



MidWeek

This column by Senator Michelle Kidani was published in the MidWeek **CENTRAL VOICE** section on Wednesday, August 24, 2016.

Tackling the Traffic

Anyone who is on the road during the morning commute hours knows that schools are back in session after the summer break. The heaviest traffic began just this week as more than 50,000 students from Oahu's UH campuses and private schools and colleges headed back to classes.

The state and city transportation departments have unveiled several changes to major roadways – mainly to improve traffic flow heading east toward Honolulu on H-1. The change that town-bound Mililani motorists will be able to take advantage of is a second zipper lane from the H-1/H-2 merge to Pearl Harbor that could accommodate about 20 percent more vehicles. Some of the hours for use of high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes have been adjusted. Also, as it has in the past, the state has suspended construction-related road closures during daylight hours on major highways through the end of this week as drivers get used to the heavier traffic and new traffic lane patterns.

It was also announced that the city is reviving a ride-sharing vanpool program that was successful on Oahu for several years beginning in the 1990s. I was one of the original vanpool drivers and thought it was a great option for taking cars off the road. However, after 9-11, federal spending priorities shifted dramatically, and the program was discontinued when funding for the program was no longer available.



I joined city and state executives at the "Beat the School Jam" traffic congestion mitigation announcement. Mayor Caldwell and city Director of Transportation Service Mike Formby talked Vanpool ridesharing - coming soon!



In the 2015 legislative session, I pushed for a renewed vanpool project and secured funding in the amount of \$500,000 with the help of Senators Tokuda and Dela Cruz. We allocated another \$500,000 again this year for a total commitment of \$100 million in state support. If this is a success over a 30-month period, it's expected that federal funding will again support the program.

Enterprise Rideshare will supply the vans and run the program. Final permitting and other arrangements are just about complete and the first vans will be on the road in a few weeks. They

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hope that as many as 150 vans will eventually carry more than a thousand commuters between their homes and schools or workplaces on a regular basis. The program will include a free ride-matching system to link riders to common destinations.

You can find detailed information by calling 1-800-VAN4WORK, or inquire by email at RideshareHawaii@erac.com. I'm grateful that Mayor Caldwell and the city are willing to host this program that could provide significant relief to traffic congestion.

Workers on our campuses

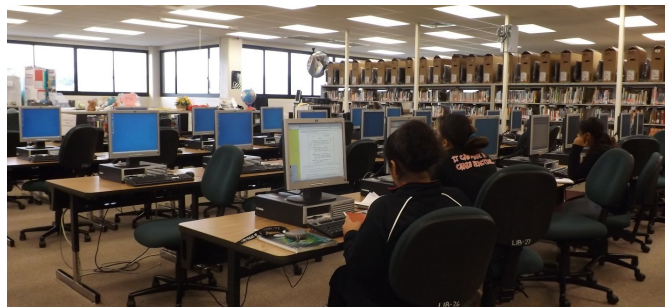
Meanwhile, our public elementary, middle/intermediate and high schools have been up and running since the first of the month. I have already visited a couple of campuses in our Senate district, and I look forward to making the rounds to others as the year proceeds.

Funds that the legislature approved will be used for electrical system upgrades at **Mililani Uka Elementary** during the year. A contract for \$582,721 was awarded to Network Power Solutions, Inc., earlier this month to carry out phase 2 of these upgrades; school leaders and the contractor are developing a schedule to work around campus activities.



Campus upgrades underway at Mililani Uka Elementary (above)

Classes resume at Mililani Middle School (below) where parking lot paving is underway.



Also, **Mililani Middle School** families are adjusting their schedules and traffic routines to work around the long-anticipated major parking lot resurfacing project. Through a special permit from the city, school buses are allowed to pick up and drop off students along Lehiwa Street fronting the parking lot. Parents have been re-routed to the bus lane along Kuaoa Street for drop offs and pickups. Principal Elynne Chung and her staff have done a great job working around the inconvenience. The improvements should be completed around the end of September.

I should note that one major improvement project at Mililani Middle – the important playcourt facility – has yet to be fully completed. The work performed by the contractor was not deemed satisfactory, and the matter is now the subject of a State lawsuit filed by the Attorney General's office. Also, and very unfortunately, as work was nearing completion, the court was vandalized, and that's also delayed its full use. We all hope for a speedy resolution of the problem.