



HB2056  
TRN  
Wednesday, January 23, 2008  
8:30 a.m.  
Room 309  
5 copies

**Hawaii Voice for a Better Future**

Committee on Transportation

Rep. Joseph M. Souki, Chair

Rep. Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair

January 22, 2008

**Re: HB2056 — Relating to Pedestrian Safety**

**In Support**

For years, Hawaii has had the highest pedestrian death rate among the elderly nationwide, a dubious “honor” that I’m sure everyone would like us to give up.

This requires that we change the conditions that are resulting in these largely avoidable deaths and injuries.

The newspapers emphasize deaths, but there is a larger number of injuries, and school children are also injured in large numbers without much press attention. Taken all together, the situation calls out for us to do something.

Last session, the Legislature passed a bill that allocated money for pedestrian safety, only to have it vetoed by the Governor. When her veto was overridden, she chose to withhold the funds that should have been spent for the benefit of the ordinary citizens of Hawaii, who, unlike the Governor, have to cross streets to get to the Safeway to shop, and have to carry their purchases back with them on a daily basis.

I am very sure that if the Governor had to cross at the Nuuanu Ave. and Vineyard Boulevard intersection, listed as one of the three most dangerous intersections by the Honolulu Weekly, she would be a supporter of pedestrian safety legislation instead of an opponent.

My intention is not to inject partisan considerations into this testimony. I would simply like to emphasize that should this bill, HB2056, become law but suffer the same fate as last year’s bill, it will have no beneficial effect.

This committee, and subsequent committees where this bill may be heard, might usefully tackle the larger problem of how to avoid a situation where the public and the Legislature strongly support a measure and indeed it becomes law, only to be meet an untimely death itself after passage. Can language be inserted that will preserve whatever funds the Legislator apportions

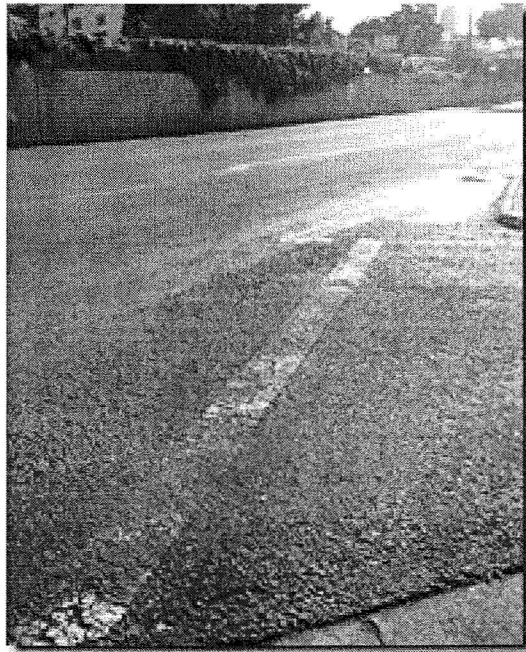


### **Pedestrian button inaccessible**

Imagine that a blind person is looking for the pedestrian button to cross the street. Or that someone in a wheelchair or scooter is thinking of getting across this street.

Not only is the button hidden behind a newspaper box, but there's another pole in front of it.

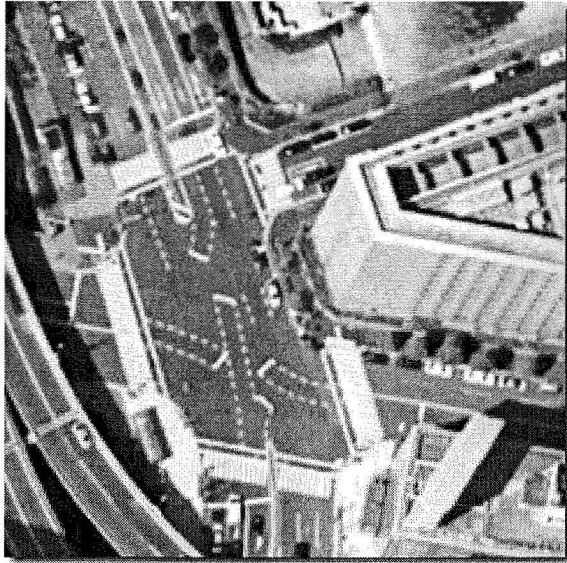
There's no zebra paint, either, in the intersection.



### **Is this a crosswalk?**

Yes, this one is a crosswalk. It's about to vanish forever.

The deck is clearly stacked against any pedestrian hoping to cross safely at this intersection.

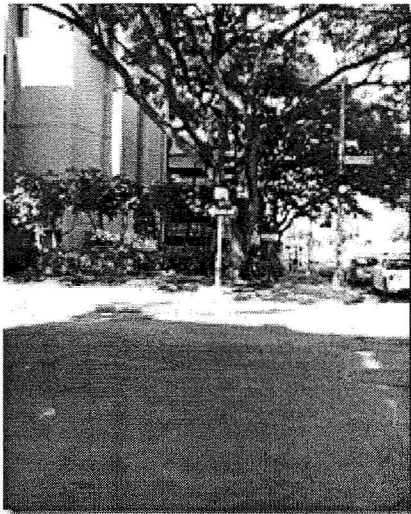


### **It's possible to keep paint on the streets for pedestrian safety**

You can visit other places and check out how well their streets are maintained, to a limited extent, using Google Earth.

Paint is easy to see. Here's a shot from high in the sky over Tokyo:

I just picked one intersection. You can choose any. Guess what: they are painted. Shiny white (if I recall correctly, they use reflective paint for added safety).

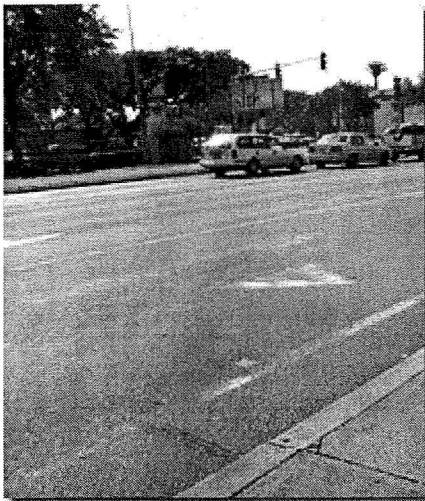


### **Is this a crosswalk?**

The crosswalk signal is hard to see, and harder to tell if it's red or white in the sunlight. This is assuming you figure out that this is a crosswalk in the first place. It's not painted.

Will cars know it is a crosswalk? Are pedestrians safe using it?

Will cars be able to stop in time at night if a pedestrian is crossing? Will someone be unnecessarily killed here?



### **Disappearing paint**

This shot is along Pali Highway. It's nothing special, just one of many thousands of examples of paint gone and not renewed. There's a little paint, or I wouldn't have a picture to show you. Give it a month or so and this will be bare.

from being withheld? The Governor's ability to withhold funds for policy reasons was created by statute, and so why not restrict it by statute. If this cannot be done, your efforts may be in vain.

Kokua Council supports this bill. We suggest that the Committee consider amending the bill to include funding for an outside expert to suggest improvements in crosswalks, intersections and other areas so that pedestrian safety will indeed be improved and deaths reduced. The Department of Transportation suggestions, for example, replacement of light bulbs with LED traffic signals, do not relate to pedestrian safety and I humbly suggest that they badly need some help with this task.

There are other issues that this bill might address and that an outside expert might assist with. Some that come to mind include:

- why crosswalks are not painted, as in other cities, for an extended length of time
- why pedestrian buttons are often hidden or curiously placed, so that those on wheelchairs or scooters or those who are blind simply cannot find or reach them
- what the criteria should be for installing traffic signals or other warning devices at intersections—at present, you often here the macabre joke that it takes so many pedestrian deaths before the City will install a traffic light. There should be an evidence-based methodology for making that decision.

This committee has the opportunity, through this bill and others, to truly make a difference by saving lives and avoiding injuries. I strongly urge you to pass this bill, and consider amendments that will both strengthen it and assure that it will be funded.

Larry Geller, President

  
Kokua Council

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**FROM: GEORGE FOX**  
**To: COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION**  
**RE: HB 2056 RELATING TO PEDESTRIAN SAFETY**  
**TIME: 8:30 a.m.**  
**PLACE: ROOM 309**  
State Capitol  
Honolulu, HI 96813

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION  
Rep. Joseph Souki, CHAIR  
Rep. Scott Y. Nishimoto, VICE CHAIR

Aloha honorable Chair, Vice chair, and members of the committee, it a rare occasion when I testify on a Bill that has a direct effect on me. I am in strong support of HB 2056 relating to Pedestrian Safety as this is one of those Bills.

I grew up in New York City playing stickball, football, and a number of other games in the street. None of us ever was hit by any vehicle! Because of this dozen years or so of experience I never thought I would be hit crossing the street. Now, however I firmly believe it is only a matter of time even though I am extremely careful and am adamant about obeying all the rules/laws.

There are many intersections where the crosswalk stripes do not line up with the curb cuts. The worst intersection I am aware of is Bethel Street at Beretania. The curb cut is about 30, or more, feet from the crosswalk stripes and this weekend the walk light wasn't working. The curb cut on Smith Street at Beretania was dug up last week and left that way over the 3 day weekend meaning that a disabled person has to notice this before crossing or they have to turn around in the street and return to the other side of Smith

Street. Then they are forced to cross Beretania twice to get back on the side they need to be on.

Moreover, at many intersections the stripes are not painted on the street they are white rubber strips. Crossing on these strips is like riding on a wash board. Wheelchairs do not have springs or shock absorbers so crossing on these strips is an extremely rough ride. Finally, on most intersections the crosswalk buttons are located for the convenience of the installers and not disabled persons and not the disabled persons who will be using them. Just another slight inconvenience.

After a few days experience in a wheelchair it becomes apparent that no disabled person was involved with the design of any intersection. Suffice it to say that HB 2056 could be a lifesaver for me and I strongly support passage. I am available to answer any questions you my have.

Mahalo,

George Fox