

Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) Advisory Committee

February 24th, 2026

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 10:03 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,	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		Mel Chung for 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 Hawaii climate change mitigation and adaptation commission	Chairperson, Department of Land and Natural Resources	Luke Sarvis, official designee	Y
The co-chair of the Hawaii climate change mitigation and adaptation commission	Director, Office of Planning and Sustainable Development	Leah Laramée, official designee	N
One member representing the Hawaii state energy office		Nicole Cernohorsky for Chris Yunker, official designee	Y
One member representing the Hawaii 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 Hawaii	Jesse Domian, official designee	Y
	County of Kauai	Keith Hatcher, official designee	N

	County of Maui	Kurt Watanabe, official designee	Y
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	Y
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 the senate standing committee with primary jurisdiction over transportation	Senate, serving as non-voting, ex-officio member	Senator Lorraine Inoye	N
The chair of representatives standing committee with primary jurisdiction over transportation	House of Representatives, serving as non-voting, ex-officio member	Representative Darius Kila	N

Identified Guests – Kevin Richardson and Jose Vega (Attorney General’s Office); Po Unutoa and Ignacio Filippini (Hawai‘i Department of Transportation); Lauren Loor and Patti Hatzistavakis (Hawai‘i Public Health Institute); Eduardo Hernandez (Hawaii Bicycling League); Anna Haney [Maui Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)]; Amy Ford-Wagner (Federal Highway Administration; and Erin Obwald (Safe 2 School, Inc.)

II. Old Business

Action to approve, in part, the Hawai‘i Department of Transportation (HDOT) funding request dated October 6th, 2025, (see additional details provided on November 3, 2025). The committee approves the dispersal of \$500,000.00 of Safe Routes to School (SRTS) special fund monies, to cover labor costs for the HDOT SRTS Coordinator and other HDOT staff related to the SRTS program. Approval of funding shall be on a conditional basis, subject to the following terms:

- Dispersal of funding shall occur over a five-year period, beginning in FY 2025–26 and ending in FY 2029–30.
- The HDOT SRTS Coordinator shall provide monthly updates to the SRTS Advisory Committee on program activities and use of Special Fund monies. These updates shall include relevant activities identified in the HDOT SRTS Coordinator scope of work, including but not limited to: participation in walk audits, the development of SRTS plans on state-owned facilities, and additional assistance provided to counties and communities.
- The HDOT SRTS Coordinator, in coordination with other HDOT staff, shall draft and finalize the required SRTS Report to the Legislature.
- The HDOT SRTS Coordinator, in coordination with other HDOT staff, shall draft and finalize minutes for all monthly SRTS Advisory Committee meetings.
- The HDOT SRTS Coordinator, in coordination with other HDOT staff, shall take steps to ensure that actions approved by the SRTS Advisory Committee are undertaken and/or processed within three (3) months of approval.
- SRTS Special Fund monies may be used only if grant funds are unavailable or insufficient, and shall supplement, not supplant, other funding sources.
- Any increases in staff salary or benefits shall be covered exclusively by HDOT.

Chair Seitz reviewed the committee that at the last meeting the committee voted to approve use of Safe Routes to School funds to cover the funds surcharge and that the current item concerned the separate HDOT funding request related to staff expenses, including the SRTS Coordinator position. HDOT representatives outlined several concerns with the draft language.

One concern is that the action appears to limit funding to labor costs, but excludes non-labor costs such as travel for walk audits or only apply to salaried costs. Deputy AG Richardson suggested the easiest fix would be to delete the word “labor” so the funds can cover both labor and non-labor expenses. The group generally agreed this would be an acceptable revision.

Another was the structure and timing of the funds over five years. HDOT asked if the monies had a hard cap at \$100,000/year and if/when HDOT could seek additional funds, if needed given the original request was higher. It was clarified that the \$500,000 figure and five years was a planning tool to match the earlier report language, not a rigid \$100,000-per-year cap. The intent is to create flexibility for HDOT to use the \$500,000 as needed for supportive SRTS staff and program activities across the state, but also fairness across all the positions. HDOT could return to the committee for additional funding in the future, though the current committee could not bind future committees’ decisions. HDOT also asked for confirmation that HDOT could come back to the committee once funds are used; it was generally affirmed this would be reasonable, though likely not annually, but perhaps in the 3–5 year range or after the plan is underway or a

new scope of work for the coordinator position is developed. Other members expressed concerns if other safeguards were not put in place regarding fast spend-down or non-SRTS related activities.

The Committee Chair confirmed that monthly updates meant brief verbal updates and not written reports.

HDOT also expressed concerns about the report to legislature responsibility and that HRS assigns that to the Committee. It was discussed that although the Committee is responsible, it is also not realistic to have volunteer committee members do this work year over year. The intent is that staff resources (HDOT or consultants) would provide that support. There was concern that if the condition was removed from the SRTS position funding that it might result in no clear, durable assignment to ensure that the report is produced. It was recommended that the Committee recommend that this be added to the Consultant's scope of work as well, but also remain in the funding request conditions. .

Due to the number and complexity of concerns raised, Chair Seitz recommended tabling the action to update the voting language and would work on updating accordingly with HDOT.

III. New Business - Discussion on approach to meeting the law's mandate (plan, people, and projects)

- Plan - HDOT reported that it is currently waiting to receive financial information from the selected consultant to proceed with fee acceptance to initiate the plan.
- People – Chair Seitz asked for updates on staffing, specifically the County of Hawai'i position that the committee previously approved funding for in October. HDOT is working on getting Jesse the requested letter and it is currently at the Attorney General's office for review.
- Projects - The Committee had received notice that Kaua'i's project funding was approved the prior month. HDOT has a revised Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) template, which has been sent to all counties and is undergoing review. When those are ready, HDOT will proceed with drafting the specific IGAs. For its own project, HDOT has opened a charge code their approved project.
- 2026 Legislative Session – Chair Seitz summarized relevant bills for the Committee, including HB 2454 on Safe Routes to School Program Governance & Authority which would affect the Committee's future work, specifically understanding in what ways HDOT was restrained from using the funds for its own projects and how it would affect the earlier staff funding request. Two other measures were also mentioned: SB 3234 / HB 2415 that would provide funding to HDOT to install crosswalks and raised crosswalks near schools; and HB 1879 that would authorize HDOT to establish a subsidized transit program for youth under 18

IV. Presentation - Best Practices in Crossing Guard Programs by Erin Obwalk, with Safe 2 School, Inc.

Erin Obwald, Executive Director of Safe to School in Fresno, California, presented on best practices for community-based crossing guard programs. She explained that Safe to School is a vendor to two school districts (Fresno Unified and Parlier Unified), running a largely volunteer crossing guard program that engages parents, school staff, community members, high school and college students, and soon veterans. The organization handles recruitment, background checks, training, and coordination with schools, the city, and police to address both behavior (enforcement, education) and infrastructure (crosswalks, curb painting, speed feedback signs). Erin described a high school partnership where students earn service hours and recognition by serving as crossing guards, a new K–1 classroom safety curriculum delivered especially in Community Schools, and an emerging traffic calming art program that uses street murals near schools to increase driver yielding and beautify neighborhoods. She emphasized that this multi-generational, locally rooted model both improves safety around schools and builds community ownership of Safe Routes to School efforts.

V. Open Forum: Invitation to interested members of the public to be heard on matters not included on the agenda – None.

IV. Announcements – None.

V. Adjournment at 11:07 AM