



# MidWeek

This column by Senator Michelle Kidani  
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## Cooling the schools

With schools back in session during these warm-weather months there is renewed focus on the Governor's initiative to cool the state's hottest classrooms. The Board of Education heard an update on the project at its most recent meeting. The first four contracts were awarded July 27 to cover 25 portable classrooms at four schools, including Leeward Coast campuses at Kamaile Academy public charter school in Waianae and Nanakuli Elementary



**Facilities Maintenance Branch workers apply liquid coated heat reflective paint to cool more than 420 portables on Oahu. More than 400 portable ACs installed as temporary supplemental cooling in some of Hawaii's hottest classrooms. (DOE photos)**

Maintenance teams are working weekends to conduct cooling projects on portable classrooms, which tend to be the hottest rooms. So far, 423 portable classrooms have been covered with heat reflective material, fans have been installed in 139 classrooms in the last few months, and the DOE has purchased and installed more than 400 portable air conditioning units for the hottest classrooms. We will be monitoring the program to assure that these projects move forward as quickly as possible.

## Tackling the traffic

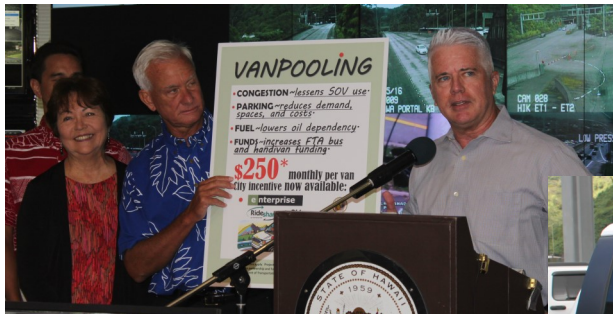
Anyone who is on the road during the morning commute hours knows that schools are back in session after the summer break. The heaviest traffic began just last week as more than 50,000 students from Oahu's UH campuses and private schools and colleges headed back to classes.

A new shoulder lane beginning at Kualakai Parkway onramp to the Kunia/Waipahu/Ewa (Exit 5) and the addition of a second zipper lane from the H-1/H-2 merge to Pearl Harbor should help West Oahu motorists heading toward Honolulu. The city is also on the verge of 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 funding for the program was no longer available.

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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.

Enterprise Rideshare will supply the vans and run the program. Final permitting and other arrangements are just about complete and the first vans are expected to be on the road in a few weeks. Enterprise hopes that as many as 150 vans eventually will 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](mailto:RideshareHawaii@erac.com). If this is a success over a 30-month period, it's expected that federal funding will again support the program. I'm grateful that Mayor Caldwell and the city are willing to host this program that could provide significant relief to traffic congestion.



***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!***



### **Get out the vote!**

With this month's primary election fresh in our minds and the numbers showing record low voter turnout, here's a reminder that there are some deadlines approaching for participation in the November general election. If you have not registered to vote, you can do so online at [elections.hawaii.gov](http://elections.hawaii.gov). Beginning this year, voters are eligible for late registration for the General Election at an early walk-in voting location; early walk-in voting at Kapolei Hale and Honolulu Hale begins on October 25. If you would like to request a ballot so that you can vote by mail, you may do so at that same website no later than November 1. It's important to our communities, the State of Hawaii and our nation that eligible voters exercise their right and privilege to vote. I urge you to be involved and participate.