

SUMMARY

Farrington Highway is the main route of travel through the communities of the leeward coast of Oahu. In the event of an emergency or natural disaster requiring evacuation of the leeward coast, Farrington Highway is the only highway that leads out of the region and provides access to other parts of Oahu. However, in recent years, Farrington Highway has been partially or completely shut down several times due to incidents involving accidents, severe weather, and other emergency conditions.

Although Farrington Highway is the only highway leading into and out of the leeward coast, Lualualei Naval Road (also known as Kolekole Pass Road), a federally-owned and controlled road, passes through the Kolekole Pass of the Waianae mountain range and connects the leeward coast to central Oahu. The road passes through two military installations -- Naval Magazine Pearl Harbor, Lualualei Branch, to the west of the mountains and Schofield Barracks to the east. Because of security concerns, the road is not open to the public.

House Concurrent Resolution No. 223, H.D. 1, adopted during the Regular Session of 2010, expressed concern that the residents of the leeward coast might have no way of evacuating the region if Farrington Highway were shut down during an emergency or natural disaster. The Resolution requested that the Legislative Reference Bureau conduct a study to determine the feasibility of using Lualualei Naval Road as an evacuation route in the event of an emergency or natural disaster on the leeward coast.

Since 2001, an agreement has existed between the U.S. Navy, U.S. Army, and State Civil Defense Division. This agreement, in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding, establishes procedures to open Lualualei Naval Road to the general public upon request by the State Civil Defense Division during civil emergency situations. Since the Memorandum of Understanding went into effect, Lualualei Naval Road has been opened to the general public during emergency situations on four separate occasions.

Over the years, erosion has taken a physical toll on Lualualei Naval Road that may affect its continued use for civilian evacuation. In December 2008, heavy rains caused rockslides and severely undercut a hillside beneath the roadway. As a result, the road can only support one-way traffic safely. The Navy is currently preparing a cost estimate for the repairs necessary to restore Lualualei Naval Road to a condition where it can safely sustain two-way traffic.

In recent years, the Navy has undertaken an effort to update the Memorandum of Understanding. Among other things, the proposed changes would update installation names and titles and address the deteriorating physical condition of Lualualei Naval Road. A draft of an updated Memorandum of Understanding is currently under review.

Given that an agreement between the affected parties already exists, and has been put into operation on four separate occasions, it appears that, so long as only one-way transit out of the leeward coast is required, the use of Lualualei Naval Road as an evacuation route is feasible and currently available on an emergency basis.