider #2 option.

- In 2000, traffic coming to a halt was at Anna’s Ranch. Today, it is at the south end of Kamuela View Estates; with planning for expansion of DHHL Lalamilo subdivision, phase 3 and 4. The Waiemi boundary should decrease to this intersection.
- The Pu’u Pa boundary would be favorable because 1) It allows for future development for Parker Trust lands, but 2) It avoids the expansion to very important age lands. Connection from Kawaihae Road to Mamalahoa is primary. 1-Suggest an alignment at south end of DHHL Lalamilo and County Transfer Station and across Merrimens Restaurant.
- Extend the Study area past the Minute Stop gas station going to and from Hamakua.
- The perilous situation through Waimea is trying to enter into Kawaihae Road and Mamalahoa from businesses and driveways. Visual impairment is primary.
- Encouraging Ala Ohia Road is primary, especially behind Waimea schools and the Shopping Center.
- Lastly, I would ask that the name Kawaihae Bypass, be changed to Waimea Bypass. I live in Kawaihae and it is confusing.

Emailed Comment 2

Thank you for coming out with your team to get comments on the WRSS. I would like to add a comment.

In the study area I would like to advocate for continuation and implementation of the Waimea Trails and Greenways project. It is a County Parks and Recreation project that was conceived in 1994 through Waimea Main Street. It continues today with a community built and maintained trail of one mile from Lindsey Road to Kahawai Street at the top of Sandalwood subdivision. It is planned to go from Church Row, follow the Waikoloa Stream and come out to the Ouli Park on the west end opposite South Kohala View Estates.

This would be a dedicated trail for non-motorized vehicles as well as pedestrians and would tie in safe transportation for kids to get to school by bike (away from cars) and residents to get to the center of town in a safe manner without using their car (thereby reducing congestion). Right now the project is stalled in the County level with outdated studies and slow or non-progress on easement procurement.

This is a very important project within the study area and I urge you to inform yourself about this project and advocate for it.

Emailed Comment 3

I'm concerned about expanding the scope of the current study to include the area up to Mud Lane. There is historical, and cost, reasons for this concern. Both the Kawaihae and Waimea bypasses were scuttled because of cost. The additional complication is the DHHL homesteads on the east side. The latter was another reason why the Waimea bypass project was scuttled.

I strongly believe it's important to keep this study within scope the HDOT can afford fiscally. There is no way that we'll see a bypass road go from the west side to the east side all at once. If that happens, it will have to be completed in phases. I believe what Ken Tatsuguchi stated should be repeated. The community needs to focus towards what is achievable in the current environment. This statement really resonated with me. I firmly believe if we expand the scope of this study, we're doomed for failure.

Emailed Comment 4

I attended the last PEL in Waimea and was disappointed that it was hijacked by a couple of disgruntled residents. Please do not use that moderator again. She lost control of the meeting. Your group as a whole seemed unsure and afraid. Would it be possible to send more confident staff?

Emailed Comment 5

Good Morning! Many thanks for conducting the Waimea Regional Safety Study meetings. The community is overjoyed that we are visiting this and do hope that we can finally get this project on the future of the road in our lifetime!

Please find my completed PDFs attached for your review and to add to your data.

- We need every single roadway counted every other year. Recommend cars, and trucks, and heavy vehicles as different numbers in counts to ascertain the numbers.
- DOE data on future school (Patti Cook to provide)
- South Kohala CDP Action Committee Book 2007 – Second access road out of Waikoloa Paramount. Developers are not doing diligence the County of Hawaii required of them. Aina Lea had this. They are in limbo?

- South Kohala CDP Action Committee Book outlines billing residents as a possibility. It should be updated, explored, and reviewed by community as option. It's indeed welcome and a concern by all here in Waikoloa Village.
- Hawaii County DOT would stand to save much money in time, energy, and labor costs if bypass becomes reality.
- Involve all private bus services in focus group and resorts along coast (we spoke of a huge list of stakeholders. Add these: Roberts Hawaii, Polynesian, Hawaii Trails, etc.

Next Steps

The next Community meeting will continue discussions on Need, Purpose, and Alternatives. The objective is to identify where consensus exists, to involve others, and to choose a path for moving forward.

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List of Attendees at PEL 2

Table 1 provides a list of the attendees at the first PEL meeting held on December 5, 2018 at Waimea Elementary School Cafeteria.

Table 1. Attendees at PEL #2

ATTENDEE	AFFILIATION
Pete Hendricks	Waimea Preservation Association
Tim Richards	Hawaii County Council
Margaret Wills	Resident
Billy Bergin	Lalamilo Farm
Bill Simonsma	Waimea Preservation Association
Julia Alos	Waikoloa Community Leadership Council
Kamuela Plunkett	Hawaii County Planning Department
Bill Moore	WLM Planning
Aaron Stene	Resident
Patti Cook	Waimea Community Association
James Kong	Resident
James Hustace	Waimea Community Association, South Kohala Traffic Safety Committee
Roger Wehrsig	Waikoloa Community Association
John Buck	Resident
David Tarnas	State of Hawaii House of Representatives
William Sanborn	Waimea Preservation Association
Jonathan Mitchell	Parker Ranch
Candace Wharton	Resident
Michael Vasquez	Mauna Kea Resident
Anika Glass	Resident
Frankie Pang	South Kohala Traffic Safety Committee
Jojo Tanimoto	Kawaihae
Frank Weber	PATH
Nancy Rose	Resident
Mike Rose	Resident
Clem Lam	WT & Greenways
Robyn Hafner	PATH
Kalena Blakemore	Office of Hawaiian Affairs
Gunner Mench	South Kohala Traffic Safety Committee

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