

ENSURING “SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL” THROUGHOUT HAWAII

One in five Hawai'i public school students is chronically absent from school for many reasons, including lack of transportation. The Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program, created through Act 244 (SLH 2023), as codified in the Statewide Traffic Code (HRS Chapter 291C), removes barriers for students to fully participate in civic, academic and community life.

Request

Support the Hawai'i Department of Transportation's budget request to:

- Expend up to \$13 million from the Safe Routes to School Special Fund in fiscal year 2025-26 for worthy projects in communities across the state (in coordination with the Safe Routes to School Advisory Committee).
- Access future surcharge revenues deposited into the Special Fund, not to exceed \$500,000 annually.

Purpose

Provide a necessary budgetary process mechanism to optimize the SRTS Program's implementation, while simplifying the program, re-engaging community stakeholders, prioritizing high-impact projects and, most importantly, saving lives.

Benefits

- **Safer students** – SRTS addresses traffic dangers and improves safety for students, resulting in a 44–75% decline in pedestrian injury in SRTS school zones.
- **Reduced student absences and tardiness** – Lack of transportation can be a barrier to getting to school on time or at all, especially for students in disadvantaged communities. Studies suggest improved attendance rates of up to 2% at participating schools.
- **More students walking and bicycling to school** – Studies have shown an increase in walking and biking to school through SRTS and programs anywhere from 18–37%, depending on the projects implemented. For each year of SRTS programs, walking and bicycling increase by 5%.

(Source: <https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/safe-routes-school/101/benefits>)



Why Ulupono Supports Safe Routes to School

Challenge: High transportation costs for Hawai’i households and school districts

SRTS Impact: Low-cost options for keiki to get to and from school.

- Households could save up to \$16,200 per year if they shed one vehicle
- School bus programs cost more than \$6.3 million per year

Challenge: Neighborhoods becoming increasingly clogged by traffic. In urban Honolulu, up to 50% of all trips are five miles or less, many of which may be school or student-related travel.

SRTS Impact: Reduced traffic congestion by boosting the number of students walking and bicycling.

Challenge: Health issues due to inactivity and more air pollution caused by heavy volume of cars on roads.

SRTS Impact: Children who walk or bike to school will get more physical activity, which can lead to improved brain activity and decrease in the risk of chronic diseases. Also, fewer cars on the road can improve the air quality.



Did You Know?

SRTS can play an integral part of State’s work in fulfillment of the Navahine + HDOT settlement, in which HDOT committed to build out the active transportation and transit network within 5 years – much of which will serve school travel. Deliberately and explicitly aligning HDOT’s work with both Navahine and SRTS would be mutually beneficial.

% Population within 1 mile of a Hawai’i Public School							
	O’AHU	HAWAI’I	MAUI	KAUA’I	LANA’I	MOLOKAI	STATEWIDE
# of HIDOE schools	182	56	27	20	1	6	292
Population	918,304	170,572	149,835	66,321	2,813	6,264	1,314,727
Residential population within 1 mile of a HIDOE school	800,936	72,886	96,424	38,411	2,650	2,420	1,013,727
% of population within 1 mile	87%	43%	64%	58%	94%	39%	77%

Based on sketch analysis done in Urban Footprint by Ulupono Initiative; excludes private/charter schools. Uses 2022 5-year American Community Survey and Hawai’i Department of Education Public School Locations (July 2023).

Examples of Projects

- Kamehameha Highway – Shoulder Bikeway from Kuahelani Avenue to Meheula Parkway (\$2,970,679)
- Wilikina Drive – Shoulder Bikeway from Kunia Road to Kamehameha Highway, Central O’ahu (\$2,560,578)
- Kamehameha Highway – Shared-use path/sidewalk from Meheula Parkway to Lanikuhana (\$1,500,00 – \$2,500,000)
- Kamehameha Highway – Shoulder Bikeway from Waipio Uka Boulevard/CORP to Connector to Waipahu Street (\$1,552,670)
- Farrington Avenue at Molokai High School – Dedicated pedestrian facility from Kalae Highway to Molokai High School for children to walk/bike to school (\$465,000)
- Haleakala Highway – Shared-use path/sidewalk along Kula Highway and Haleakala Highway between Aapueo Parkway and Makawao Avenue (\$440,000)