



Date: February 6, 2024
To: Project Files
From: Townscape, Inc.
Re: Pololū Trailhead Management Plan – Community Meeting on the Draft Plan via ZOOM

Meeting Attendees: Meeting attendees were asked to sign-in via a Google Form. Only 21 participants signed-in, but approximately 39 participants joined the meeting online or called in by phone. Participants from the consultant team included Gabrielle Sham and Rachel Kapule (Townscape, Inc.). The State Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW) staff (Dave Smith, Jackson Bauer and Steve Bergfeld) also attended the meeting.

This memo documents the community meeting held on Tuesday, February 6, 2024 via Zoom for the Draft Pololū Trailhead Management Plan. Similar to the in-person meeting held on Tuesday, January 30, 2024 at the North Kohala Intergenerational Center, the purpose of the meeting was to share the Draft Plan for the trailhead, which included three alternative scenarios, and gather input from the community.

Gabrielle Sham started the meeting at 5:00 p.m. She and Ms. Kapule provided a [slideshow](#) presentation that highlighted key points of the Draft Plan. They gave an overview of the planning process, approach, issues, and vision for Pololū before sharing potential solutions and parking scenarios for the trailhead. A recording of the meeting is available [online](#).

Questions and/or comments from participants are provided below. Responses from the planning team are shown in *italics*.

- My name is Loa. This is my wife, Jessica. We live in Niuli'i in my grandparents' house. My grandmother's name is Emma Rodenhurst and my grandfather, his name was Raymond Glory. We just want to mahalo Townscape for the work that they've done with the community and the dedication it takes to come up with the scenarios that you've come up with. You haven't talked to one person; you've talked to many people. So we just want to say thank you for the time that you guys have done. For my family, we support the Mule Station. And we like that because first and foremost, we want to think about Pololū first. And I'm not talking about access for people, I'm talking about what Pololū needs. And what Pololū needs is less people. And so whether that's a visitor or a local resident, we need less people there. And the way we can do that is by management. Not a lot of development, we're not talking about development, we're talking about managing the area. The Mule Station has infrastructure. If the State is able to purchase the Mule Station, we would hope that the rest of the unused area of the parcel is put into conservation. I just want everyone to realize that if the parcel is sold to someone else that we have no control over it if it's sold to anyone. Anything can happen over there. And so those 42 acres could be a couple mansions. And so we need to be part of the solution. And if we are not, then we're part of nothing, and anything can

happen. And so for my family and for a lot of people that I know in this community of Niuli'i who are lineal descendants and have generational ties to this place, we support the Mule Station. Thank you.

- [Chat] I'd like to ask about the proposed housing development near Pololū.
 - *I'm not sure what the proposed housing development is. This meeting is focused on the trailhead area so that might be a separate discussion. I can connect with you if you signed in, and maybe connect you with the right people about housing development specifically. This presentation, and this meeting, is focused on the trailhead area.*

- My name is Scott Pauli. I am with the Hawai'i Visitors [and Convention] Bureau; I'm the new Executive Director. I just want to comment on a few things. One, Loa, you're absolutely right about the management and restriction of the people there. I was there on December 28th, and I was interacting with the stewards who are doing an incredible job and have an extreme passion for that special place there. And they need more support for sure. And I think that Mule House is a great opportunity to really make it a great experience and then to manage the area and stay in its natural beauty. So one question on the timeframe, is there a timeframe that when somebody makes a reservation that they have, you know, a certain limit that they need to be there and then they need to come back up? And if so then you know, do you have to go chase people? I'm not sure if that's been thought through that far yet. But just wondering if that's all day or a portion of the day or what?
 - *Thanks, Scott. Those are great questions. I mean, the details, we still need to figure out. The trail stewards, they've been doing daily counts, and they've been observing the amount of time that people usually spend at the trailhead, or the lookout and people hiking down. On average, people that do come just to the lookout, they stay about 15 minutes. And for those that are hiking down and come back up, it's just under two hours. I think that could be an option where there could be blocks where you make reservations for and I think that's what they do at Hā'ena on Kaua'i, you can make parking reservations for two hour blocks. So if you think you're going to take more time than you can make reservations for additional blocks. We still need to think through what that would look like. And then I think State Parks, they're doing a great job, and I actually don't know how far in advance they offer their reservations. I know for Hanauma Bay on O'ahu it's 72 hours, I have to double check, but it's at least a couple of days in advance.*

- [Chat] I agree with Loa. Please protect this area with the State buying the 42-acre Mule Station. Also, it is so important to provide accessibility for people with disabilities.
 - *Yes, we heard that comment when we met in person last week as well. Some of the comments were to provide at least a couple more parking stalls for people with disabilities.*

- My name is Ryan Lafferty. I'm one of the trailhead stewards. And I just wanted to reiterate what Loa had mentioned about the people from Townscape and the time and commitment that they put into this. Everybody should know that they are on our side, even if you don't like the proposals, they are doing this for us, and they don't have special interest in the place. Just our interest. So I really want to thank you guys a lot for that. And if there is going to be change, I kind of agree with Loa also. The less development the better and the Mule Station seems to be a decent plan, in my opinion. And, again, just wanted to thank everybody, especially Townscape people, and everybody else that's here and loves Pololū as much as we do. Thanks.
- I used to go up to Pololū years ago, and you know, you can park at the end with no problem ever. And so I've been there when it's uncrowded. And then I was up there recently, when it was, there was quite a few people visiting and the trail stewards are doing a great job, if they hadn't been there, it just would have been a complete cluster at the end of the road, but they were doing a really good job getting people to, you know, turn around and park and you know, if they were just viewing and whatnot, there were certain people out and it was very well done. So compliments on that. One thing. So I was hearing kind of like, we were talking about buying the Mule Station. But if the road is just owned to just the edges of the road and all the rest is private, it seems like that's a pretty narrow corridor to work with. I didn't hear about buying. In addition, those other shoulders, I guess you'd have to do that for options one and two. But it seems even with the Mule Station, it seems like that would be a good thing to consider if it isn't already being considered is just to buy some space on either side of the road, regardless, as part of the plan.
 - *Both sides of the road where people are parking are part of the TMK parcel. So that's private property. The roadway is just the 20 feet, just the driving area. The area where cars are parking now on both sides of the road, that's part of the adjacent parcels on private property.*
- That's part of the Mule Station parcel?
 - *Correct.*
- *I see that we have a few people in the chat that have commented, but before we go there, I just wanted to, you know, we had our in person meeting last week, Tuesday. And one thing we did as well was not just introduce the stewards, but we wanted to kind of get a perspective from the stewards. I know some of you were already at that meeting, but I realize some of you were not at last week's meeting. If it's all right, Sarah, and Ryan, I don't think Paul's here, if you're available, Sarah, you can unmute yourself. I was wondering if you want to tell us your experience as a steward, your interactions with the visitors to the area and go ahead and unmute yourself.*
 - I gotta say that 99% of the people that come to visit Pololū, they have respect when we give them all the information. They say thank you for allowing us to visit this sacred place. But then you know, there's the one percent that will keep on walking; they don't want to hear what we have to say. And I will tell you guys

about one experience where this guy came and I asked him if he knew where the burial sites were and he kept walking. I said, 'Sir, can you just tell me if you know what the burial sites are?' And he turned around, he yelled at me. And he said, 'I don't need to tell you nothing.' He steps over that little hump before the trail and he falls. And I told him that my kūpuna knows that I'm here to take care of them so they just took care of you. And that's the kind of people we deal with. Every day, there's going to be somebody that's gonna get that kind of attitude, but the 99% that come, they appreciate what we're doing. The returnees tell us thank you for being here, the last time they came, it was a mess here and this is so awesome what we're doing.

- *Ryan, do you want to share your experiences when it comes to safety?*
 - So I've only been a steward there since June. And in my time there, I haven't seen or been there at the time of too many accidents. What I mostly have seen is heatstroke lately, we've had two about a week ago all in one week. And both of them seemed like they were pretty much overdoing it and weren't used to the humidity here. And then I see safety issues sometimes down in the valley, I saw someone fall one time, knock themselves out for a split second not paying attention. But fortunately, with what we tell them at the top, they're pretty careful. And a lot of times people come out saying that was a lot easier than you made it sound. For a lot of people, it is an easy hike. But for a lot of people, it's not. And with all the misinformation out there about the place. I mean, we literally have people drive up and ask, 'Hi, I'm here for the 10 minute hike.' Like that's from your car up the road to the storyboard and back again. So the education is good. And you know, as far as the interactions with the people, my favorite is when you really give them the history on how King Kamehameha was raised there how they hid him in 'Āwini. And you tell him that they're walking the same trails as King Kamehameha and you see their demeanor completely change. The energy, you know, they start to feel it. That's the best thing for me there. It's just such a magical place to be able to have people respect it the way it should be is a real honor to me. So thank you.

- [Chat] The State is not in line to purchase this parcel. My concern is that Surety wants to make a deal with the State to change the land use from ag to residential. Their end goal is to be able to make millions by building homes up in the valley rim. We definitely don't want that.
 - *I can't speak to what Surety's plans are for their lands on the rim. Like Gaby said, this plan is related to dealing with the parking congestion or rather the user congestion by using some kind of parking controls. And so we're not making any deals with Surety. Obviously, we would need to acquire the land.*
 - *So let's see, I think this is in response to the Mule Station comments. If we were to purchase that, that is already in an SMA so it does have quite stringent rules upon it already. And we didn't really explain what Division of Forestry and Wildlife does, but we are all about conservation. The Division of Forestry and Wildlife is*

different than State Parks. We're not into building parks for people and big infrastructure. We're about the natural and cultural resources. And in this case, we're managing how people interact with the resources. But we are not about expanding. And as you can see in our plan it's just that; we're not going to be changing any zoning or anything like that. Even the parking itself we'd like something that's more impervious like a hardened grass system. So it's not just a bunch of blacktop. There was a lot of feedback from the community about trying to keep it as little impact as possible. So we definitely heard that.

- [Chat] I'm reaching out as much as I can to get someone to purchase this, and then turn it all into conservation land, nothing should be built on this land.
 - *Again, we're not planning to really build anything substantial. The parking would be pretty minimal construction, if you would even call it that.*

- [Chat] Is there a plan to get the word out that there will be reservations, travel websites may not have updated information. Will there need to be parking officer to send people away without reservations?
 - *That's a great question. Yes, I think part of the implementation of this plan, the first step will be working with concierges, hotels, like you said, some of the travel websites to get the word out. Obviously, it's gonna be hard to reach everybody. But definitely that's going to be a big component is that outreach on the get go. So that there aren't needless efforts by people to get turned away. And then our parking officers essentially would be the stewards that would be managing that area.*

- [Chat] There was some discussion of an information education center in Hāwī with management via a limited number of tickets available for shuttle buses to the lookout/trailhead, is inclusive of fees for bus, and/or hiking passes for fee. Bathrooms in town, where water is limited, parking at Pololū for locals, cultural practitioners, etc. Continued trail stewards as people arrive off the transport.
 - *We did look extensively at the shuttle service option because we know it's been successful for Hā'ena on Kaua'i. But after looking at that further, there's several challenges: identifying and securing a pickup and drop off location, it would also require infrastructure development, because for the shuttle, where will they be turning around? I don't think the space at the current lookout would provide for that turnaround area. So it would also require some kind of development or acquiring land from Surety as well to create this turnaround area. And then also operational capacity. When we spoke to folks at Hā'ena, they shared that there's quite a bit of upfront costs that's required, and staffing that's required to operate this system. And eventually there were some concerns from the community that in order to operate the shuttle service, does it become an incentive for the operators to increase the number of visitors in order to break even? There were concerns that instead of trying to limit the number of visitors and the number of*

people that are going to Pololū, that instead the shuttle service becomes focused on trying to break even and bringing more people into Pololū. So those are some of the concerns. We have a section in the plan that talks about these challenges. We did look at the shuttle service option, but it didn't make it into one of the scenarios that we're considering at this time.

- If I could say something about the shuttle service real quick. The other issue that the stewards have talked about with the shuttle service is, let's say a shuttle comes and drops off 20 people or however many people and one of them 10 minutes or five minutes into the hike hurts themselves. Now they gotta come back up. Or let's say they hurt themselves at the trailhead, but the rest of the people are gonna go, the bus has already turned around and left. Now they have no way to get themselves to the ER. So, because they don't have a vehicle there or a family member that could drive them. That's something that stewards have talked about. I just wanted to throw that out there too.

- My name is Pua, my 'ohana is from Kohala, and I was raised in Kohala. And I just wanted to share a short story about the stewardship program. So when the stewardship program first began, a few of us went over to Seattle to submit a resolution at the Hawaiian Civic Club Convention. And that resolution was for the stewardship program, to kind of push things through, we knew it was a good thing. And obviously it is, we hear good things about it all the time. While we were there, Aunty Patty Ann Solomon was getting ready to leave us. So a few of us stay back. And those of us who went and presented that resolution we cried while we did it. So I just wanted to mention that for those of us who are from Kohala, raised in Kohala, and we know that place, Pololū is more than just a place for us. It's a person really, it's our lineage, it's what my tutu taught me as I was growing up, it's how she taught me how to be. That's what I think about when I think about Pololū. And I understand where Loa's coming from too because it's not an easy decision to come up with solutions when really you just want to leave it the way it is. But we do understand that if we do nothing, then something is going to happen. And we want to be a part of doing something. So I do agree with Loa. We have talked about this before that the amount of people that are going down there, we always say even if we decide something today, the 'āina will decide for itself what it's going to do. You know, if it gets overrun by too many people, it's going to shut itself down. And I do feel like with us we follow our kūpuna...and Aunty Sarah, you know, we respect her, we know that she tells this story all the time that that highway was named after her grandfather. If you don't know that, then you know that now. I think we just really want to come up with some solutions for Pololū, like Loa said. It's not about access for who is this and who is what, but really what is best for our kūpuna, for that valley. That valley is 'ohana to us.

- [Chat] What is the goal for daily visitor count?
 - *So it's not decided yet. But we did, in the in-person community meeting, share a slide but it just got too confusing, so we didn't share it tonight. But we just looked at the example of if we did 10 stalls for Hawai'i residents and 10 for visitors. And*

if we had reservations for an eight-hour time period, and we allowed hikers to stay for two hours, and for people who want to go to the lookout reserve a 30 minute time slot. Eventually, the math came out to of those 10 stalls, if four were designated for lookout and six were designated for hiking, there would be a total of 264 visitors per day. And I think it was maybe around 72, 76 would be hikers, and the remainder would be people just going to the lookout. And what's neat about this reservation system is that it can be adapted based on observations. If we think there's too many people going, then that number can be reduced and maybe it could be like eight stalls for visitors and 12 stalls for residents. And again, making sure that residents always have a parking stall. So like on weekends, it could be different. And really, we won't know that number until they implement this and then kind of see what happens, and then it can be adjusted accordingly.

- *I think to answer the goal for the visitor daily count, what we're hearing is that currently the average is about 600 visitors, and what we've heard from the community is that it's not acceptable. So ideally, the idea is to reduce that number significantly. I think that's kind of the end goal.*
 - *In summary, we're looking at least half if not more, than what the average is. And again, that would be the peak, there would be no peaks of 1,400 people in a day, for example.*
- Have you thought of the congestion that will happen when you are directing people to go into the new parking? Or to turn around and reverse? Seems more of a cluster than before.
 - *Well, yes, and I should also preface that these are not engineered designs at this point. These are just plans. So all of those questions will be designed by an engineer that can work on the flow. But the short answer is yes, we have thought of those things. By having a finite parking and reservation system, there's going to be far less vehicles driving and therefore less of that conflict. And that's part of kind of the reason for this, for safety as well and to reduce that. As far as the reverse parking in scenario two, that has been tried here in Hilo at Kealoha Beach Park, there's reverse parking that was done there. And yeah, the first day everybody was like what is this, but after people started using it, it actually made things a lot safer and easier in a compact space. So that is a trend that is starting to happen in the kind of road engineering world when it comes to parking to do this kind of reverse diagonal in those types of scenarios.*
- Aloha to everyone. I'm very happy to be among the residents of Kohala. I've joined in earlier discussions and I'm glad to see and be with you all tonight again. I'm Lamakū Mikahala Roy. My father, David Keli'ihelemauna Roy Jr led the restoration of Ahu'ena Heiau, in Kailua-Kona. It is the first capital of the Kingdom of Hawai'i, unified by Kamehameha the Great. This was his personal temple. I wish to share information with you. While these planning sessions are a good opportunity to talk and share, I would like

to share with you what you have not heard from the general population in the State. In 2010, the voices of the ancestors have come forward at Ahu'ena Heiau. I have reached to the State to let them know that copious messages from the ancestors are being received. They discuss the very sanctity of our faith, of our people, of our lands, and of our future. This you should know about before we even discuss things like this, because they are far more important, not that Pololū or all of our lands are not important. In fact, they are so important that I must bring forward this information to you that you've not known about. There has been reaches to the State with no responses from them. The State is required to uphold the laws of the United States, which is to uphold the freedoms of religion. And at Kamakahonu, this is the first Capitol site. It is the first temple restored in the Hawaiian Islands, in the Pacific, and on earth. The ancestors and their story, our oral history, all of ours is here to share. Lamakū is the word that means standing torch. I am the first Lamakū of the modern era. We are all oral history. And this Lamakū is chosen by God to serve God on earth. I am honored beyond what I can say for this. And I feel it's very important, I'm a teacher, very important to tell you this information because Ryan as you speak about the mana of the great king, I want to tell you more about the great king and how he is not upheld as he should be at the very place that was restored by the people. There has not been help by the State. There has not been support at all. This is important to say because right now, we are about, the time is now at the place where the ancestors have declared that for most high God. God has decided has come forward with a plan for the world. He plans to heal the planet and all life upon the planet and it's to start in Hawai'i. Where? Right at Kamakahonu.

- [Chat] How will people be informed not to drive there?
 - *It's a good question. And again, that's something we're going to need to look at is that outreach plan. So similar to how the other person asked about letting people know, so we have to have an outreach plan, perhaps we can work with the County on some signage, although we also had some feedback, we don't want to do too much signage, we don't want sign pollution, and we do recognize that. We have to look at different avenues and see what works for the Kohala community and also with that audience.*
 - *Also with social media, that's how people are learning about Pololū. I think that's probably an opportunity to inform folks and educate folks about not driving their without a reservation.*
- [Chat] Can you go through a scenario if you are a resident and want to hike during hours and after the stewards go?
 - *Our name is Nā Ala Hele Trails and Access program, so our priority is access and public access. A lot of what we do is guided actually, by Kingdom law and the Kānāwai Māmalahoe, that allow and protect access on these public trails. And so our view is always to prioritize traditional customary and public access on these trails. So the trails themselves will not be restricted in that sense. Parking is the thing we're trying to control and having an adequate number of parking for*

residents is something that will be prioritized. And then again, if we're talking about cultural practices, that is something that there is whether that can be done at the current lookout area, where if they need to park there or stage there or whatnot, that's something they can work with the stewards to accommodate for at that location.

- I want to tell the people that the ancestors are very much in honor of our King. These lands are pristine; they need to be protected. No one but kupa should be there. This is the words of the ancestors.
- What Pua said about Pololū not being a place, it really isn't. To people that have never experienced it, it is a place to come visit. But Pololū, in fact, is a living entity. And I have an intimate relationship with Pololū. And that's why we're here. And I want to learn more. But yeah, Pololū speaks to me. Pololū, in fact, the other day told me that I was a lucky person to be there when I was, and told me they would let me know when it was time to leave. And in fact, Pololū let me know when it was time to leave. I was literally one of four people that went down that day; it was an absolute honor. And so I just want to say thank you to everybody, for having Pololū and the Hawai'i kingdom in your thoughts and your prayers, and that's what this is about, preservation of this place. Thanks.
- I really appreciate this meeting being put together. And I've been listening almost all the time, I was late I had a previous meeting. So I really appreciate the thoughts and the mana'o coming from the community as far as expressing a direction forward. So just wanted to let you know, I've been sitting listening very carefully to what things have been said.
- I want to thank you and Rachel for all the time you did working with us trying to get to the right scenario. And the last time in the last meeting, when I stood up, I didn't mean to put you guys down. It's just I was fed up with other things that were being said, but I appreciate what you guys are doing. I know we got to do something to protect Pololū. And the less development is the best thing for Pololū, and what we're trying to do with the Mule Station, but I really appreciate everything, I love my job, and all what you guys are doing to help us protect Pololū. When somebody is hurting, you want to help them; Pololū is hurting with so much people going down there and the disrespect that happens and we got to help and protect Pololū. So thank you.
- [Chat] Mahalo nui Gaby, Rachel, and Jackson for this and as always a big mahalo nui to our stewards Sarah, Paul, and Ryan. All so soulful and kind. We all appreciate all that you do.