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## Poll shows many interested in interisland ferry

August 26, 2010 - By HARRY EAGAR, Staff Writer

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KAHULUI - A public opinion survey of state transportation issues revealed a yearning for an interisland ferry, with 83 percent of those polled by SMS on behalf of the state Department of Transportation saying a marine transportation system should be part of the state's overall infrastructure, although pro-ferry sentiment was much weaker on Kauai.

An interisland ferry has been part of the state's long-range transportation planning since the first plan in 1961. That plan, now called the Hawaii Statewide Transportation Plan, is undergoing its sixth revision.

Each revision looks forward 25 years, so the current one will attempt to assess needs through 2035, planning officer David Shimokawa told a lightly attended informational meeting Monday night at the Maui Arts & Cultural Center. The past revision was completed in 2002.

The audience not only heard what a telephone survey, conducted earlier this year, of 1,200 Hawaii residents thought about transportation issues, they got to vote themselves - using radio tally counters - on a long list of questions on specific areas.

For example, security, which used to be bundled along with safety in the plans, is now broken out as a separate goal, at the behest of federal transportation administrators. Security involves both natural disasters and human-caused incidents, so there was a question about whether global warming and sea level rise should be addressed - about a third of telephone responders said yes. But half of the 28 people voting in person thought so.

And there was a separate question about human threats to security. Audience members were asked not only to vote but to comment, and Walter Enomoto said every New Year's and Fourth of July demonstrates how obvious it is that security is deficient.

"All those illegal fireworks are getting in," said Enomoto, who is head of the Maui Bicycle Alliance.

Like many of those attending, he has long been active in transportation issues. Two members of the Maui County Council, Mike Victorino and Bill Medeiros, and one hopeful, Elle Cochran, attended and took part in the discussions, which were lubricated by complimentary gelato from Ono Gelato of Paia.

The comments revealed that many of the prepared questions were ambiguous. Bike questions were especially contentious, since people who said they favored more biking also complained that roads in many places - Upcountry was singled out - are unsafe for bikers.

On the general question of whether roadways are safe, moderately safe or unsafe, those speaking out at the meeting wanted to distinguish between general conditions (regarded as safe) and special situations.

Marv Paularena, speaking about Honoapiilani Highway, said, yes, roads are safe, "except when the whales are here. Then it's unsafe."

Not everybody, however, agreed that Maui's narrow, undivided main highways are generally safe.

There will be a lot more demand for transportation, if forecasts are correct. Projections see a 39 percent greater population in Maui County by 2035 - 207,000 residents. Twice as many people will be more than 70 years of age, creating more demand for public transit.

The additional traffic from tourists will not grow nearly as fast,

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planners predict.

The estimates call for only 16 percent more visitor-days spent on the island 25 years from now.

Shimokawa said planners now think about how different modes of transportation - airports, harbors and roads - interact. In the past, each was treated as being somewhat insulated from the others.

The trend for current planning is to recognize that the tourist who steps off an airplane will likely get into a bus or a rental car.

The planners also have identified three "emerging issues" in addition to those that go back half a century: global warming, climate change and sea level rise; fuel and energy supplies; and aging populations and their transportation needs.

The survey results, proposed goals and subsidiary questions will be posted within a few days at [www.hawaii.statewidetransplan.com](http://www.hawaii.statewidetransplan.com).

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