

# Roadway work uncovers community divide



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A map presented at a Transportation Department public meeting Wednesday depicts a possible realignment of the Lahaina bypass to skirt archaeological features discovered within the original alignment. The archaeological site is marked in blue; the bypass alignment is in white; the possible realignment is in yellow.

## Lahaina bypass plan skirts cultural sites



The Maui News / MATHIEU THAYER photo

During a Maui/Lanai Islands Burial Council site visit along the Lahaina bypass route last year, officials examined the open land where a number of cultural features were discovered, requiring further examination and analysis to determine their significance.

By CHRIS HAMILTON  
Staff Writer

LAHAINA — The state Department of Transportation expects to begin construction on the often-delayed Lahaina bypass in January with a new route that will avoid two archaeological sites, department officials announced Wednesday.

A public meeting on the status of the Lahaina bypass Wednesday also exposed sharp community divisions over the planned expressway apparently based on ethnicity or socioeconomic status.

The \$48 million, half-mile phase 1A of the bypass has been stalled since last fall when two archaeological sites were discovered within the path of the highway that would run from Lahainaluna Road to an exten-

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### Bypass

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sion of Keawe Street.

Transportation officials said Hawaii Cultural Surveys completed its investigation of one site, and is nearly finished with the second. So far, no burials have been found to within the 32 acres of terraces and walls, which state officials said they believe were built for hand-cultivated sugar cane perhaps as early as the mid-1800s.

Still, in order to avoid the sites, Ed Sniffen of the Highways Division, said planners are seriously considering a realignment to go around the sensitive sites.

On Wednesday, most Native Hawaiians who spoke out stated their heritage and then their opposition to a plan that they said could further disrupt burials, as well as cultural sites — and promote further high-end development in West Maui.

Others in the audience spoke

to stand up. About half the people did; and nearly all of them were together on one side of the room.

"It's all haoles standing up," one man shouted from the back.

Planning for a Lahaina bypass began more than 30 years ago and has been regularly stalled by disputes over the route and the costs. It is intended to relieve traffic along the Honoapiilani Highway through Lahaina town and the Kaanapali Resort, which is frequently jammed to near standstill from visitors heading to their hotels when workers are usually heading home.

The first phase 1A is aimed at alleviating traffic from Lahainaluna Road by providing a second route to the roadway that is now the only access for three public schools — Lahainaluna High School, Lahaina Intermediate School and Princess Nahienaena Elementary School. Phase 1A would connect to Lahainaluna Road at Ikena Avenue, just below the three

two supported the new alignment.

Theo Morrison, head of Lahaina Bypass Now, thanked the Transportation Department for all its hard work.

Kirk Kirkpatrick of Kahana arrived wearing a costume construction hat and carrying a shovel. He said he was ready to break ground Wednesday night.

For their part, state officials and contractors said that if all goes as planned, construction on the Phase 1A could begin in January. An environmental assessment should be completed by August.

Sniffen said the state is complying with federal law that requires it to avoid historic sites.

Still, several speakers repeatedly asked state officials to reconsider using the old cane haul road as an alternative route, if they have to build anything at all. This option would utilize existing easements that served the old Pioneer Mill. After a century of use by cane hauling equipment

sites at the cane road as well, Mau said.

"The iwi of our kupuna is our life," said Albert Dizon. "I'm sick of the degradation, of all this development."

Toni Kaahanui Dizon said that the bypass and other realignment of Honoapiilani farther southeast won't stop congestion anyway because the pali will continue to bottleneck traffic.

The issue was also raised as to whether the state even has the right to build on ceded lands in lieu of a recent state Supreme Court decision that bars the government from selling or transferring the properties indefinitely.

"This place is not for sale," said Maui/Lanai Islands Burial Council member, Keeaumoku Kapu, speaking against the bypass route.

Kapu said he has been in conversations with state transportation officials as a family representative of descendants of the Hawaiians who originally populated the Lahaina lands.