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VIEWPOINT: Increasing fares will hurt Maui Bus

By BOB PURE

POSTED: April 21, 2010

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Lahaina Bypass Now (LBN) has been a strong supporter of public transit for the last four years. We believe that a viable and expanded public transit system benefits Maui and its residents and visitors in numerous ways.

Maui Bus service, with inexpensive fares, has allowed commuters to leave their cars home and take the bus, resulting in fewer cars on our roads and highways.

Bus ridership has increased from 73,000 riders in 2005, to 292,000 in 2006, to 865,000 in 2007, to 1.45 million in 2008, to more than 2 million riders in 2009. This did not happen by accident. This was the result of many county officials and supportive and active groups, such as LBN, banding together to create a more significant public transit system never before seen on Maui.

The current bus service program on Maui is a great success story. With budget cut proposals on the table affecting bus service, we are going to shoot ourselves in the foot by putting an abrupt stop on the continued increased usage of Maui buses and potentially destroy a hugely successful public venture.

If the price of bus fare starts to approximate what it costs to carpool, commuters will go back to their cars, putting more cars back on our roads and we will see bus revenue plummet. We will have accomplished nothing good by raising fares. It is the law of unintended consequences. Revenue will fall; it will not go up. And many people, who finally have been persuaded to leave their cars at home, will go back to using them again.

LBN supports a proposal to keep the monthly commuter pass at the discounted current level and increase the single fares by 50 percent, not 100 percent.

Let's not kill a successful program that is on an upward growth curve. We've all worked too hard to get where we are today. Successful programs, like the Maui Bus, should be funded and encouraged.

* Bob Pure is the president of the board of directors of Lahaina Bypass Now, a grass-roots nonprofit group dedicated to solving West Maui transportation issues.

Political cartoon found to be offensive, race-based

The political cartoon in the April 14 Maui News is race-based and offensive. I don't agree with the message, which I accept without complaint even though I completely disagree with it, but the image used

Fact Box

GUIDELINES FOR LETTERS

In order to expedite the process of receiving, editing and publishing submissions to Letters on the Opinion pages, The Maui News has established the following guidelines:

Letters must not exceed 250 words.

Writers are limited to two published letters per month.

Handwritten letters are not accepted.

Every submission must include the writer's name, community and a phone number where the writer can be reached. The number is not published.

Letters submitted via e-mail (letters@mauinews.com) or the Virtual Newsroom on The Maui News Web site (<http://www.mauinews.com/>) are given priority.

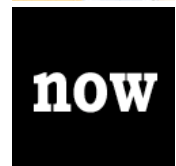
Poetry is not accepted.

All letters are subject to editing.

Viewpoints are limited to subjects particular to Maui County or the State of Hawaii, and the writer must have proven expertise in connection with the subject.

The Letters section is among the most popular features of The Maui News and submissions on subjects of general interest are welcome. Adherence to the guidelines above will allow for the publication of a greater volume of letters on a wider range of issues from a more diverse group of writers. Thanks to all contributors to the Letters section for your cooperation.

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to convey the point is out of bounds.

On the left is a fat, kinky-haired, big-nostriled, dark-skinned slob who is apparently taking money from the white man on the right.

Is this the kind of thing to inject in our beautiful community?

Mark Hyde

Wailea

HC&S plan could be a great opportunity for Maui

Is Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar going into biofuels as a result of a multimillion-dollar research project good news? The key is that "the research will emphasize strategies that ensure adequate resources and infrastructure are available" (The Maui News, April 11).

Since most of the money comes from federal sources, and the Environmental Protection Agency - a federal agency - is committed to the phasing out of injection wells, this could be a great opportunity for Maui to pursue a win-win-win solution.

Globally, water is a precious commodity. Currently there is a fight for stream water on Maui, there is no guarantee the streams will flow at any particular rate, which makes it hard to divide the water fairly. More than 4 million gallons a day of wastewater is being injected to our nearshore waters (Lahaina plant only), causing invasive algae blooms and other problems. Any research or plans for major future agriculture projects should include investigation on how to use reclaimed injected wastewater for agricultural purposes. This will also save money on fertilizer as reclaimed water is nitrogen-rich. Droughts happen but people never stop flushing their toilets. This is a problem that needs to be addressed and now is the time.

With millions of federal funds invested, the solution seems to be within our grasp. We need to use all of our water resources efficiently; set up a system now for future generations to thrive. This is something we could all be working toward together instead of fighting over.

Tamara Paltin

Kahana

Administration played a role in furlough decision

An April 14 letter writer stated that I gave "patently false" information in an April 2 Maui News article.

Here are the facts:

On June 1, 2009, Gov. Linda Lingle unveiled her plan to furlough all state employees 36 days per year. Since she did not have the authority to furlough Department of Education or University of Hawaii employees, Lingle said she would cut funding for those departments by an amount equivalent to 36 furloughs per year. On June 3, Lingle said she had an implied right to order furloughs. On July 2, Judge Karl Sakamoto disagreed, ruling that she does not have this authority. She was allowed, however, to make cuts to the DOE and UH budgets. This led directly to the negotiations that produced our current furlough situation.

Lingle cannot be held solely responsible for the economic mess that led to the budget cuts nor can she be held solely responsible for the furloughs. But the letter writer is being untruthful when stating that these furloughs were purely the decision of the Board of Education, the DOE and the teachers.

Lingle's administration has been very good at spinning this story and distorting the facts to make teachers look like the bad guys. Don't believe the spin. Let the facts stand for themselves. We are all in a bad situation and we teachers are simply trying to do our jobs.

Our leaders should stop all the posturing and focus on getting our kids the best education possible.

Mike Landes

Kihei

Jobs, economy should be considered in decision

Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar is a company that is made up of good, solid, hardworking people, some of whose families have worked for the company for generations. It disturbs me to think that the proud history of innovation, heart and soul that distinguishes HC&S will be lost if the state water commission determines that somehow the water that the plantation has used for more than 100 years should no longer be available for irrigating the sugar cane fields that define Maui's central valley.

The jobs that will be lost, the economy that will be damaged and the lifestyle that will be forever changed should all be relevant considerations for the commission.

I certainly hope that their decision will be a rational and thoughtful one.

John W. Hoxie Jr.

Haiku

Phone use, texting while driving should be illegal

According to estimates by the National Safety Council, at least 28 percent of all traffic crashes in the U.S. - or 1.6 million crashes each year - are caused by drivers using cell phones or sending/reading text messages. That includes 1.4 million crashes each year caused by cell phones and at least 200,000 crashes caused by texting.

At any given moment, about one in 10 drivers is using a phone and one in 100 is texting.

Cell phone use is against the law on other islands, it is time for a similar law on Maui.

Tom Brayton

Lahaina

Taxing tourists, unhealthy food will increase revenue

It seems to me that Maui has great opportunities for increasing revenue to protect the nonprofits of the county.

Tourists will always come to Maui. A paradise tax (maybe \$100 per person) could be applied to every tourist arriving here. People providing a Hawaii driver's license would be exempt.

Another sensible tax is a health tax placed on all those non-nutritious foods that help make us obese. If we have to pay more for pop, candy and unhealthy fast food, we will probably buy less. Those who insist on unhealthy lifestyles will help pay for our nonprofits.

We already do this with cigarettes and alcohol.

Eleanor Howell

Napili

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