IN REPLY REFER TO:
O.MPO-26-058

October 8, 2026

TO: **O‘AHU METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION POLICY BOARD**

FROM: **COUNCILMEMBER VAL OKIMOTO, CHAIR, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SELECTION PERMITTED INTERACTION GROUP**

SUBJECT: **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SELECTION PERMITTED INTERACTION GROUP REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

I. PURPOSE

At its meeting of June 29, 2026, the O‘ahu Metropolitan Planning Organization (O‘ahuMPO) Policy Board established a Permitted Interaction Group (PIG), pursuant to Hawai‘i Revised Statutes §92-2.5(b)(1), for the purpose of assisting the Policy Board in the recruitment and selection of the next Executive Director of O‘ahuMPO.

The PIG was authorized to review and evaluate candidates for the Executive Director position, participate in the finalist selection and assessment process, and report its findings and recommendations to the full Policy Board.

PIG Members:

1. Councilmember Val Okimoto, Chair
2. Senator Sharon Moriwaki
3. HDOT Director Edwin Sniffen
4. HART Executive Director & CEO, Lori Kahikina
5. DTS Director Roger Morton

The PIG conducted its work within the scope of authority established by the Policy Board.

II. PIG ACTIVITIES

Following its establishment, the PIG undertook the following activities in connection with the recruitment and selection of the Executive Director:

1. Reviewed the Executive Director position description and qualifications;

2. Reviewed the recruitment and evaluation process;

3. Reviewed the applications and professional qualifications of candidates for the Executive Director position

4. Considered the experience, qualifications, leadership capabilities, and other characteristics relevant to successful service as O‘ahuMPO Executive Director;

5. Developed and/or reviewed a finalist assessment process designed to provide the Policy Board with multiple opportunities to assess candidates' qualifications, judgment, communication skills, leadership abilities, and strategic thinking;

6. Participated in the finalist assessment process conducted on September 24, 2026, which included:
   - Timed written exercise
   - Structured interview
   - Executive presentation and Q&A

7. Following completion of the finalist assessments, met as a PIG on September 24, 2026, to review the results of the finalist process, discuss the candidates' qualifications and performance, and develop its findings and recommendation to the Policy Board; and

8. Conducted a follow-up interview with one of the finalists on September 28, 2026, and met as a PIG afterward to discuss the candidate’s qualifications.

III. RECRUITMENT AND CANDIDATE REVIEW

The recruitment for the O‘ahuMPO Executive Director position resulted in 25 applications. The HDOT Personnel Office reviewed the candidates' minimum qualifications in relation to the Advertisement and official Position Description. Nine candidates were found qualified and their application materials were sent to the Selection Committee members for review.

The PIG members reviewed the application materials while considering the responsibilities and requirements of the Executive Director position, considering the following general areas:

- Executive leadership and organizational management;
- Transportation planning and metropolitan planning experience;
- Knowledge of federal transportation planning requirements;
- Experience working with governing boards and elected officials;
- Regional collaboration and intergovernmental relationships;
- Strategic thinking and organizational leadership;
- Communication skills and executive presence; and
- Understanding of the Hawai‘i and O‘ahu transportation environment.

Following its review of the applicants, the PIG identified three finalists to participate in the finalist assessment process. One of the finalists dropped out at this point and the two remaining finalists were interviewed and assessed.

IV. FINALIST ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The PIG developed a finalist assessment process intended to provide a balanced evaluation of each finalist's professional qualifications, leadership experience, judgment, communication skills, and vision for O‘ahuMPO.

Each finalist participated in three assessment components:

A. **Written Exercise**
Each finalist completed a timed written exercise designed to assess analytical thinking, executive judgment, and written communication. The exercise presented candidates with a hypothetical transportation policy and management situation and asked them to prepare a short, written response addressing the issues presented and describing how they would approach the matter as Executive Director. The same exercise and substantially identical conditions were provided to each finalist.

B. Policy Board Interview
Each finalist participated in a 30-minute interview with the Policy Board selection panel.

The interview consisted of five questions addressing:
1. Executive leadership and management;
2. Experience working with governing boards and elected officials;
3. Regional collaboration and relationship building;
4. Transportation and MPO leadership; and
5. Understanding of Hawai‘i, O‘ahu, and the Executive Director role.

Panel members were permitted to ask limited follow-up questions to clarify or further explore candidates' responses.

C. Executive Presentation
Each finalist made a 20-minute presentation followed by approximately 10 minutes of questions and discussion.

Candidates were asked to describe their priorities and approach during their first year as Executive Director and their vision for O‘ahuMPO's future.

The presentation provided the PIG and Policy Board with an opportunity to assess each candidate's strategic thinking, communication skills, leadership approach, understanding of the MPO role, and ability to articulate a vision for the organization.

V. PIG Findings and Recommendation

Following completion of the finalist assessment process, the PIG met on September 24, 2026, and again on September 28, 2026, to review the candidates and develop its findings and recommendation. In reaching its findings, the PIG considered the candidates' qualifications and professional experience, as well as their performance during the written exercise, interview, and presentation.

Following completion of the finalist interviews, the PIG discussed the results of the recruitment and finalist assessment process. The PIG concluded that neither of the two finalists interviewed provided a sufficient basis for the PIG to recommend appointment as the next Executive Director.

In light of this conclusion, the PIG considered whether an alternative approach would provide the Policy Board with a better opportunity to assess potential leadership for O‘ahuMPO. The PIG discussed the possibility of utilizing an existing O‘ahuMPO employee, Dallas Ige, currently serving as a Senior Transportation Planner, to serve temporarily as Acting Executive Director.

The PIG believes that a temporary assignment or appointment of Mr. Ige could provide the Policy Board with an opportunity to observe his performance in the Executive Director role, including his ability to lead the organization, work effectively with the Policy Board and partner agencies, manage staff and organizational responsibilities, and represent O‘ahuMPO in its relationships with federal, state, county, and other stakeholders.

The PIG's consideration of this approach is based on the desire to provide the Policy Board with an opportunity to evaluate actual executive performance before making a determination regarding the permanent Executive Director position. The PIG does not, at this time, recommend that the Policy Board make a permanent appointment to the Executive Director position.

Accordingly, the PIG recommends that the Policy Board consider authorizing a temporary appointment or assignment of Mr. Ige as Acting Executive Director for a limited period, subject to confirmation by the appropriate State and O‘ahuMPO authorities of the applicable personnel mechanism, terms, and conditions.

The PIG further recommends that, during the temporary assignment, the Policy Board establish a process for evaluating Mr. Ige's performance in the Acting Executive Director role and, following that evaluation, determine whether to proceed with a permanent appointment or undertake another recruitment process.

The PIG recognizes that the authority to make any permanent appointment rests with the full Policy Board and that the temporary appointment would not constitute a commitment to appoint Mr. Ige permanently. The PIG recognizes that the temporary

assignment would be an interim leadership arrangement and would not constitute a determination regarding Mr. Ige's eligibility or qualifications for permanent appointment as Executive Director. The temporary assignment would also not be intended to waive, modify, or otherwise establish an exception to any minimum qualifications or other requirements applicable to a future permanent appointment. Any subsequent permanent appointment would be subject to applicable personnel requirements and any recruitment or selection process determined appropriate by the Policy Board and the appropriate State authorities.

VI. Next Steps

The PIG presents this report and its findings and recommendation to the O‘ahuMPO Policy Board for consideration.

The PIG understands that the authority to deliberate and make the final decision regarding appointment of the Executive Director rests with the full Policy Board.

The PIG has completed the work assigned to it and, upon presentation of this report, will conclude its work.

Respectfully submitted,

Councilmember Val Okimoto, Chair,
Executive Director Selection Permitted Interaction Group