

Safe Routes to Schools Advisory Committee

August 26, 2025

10:00-11:00 AM

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Meeting Minutes

I. Call to Order, Roll Call

Chair Abbey Seitz called the meeting to order at 10:01 am and conducted a roll call of committee members and confirmed a quorum was present.

Member requirement	Appointment detail(s)	Name	Present?
One member to be appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives	House of Representatives appointee, vice chair	Kathleen Rooney	Y
One member to be appointed by the president of the senate	Senate appointee, chair for 2025-2026	Abbey Seitz	Y
The department of transportation's safe routes to school program coordinator		Tara Lucas	Y
The deputy director of the department of transportation's highways division		Robin Shishido	Y
One member representing the physical activity and nutrition section of the department of health's chronic disease prevention and health promotion division		Heidi Hansen-Smith, official designee	Y
The superintendent of education		Audrey Hidano, official designee	N
The co-chair of the Hawai'i climate change mitigation and adaptation commission	Chairperson, Department of Land and Natural Resources	Luke Sarvis, official designee	N
The co-chair of the Hawai'i climate change mitigation and adaptation commission	Director, Office of Planning and Sustainable Development	Leah Laramée, official designee	N
One member representing the Hawai'i state energy office		Shana Merrifield for Chris Yunker, official designee	Y
One member representing the Hawai'i state council on developmental disabilities		Sierra Whiteside	N
One member representing each county agency with jurisdiction over transportation	City and County of Honolulu	Yamato Sasaki, official designee	Y
	County of Hawai'i	Melanie DeMello for Jesse Domian, official designee	Y
	County of Kaua'i	Keith Hatcher, official designee	Y

	County of Maui	Kurt Watanabe, official designee	N
One member representing an organization with a focus on bicycling	Appointed by the governor, pursuant to section 26-34, for a three-year term	Thomas Noyes	Y
One member representing an organization with a focus on senior citizens and their families	Appointed by the governor, pursuant to section 26-34, for a three-year term	James Burke	Y
One member representing an organization that understands the ways families with young children navigate through the State	Appointed by the governor, pursuant to section 26-34, for a three-year term	Pending	N
One member representing an organization with a focus on public health and mobility	Appointed by the governor, pursuant to section 26-34, for a three-year term	Jessica Thompson	N
One member representing an organization with a focus on transportation equity and mobility	Appointed by the governor, pursuant to section 26-34, for a three-year term	Jeanne Torres	N
The chair of representatives standing committee with primary jurisdiction over transportation	Senate, serving as non-voting, ex-officio member	Senator Chris Lee	N
The chair of the senate standing committee with primary jurisdiction over transportation	House of Representatives, serving as non-voting, ex-officio member	Dorene Eddy for Representative Darius Kila	Y

Identified Guests – Kevin Richardson and Jose Vega (Attorney General’s Office); Fa‘alepo Unutoa [Hawai‘i Department of Transportation (HDOT)]; Sarah Hipp and Justin Menina (Hawai‘i Department of Health); Leigh Ann Lopez (Hawaii Public Health Institute); Eduardo Hernandez (Hawaii Bicycling League), Matthew Leonard; Michael Moule (County of Kaua‘i); Paul Strauss; Ke‘ōpū Reelitz (Papa Ola Lokahi); and Aldric Ulep.

II. Old Business – None

III. Presentation: Safe Routes to School in Ka‘ū by Treena Becker, PhD, University of Hawai‘i, Center on Aging

Dr. Becker summarized Safe Routes to School research she completed on the Big Island, including Ocean View Estates and on Lahaina post-wildfires. These communities face a variety of economic needs/issues, and also lack safe transportation options for keiki. In comparison to urban areas (like O‘ahu), which often offer multiple transportation modes, Dr. Becker noted that rural transportation considerations are commonly overlooked. These challenges include:

- Children depend on school buses/cars.

- Limited public transportation options.
- Safety concerns about long bus rides.
- Lack of infrastructure for walking/cycling.
- Critical importance of transportation beyond education (food access, social interaction).
- Need to consider the entire household's transportation needs.

She offered key recommendations for the Committee: 1) Rethink Safe Routes to School in rural contexts; 2) Consider broader impacts of transportation on children's lives; and 3) Plan for potential disruptions like natural disasters. Dr. Becker's presentation emphasized the complex transportation challenges faced by children in Hawai'i, highlighting the need for nuanced, location-specific approaches to Safe Routes to School.

IV. New Business

a. Submitting comments for [HDOT's Energy Security & Waste Reduction Plan](#).

The Committee agreed to draft a letter of support that can be reviewed and approved at the September meeting.

b. Discussion on approach to meeting the law's mandate.

The Committee discussed updates regarding the initial approved SRTS project and the funding process. HDOT is coordinating with the counties to get the specific information such as title, scope, and location maps for approved projects. It was noted that the previous PIG is no longer active but that the lessons learned and documenting the project ranking process should be considered. Some options include a standing subcommittee, future/non-governmental project sponsors, a limited/annual call for projects, etc. Some challenges were also noted such as procurement law complexities, limited resources for detailed project evaluation, and the need for technical support in the project selection process. Overall, the discussion emphasized the need for a transparent, systematic approach to project funding while recognizing the current limitations and future opportunities for Safe Routes to School project selection.

V. Open Forum: Invitation to interested members of the public to be heard on matters not included on the agenda

James Rodrigue from the Hawai'i State Council on Developmental Disabilities requested clarification about meeting attendance and ability to be the designee, noting specific accessibility challenges. Justin Medina shared details about the "Week Without Driving" event in which Anna Zivarts will be speaking on Thursday, September 25th. Chair Seitz noted that the September meeting will be held at 2pm to accommodate the upcoming speaker's time zone.

VI. Announcements

VII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 11:13 AM