

Lahaina bypass work on hold for assessment

Public informational meeting will be scheduled to discuss findings

By **CLAUDINE SAN NICOLAS**
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LAHAINA — Work on the first phase of the Lahaina bypass has been postponed indefinitely while a new archaeological study is conducted.

State Department of Transportation Director Barry Fukunaga asked the public “for its patience and understanding” while his agency completes a new archaeological assessment of two sites in the project area. Construction cannot begin until the assessment is completed.

In addition, transportation officials plan to consult with government agencies and affected Native Hawaiian families and cultural groups in the community about the study’s findings.

This summer, transportation officials announced that the long-awaited bypass would begin construction in late July, but the project was postponed when the state Department of Land and Natural Resources’ Historic Preservation Division recommended more archaeological work in the project area to identify sites that were not previously identified in a survey conducted 15 years ago.

Because of sensitive cultural issues, transportation officials will consult with the Native Hawaiian community, including cultural practitioners, groups, organizations and descendants of the original families associated with the project area.

“This consultation is important in determining the significance and appropriate treatment of the archaeological sites within Phase 1A and future phases,” Fukunaga said. “The process will also influence how and when construction can proceed.”

Following the archaeological assessment, a public informational meeting will be scheduled to discuss its findings and how it will affect the project’s schedule. No target date has been released for the beginning of the bypass’ construction.

For decades, West Maui residents have been seeking relief from congestion on Lahainaluna Road where traffic backs up onto Honoapiilani Highway.

The first phase of the Lahaina bypass features a two-lane road running from Lahainaluna Road

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state Department of
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to the future Keawe Street extension, which will be done by Maui County. The state’s Lahaina minibypass project contract is approximately \$48 million for the first phase.

Future phases of the bypass project will continue the new two-lane roadway south toward Launiupoko and north toward Kapakua.

The first archaeological site, described as a remnant walled enclosure, was documented as part of archaeological sites during the early to mid-1990s and was included with the final supplemental environmental impact statement in 2002.

The Historic Preservation Division is requiring further investigation of the site to determine if any burials may be present. Initial testing conducted with the agricultural features of the remnant walled enclosure found no burials, state transportation officials said.

The second archaeological site is described as a large complex of agricultural terraces that lie within about 27 acres of state property.

Further investigation is required, however, to determine the limits of the archaeological site and its cultural significance. Of the 27 acres within state lands, fewer than 2 acres are located within planned construction areas.

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