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# 1. Introduction, Purpose and Need

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Hawai‘i Department of Transportation (HDOT), as the state project sponsor and lead agency, in coordination with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the federal lead agency, has prepared this ~~Draft~~ Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Honoapi‘ilani Highway Improvements Project (the Project) in accordance with the following requirements:

- ~~The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (2022 Phase One revisions to 2020 CEQ regulations, 40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500 to 1508)~~
- FHWA regulations implementing NEPA ~~(~~23 CFR 771.~~101 to 771.139)~~
- FHWA guidance provided in its Environmental Review Toolkit
- ~~23 United States Code (U.S.C.) 139 regarding efficient environmental reviews for project decision-making, including the following:~~
  - ~~Section 139(d)(8), where the lead agency will develop a single environmental document sufficient to satisfy the requirements for any federal approval or other federal action required for the Project~~
  - ~~Section 139(d)(10), which provides for timely authorizations such that all authorization decisions necessary for the construction of the Project will be completed no later than 90 days after the issuance of the Record of Decision (ROD)~~
  - ~~Section 139(n)(2), which requires a combined Final EIS and ROD although the USACE may not be able to join the ROD if they have to issue an individual permit, which would occur later in the design-build process~~
- The Hawaii Environmental Policy Act/Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) Chapter 343

~~The Project is classified as a NEPA Class I project in accordance with 23 CFR 771.115(a). NEPA Class I projects are actions that significantly affect the environment and require the preparation of an EIS to evaluate the potential impacts that a project's alternatives would have on the environment. The FHWA and HDOT prepared a Notice of Intent announcing that an EIS would be prepared for the Project. Pursuant to NEPA regulations, the Notice of Intent was published in the *Federal Register* on November 23, 2022.~~

~~In accordance with the Hawaii Environmental Policy Act, HRS 343-5(a)(1) and HRS 343-5(b), the environmental review process for the Project began with the publication of an EIS Preparation Notice,~~

~~which was published in the State of Hawai'i, Office of Planning and Sustainable Development, Hawai'i Environmental Review Program's (ERP's) *The Environmental Notice* on November 24, 2022.~~

Consistent with HRS 343-5(h), whenever an action is subject to both NEPA and HRS 343, the ERP and State of Hawai'i agencies will cooperate with federal agencies to reduce the duplication of requirements. This cooperation will include a joint EIS with concurrent public review and processing at both levels of government, although it is noted that separate HEPA and NEPA Final EIS documents have been prepared for the Project based on new federal requirements and existing state requirements[1]. ~~Accordingly, a single Draft EIS has been jointly prepared to satisfy the requirements of both the applicable federal and State of Hawai'i environmental review regulations.~~

~~This joint Draft EIS is available to the public over a 45-day public review period that extends through February 24, 2025. The Draft EIS Notice of Availability was published in both the *Federal Register* and *The Environmental Notice* in January 2025. Two public hearings are scheduled to allow for one virtual public hearing on January 28, 2025, and one in person public hearing on January 23, 2025. All substantive comments received on the Draft EIS would be summarized and responded to in the Final EIS. As set forth in 23 U.S.C. 139(n) and 23 CFR 771.124, the project sponsors (HDOT and the FHWA) intend to prepare a combined Final EIS/ROD if the Project satisfies the conditions defined in the USDOT *Guidance on the Use of Combined Final Environmental Impact Statements/Records of Decision and Errata Sheets in National Environmental Policy Act* (April 2019). All project documents and a calendar of hearings can be found on the Project's website at https://www.honoapiilanihwyimprovements.com/.~~

~~The CEQ and~~ HRS 343 implementing rules, Chapter 11-200 State of Hawai'i Administrative Rules regulations (Hawai'i Administrative Rules 11-200.1-24(f)), require an EIS to specify the purpose and need that an agency is responding to in developing alternatives for a proposed project. The purpose and need statement is critical to the environmental review process because it establishes the reason an agency is proposing a project. In addition, the purpose and need statement justifies the expected outcome of public spending and provides the basis for agency decision-making.

This chapter describes tangible and fact-based evidence of the problems that the Project is intended to address and explains the underlying causes of those problems. Section 1.3 states the Project's purpose, and Section 1.4 provides the need or factual foundation for the statement of the Project's purpose. Additionally, Section 1.5 identifies secondary objectives that factored into evaluating reasonable alternatives.

[1] Since publication of the Draft EIS, President Trump signed Executive Order (EO) 14154 – Unleashing American Energy – which, among other things, required the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) to issue guidance on implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and propose rescinding its NEPA regulations at 40 CFR 1500 et seq. Subsequently, on February 25, 2025, CEQ published an Interim Final Rule (IFR) removing the CEQ NEPA implementing regulations, effective April 11, 2025 (90 Fed. Reg. 10610). Additional NEPA policy directives have resulted in changes that alter impact assessment methodology (Reasonably Foreseeable Effects) and limit assessment of Greenhouse Gas and Climate Change, Cumulative Effects and Environmental Justice.

### 1.1.1 Hawaiian Language Terminology

The Hawaiian language, ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i, is an important source of knowledge and reference in establishing historical context as well as current definitions of location, setting, and lineage. Consistent with CEQ Guidance for Federal Departments and Agencies on Indigenous Knowledge (November 2022), this Draft EIS incorporates numerous conventions and terminology used in ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i, most notably the following:

- “Makai” (seaward) and “mauka” (inland) generally correspond to the project area’s easterly/westerly directions, respectively.
- “Pali” is generally the term for cliff but also refers to a specific place of steep topography south of the project area.
- “Ahupua‘a” is a traditional land division that typically extends from the top of a mountain along its ridges to the shoreline and into the ocean. An ahupua‘a generally includes a watershed. Each ahupua‘a consists of numerous different ecosystems and habitats that contain all the resources needed for a population to survive.

These terms may be used interchangeably to provide clarity and convenience in describing a direction or location. Other words or phrases may be used as appropriate and are defined accordingly. Terms that are used more frequently in this Draft EIS are summarized just after the list of abbreviations and acronyms (before the Summary).

Finally, this ~~Draft~~ Final EIS is written with diacritical punctuation, including the ‘okina (‘) and kahako (ā, ē, ī, ō, or ū).

## 1.2 PROJECT AREA LOCATION AND CONTEXT

### 1.2.1 Project Area Location

FIGURE 1-1 locates the Project in West Maui and FIGURE 1-2 zooms in to show the project area and the existing Honoapiʻilani Highway between milepost 11 and milepost 17. As a part of Maui's Belt Road system, Honoapiʻilani Highway is a two-lane principal arterial highway that provides the main access between communities along Maui's west coast and the rest of the island. The southeastern terminus of the Project is at milepost 11 in Ukumehame, within the vicinity of Pāpalaua Wayside Park. The northwestern terminus of the Project is at milepost 17 in Launiupoko, where Honoapiʻilani Highway intersects the southern terminus of Lāhainā Bypass.

Because realigning the highway is among the alternatives considered, the project area extends from the mountains to the sea along this corridor, from the base of the West Maui Mountains to the existing highway along the coastline. A coastal plain that includes the ahupuaʻa of Ukumehame, Olowalu, and Launiupoko predominately comprises the approximately 6-mile-long and 0.75-mile-wide project area.

### 1.2.2 Project Context

Honoapiʻilani Highway is the main travel way for people and goods between West Maui and the rest of the island. It connects West Maui to transportation hubs (such as Kahului Airport and Kahului Harbor), critical medical services, and other goods and services that are not readily available in West Maui. About 15% of the island's population lives in the region and it is the second-largest employment center.[2] With popular beaches, West Maui is a hub of tourism, and many industry workers commute from outside the area. As the main access to this part of the island, closures and delays on Honoapiʻilani Highway can severely affect West Maui's economy.

Honoapiʻilani Highway is part of the National Highway System and Primary Highway Freight System. The *Hawaii Statewide Freight Plan* (2018) identified the top 10 truck count locations on each island.[3] On Maui, Honoapiʻilani Highway is one of the highest-ranked routes for freight truck volumes, with four distinct segments along its route from Central Maui to the far end of West Maui ranked in the island's top 10. Honoapiʻilani Highway is the primary and most direct route to West Maui. Therefore, even minor traffic congestion along this stretch of highway can cause significant effects to the movement of people and freight. These effects include travel delays, missed flights, and reduced access for emergency vehicles.

[2] Department of Business Economic Development & Tourism. 2019. State of Hawaiʻi Data Book (2022 and 2018). Accessed May 2023.

[3] https://hidot.hawaii.gov/highways/files/2019/03/HDOT_FreightPlan_FINAL.pdf. Accessed May 2023.

FIGURE 1-1. **Vicinity Map**

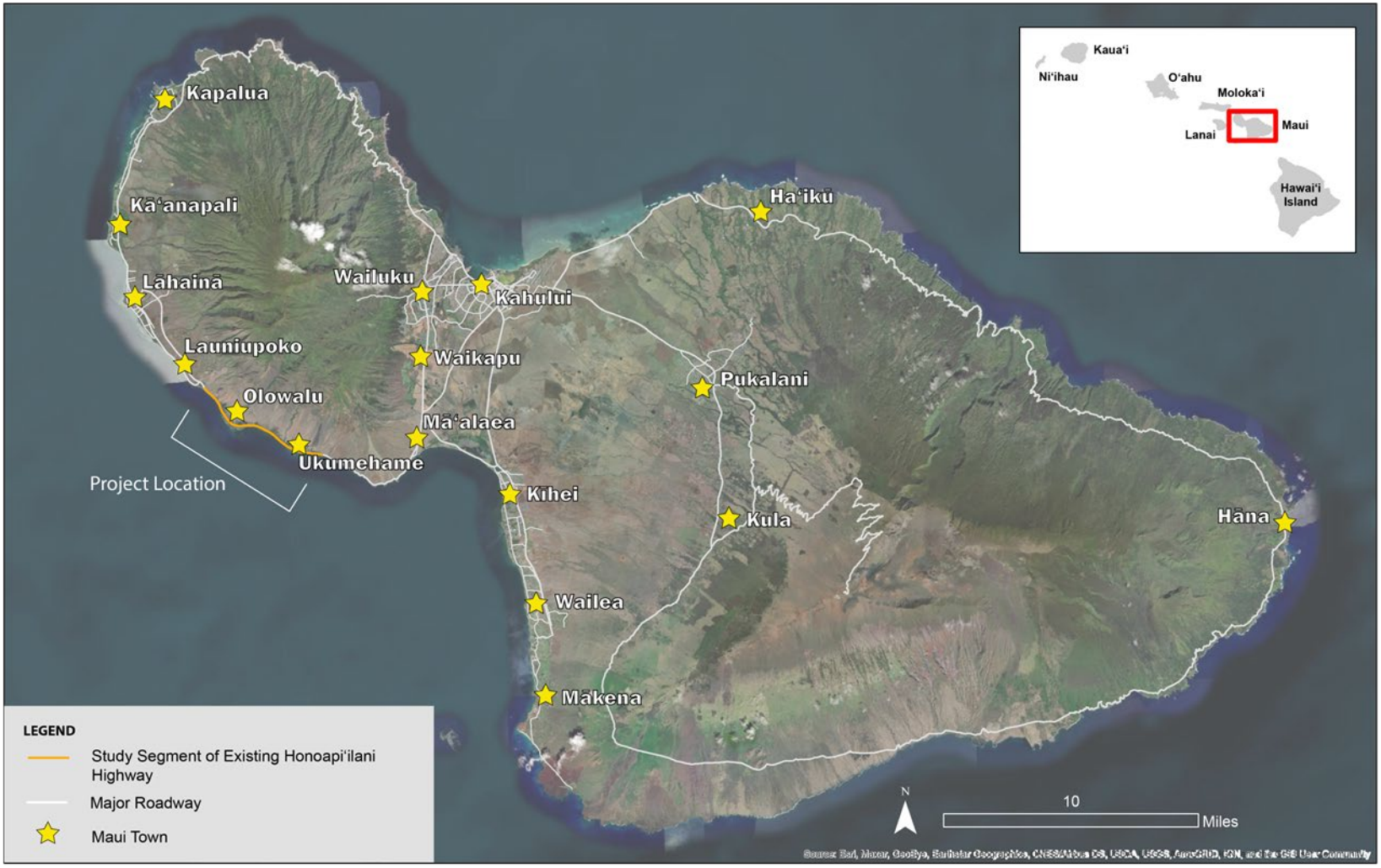
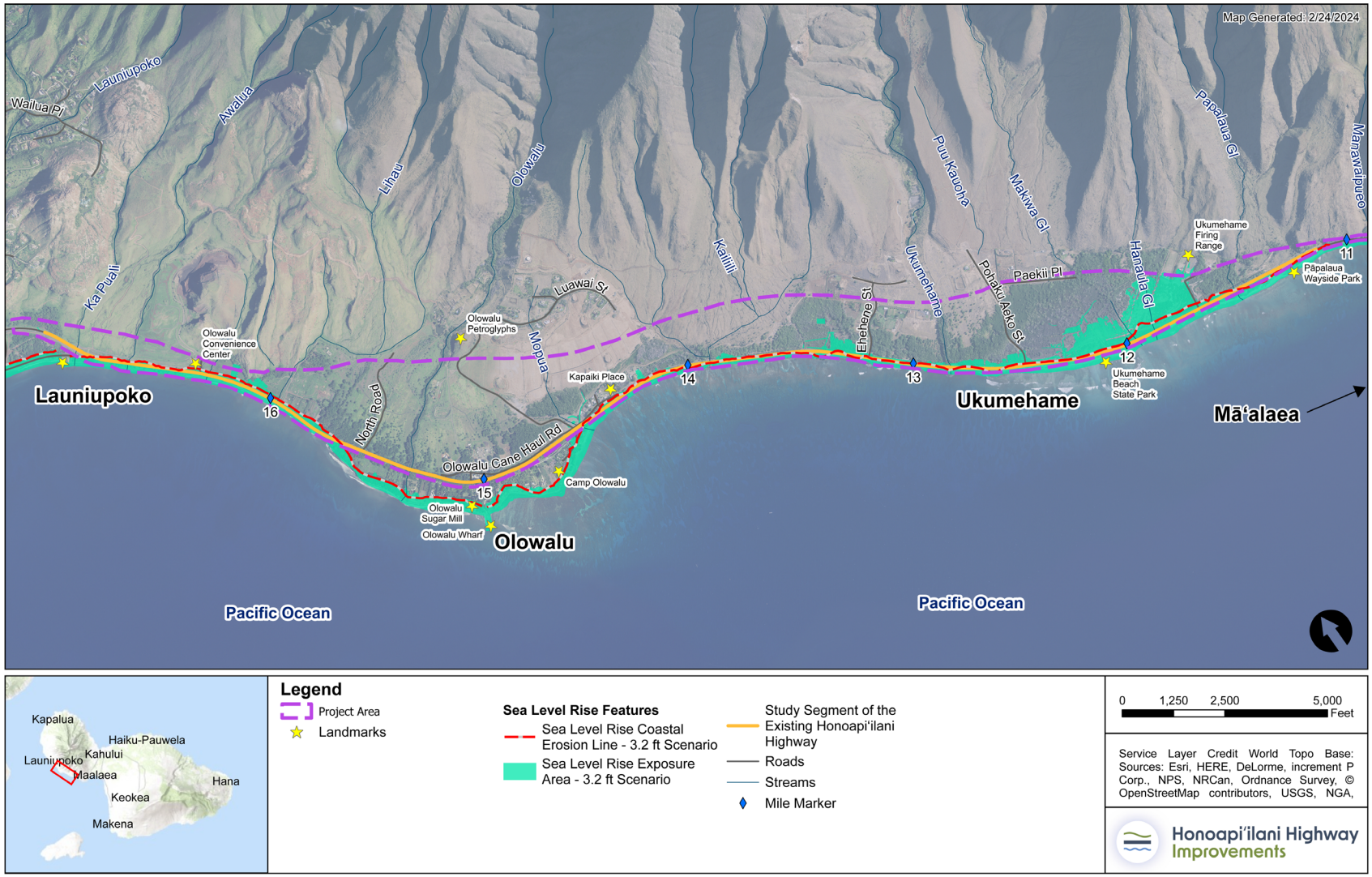


FIGURE 1-2. **Project Area**



Over the past 10 years, Honoapi‘ilani Highway has been repaired three times after storm and high-wave events undermined pavement sections, overtopped the highway, and rendered it impassable. An independent repair project is being developed to address erosion where 4,100 feet of highway fronting Ukumehame and 1,000 feet of highway fronting Olowalu would be shifted 8 to 12 feet inland within the existing right-of-way. But these are short-term fixes because they only address the most severe locations where Honoapi‘ilani Highway is already undermined.

Federal regulations require that state departments of transportation evaluate locations in the transportation network that are subject to frequent emergency events—like the coastal segment of Honoapi‘ilani Highway—and address them in agency plans for long-term transportation improvements (23 CFR Part 667). In addition, much of Honoapi‘ilani Highway in the project area is within the projected Sea Level Rise Exposure Area (SLR-XA)[4] (FIGURE 1-3). As described below, this is critical to the Project’s purpose and need. SLR-XA, as defined by the Hawai‘i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission and the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources, establishes a comprehensive model of sea level rise effects including passive flooding, coastal erosions, and high-wave flooding. It also establishes the planning and public policy basis for defining areas of greatest vulnerability and increasing investments in resilient infrastructure in Hawai‘i.

The 3.2-foot SLR-XA incorporates a future-year coastal erosion line (essentially the model’s prediction of a new coastline) as well as areas of flooding inundation based on wave action from the sea or from water mauka of the coastline. Where Honoapi‘ilani Highway is within the project area, SLR-XA coastal erosion modeling indicates that the number of emergency repairs and service disruptions would increase because the effects of climate change and sea level rise exacerbate the frequency and severity of flooding.

## 1.3 PROJECT PURPOSE

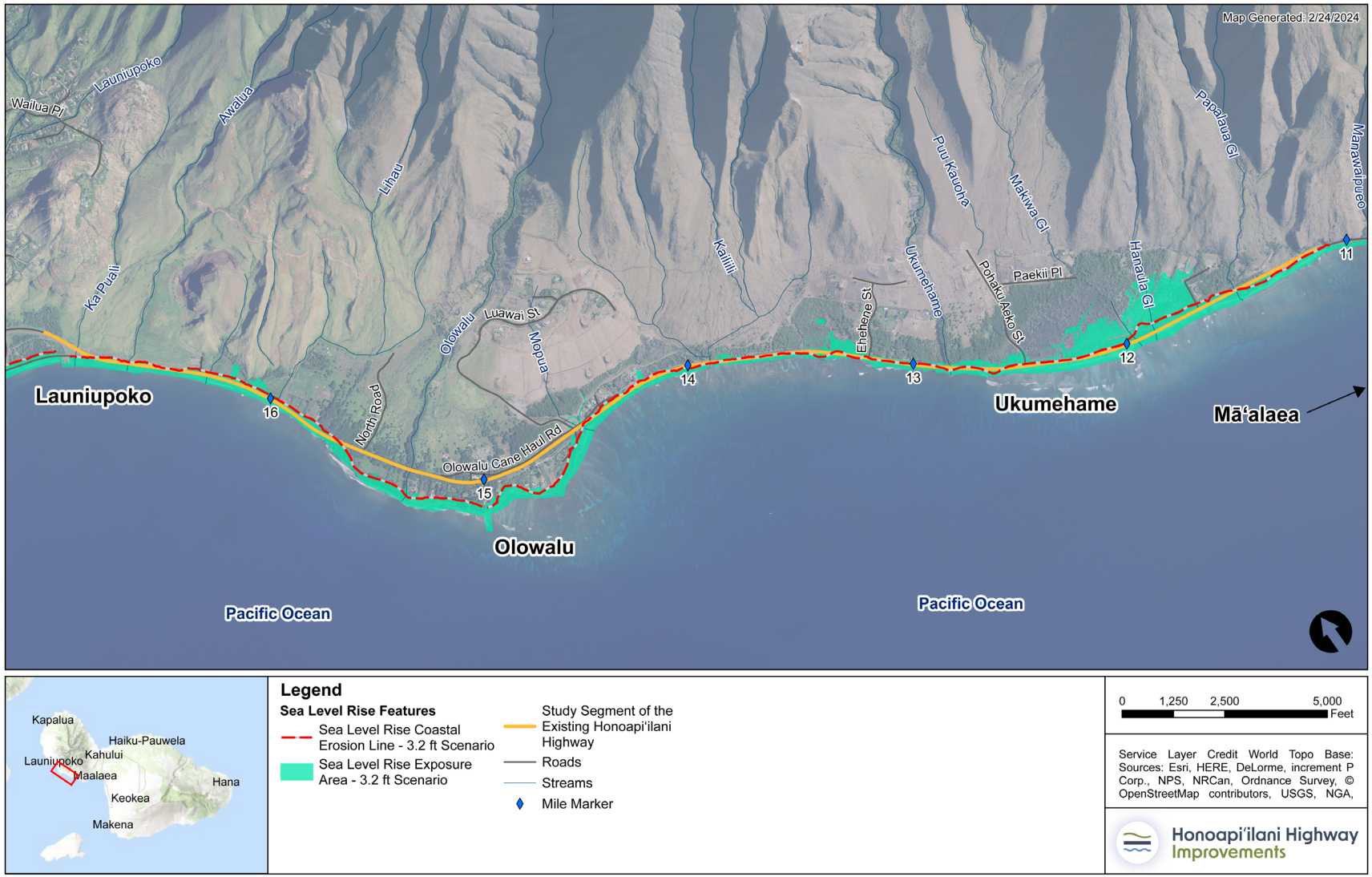
The Project’s primary purpose is to provide a reliable transportation facility in West Maui and improve Honoapi‘ilani Highway’s resilience by reducing its vulnerability to coastal hazards. Specifically, the Project is intended to address existing coastal erosion and flooding vulnerabilities as well as future coastal erosion and flooding caused by anticipated sea level rise (FIGURE 1-3). Areas within the SLR-XA boundary, including Honoapi‘ilani Highway, are considered exposed and potentially vulnerable to sea level rise. Approximately 4 of the 6 miles of existing Honoapi‘ilani Highway in the project area are within the projected 3.2-foot SLR-XA.

To summarize, the Project’s primary purpose is to reduce the highway’s exposure to the SLR-XA, where feasible. Because there is no other route to central Maui, road closures, and even slowing traffic along this stretch can have significant effects on the movement of people and freight. Strengthening and reinforcing the highway’s reliability would improve the efficiency of daily travel for Maui residents,

[4] Hawai‘i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission. 2021. State *of Hawai‘i Sea Level Rise Viewer*. Version 1.11. Prepared by the Pacific Islands Ocean Observing System (PacIOOS) for the University of Hawai‘i Sea Grant College Program and the State of Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources, Office of Conservation and Coastal Lands, with funding from National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Office for Coastal Management Award No. NA16NOS4730016 and under the State of Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources Contract No. 64064. http://hawaiisealevelriseviewer.org. Accessed February 2023.

businesses, visitors, and critical emergency response providers. A more resilient Honoapi‘ilani Highway would be an important resource in providing evacuation routes and access for emergency services resulting from wildfires or other disasters.

FIGURE 1-3. **Sea Level Rise Exposure Areas**



## 1.4 PROJECT NEED

HDOT has several reports and a data-driven web-based platform that document the climate hazards its facilities are exposed to statewide:

- Hawaii Highways Climate Adaptation Action Plan Exposure Assessment[5]
- HDOT Asset and Hazard Assessment – Hazard Viewer[6]
- HDOT Climate Insights for Infrastructure Platform[7]
- Statewide Coastal Highway Program Report[8]

The *Hawaii Highways Climate Adaptation Action Plan* identifies strategies to create a more resilient transportation system. This plan included an assessment of the exposure of highway infrastructure to rockfall and landslides, sea level rise, storm surges from Category 1 through Category 4 hurricanes, tsunamis, wildfires, and lava flow. Of these potential hazards, the most urgent need in West Maui is sea level rise (combining passive flooding, annual high-wave flooding, and coastal erosion) based on the history of storm events as described in Section 1.2. Further, other vulnerabilities in West Maui are increasingly recognized as related to climate change, including its association with the increased severity or frequency of storm events. While wildfires are a long-recognized hazard in the area, the 2023 Lāhainā wildfire and its devastating consequences accentuate the ongoing changes to the area's weather and storm patterns.

The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology (SOEST) Coastal Geology Group (CGG) has studied statewide shoreline erosion trends by evaluating mosaics of aerial photography that date back to 1912.[9] SOEST CGG study areas that are relevant to the Project from north to south are identified as Launiupoko, Awalua, Olowalu, Hekili, Ukumehame, and Pāpalaua. In general, portions of the shoreline areas abutting the existing Honoapi'ilani Highway near Launiupoko and between Ukumehame Beach Park and Pāpalaua Wayside Park are experiencing significant erosion at an average of -1.4 feet per year and -1.9 feet per year, respectively. For comparison, adjacent transects within the same study areas are losing roughly -0.3 foot per year and -0.7 foot per year.

5 https://hidot.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/HDOT-Climate-Resilience-Action-Plan-Exposure-Assessments-April-2021.pdf. Accessed May 2023. The *Hawaii Highways Climate Adaptation Action Plan: Exposure Assessments* is a supporting technical document to the *Hawaii Highways Climate Adaptation Action Plan*.

6 Department of Transportation | Resilience (hawaii.gov). Accessed September 2023.

7 https://climateresilience.hidot.hawaii.gov/map/information/info

8 https://hidot.hawaii.gov/highways/files/2019/09/State-of-Hawaii-Statewide-Coastal-Highway-Program-Report_Final_2019.pdf. Accessed May 2023.

9 http://www.soest.hawaii.edu/crc/index.php/resources-2/historical-mosaics/. Accessed November 4, 2022.

Recognizing the effects of climate change across the state, HDOT commissioned a *Statewide Coastal Highway Program Report*[10] to develop a scientifically rigorous methodology to assess and rank the susceptibility of Hawaiʻi's coastal roads to erosion and structural degradation caused by multiple ocean hazards such as waves, currents, tides, and sea level rise. One component of this report evaluated over 300 discrete coastal highway segments statewide that are threatened by coastal hazards and climate change. The segments were then prioritized using a new ranking system called the Coastal Road Erosion Susceptibility Index. A section of Olowalu within the project area known as Mōpua (in the northwestern portion of the SOEST CGG Hekili study area) was ranked second in priority statewide with the recommendation to harden or relocate this portion of Honoapiʻilani Highway. A segment of Honoapiʻilani Highway in Ukumehame is ranked 11th in priority with a recommendation to elevate or relocate the segment. The *Statewide Coastal Highway Program Report* findings are consistent with the *Hawaii Highways Climate Adaptation Action Plan: Exposure Assessments* (2021).

As the effects of climate change and sea level rise exacerbate the frequency and severity of flooding, highway service disruptions are expected to increase. The Hawaiʻi Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission's SLR-XA boundary delineates the statewide footprint where passive flooding, annual high-wave flooding, and coastal erosion have been modeled for the 0.5-foot, 1.1-foot, 2.0-foot, and 3.2-foot sea level rise scenarios. Unless otherwise noted, references to the SLR-XA boundary throughout project documentation describe the 3.2-foot sea level rise scenario, which is consistent with the recommendations of the Hawaiʻi Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission.[11] Areas and assets within the 3.2-foot SLR-XA boundary, including Honoapiʻilani Highway, are considered exposed and potentially vulnerable to sea level rise.

To summarize, the Project is needed to reduce Honoapiʻilani Highway's exposure to the SLR-XA due to the relationship between the SLR-XA boundary and highway reliability. The Hawaiʻi Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission's models used for analyses in this environmental review are consistent with the *Hawaii Highways Climate Adaptation Action Plan*.

## 1.5 SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

### 1.5.1 Provide Regional Transportation System Linkages that Support Safe Movement of People and Goods

Over the last decade, the transportation network just north of the project area has changed significantly. HDOT improved a portion of Honoapiʻilani Highway that passes through the town of Lāhainā and constructed a portion of Lāhainā Bypass, mauka of Lāhainā. Lāhainā Bypass Phase 1A from the Keawe Street Extension to Lāhaināluna Road was completed in 2012; Phase 1B-1 from Lāhaināluna Road to Hōkiokio Place was completed in 2013; and Phase 1B-2 from Hōkiokio Place to the southern terminus of Lāhainā Bypass was completed in 2018.

10 https://hidot.hawaii.gov/highways/files/2019/09/State-of-Hawaii-Statewide-Coastal-Highway-Program-Report_Final_2019.pdf. Accessed May 2023.

11 Department of Land and Natural Resources. 2018. State Climate Commission Adopts Recommendations for Countering Impacts of Sea Level Rise. https://climate.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/NR-State-Climate-Commission-Adopts-Recommendations-MIssion-Statement-Sept.-5-2018.pdf. Accessed May 2023.

While these improvements have resulted in a two-lane highway, grading, drainage, and structures were designed to accommodate four lanes if the need arises and funding is available (with additional NEPA/HEPA environmental assessment as required). In considering long-term solutions, consistent roadway system linkages are needed to connect with these recent inland highway improvements, which are located beyond the SLR-XA and north of the project area. These improvements would also ensure that the new highway meets or exceeds current design standards.

### 1.5.2 Consistency with Regional Land Use and Transportation Plans

Regional land use and transportation plans support improvements to Honoapi'ilani Highway as an opportunity to enhance multimodal transportation and access to recreational resources along the coast:

- The Maui Metropolitan Planning Organization (Maui MPO) *Hele Mai Maui Long-Range Transportation Plan 2040*[12] identifies the proposed improvements as "critical to preserve the shoreline for public use."

- The County of Maui's *West Maui Community Plan*[13] (January 2022 update) and the *Pali to Puamana Parkway Master Plan*[14] envision improvements to Honoapi'ilani Highway that would allow "open space and park to buffer against the effects of sea level rise and climate change while providing recreational opportunities."

The Maui MPO also completed the *West Maui Greenway Plan*,[15] which includes paths for biking and pedestrian use from Ukumehame to Līpoa Point at the northern tip of West Maui.

In short, the interaction between Honoapi'ilani Highway and public shoreline access and open space must be thoughtfully integrated with regional transportation uses to be consistent with existing plans for West Maui.

## 1.6 ANTICIPATED PERMITS AND APPROVALS

TABLE 1-1 identifies the permits, approvals, and coordination/consultation anticipated for the Project.

12 https://issuu.com/mauimpo/docs/hele_mai_maui_final_plan_2019_final_for_print?fr=sOTg0YTUyMTAyOO. Accessed May 2023.

13 https://www.mauicounty.gov/DocumentCenter/View/131915/West-Maui-Community-Plan-January-2022. Accessed May 2023.

14 https://www.mauicounty.gov/DocumentCenter/View/83453/Pali-to-Puamana-Parkway-Master-Plan-Feb-2005?bidId=. Accessed May 2023.

15 https://issuu.com/mauimpo/docs/220920_wmg_final_report?fr=sNGIwNTMwNzgwNTg. Accessed May 2023.

TABLE 1-1. **Potential Permits and Approvals**

| PERMIT/APPROVAL | ISSUING/APPROVING AGENCY |
|---|---|
| **FEDERAL** | |
| National Environmental Policy Act | Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) |
| Department of Army Permit, Clean Water Act, Section 404 | U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) |
| Department of Transportation Act of 1966, Section 4(f) Evaluation | FHWA ~~Federal Highway Administration~~ |
| Endangered Species Act, Section 7 consultation | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service |
| Farmland and Conversion Impact Rating, pursuant to the Farmland Protection Policy Act | U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service |
| Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, Essential Fish Habitat coordination | National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service |
| National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 consultation | Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) |
| Section 309 of the Clean Air Act | U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) |
| Rivers and Harbors Act Section 10 Impacts to Navigable Waters (if applicable specific to tidal water influence) | USACE ~~U.S. Army Corps of Engineers~~ |
| ~~U.S. Coast Guard Bridge Permit Coordination~~ | ~~U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)~~ |
| Flood Map Change Request (if no-rise condition cannot be achieved) | Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), County of Maui Emergency Management Agency |
| **STATE OF HAWAIʻI** | |
| Hawaiʻi Revised Statutes (HRS) Chapter 343, environmental review compliance | Governor, State of Hawaiʻi |
| Coastal Zone Management Act Consistency Determination | Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism, Office of Planning and Sustainable Development, Coastal Zone Management Program (DBEDT-OPSD, CZM) |
| Clean Water Act, Section 401, Water Quality Certification | Department of Health (HDOH), Clean Water Branch |
| Clean Water Act, Section 402, National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit | HDOH, Clean Water Branch |
| HRS Chapter 6E-8, State Historic Preservation review | Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR), State Historic Preservation Division (SHPD) |
| HRS Chapter 195D, Conservation of Aquatic Life, Wildlife, and Land Plants | DLNR, Division of Forestry and Wildlife and Division of Aquatic Resources |
| Stream Channel Alteration Permit | DLNR, Commission on Water Resource Management (CWRM) |
| Conservation District Use Permit | DLNR, Office of Conservation and Coastal Lands (OCCL) |
| Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines | HDOH, Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) |

| PERMIT/APPROVAL | ISSUING/APPROVING AGENCY |
|---|---|
| Community Noise Permit/Community Noise Variance | HDOH, Indoor and Radiological Health Branch |
| COUNTY OF MAUI | |
| Special Management Area Permit (modification for Olowalu subdivision existing ~~SMA~~ permit; new permit for highway construction ~~within the SLR-XA Erosion Line~~) | County of Maui Planning Department |
| Building and Grading Permits | County of Maui Planning Department |
| Maui County Ordinance 5421 Compliance (applicability to be determined in final design by design-build contractor and HDOT ROW in coordination with Maui County) | Maui County Council |
| Flood Map Change Request (if no-rise condition cannot be achieved) | County of Maui Emergency Management Agency, FEMA |

## 1.7 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FRAMEWORK, PROCESS, AND PROJECT SCHEDULE

### 1.7.1 Environmental Impact Statement Framework

The Draft EIS described ~~describes~~ the potential environmental effects of the Build Alternatives compared to the No Build Alternative. It evaluated ~~evaluates~~ and compared ~~compares~~ the Build Alternatives to allow HDOT and the FHWA to recommend the Preferred Alternative for the Project.

The Final EIS presents the following:

- A summary of comments received on the Draft EIS and agency responses to substantive comments.
- Updated analyses based on new information or ongoing agency consultation between Draft and Final EIS.
- Determination of the Preferred Alternative as the Selected Alternative.
- Summary of refinements incorporated between the Draft and Final EIS to the Selected Alternative and an evaluation of their potential environmental effects, and
- A revised statement of environmental commitments and mitigation.

#### *1.7.1.1 Project and Study Areas*

Each technical chapter of the ~~Draft~~ Final EIS identifies its method for analysis. While each technical assessment defines a specific study area that is appropriate for the analysis, the ~~Draft~~ Final EIS uses an overall defined project area (Section 1.2) where the Build Alternatives are located. As needed within any specific chapter, a larger regional study area surrounding the Project is defined as West Maui or all of Maui County.

#### *1.7.1.2 2045 Analysis Year*

The analysis year guiding the ~~Draft~~ Final EIS is 2045 (often referred to as Future Year 2045), which is a roughly 15-year post-construction horizon year if a Build Alternative (or a combination of Build Alternatives) is selected. The 2045 analysis year is tied to the long-term forecast for travel demand as available through the Maui MPO. The analysis year defines the transportation analyses and generally guides the evaluation of other technical chapters. This includes the assessment of the cumulative impact of the Project along with other known projects and developments within the project area or larger region.

#### *1.7.1.3 Evaluation of the No Build Alternative and the Build Alternatives*

Each technical chapter presents and summarizes the following:

- Regulatory context and methodology underlying the impact assessment
- The affected environment, which provides background and existing baseline conditions
- Environmental consequences, which evaluate the potential effects of the No Build Alternative and the Build Alternatives
- Mitigation for identified adverse effects
- Comparative assessment of the Build Alternatives to each other and the No-Build Alternative

Technical conclusions have not substantively changed between the Draft and Final EIS and any updates with new text or data are presented in double-underline while deleted text is shown with a ~~strikeout.~~

#### *1.7.1.4 Environmental Impact Statement Format*

To optimize the length and improve the understanding and readability of the main document of the EIS (draft and final), and to adhere to statutory and regulatory requirements on page limits, many technical assessments are summarized in the main document. As needed, the appendices provide comprehensive technical evaluations and supporting data.

### 1.7.2 Environmental Impact Statement Process

The NEPA Final EIS and this HEPA Final EIS are the last step in the NEPA and HEPA processes, respectively, leading to a decision by HDOT as the HEPA lead agency (see **FIGURE 1-4**). The NEPA Record of Decision (ROD) will memorialize the findings and decision of the NEPA lead agency and provide the environmental mitigation and commitments that will be required as part of project implementation. The decision document memorializing findings and commitments for the HEPA process will occur when the Final EIS is accepted by the Governor of the State of Hawaii after Final EIS publication.

Efforts to inform federal and state decision-making for the Project began with early public outreach, which happened before initiation of the NEPA and HEPA process. The formal stat of the process occurred with the publication of the EIS Preparation Notice in the State of Hawai‘i, Office of Planning and Sustainable Development, Hawai‘i Environmental Review Program’s (ERP’s) *The Environmental Notice* on November 23, 2022 and the NEPA Notice of Intent (NOI) was published in the Federal

Register on in November 23, 2022. Scoping activities provided the public an opportunity to give input on the Project. The public provided feedback on the four Build Alternatives that the lead agencies proposed to analyze in the Draft EIS, and the analysis's scope of environmental studies. The results from the public scoping period are documented in a Scoping Report that the lead agencies released in May 2023 and is available on the project website at www.honoapiilanihwyimprovements.com. Concurrently with the release of the NOI, the FHWA and HDOT implemented a coordination plan to collaborate with external participating and cooperating agencies from federal, State, and County governments.

The Draft EIS presented the Project's Purpose and Need and the impact assessment conducted for the No Build and four Build Alternatives. Further, it identified a Preferred Alternative that best balanced meeting the purpose and need for the Project with the opportunity to minimize and avoid adverse environmental effects. On December 20, 2024, the Draft EIS was completed and made available to the public through the Project's website. The lead agencies notified the public about releasing the Draft EIS by publishing the Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register* and in the State of Hawai'i, Office of Planning and Sustainable Development, Environmental Review Program's *The Environmental Notice* in January 2025. These publications initiated a 45-day public review period extending to February 24, 2025. During this period, two public hearings were held: an in-person hearing on January 23, 2025, and a virtual public meeting on January 28, 2025.

This Final EIS summarizes and responds to the public comments on the Draft EIS through testimony at the public hearings or written submissions as described in Chapter 9, Public Comments and Responses. The Final EIS also summarizes the refinement of the Preferred Alternative based on public input, continued agency coordination, and review of ongoing design considerations.

~~Title 23 U.S.C. 139(n)(2) provides for a combined Final EIS/ROD. Therefore, the FHWA intends to issue a single document that consists of the Final EIS/ROD consistent with Title 23 U.S.C. 139(n)(2); unless the agency determines that statutory criteria or practicability considerations preclude issuance of such a combined document. Pursuant to HRS Chapter 343, upon acceptance by the governor of Hawai'i of the Final EIS, a notice of acceptance of the Final EIS would be published in *The Environmental Notice*, which would initiate a 60-day challenge period.~~

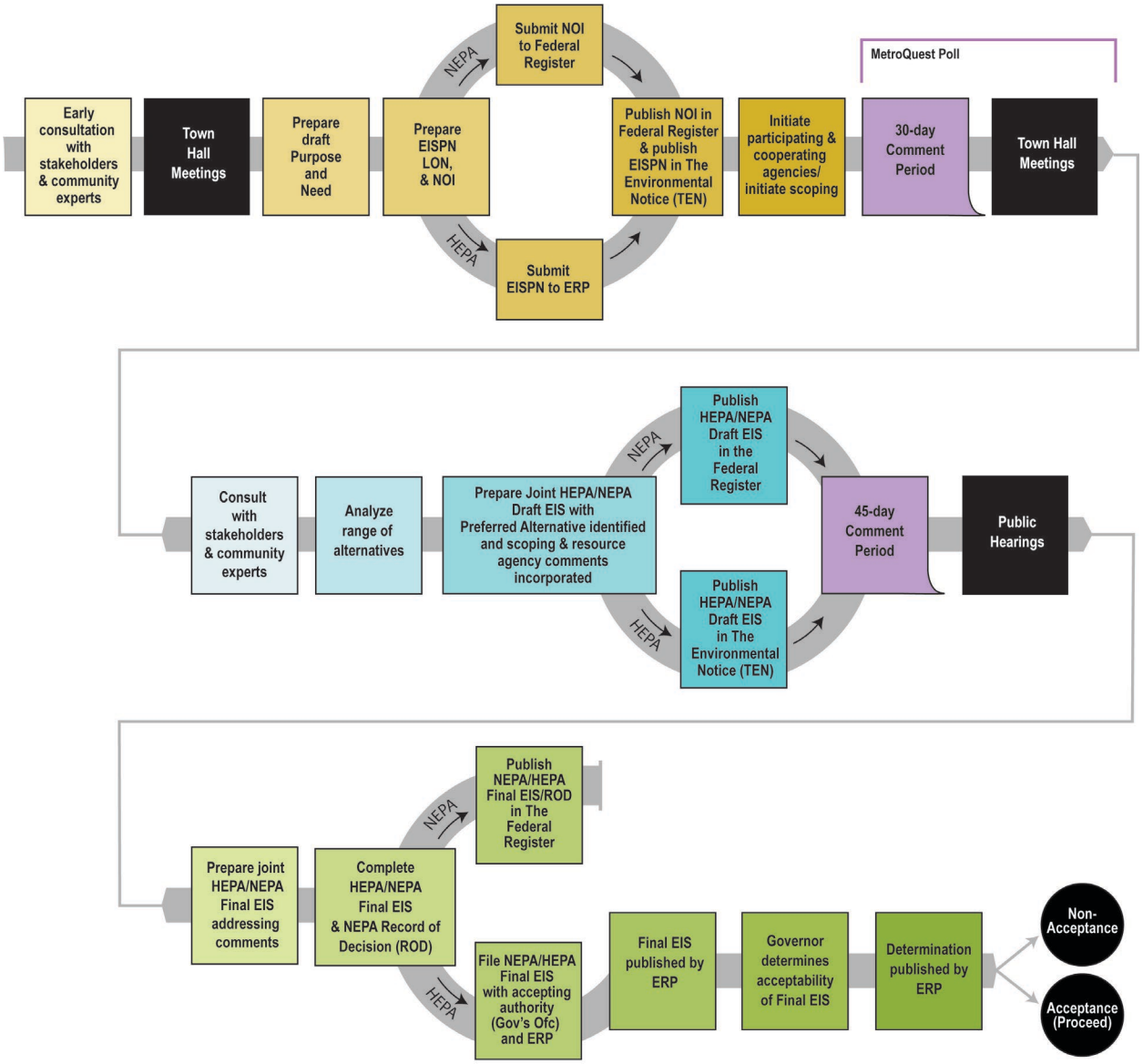
~~In conjunction with the publication of this Draft EIS (FIGURE 1-4), a Notice of Availability would be published in the State's ERP publication, *The Environmental Notice*, and a Notice of Availability would be published in the *Federal Register*. The ERP notice initiates a 45-day public review period under HRS Chapter 343, and the *Federal Register* notice also initiates a 45-day public review period under NEPA. All comments received by the later deadline would be considered. Draft EIS public hearings would be conducted during the public review period, and the Final EIS will consider and respond to public comments on this Draft EIS.~~

~~Pursuant to HRS Chapter 343, upon acceptance by the governor of Hawai'i of the Final EIS, a notice of acceptance of the Final EIS would be published in *The Environmental Notice*, which would initiate a 60-day challenge period.~~

~~Title 23 U.S.C. 139(n)(2) provides for a combined Final EIS/ROD. Therefore, the FHWA intends to issue a single document that consists of the Final EIS/ROD consistent with Title 23 USC 139(n)(2); unless~~

~~the agency determines that statutory criteria or practicability considerations preclude issuance of such a combined document.~~

FIGURE 1-4. **Environmental Impact Statement Process Chart**




## 1.7.3 Environmental Impact Statement Schedule

With completion of the NEPA and HEPA review process, HDOT will procure a design-build contractor and construction would be anticipated to begin in 2026, about a year from the contractor award. With anticipated construction schedule of ~~A combined Final EIS/ROD is anticipated in 2025. HDOT anticipates that project construction would take~~ approximately four years, the Project could potentially be complete and operational by 2030.

## 1.8 PROJECT CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information regarding the Project, please visit the project website or contact the following people:

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