

Date: 02/11/2009

Committee: House Education

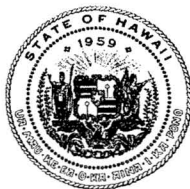
Department: Education

Person Testifying: Patricia Hamamoto, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB 0983 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Requires the director of transportation to conduct a statewide pupil travel evaluation to study how students get to school and to use that information to award federal grants for school-based workshops and community planning that will reduce traffic congestion, encourage walking and bicycling, and increase health and safety. Requires the director of transportation to streamline the grant application process. Requires annual reports.

Department's Position: The Department of Education defers to the Department of Transportation regarding this bill. The Department of Education is already working with the Department of Transportation to conduct pupil travel evaluations at select schools. The Department will continue to give its full support and cooperation to the Department of Transportation.



Deputy Directors
MICHAEL D. FORMBY
FRANCIS PAUL KEENO
BRIAN H. SEKIGUCHI
JIRO A. SUMADA

IN REPLY REFER TO:

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
869 PUNCHBOWL STREET
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-5097

February 11, 2009

TESTIMONY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

HOUSE BILL NO. 983

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

House Bill No. 983 requires the director of transportation to conduct a statewide pupil travel evaluation to study how students get to school and to use that information to award federal grants for school-based workshops and community planning that will reduce traffic congestion, encourage walking and bicycling, and increase health and safety.

The Department of Transportation (DOT) understands the intent of this bill but must respectfully **oppose it**.

The DOT supports the bill's objective to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety for our school children. However, the bill directly conflicts with the provisions of the federal Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program under the current federal authorization. Use of these SRTS funds for Hawaii is contingent on following the federal regulations and national criteria for this program.

SRTS is a federal grant program with the mission of improving the health of our children by encouraging walking and bicycling to school. The program awards Hawaii \$1,000,000.00 annually for this program. SRTS is not intended to be used by Hawaii DOT to implement its own priorities in school safety. Instead, this reimbursable federal grant program is intended for schools, agencies, non-profits, and communities to submit grant proposals for improvements they determine to be priority. The requirements prescribed for DOT in this legislation for evaluation are already a current requirement for grant request proposers under the federal regulations. This bill may threaten DOT's ability to qualify for the federal SRTS program.

The SRTS program is also not intended to reduce congestion around schools nor is it intended to improve safety of those commuting in cars or buses. For these reasons, these aspects are not eligible for SRTS funds.

In addition, any study of student commute patterns is most appropriately done by the Department of Education or the counties. Regional circulation or congestion within a small radius is not the mission or responsibility of the state Department of Transportation, but instead the responsibility of each respective county. Also, traffic calming devices are not appropriate on higher speed state highway facilities, but are more appropriate on surface streets in and around residential neighborhoods. Traffic calming devices on state highway facilities actually increase the safety hazards. The other aspects being proposed are also more intimately tied to the Department of Education such as access to parents and observations immediately surrounding schools.