

BILL054(25)
Testimony

MISC. COMM. 449

COUNCIL

COUNCIL Meeting

Meeting Date: Sep 3, 2025 @ 10:00 AM

Support: 1

Oppose: 14

I wish to comment: 2

Name: Donald Sakamoto	Email: cylonone@aol.com	Zip: 96744
Representing: Self	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Aug 29, 2025 @ 01:08 PM
Testimony: Oral testimony via video conference only.		
Name: Eduardo Hernandez	Email: eduardo@hbl.org	Zip: 96816
Representing: Hawai'i Bicycling League	Position: I wish to comment	Submitted: Aug 29, 2025 @ 04:02 PM
Name: Bryan Mick	Email: bryan.mick@doh.hawaii.gov	Zip: 96734
Representing: Disability and Communication Access Board	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Aug 29, 2025 @ 04:31 PM
Name: Micah Munekata	Email: mmunekata@ulupono.com	Zip: 96813
Representing: Ulupono Initiative	Position: I wish to comment	Submitted: Aug 29, 2025 @ 06:19 PM
Name: Daniel Treas	Email: dtreas@hotmail.com	Zip: 96813
Representing: Self	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Aug 30, 2025 @ 01:33 PM
Testimony: Testimony Opposing Bill 54 I oppose Bill 54. It risks cutting essential transit services and undermines access for those who rely on public transportation most. We need solutions that strengthen—not sideline—our community's mobility and equity. Mahalo for considering this perspective. Best, Dan Treas		
Name: Matthew Herrera	Email: mattmherrera@icloud.com	Zip: 96782

Representing: Self	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Aug 30, 2025 @ 01:59 PM
Testimony: I oppose this bill. It is unfair to the vulnerable population (youth, geriatric and handicap)that this bill will affect. Do better please.		
Name: Christopher Wong	Email: cwongsfs123@gmail.com	Zip: 96816
Representing: Self	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Aug 30, 2025 @ 02:11 PM
Testimony: My name is Christopher Wong, and I rely on TheBus almost every day to get to both work and school. Public transportation is not a luxury for me it is my lifeline. That is why I strongly believe Bill 54, which raises bus fares in Honolulu, is harmful and unfair to people like me who depend on the bus just to survive. As a full-time student and worker, I already struggle to make ends meet. Almost half of every paycheck I earn goes directly to paying for my tuition or helping cover rent for my family. My parents are disabled, so I am the main breadwinner in my household. Every dollar I make has a purpose: to keep a roof over our heads, to pay for basic bills, and to cover the costs of getting an education so that I can build a better future. When bus fares increase, it cuts directly into the little money I have left over for food, savings, and other necessities. The increase may not look like much on paper \$0.25 more per ride or \$10 more for a monthly pass but when you use the bus every single day like I do, those extra costs add up quickly. That extra \$10 a month could mean a meal for my family, a textbook I need for class, or part of a utility bill. For people already living paycheck to paycheck, this is not just an inconvenience; it is a real hardship. What makes this worse is that TheBus is a system used most heavily by low-income workers, students, and kupuna. We are the ones who cannot afford cars or high gas prices, and we depend on reliable, affordable public transit to survive. Bill 54 essentially punishes the very people who can least afford another expense, while doing little to address the bigger financial problems facing Honolulu's transit system. In the end, raising bus fares through Bill 54 does not solve the city's deficit in a fair way. Instead, it places the burden squarely on the shoulders of those who are already carrying the heaviest load students, families, the elderly, and the working poor. For someone like me, who is working hard to support a disabled working class family while staying in school, this bill is more than just numbers on paper. It is a policy that makes survival even harder. That is why I believe Bill 54 is bad for Honolulu. Instead of raising fares, our city leaders should find solutions that protect essential workers, students, and vulnerable families who rely on public transportation every single day.		

Name:	Email:	Zip:
Jaimelynnne Yamamoto Dela Cruz	jayamamoto125@gmail.com	96701
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Self	Oppose	Aug 31, 2025 @ 02:17 AM
Testimony: DaBus/Holo fares have already increased a significant amount in the past 5 years. The Department of Transportation should be focused on making our public transportation system safer, more sustainable, and more efficient — NOT more expensive — especially for those who are in need of it the most. Our keiki, kapuna, and disabled passengers deserve a transportation system that they can rely and depend on, not a system they have to worry about fitting into their already tight day-to-day budgets.		
Name:	Email:	Zip:
Jonathan Huynh	jhweather123@yahoo.com	96792
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Self	Oppose	Aug 31, 2025 @ 07:45 AM
Testimony: Aloha, Bill 54 proposes to raise prices on public transit. As a daily rider of DaBus and Skyline, I vehemently oppose this bill. I often get asked: why would I travel from my home in Nanakuli to town using public transit, which takes 150 minutes, if I could get there in 75 minutes by driving? I cite lower costs associated with public transit compared to those associated with the car. I cite improved health by walking more. I also cite that it means 1 fewer car on the road, which means less road maintenance costs, less pollution, and less traffic congestion. Raising the fare weakens these arguments. The value of public transit is tied directly to the proportion of the population that uses public transit. When prices go up, ridership numbers drop. Lower ridership reduces potential revenue in the long term. At a time when many are struggling to survive against the high cost of living, we should be looking for ways to cut costs for the most vulnerable, not raise them. The proposed increase of \$10 for the monthly pass will result in a \$120 increase per year per person. That's \$480 for a family of 4. The proposed \$110 increase for the annual pass will result in a \$440 increase for a family of 4. The increase in cost for someone who uses cash ($\\$0.25 \times 2 \text{ rides per day} \times 5 \text{ days a week} \times 52 \text{ weeks}$) to only commute to work will be \$130 per person per year or \$520 for a family of 4. These price increases disproportionately affect the most vulnerable because this group makes up the largest share of ridership. Increasing fares is equivalent to increasing taxes on the most vulnerable and keeping taxes unchanged for those who can afford to drive. Unlike private cars, public transit has a much higher capacity to move people and provides a net positive to the economy orders of magnitude over that of the car. Public transit requires much less space, yet it can transport so many more people. You support public transit by increasing ridership, not lowering it. Although a simple spreadsheet may indicate a		

significant budget deficit, revenue, strictly speaking, is an inaccurate statistic to use here. It does not consider the societal benefits of increased mobility.

The solution is not to raise prices. The solution has to be a systemic restructuring of the city that encourages more people to use public transit. This means working with other sectors of the local government to reduce lanes dedicated to cars, implement public transit-only lanes and priority traffic signals, extend Skyline, reduce parking, and build higher-density buildings near transit centers. Increasing ridership and reducing vehicle miles traveled are essential goals of a successful public transit system. That is why I vehemently oppose Bill 54, which raises prices, disproportionately hurts the most vulnerable, decreases ridership, and increases vehicle miles traveled. I urge you to vote no on Bill 54.

Name: Abigail Yasunaga	Email: abigailyasunaga@gmail.com	Zip: 96706
Representing: Self	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Aug 31, 2025 @ 08:21 AM

Testimony:

This bill is not fair to low income communities and not everyone can earn as much to maintain sustainable living neither the convenience to own a car.

Disabled People who rely on public transportation are often paid less and unable to use any other method of transportation. Allowing more access to more public transportation will benefit Hawai'i's environment and less cars on the roads with less traffic. There should be more incentives for public transportation rather than making it more difficult

Name: Katrina Yamamoto	Email: katreenah808@gmail.com	Zip: 96818
Representing: Self	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Aug 31, 2025 @ 08:30 AM

Testimony:

The Department of Transportation should be focused on making our public transportation system safer, more sustainable, and more efficient — NOT more expensive — especially for those who are in need of it the most.

Name: John Dela Cruz	Email: jstylez69.8o8@gmail.com	Zip: 96818
Representing: Self	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Aug 31, 2025 @ 03:30 PM

Testimony:

The Department of Transportation should be focused on making our public transportation system safer, more sustainable, and more efficient — NOT more expensive — especially for those who are in need of it the most.

Name: Shelby Billionaire	Email: presidentbillionaire@gmail.com	Zip: 96792
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Representing: www.ohanaunityparty.com	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Sep 1, 2025 @ 05:44 PM
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Testimony:

****Testimony in Opposition to Bill 54 (2025), CD1 – Honolulu City Council****

****Meeting Date: September 3 2025 –****

City and County of Honolulu
530 South King Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair and Members of the Honolulu City Council,

My name is Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire, HRM, representing the Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands, H.I., and Chairman of the Ohana Unity Party (www.OhanaUnityParty.com). I am submitting this testimony to oppose Bill 54 (2025), CD1, which amends the fare structure for Oahu’s Multimodal Municipal Transportation System, including TheBus, Skyline, and TheHandi-Van. While the bill aims to simplify fares and incentivize HOLO card use, its fare increases disproportionately burden low-income residents, youth, and paratransit users, undermining affordability and access for our most vulnerable ohana.

****Concerns with Bill 54 (2025), CD1:****

Bill 54 introduces fare hikes that exacerbate financial strain on Oahu’s residents:

- ****Increased Fares for Key Groups****: The bill raises single-ride fares for adults (\$3 to \$3.25), youth (\$1.50 to \$1.75), and reduced-fare categories (senior citizens, persons with disabilities, paratransit ID holders, and extremely low-income individuals) from \$1.25 to \$1.75. Monthly and annual passes also see significant increases (e.g., adult monthly pass from \$80 to \$90, youth monthly pass from \$40 to \$45). The seven-day pass jumps from \$35 to \$45, a 28.6% increase.
- ****Paratransit Fare Hike****: TheHandi-Van single-ride fare for paratransit eligibility ID holders and their companions rises from \$2.25 to \$2.50, despite a reduced fare cap of \$2 for extremely low-income individuals. This increase burdens persons with disabilities who rely on paratransit for essential mobility.
- ****Impact on Low-Income Households****: According to the Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation (2023), 50% of Oahu renters are cost-burdened, spending over 30% of income on housing and utilities. With Honolulu’s median household income at \$96,000 (HUD 2024), extremely low-income households (below \$28,800 for a family of four) cannot absorb additional transit costs, especially alongside a 61% sewer fee hike (Honolulu Civil Beat, June 4, 2025).
- ****Limited Relief****: While the bill repeals the \$1.5 million cap on the extremely low-income fare program, the increased fares still outpace affordability for many. The Honolulu Star-Advertiser (July 2025) notes that transit costs disproportionately affect Native Hawaiian and working-class communities, who rely heavily on TheBus and Skyline.

****Impact on Honolulu’s Ohana:****

The Ohana Unity Party stands for equitable policies that uplift our keiki, kupuna, and families. Bill 54’s fare increases risk limiting access to public transit for low-income residents, students, and persons with disabilities, who depend on

affordable transportation for work, school, and medical needs. The prioritization of HOLO card incentives and special event/airport fares overlooks the immediate needs of cost-burdened households, contradicting the City's commitment to equitable transit access outlined in the 2022 Oahu Housing Strategy.

****Call to Action:****

I urge the Honolulu City Council to reject Bill 54 (2025), CD1, and maintain current fare levels to protect affordability. Instead, I recommend:

- **Freeze Fare Increases****: Retain existing fares for adults, youth, and paratransit users until a comprehensive affordability study is conducted.
- **Expand Subsidies****: Increase funding for the extremely low-income fare program and extend eligibility to more households, as suggested by Councilmember Radiant Cordero in 2024 discussions.
- **Alternative Funding****: Follow Councilmember Tommy Waters' proposal in Bill 43 (2025) to redirect Oahu Transient Accommodations Tax revenues to offset transit costs, reducing reliance on fare hikes.
- **Public Engagement****: Hold town halls to gather community input on fare changes, ensuring the needs of low-income and Native Hawaiian communities are prioritized.

Bill 54's fare increases threaten the well-being of Oahu's ohana by making transit less affordable. I encourage the Council to reject this bill and prioritize equitable, accessible public transportation. Please share my platform (@OhanaUnityParty, @PikachuBillionaire on YouTube) to raise awareness and advocate for fair policies.

Sincerely,
Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire, HRM
Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands, H.I.
Chairman, Ohana Unity Party
www.OhanaUnityParty.com
OhanaUnityChair@gmail.com
Facebook: @KeikiOkalani | Instagram: @OhanaUnityParty, @LegendaryBillionaire | X: @OhanaUnityParty, @AmericanPartyOG
YouTube: @PikachuBillionaire (<https://www.youtube.com/@pikachubillionaire>)
Support: Venmo @PresidentBillionaire | CashApp \$ShelbyBillionaire | BTC Wallet 1sRfKDphW18hojoyTQVy9qQVSUtQgahYwj
#OhanaUnityParty #AffordableTransit #HawaiiJustice

Name: Kaili Swan	Email: kailiswan333@gmail.com	Zip: 96706
Representing: Self	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Sep 2, 2025 @ 10:45 AM

Testimony:

I am sporting this bill 57 beacuse it is unfair for the pca to pay the full fare to ride the public transportation while the individual people with disabilities use the TheBus and Handivan for people with disabilities have access to the affordable transportation please let me know if you have any questions or comments

Thank you

Kaili Swan

Name: Kaili Swan	Email: kailiswan333@gmail.com	Zip: 96706
Representing: Self	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Sep 2, 2025 @ 10:45 AM

Testimony:

I oppose bill 54 because I am a person with a disability who has a personal care assistant(PCA), who rides for free with me on the bus, the rail and on Handivan every weekend. Bill 54 changes that and will have the PCA pay for each ride. If the PCA pays cash, they will have to pay \$3.25 instead of \$3.00. therefore I oppose bill 54. please contact me if you have any questions.

Name: Richville Fagaragan	Email: rfagarag@hawaii.edu	Zip: 96706
Representing: Self	Position: Oppose	Submitted: Sep 2, 2025 @ 04:49 PM

Name: Dre Kalili	Email: dreanalee.k.kalili@hawaii.gov	Zip: 96813
Representing: Honolulu Rate Commission	Position: Support	Submitted: Sep 3, 2025 @ 03:29 AM

**ADDRESS**

3442 Wai'ālae Ave., Suite 1
Honolulu, HI 96816

PHONE

808-735-5756

EMAIL

bicycle@hbl.org

Honolulu City Council
Wednesday, September 3, 2025 – 10:00am

Hawai'i Bicycling League Offers Comments for Bill 54 (2025), CD1, Relating to Public Transit

Aloha Chair Waters and Members of the Honolulu City Council,

My name is Eduardo Hernandez, and I am the Advocacy Director for the Hawai'i Bicycling League (HBL). We are a non-profit organization founded in 1975 with the mission of enabling more people to ride bicycles for health, recreation, and transportation. We strive to create communities across our islands that have safe, accessible, and inclusive environments for people to bike, walk, and roll.

HBL offers comments on Bill 54 (2025), CD1, which updates and amends certain sections of Chapter 15B, Revised Ordinances of Honolulu 2021, as they pertain to the fare structure of O'ahu's Multimodal Municipal Transportation System. This bill would also increase the monthly and annual cost of a bus pass.

HBL respectfully requests the Council to re-commit this bill to committee for further public discussion.

The City is in the midst of reevaluating what our multimodal public transportation network should look like, including Bill 45 (2025) which adopts new definitions for public transit service, for the first time including bike share docks and fleet vehicles. Making drastic fare changes before key data is evaluated or innovative pilot solutions considered, could have serious and unintended consequences.

Past reports suggest for every 10% increase in fare, The Bus generally sees a 3% decline in ridership.¹ Absent updated analysis, we share concerns that, although this aims to simplify the fare structure (one fare policy goal) and address rising costs, it may not support another important fare policy goal of increasing ridership. This could undermine both revenue goals and the broader objectives of expanded public transportation access.

In Massachusetts, one of the greatest transportation success stories was an experiment to provide fare-free regional transit. It has proven to be a game changer, with skyrocketing ridership, economic benefits, and improved accessibility for the state's most vulnerable residents.²

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide comment.

Ride Aloha,
Eduardo Hernandez

Eduardo Hernandez
Advocacy Director

¹ <https://www.civilbeat.org/2022/02/honolulus-plan-to-raise-bus-fares-will-hurt-riders/>

² <https://mass.streetsblog.org/2025/02/06/meva-study-finds-benefits-of-axing-fares-far-exceed-lost-revenue>



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

1010 Richards Street, Rm. 118 • Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813
Ph. (808) 586-8121 (V) • Fax (808) 586-8129 • (808) 204-2466 (VP)

September 3, 2025

The Honorable Tommy Waters
Chairperson
and Members of the
Honolulu City Council
530 South King Street, Room 100
Honolulu, HI 96813

Regarding: Bill 54 (2025) CD1 – Relating to Public Transit

Dear Chair Waters and Members of the Honolulu City Council:

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) opposes Bill 54 (2025) CD1.

Bill 54 (2025) CD1 eliminates the fare structure table categories of "Medicare Cardholder (Hawaii Resident)" and "Medicare Cardholder (Non-Hawaii Resident)." It establishes a new fare structure table category of "Reduced Fare" but does not list Medicare Cardholders as eligible for this category.

Bill 54 (2025) CD1 also eliminates the existing fare structure table category of "Personal Care Attendant (PCA)" which sets the fare at zero on TheBus or Skyline when a person is serving as a PCA for a rider with a disability. Bill 54 (2025) CD1 retains the existing ordinance "15B-2.1 (k) A personal care attendant accompanying a paratransit eligibility ID holder may not pay a fare when performing the service." DCAB recommends all persons with a disability should have their PCA's fare waived, not just those who are a paratransit eligibility ID holder.

Therefore, DCAB urges the Council to amend Bill 54 (2025) CD1 to read:

§ 15B-2.1 Fare structure.

The reduced fare is available to senior citizens, persons with a disability, paratransit eligibility ID holders, Medicare Cardholders, and individuals with extremely low incomes; provided that the discounted fare for the monthly pass and annual pass is limited to persons eligible for a reduced fare who are also residents of Hawaii.

(k) A personal care attendant accompanying a ~~[paratransit eligibility ID holder]~~ person with a disability may not pay a fare when performing the service.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

for KIRBY L. SHAW
Executive Director



Email: communications@uluPono.com

HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
Wednesday, September 3, 2025 — 10:00 A.M.

UluPono Initiative offers comments on Bill 54 (25), Relating to Public Transit

Dear Chair Waters and Members of the Council:

My name is Micah Munekata, and I am the Director of Government Affairs at UluPono Initiative. We are a Hawai'i-focused impact investment firm that strives to improve the quality of life throughout the islands by helping our communities become more resilient and self-sufficient through locally produced food, renewable energy and clean transportation choices, and better management of freshwater resources.

UluPono offers comments on Bill 54(25), which updates and amends certain sections of Chapter 15B, Revised Ordinances of Honolulu 2021, as they pertain to the fare structure of O'ahu's Multimodal Municipal Transportation System.

UluPono respectfully requests the Committee to reconsider the proposed fare increases for public transit services. Increasing fares may likely offset ridership gains forthcoming from the opening of Phase 2 of Skyline (both new stations and expanded hours) and increased bus service.

Past reports suggest for every 10% increase in fare, The Bus generally sees [a 3% decline in ridership](#).¹ Absent updated analysis, we remain concerned that, although this aims to simplify the fare structure (one fare policy goal) and address rising costs, it may not support another important fare policy goal of increasing ridership. This could undermine both revenue goals and the broader objectives of expanded public transportation access. It is possible that some of these issues have been explored more recently since the Rate Commission's deliberations, but it is unclear if those have been shared more broadly or could be addressed during this bill's deliberation.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,
Micah Munekata
Director, Government Affairs

¹<https://www.civilbeat.org/2022/02/honolulus-plan-to-raise-bus-fares-will-hurt-riders/>

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee.

My name is Richville Fagaragan, I live in Ewa Beach, and I am testifying for myself in opposition to Bill 54, the proposal to increase bus fares for TheBus and TheHandiVan. Raising fares will make Honolulu’s public transit less affordable and less effective, while failing to address the real challenges of frequency and travel times.

Research consistently shows that fare increases often backfire by reducing ridership without solving budget shortfalls. According to the National Academies Transportation Research Board Report 95, fare hikes lead to ridership declines, particularly among low-income and transit-dependent riders. The report notes an average bus fare elasticity of about –0.40, meaning that a 10% fare increase leads to a 4% drop in ridership. Fare elasticity measures how sensitive ridership is to changes in fares: $E_f = \frac{\% \Delta \text{Ridership}}{\% \Delta \text{Fare}}$

The table below shows the implied fare elasticities from past and proposed fare changes, using data from *TheBus Ridership and Performance Statistics* page.

Fare Increase Year	Fare Type	Fare Change	Previous Year Ridership	Current Year Ridership	Percentage Fare Changes	Percentage Ridership Changes	Elasticity
2018	Adult Single	\$2.50 → \$2.75	63,902,413 (2017)	62,340,881 (2018)	10%	-2.46%	-0.246
	Youth Single	\$1.25 → \$1.25			0%		N/A
	Adult Monthly	\$60 → \$70			16.67%		-0.148
	Youth Monthly	\$30 → \$35			16.67%		
2022*	Adult Single	\$2.75 → \$3.00	25,811,479 (2021)	34,648,000 (2022)	9.09%	+34.2%*	3.76*
	Youth Single	\$1.25 → \$1.50			20%		1.71*
	Adult Monthly	\$70 → \$80			14.29%		2.39*
	Youth Monthly	\$35 → \$40			14.29%		
Bill 54 (2025)	Adult Single	\$3.00 → \$3.25	41,029,062 (2024)	40,887,226 (2025) **	8.33%	-0.347%	-0.042
	Youth Single	\$1.50 → \$1.75			16.67%		-0.020
	Adult Monthly	\$80 → \$90			12.5%		-0.028
	Youth Monthly	\$40 → \$45			12.5%		

*2022 Elasticities are not meaningful for fare sensitivity – ridership increase reflect pandemic recovery

**Current data is only available up to June 2025. July to December was calculated

As shown, the projected ridership impact of the 2025 fare increase is approximately 143,000 fewer riders (0.35%), reducing total ridership to about 40.7 million. Even small percentage declines represent many people discouraged from riding. For example, Honolulu has roughly 180,000 public school students, many of whom rely on TheBus daily. Increasing youth fares reduces their ability to access transit outside of school hours, making Bill 54 both inequitable and unnecessary.

Compared to other U.S. transit systems, Honolulu's proposed \$3.25 adult fare would be among the highest in the nation. For example:

- WMATA Metrobus (Washington, D.C.): \$2.25-\$2.50 flat fare for all riders, with free transfers and fare caps.
- New York City MTA Bus: \$2.90 per ride.
- San Francisco MUNI: \$2.50–\$2.75.
- Los Angeles Metro: \$1.75

Unlike Honolulu, WMATA also maintains accessibility for all riders while supporting ridership growth. Honolulu's proposed fare increase risks pricing people out of the system.

This issue is personal to me. I have relied on public transit since elementary school—to get to class, visit relatives in Waipahu, Waipio, and Wahiawa, or shop at Pearlridge and Ala Moana Center. One of my parents also depended on TheBus to reach work in Mililani. Growing up, before the EXPRESS County Bus Pass program, my family paid \$30 per monthly youth pass for three kids plus \$60 for an adult pass, long before the 2018 fare changes. Each increase made it harder for families like mine to manage transportation costs. Today, with all four members of my family considered adults, the proposed change means \$90 per person, or \$360 per month total—a heavy burden for families living paycheck to paycheck in Hawai'i. While my siblings and I now benefit from discounted UPass as college students, many families do not have that relief. Fare increases under Bill 54 would continue to hurt low- and middle-income households who depend on public transit every day.

At the same time, bus service in Honolulu remains infrequent and slow. Most suburban routes such as 40, 42, and 51, along with limited express routes from rural areas, operate only every 30–40 minutes, with trip times of an hour or more. Circulator routes often come only every 30–60 minutes. According to the Transit Capacity and Quality of Service Manual, “a maximum wait time of 10–15 minutes is strongly preferred by passengers, while 30 minutes is considered a ‘last resort’ for low-demand rural routes.” My own Route 47, which connects me to Downtown-bound buses, runs only once per hour, forcing me to plan my schedule around the bus rather than the other way around. Even though Route 47 was designed to connect to UH West O'ahu or East Kapolei Station, it is still faster to transfer to Route E to reach Downtown.

In contrast, when I was a summer intern in Washington, D.C., I experienced how affordable fares combined with reliable and frequent service create a stronger transit system. From the housing location where I lived, a suburban route called M60 ran every 12 minutes with a 30-minute travel time to a Red Line Metrorail station serving 50 stops. A peak-hour limited express version, the M6X, provided even faster trips by serving only 15 stops. In addition, Montgomery County operates the Flash Bus Rapid Transit system on the Orange and Blue lines, with buses every 15 minutes and just 10 stops between Silver Spring and Burtonsville. This shows that frequent, reliable, and affordable service—not fare increases—is what actually encourages ridership.

For these reasons, I urge the Council to take the following actions regarding Bill 54:

1. Defer or reject the proposed fare increase and maintain current fares.
2. Prioritize service improvements---increase bus frequency and reduce travel times, expand service to and from Skyline stations, and continue programs like the EXPRESS County Bus Pass that ensure youth access to transit.
3. Encourage ridership growth by keeping fares affordable and supporting public events near Skyline stations.

Finally, if the Council feels fare increases must be considered in the future, a fairer alternative would be to apply them only to peak-hour express routes (such as Routes 81–99 and W1–W3). These routes serve longer commutes and provide a faster, premium service, meaning riders are more willing to pay a slightly higher fare (such as \$3.50). This model is already used successfully in cities like Washington, D.C. and New York, where standard local bus service remains affordable while premium express routes carry higher fares. By contrast, a general fare increase like that in Bill 54 unfairly burdens youth, seniors, and low-income riders who depend on regular routes for everyday travel.

In conclusion, Bill 54 is not the solution. Higher fares will reduce ridership, hurt working families, and make Honolulu’s already limited transit system less accessible. Instead, the Council should invest in faster, more frequent service while keeping fares affordable for all riders.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify

Richville Fagaragan

Ewa Beach, HI

96706



Honolulu Rate Commission

Komikina Lākiō Kāki

CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

<http://www.honolulu.gov/boards-and-commissions>

711 Kapi'olani Boulevard, 16th Floor • Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

COMMISSIONERS

DreanaLee K. Kalili, Chair

Rex Y. Akutagawa

James Burke

Gary Gill

Cindy McMillan

Charlotte Townsend

September 3, 2025

The Honorable Thomas Waters, Chair & Presiding Officer
and Members
Honolulu City Council
530 South King Street, Room 202
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair Waters:

Subject: Bill 54 (2025); Testimony in Support

The Rate Commission testifies in support of this measure as it aligns with policy recommendations the commission adopted earlier this year. Specifically, the Rate Commission recommends the following revisions to the City's transit fare structure:

1. An incentive for bus riders to use the HOLO payment card and a disincentive to pay fares with cash to be implemented as a fare increase of \$0.25 for riders paying in cash;
2. An increase of the adult monthly capped HOLO card fare or prepaid pass from \$80.00 to \$90.00;
3. An increase of the youth monthly capped HOLO card fare or prepaid pass from \$40.00 to \$45.00;
4. An increase of the reduced fare category for single rides from \$1.25 to \$1.50;
5. An increase of the reduced fare category for daily/24-hour capped HOLO card fare from \$3.00 to \$3.75;
6. An increase of the reduced fare category for the annual pass HOLO card fare from \$45.00 to \$50.00;
7. An increase in the paratransit one-way trip fare from \$2.25 to \$2.50; and
8. An increase of the seven-day pass cost from \$35.00 to \$50.00.

In addition to these fare structure revisions, the Rate Commission also recommends that the ordinance be further amended to authorize the director of the Department of Transportation Services to establish a special events single ride fare for special events at his/her discretion, as well as a repeal of the \$1.5 million per fiscal year limit for the

subsidy available for the reduced fare program for individuals with extremely low incomes. The Rate Commission finds that the annual cost of the program based on current use is between \$600,000 and \$700,000; this adoption rate coupled with the public comment and testimony suggests the program is misunderstood or is difficult to access. In either case, there is an opportunity to improve efforts for outreach and education, or to reduce barriers to participation.

The members of the Rate Commission evaluated these proposals and received public testimony from nearly 100 individuals. In addition to its regularly scheduled meetings, the Rate Commission held four public outreach meetings including three evening meetings in Kalihi, Kapolei, and Kāneʻohe. These recommendations of the commission reflect an effort to achieve key fare policy objectives (e.g., a simplified fare structure that encourages intermodal trips and guarantees transit riders the best available fare) while weighing the expressed needs of the public. The Rate Commission approved these recommendations at its meeting on March 4, 2025. The attachment includes excerpts of a slide deck presented at the March meeting that reflect the discussion, consideration, and deliberation of the Rate Commission.

Noting the numerous voiced concerns opposing the fare increases, the Rate Commission's recommendations to increase the fare caps instead of the single ride fares represent a balanced approach to supporting the City's transit service while minimizing the financial impact to its transit riders.

Should you have any questions, please contact me at (808) 388-5969.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "DreanaLee K. Kalili". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "DreanaLee" and last name "Kalili" clearly distinguishable.

DreanaLee K. Kalili, Chair
Honolulu Rate Commission

HONOLULU RATE COMMISSION

2025 REVIEW OF FARES, FEES, RATES, TOLLS & OTHER CHARGES





RATE COMMISSION RESPONSIBILITY

1. Review the fares, fees, rates, tolls and other charges for the use of any and all modes of the multimodal municipal transportation system
2. Recommend adjustments
3. Consider that revenues + budget allocated to the system shall be sufficient to support the operation and maintenance of the system
4. Consider factors such as
 - a. Transportation equity
 - b. Accessibility
 - c. Sustainability
 - d. Availability
 - e. Effect on ridership



FARE POLICY OBJECTIVES

- 1. Simple fare structure.** Easy to use and understand; Convenient ways to pay
- 2. Timing of changes.** Regular, predictable, affordable
- 3. Encourage intermodal trips**
- 4. Fare capping & “best fare”**
- 5. Incentivize use of HOLO**
- 6. Disincentivize use of cash on TheBus**

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC MEETINGS & PARTICIPATION

Meeting	Testifiers
February 10, 7:30 Kapolei Hale	3
February 11, 2:30 DTS	4
February 11, 6:30 Kapālana Hale	2
February 13, 6:30 Kāneʻohe District Park	0

- 9 individuals testified during a meeting
- 24 individuals submitted written testimony (February 4-28)
- 66 individuals submitted written testimony (previously received, prior to meetings)

ANALYSIS | ADULT FARE (MONTHLY BASIS)

Rider Type	Current Cash Payment	Current HOLO Payment	Proposed Change Cash Payment	Proposed Change HOLO Payment
Casual user (10 single rides/month)	\$30	\$30	\$32.50 [+\$2.50]	\$30 [No change]
Commuter (20 round trips/month)	\$120	\$80 Capped on Day 14 (19) <i>(Earliest possible)</i>	\$130 [+\$10]	\$90 [+\$10] Capped on Day 15 (20) <i>(Earliest possible)</i>
Heavy user (20 daily round trips + 10 days w/ 3 trips)	\$210	\$80 Capped on Day 11 <i>(Earliest possible)</i>	\$227.50 [+\$17.50]	\$90 [+\$10] Capped on Day 13 <i>(Earliest possible)</i>

ANALYSIS | ADULT PER RIDE

Rider Type	Current Cash Payment	Current HOLO Payment	Proposed Change Cash Payment	Proposed Change HOLO Payment
Casual user (10 single rides/month)	\$3	\$3	\$3.25	\$3
Commuter (20 round trips/month)	\$3	\$2	\$3.25	\$2.25
Heavy user (20 daily round trips + 10 days w/ 3 trips)	\$3	\$1.14	\$3.25	\$1.29

ANALYSIS | YOUTH FARE (MONTHLY BASIS)

Rider Type	Current Cash Payment	Current HOLO Payment	Proposed Change Cash Payment	Proposed Change HOLO Payment
Casual user (10 single rides/month)	\$15	\$15	\$17.50 [+\$2.50]	\$15 [No change]
Commuter (20 round trips/month)	\$60	\$40	\$70 [+\$10]	\$45 [+\$5]
Heavy user (20 daily round trips + 10 days w/ 3 trips)	\$105	\$40	\$122.50 [+\$17.50]	\$45 [+\$5]

ANALYSIS | REDUCED FARE (MONTHLY BASIS)

Rider Type	Current Cash Payment	Current HOLO Payment	Proposed Change Cash Payment	Proposed Change HOLO Payment
Casual user (10 single rides/month)	\$12.50	\$12.50	\$17.50 [+\$5]	\$20
Commuter (20 round trips/month)	\$50	\$20	\$70 [+\$20]	\$20
Heavy user (20 daily round trips + 10 days w/ 3 trips)	\$87.50	\$20	\$122.50 [+\$35]	\$20

RECOMMENDATION

Implement a \$0.25 incentive to use HOLO (bus only)

- Cash payments slow boarding; HOLO increases bus efficiency

RECOMMENDATION

Increase paratransit fare from
\$2.25 to \$2.50

- General opposition to fare increases
 - Consider already high cost of living
 - Increases in fares will decrease ridership
 - Need to protect affordable access to transit
 - Increases disproportionately impact low- and middle-income riders
 - Decision makers need to understand impacts on riders

RECOMMENDATION

Increase 7-day pass from \$35 to \$40

- Support for this increase as local residents will likely not be impacted
- Support this increase instead of increasing the monthly cap/pass for youth

RECOMMENDATION

Authorize DTS Director to set
the special event fare

- *No testimony specific to this recommendation*

RECOMMENDATION

Eliminate the \$1.5 million budget cap for the low-income fare program

- Recommendation is misunderstood
- FY 2024, program cost (in lost revenue): \$668,585



SUMMARY OF PUBLIC TESTIMONY | OPPORTUNITIES

- Testifiers identifying as eligible for reduced fare opposing increases to those fares
- Misunderstanding of HOLO benefits
- Misunderstanding of low-income fare program
- General complaints about bus service/schedule/timeliness