

Date: 02/27/2009

Committee: House Finance

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Patricia Hamamoto, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB 0983(HSCR274) 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.

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February 27, 2009

TESTIMONY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
HOUSE BILL NO. 983
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

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. We have also discussed this bill with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and FHWA has indicated that the studies being requested by this initiative are not eligible for SRTS funds or any other FHWA 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.



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TO: Representative Marcus R. Oshiro, Chair
Representative Marilyn B. Lee, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Mitchell S. Nakagawa, Executive Director

HEARING DATE: Friday, February 27, 2009, 10:00am

SUBJECT: Support for HB0983

The Hawaii Bicycling League (HBL) supports HB0983 and the aim to create safe, healthy options for families to travel to school. A membership organization established in 1975, HBL has managed BikeEd Hawai'i for 22 years, reaching more than 84,000 children in public schools on O'ahu with the 4th grade bicycle education program.

Safe Routes to School represents an opportunity to develop solid public-private partnerships that will result in the creation of safe streets, sidewalks and facilities to encourage all students to bicycle and walk, and to raise awareness and develop skills that will keep our students healthy and safe.

So that more non-profits, communities, and schools can apply for projects to provide safe bike and pedestrian access and programs to encourage biking and walking, HBL recommends that:

- **Section 3 (b):** Organizations that have received non-infrastructure and pending infrastructure grants be consulted in revising the application and contractual processes.

HBL also continues to seek an accounting of Safe Routes to School funds. We were surprised to learn in the bill that nearly \$2,000,000 has been expended, with the state appointing an interim Coordinator to administer the program in 2007.

Thank you for your attention and the opportunity to testify.



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February 25, 2009

Testimony in Support of HB983

House Finance Committee

Representative Marcus Oshiro, Chair

Representative Marilyn Lee, Vice Chair

Friday, February 27th, 2008 10:00AM; Conference Room 308

Aloha Representatives Oshiro, Lee and members of the Committee:

We are submitting testimony in support of HB983, regarding Hawaii's Safe Routes to School Program.

We feel strongly, as the majority's endorsement reflects, that Safe Routes to School provides a comprehensive framework for addressing many of our community's most pressing needs in terms of health, safety and quality of life.

Transportation studies and mapping are basic tools for every school to assess their pedestrian and bicycle environments and then build a safe routes to school program around those specific needs.

We would like to see language in the bill that reflects a multi-agency approach to safe routes to school that involves DOE and DOH as partners. Safe Routes to School is by its nature multi-disciplinary and will require leadership from these other agencies to implement well.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony.

TO: Chair Marcus Oshiro
Vice Chair Marilyn Lee
Members of the Committee on Transportation

DATE: Wednesday, February 25, 2009

FROM: Natalie Iwasa
aka Bicycle Mom
1331 Lunalilo Home Road
Honolulu, HI 96825
808-395-3233

HEARING: 10 a.m. Friday, February 27, 2009

SUBJECT: HB 983 - Relating to Education (Safe Routes to School)

Aloha Representatives,

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. My previous testimony on HB 983, Relating to Education (Safe Routes to School), was in support with amendment. Unfortunately, I find it necessary at this time to oppose this bill. This was a difficult decision for me because of the bicycle advocacy work I've done over the past several years and the role I've had with respect to Safe Routes to School (SR2S). In October 2007 I started the first, and currently only, Bike School Bus on Oahu. In September 2008 I started the first, and as far as I know, only Walking School Bus, on Oahu. The Bike and Walking School Buses are the main components of the SR2S program.

While I am excited this topic has come before the legislature, there are several issues that in my opinion must be addressed in this bill in order to make the best use of the funds available to us. This bill does not take into account the valuable work already done by the Department of Health (DOH). Nor does it consider coordinated efforts needed by the Department of Transportation (DOT), Department of Education (DOE), DOH and various stakeholders interested in making this program successful.

In addition, this bill appears to mandate minimum funds be awarded to every school for funding and planning purposes. While the intent of Section 3(a) is admirable, it does not take into account the fact that Hawaii currently does not have enough people with the expertise to conduct these workshops. Allocating funds to each school may also not be the most efficient use of the non-infrastructure funds available under the program as it does not consider that several schools in a particular area may be able to have one workshop together.