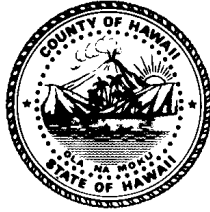


Mitch Roth
Mayor



Lee Lord
Managing Director

Bobby Command
Deputy Managing Director

County of Hawai'i Office of the Mayor

25 Aupuni Street, Suite 2603 • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720 • (808) 961-8211 • Fax (808) 961-6553
KONA: 74-5044 Ane Keohokālole Hwy., Bldg C • Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i 96740
(808) 323-4444 • Fax (808) 323-4440

August 3, 2023

NEWS RELEASE

Media Contact:

Sherise Kana'e-Kāne

Sherise.Kanae-Kane@hawaiicounty.gov

808 961-8499

Jen Myers

Jennifer.Myers@hawaiicounty.gov

808-961-8729

PUNA ROAD AND WATERLINE PROJECTS DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT COMPLETED AND PUBLIC REVIEW MEETING SCHEDULED

The County of Hawai'i announced today that the Puna Road and Waterline Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) has been completed and is now available for public review. This marks the next step in \$88 million in infrastructure restoration projects, making up \$82 million for roads and \$6 million for waterlines, in partnership with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) after the 2018 Kīlauea eruption.

This draft EA covers the road and waterline construction on Upper and Lower Pohoiki Road, road and waterline construction from Highway 137 Kapoho Beach Road to Pohoiki Road, road construction for Highway 137 Pohoiki Road to MacKenzie, and finally, road construction at Lighthouse Road and Four Corners to Kapoho Beach Road.

“We're excited to see that FEMA has completed their portion of the Environmental Assessment for our project,” said Mayor Mitch Roth. “It's a significant milestone that brings us closer to breaking ground. We appreciate the community's patience and support, and we look forward to seeing the positive impact of our hard work in the upcoming construction phase.”

There will be a 30-day public comment review period for this environmental assessment from August 3, 2023 to September 5, 2023. The County, in partnership with FEMA, will also hold a public review meeting on Tuesday, August 8, 2023 from 5-6:30 p.m. on Zoom where residents can review and discuss the contents of the EA as well as the next steps in the project.

“We specifically worked with FEMA to organize this public meeting for the draft Environmental Assessment because we want to connect with the community on this project and how things are progressing,” said Department of Public Works Director Steve Pause. “FEMA will also be on-hand to answer questions as well.”

The EA process is important in that it describes alternatives, ensures proper consultation with lineal descendants, and assessment and documentation of historic, archaeological and environmentally sensitive resources, including any impacts and mitigation actions.

The completion of the EA is a required step that must be finished before construction can begin and ensures the County follows the National Environmental Policy Act rules and regulations. Now that the draft EA is published, FEMA expects to finalize the EA in September 2023 and the County will receive a Notice to Proceed thereafter, allowing formal design plans for the roads and waterlines to be submitted for review which will lead to construction beginning early next year.

"We are excited to collaborate with DPW on the Puna Road and Waterline Projects to restore water access in the areas impacted by the 2018 Kīlauea eruption," said Department of Water Supply Manager-Chief Engineer Keith Okamoto.

Key dates for the draft EA are as follows:

August 3, 2023: EA is released and 30-day comment period begins
August 8, 2023: Public meeting held over zoom
September 5, 2023: Comment period ends

FEMA is contributing \$61.5 million grant for impacted County roads and a \$30 million grant for impacted water infrastructure due to the eruption. The grants are provided on a reimbursement basis and cover 75% of the costs that were estimated in a damage assessment. The remainder of the funding comes from the County. For more information on the full scope of investments to restore infrastructure following the historic 2018 Kīlauea eruption visit recovery.hawaiicounty.gov/infrastructure.

The public can review and comment on the EA at the Department of Public Works website: www.dpw.hawaiicounty.gov/resources/bulletins#Engineering

All comments must be received in writing and will be accepted through September 5, 2023. Comments should be mailed to: Regional Environmental Officer, FEMA Region 9, 1111 Broadway, Suite 1200, Oakland, CA 94607-4052. Comments may also be submitted via e-mail (preferred) to fema-rix-ehp-documents@fema.dhs.gov; please include “Puna Road Repair and Water Line Installation” in your subject line.

For more information, including the link for the Zoom meeting, go to recovery.hawaiicounty.gov/infrastructure or follow us on social media @kilauearecovery.