



DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS

News Release

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Hawaiian Home Lands and County of Hawai'i Partnership Dedicates Keanalehu Drive

**Partnership between state and county on long-awaited road will greatly improve
drive time between Kealakehe and the Villages of La'i 'Ōpua**

KONA, HAWAII — In a partnership between the state and county governments to improve traffic and access for West Hawai'i residents, Governor Linda Lingle, Hawai'i County Mayor Billy Kenoi and Hawaiian Homes Commissioner Micah Kāne today dedicated the long-awaited Keanalehu Drive extension in Kealakehe.

The connector road will provide motorists a new mauka-makai access between Kealakehe and the Villages of La'i 'Ōpua with the area schools and dramatically reduce drive times.

The 3,800-foot road extension project provides a direct route for motorists between Kealakehe and the Villages of La'i 'Ōpua with the various schools located in the area. This connection gives the residents of both subdivisions a better route to the schools, rather than traveling in a roundabout manner by using Queen Ka'ahumanu Highway and Palani Road.

"While we are dedicating a road, this is really about the county and state working together for the benefit of our communities," said Governor Linda Lingle, "The public expects us to do what's best for all regardless of whether it is a county road or a state road. I am very happy about this project because it will make life better for so many families."

"This is a road we all knew needed to be built," said Mayor Kenoi. "It just shows that the state and the county can step up, work together, and make things happen for the betterment of our community."

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Micah Kāne, director of the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, said the road was the top road priority of the Kealakehe/La'i 'Ōpua Regional Plan and Hawai'i County's plans.

"This just shows that when the community comes together on the same page and you have the support of all of the stakeholders, positive results will happen," he said. "Our regional plans work to improve the whole region because that will make life better for our homestead communities."

With the completion of the Keanalehu Drive extension, Kāne said the next priority road project is the Ane Keohokalole Highway Extension to Henry Street, otherwise known as the Mid-Level Road.

Governor Lingle said the regional plan is effective because it is community-based and works from a consensus from all of the stakeholders in the region.

"DHHL did a great job of facilitating the regional plan process and getting us to this point where we can move forward on the next road priority on the list – the Mid-Level Road," she said. "This project will help stimulate the economy through job creation in the construction industry and I want to thank the Senate leadership for including it in their version of the budget. I am hopeful the House will also support this important project."

The Administration has proposed \$15 million in state funds for the Mid-Level Road. The appropriation is currently included in the Senate version of the budget bill and would need to be negotiated with the House in conference committee. The Mid-Level Road is also scheduled to receive \$35 million in federal stimulus funds. The county has already appropriated \$4.0 million for the road.

"We are ready to work on the Mid-Level Road," said Mayor Kenoi. "That road will not only help with traffic flow, but open the area to affordable housing and community priorities such as a community center and employment opportunities."

The Keanalehu Drive extension project is the result of the partnership DHHL developed with the County of Hawai'i. DHHL's portion of the project was \$3.46 million for 1,625 feet while Hawai'i County paid \$10.4 million for 2,175 feet. Both the county and DHHL said that partnerships are an effective way to leverage resources and capital investments to create broad community benefits.

Partnerships allow for better prioritization and coordination of infrastructure improvements and the development of regional and public residential communities.

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