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## HOUSE RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE COUNTY OF HAWAI'I TO EXPAND THE HELE-ON SHARED RIDE PROGRAM TO SERVE THE ENTIRE ISLAND OF HAWAI'I, INCLUDING RURAL AND UNDERSERVED AREAS SUCH AS WEST HAWAI'I, NORTH KOHALA, SOUTH KOHALA, KA'Ū, AND PUNA.

1           WHEREAS, reliable, affordable, and accessible  
2 transportation is a critical component of public infrastructure  
3 that enables residents to meet basic needs, maintain  
4 independence, and fully participate in their communities; and

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6           WHEREAS, individuals with disabilities, kupuna, and  
7 residents with chronic health conditions often rely on  
8 specialized or accessible transportation services to attend  
9 medical appointments, obtain prescriptions, access supportive  
10 services, and maintain their overall health and well-being; and

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12           WHEREAS, residents of rural and geographically isolated  
13 areas of the island of Hawai'i face disproportionate  
14 transportation barriers due to long travel distances, limited  
15 fixed-route bus service, and a lack of on-demand transportation  
16 options; and

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18           WHEREAS, these barriers are particularly acute in west  
19 Hawai'i, Ka'ū, North Kohala, and South Kohala, where access to  
20 health care facilities, social services, and employment  
21 opportunities often requires long-distance travel; and

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23           WHEREAS, the County of Hawai'i Mass Transit Agency currently  
24 operates the Hele-On Shared Ride Program exclusively in east  
25 Hawai'i, offering subsidized, on-demand transportation services  
26 that are accessible to individuals who use mobility devices; and

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28           WHEREAS, effective July 1, 2023, the Hele-On Shared Ride  
29 Program subsidizes up to \$15.80 per trip, equivalent to  
30 approximately four miles, with passengers responsible for any



1 remaining balance, thereby increasing flexibility, eliminating  
2 the use of traditional taxi coupons, and allowing unlimited  
3 travel based on individual need; and  
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5 WHEREAS, participation in the program requires eligible  
6 individuals to obtain a Shared Ride Program Identification Card,  
7 helping ensure that transportation support is provided to those  
8 who need it most while maintaining program accountability; and  
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10 WHEREAS, at present, shared ride providers participating in  
11 the program operate only in the Hilo area, with no participating  
12 companies serving Puna, Ka'ū, Waimea, South Kohala, North Kohala,  
13 or west Hawai'i, including Kailua-Kona; and  
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15 WHEREAS, the absence of island-wide shared ride service  
16 limits access to timely health care, contributes to missed  
17 medical appointments, and increases isolation for individuals  
18 who are unable to drive or who require accessible  
19 transportation; and  
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21 WHEREAS, expanding the Hele-On Shared Ride Program to serve  
22 the entire island of Hawai'i would advance transportation equity,  
23 support independent living for people with disabilities, improve  
24 health care access in rural communities, and reduce disparities  
25 between east and west Hawai'i; and  
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27 WHEREAS, an island-wide expansion would also complement  
28 existing Hele-On fixed-route services, encourage partnerships  
29 with local transportation providers, and support a more  
30 integrated and responsive public transit system for the island  
31 of Hawai'i; now, therefore,  
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33 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the  
34 Thirty-third Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session  
35 of 2026, that the County of Hawai'i is requested to expand the  
36 Hele-On Shared Ride Program to serve the entire island of  
37 Hawai'i, including rural and underserved areas such as west  
38 Hawai'i, North Kohala, South Kohala, Ka'ū, and Puna; and  
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40 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the County of Hawai'i Mass  
41 Transit Agency is requested to:



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- (1) Prioritize accessibility for individuals with disabilities, including ensuring the availability of vehicles that accommodate mobility devices and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act;
- (2) Collaborate with local taxi, shared-ride, and transportation providers to increase participation in areas that currently lack service, including west Hawai'i and other rural districts;
- (3) Consider the expansion of the Hele-On Shared Ride Program as a means of improving access to health care services, including medical appointments, pharmacies, and supportive care, particularly for kupuna, individuals with disabilities, and residents without access to personal vehicles; and
- (4) Explore phased implementation, pilot programs, or other cost-effective strategies to support island-wide expansion of the Hele-On Shared Ride Program, subject to available funding; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the Mayor of the County of Hawai'i, Chair of the Hawai'i County Council, and Administrator of the County of Hawai'i Mass Transit Agency.

OFFERED BY: *Jeanie Kopeha*

MAR 16 2026

