Governor Seeks Additional Funds for Maui Recovery

Hawaii Governor Josh Green is asking for $326 million for the operating budget and an additional $890 million in general obligation funds in his supplement fiscal year 2025 budget, The Center Square reports. Much of what was released includes funding to rebuild Maui, which was devastated by a wildfire in August.

The request would set aside $186.2 million for ongoing recovery costs and $200 million for the Risk Management Revolving Fund to pay for claims due to the fire. An additional $10 million would be designated for general fire and emergency response equipment.

Green asked for $35.4 million in the capital improvement budget to improve wildfire mitigation. Most of the funding is federal – $26.4 million – while $2.4 million is in general obligation bond funds and $6.6 million is in revenue bonds.

"In addition to disaster preparation and mitigation, many of the proposed funds will advance key priority initiatives across the state, such as increasing access to quality healthcare, fully resourcing our public education systems, and accelerating the development of affordable housing and essential infrastructure," Green said.

The governor asks lawmakers to convert some capital improvement funds to general obligation bond funds. The projects include:

- $25 million for capital renewal and deferred maintenance for the University of Hawaii and the state's community college.
- $30 million for system modernization at the University of Hawaii.
- The Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation's Dwelling Unit Revolving Fund would have $50 million and another $180 million for the agency's Rental Housing Revolving Fund. Read more.

Cyber Army is Invading Critical US Services, Including in Hawaii
China's cyber army is invading critical US services, including Hawaii's infrastructure. *The Washington Post* reported that according to US officials and industry security officials, the Chinese military is ramping up its ability to disrupt key American infrastructure.

They're specifically targeting power and water utilities as well as communications and transportation systems. Hackers affiliated with China's People's Liberation Army have hacked into the computer systems of about two dozen critical entities over the past year.

The intrusions are part of a broader effort to develop ways to sow panic and chaos or snarl logistics in the event of a US-China conflict in the Pacific, experts said.

*The Post* also mentioned one of the targets was "a water utility in Hawaii." Though it's not yet clear exactly which water utility was impacted. Also among the victims is a major West Coast port and at least one oil and gas pipeline. Read more on hawaiinewsnow.com.

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**Honolulu DOT Services Wants Higher Skyline Metro Rail Ridership**

The Skyline metro rail system started running its first segment from East Kapolei to Aloha Stadium six months ago and officials say they would like the ridership numbers to be higher, *Spectrum News* reports.

Honolulu Department of Transportation Services Deputy Director Jon Nouchi recently discussed Skyline's ridership numbers during a Stadium Authority meeting. "Although we'd like it to be higher, it has stabilized," said Nouchi.

On weekdays, an average of about 3,200-3,300 people ride the Skyline. Nouchi said there is a bump on Wednesdays when the Aloha Stadium hosts the swap meet with about 3,500-3,700 riders. About 2,300 people ride the Skyline on Saturdays and a little over 2,000 people ride on Sundays. On major holidays, about 1,200 people use the Skyline.

Skyline opened with much fanfare on June 30, when the Honolulu Department of Services offered five fare-free days to riders. During the free days, between 8,942 riders and 18,108 riders got on the Skyline. But in the first five days of regular fare operations, the numbers dropped significantly to between 3,203 to 4,312 riders. Read more.

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