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March 11, 2025

APPROVED FOR TRANSMITTAL

 3-11-25
Mayor Date

Honorable Richard T. Bissen, Jr.
Mayor, County of Maui
200 South High Street
Wailuku, Hawaii 96793

For Transmittal to:

Honorable Tamara Paltin
Chair, Disaster Recovery, International Affairs, and Planning Committee
200 South High Street
Wailuku, Hawaii 96793

Dear Chair Tamara Paltin:

**SUBJECT: BILL 103 (2024), AMENDING CHAPTER 19.08, MAUI COUNTY CODE,
RELATING TO DENSITY WITHIN RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS (DRIP-2)**

The Department of Transportation (DOT) hereby transmit the following response to your letter dated February 19, 2025, regarding the Bill 103 (2024), Ordinance amending Chapter 19.08, Maui County Code, Relating to Density within Residential Districts:

Question 1: If applicable, in the event of a natural disaster or emergency, does your Department rely on studies or methodology to determine the number of vehicles on a roadway during an evacuation? Please explain.

Response: The Department of Transportation does not employ pre-determined studies or methodologies to calculate and determine precise evacuation plans. The Department's response is adaptive, recognizing that each natural disaster or emergency presents unique challenges requiring tailored solutions.

The Department's approach prioritizes maintaining essential transit services as long as safely feasible. This strategy aims to support residents in accessing necessary supplies, medications, and appointments during critical periods. The Department ensures continued fixed route and ADA paratransit services until road conditions become unsafe. Due to the majority of the Department's fleet being actively deployed, spare County-owned buses for dedicated evacuations are limited.

However, the Department leverages its contracted operators, Roberts Hawaii and Maui Economic Opportunity (MEO), who possess supplemental resources, including school buses, motorcoaches, and minibuses, along with standby drivers.

Historically, the Department has coordinated with these operators to provide emergency transportation services. Examples includes:

2010 Tsunami (February 27, 2010):

- Coordinated with Roberts Hawaii and MEO to relocate assets to higher ground due to tsunami risk.
- Six Roberts Hawaii drivers and motorcoaches (300 passenger capacity) were placed on standby.
- Responded to two requests: one to transport 400-600 people from the airport and another from Harbor Lights.
- Fixed route and MEO services operated until 8:30AM before being suspended.

2014 Tropical Cyclone Iselle (August 7, 2014):

- Roberts Hawaii provided evacuation school bus services to designated shelters (Baldwin High School, Lahaina Civic Center, King Kekaulike High School, Lokelani Intermediate School) from 1:00PM to 5:00PM.
- MEO provided transportation to shelters for Hana, Lanai, and Molokai residents.
- All fixed route and MEO services were suspended at 6:30PM.

2018 Tropical Cyclone Olivia (September 12, 2018):

- Maui Bus services were suspended beginning Wednesday morning (September 12).
- MEO facilitated same-day paratransit reservations for individuals with disabilities to reach shelters.
- Normal operations resumed on September 13, 2018.

2023 Wildfires (August 8, 2023); just a few examples listed:

- On August 8, 2023, the Department did its best to move people north within West Maui. As communications were down, the Department worked with MPD to find the Roberts drivers on the road and have them move people.
- Roberts Hawaii provided emergency bus transportation from Ma'alaea Harbor to Central Maui community shelters, transporting Coast Guard evacuees.
- Beginning August 13, 2023, organized a free on-demand Central Maui shuttle service by Roberts Hawaii from designated shelters to shopping and medical facilities.
- Beginning August 20, 2023, organized a Ka'anapali Circulator shuttle operated by Roberts Hawaii connecting resort hotels housing survivors.
- Beginning in August, organized motorcoach transportation to transport military personnel from the airport to West Maui.

This demonstrates the reliance on adaptable responses and collaboration with contracted partners and partner agencies, rather than pre-determined evacuation methodologies.

Question 2: In the event of a natural disaster or emergency, how are individuals who do not have access to, or able to drive, a vehicle evacuated?

Response: Due to the diverse nature of potential natural disasters and emergencies, each requiring unique response strategies, there is no single, definitive answer to how all non-driving individuals are evacuated. This population encompasses a wide range of vulnerable groups, including:

- Children in schools
- Residents of nursing homes and elderly facilities
- Patients in hospitals and medical facilities
- Individuals at airports and beaches
- Residents in private homes
- Visitors in hotels and condominiums

Given the Department's limited resources, particularly in terms of available vehicles and drivers, the Department prioritizes accommodating emergency transportation requests to the best of its ability.

It is strongly emphasized that individuals and family preparedness is crucial. As detailed in the "Disaster Preparedness Guide for Maui County" (January 2019), available on the Maui County website, every resident should develop a personal emergency plan. This plan should include:

- Determining whether to shelter in place or evacuate.
- Establishing meeting and sheltering plans with relatives or friends, either at a private residence or a county shelter.
- Recognizing that individuals with special health needs, activity limitations, or disabilities require more detailed planning and additional evacuation time.

The guide underscores that individuals, their families, and caregivers are best positioned to plan for their safety during and after an emergency.

While the Department will make every effort to provide transportation assistance within available resources, proactive individuals preparedness is essential for ensuring the safety of all residents.

a. Does the Maui Bus Public Transit System serve a role in evacuating people? If no, why not?

Response: The Maui Bus Public Transit System can serve a role in evacuating people, dependent on the severity of a situation. As previously indicated, public transit services will continue to operate if safe road conditions permit, facilitating residents' access to necessary supplies, medications, and appointments during an imminent natural disaster or emergency.

Should the Administration or MEMA require the transit service to be activated for emergency evacuation, the Department would suspend regular transit operations to prioritize emergency response.

However, it is important to acknowledge that individuals relying on public transit may be negatively impacted should routes be suspended while they are away from their residences. A suspension of service during an emergency could leave transit-dependent individuals without immediate transportation options.

b. Can our public transit system be an alternative mode of evacuation dedicated to non-drivers, including disabled individuals and the elderly?

Response: The public transit system can serve as an alternative mode of evacuations for non-drivers, including individuals with disabilities and the elderly. However, the practical application of this face's significant challenges.

Distinguishing between drivers and non-drivers, individuals with disabilities and those without, and determining who qualifies as elderly during an active emergency is exceedingly difficult. Therefore, the Department would likely prioritize evacuating anyone in need of assistance within its capacity.

Furthermore, the Department operates under limitations regarding the number of accessible vehicles and available drivers. These constraints directly impact the system's capacity to serve as a dedicated evacuation resource for specific populations during an emergency.

Sincerely,



Marc Takamori
Director of Transportation

Cc: Mayor Richard T. Bissen, Jr.

DRIP Committee

From: Michelle L. Santos <Michelle.Santos@co.maui.hi.us>
Sent: Tuesday, March 11, 2025 11:56 AM
To: DRIP Committee
Cc: Cynthia E. Sasada; Erin A. Wade; Josiah K. Nishita; Kelii P. Nahooikaika; Cora-Lyn Dumlao; Diane C. Yogi; Marc I. Takamori
Subject: MT#10988 Bill 103
Attachments: MT#10988-DRIP Committee.pdf