

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT OF OPERATIONS

August 29, 2024

TO: The Honorable Roy Takumi
Chairperson, Board of Education

FROM: Randolph G. Moore /s/Randolph G. Moore
Deputy Superintendent for Operations

SUBJECT: Department Updates on Student Transportation

1. BACKGROUND

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) provides bus service for students with disabilities receiving transportation as part of their Individualized Education Program, as well as bus service in neighborhoods around the islands, to ensure access to educational opportunities for Hawaii's students.

On August 1, 2024, the Department announced the temporary suspension of 108 bus routes because of bus contractors' ongoing shortage of school bus drivers with the required commercial driver's licenses. This suspension affected nearly 2,900 students who signed up for bus transportation. Bus routes for students receiving transportation as part of their special education services are not impacted.

Hawaii's contractors' school bus driver shortages are part of broader workforce shortages experienced locally and nationally. An August 15, 2024 *Education Week* article identified Hawaii among the school districts that are experiencing shortages.

2. UPDATE

The attached presentation provides information about the student transportation situation. The presentation includes information about actions that have been taken to reinstate bus routes, including the Governor's issuance of an emergency proclamation relating to school bus services. The presentation also includes information about routes that have been restored; as of August 22, 2024, 63 bus routes were restored.

RGM:toc
Attachment



HAWAII STATE

Department of Education

Agenda Item II:

Department updates on student transportation

Hawai'i State Board of Education
Special Meeting
August 29, 2024

Randolph Moore, *Deputy Superintendent*

Megan Omura, *Administrator, Student Transportation Services*

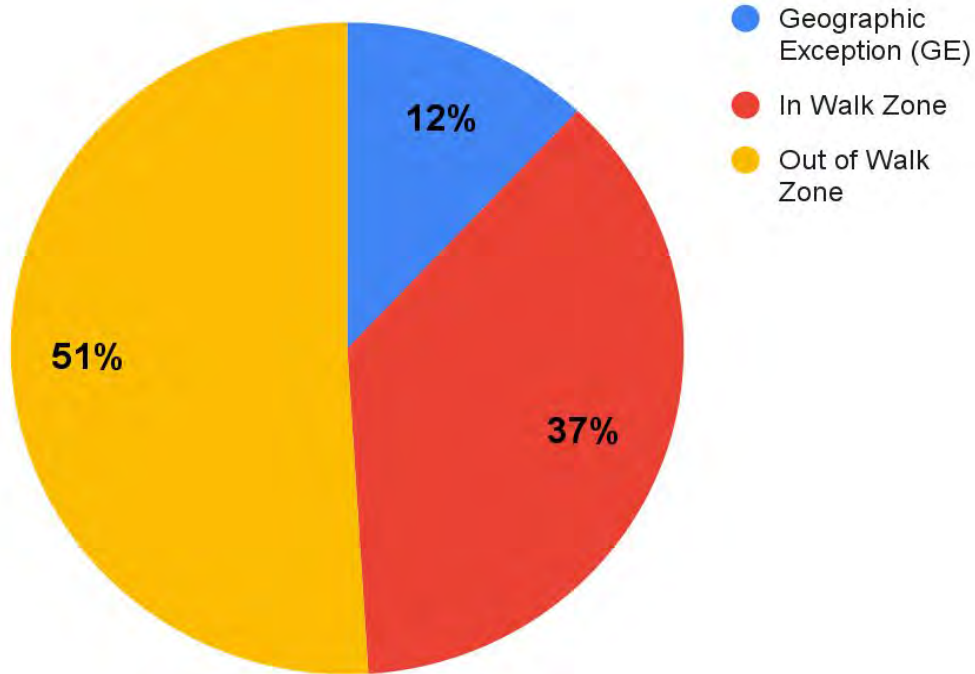


Student transportation guidelines

- **Federal 34 CFR 104.33(c)(2)**
Requires transportation for special education
- **Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) §302A-406**
State law for Regular Education transportation is discretionary
 - (a) The Department may provide suitable transportation to and from school and for educational field trips for all children in grades kindergarten to twelve and in special education classes. The department shall adopt policies, procedures, and programs as it deems necessary to provide suitable transportation.
- **Hawai'i Administrative Rules (HAR) §8-27-1**
Department administrative rules require transportation in line with federal law
 - (d) Transportation may be provided to students during the school year, as determined by the Department (§8-27-4)



Who qualifies for student transportation

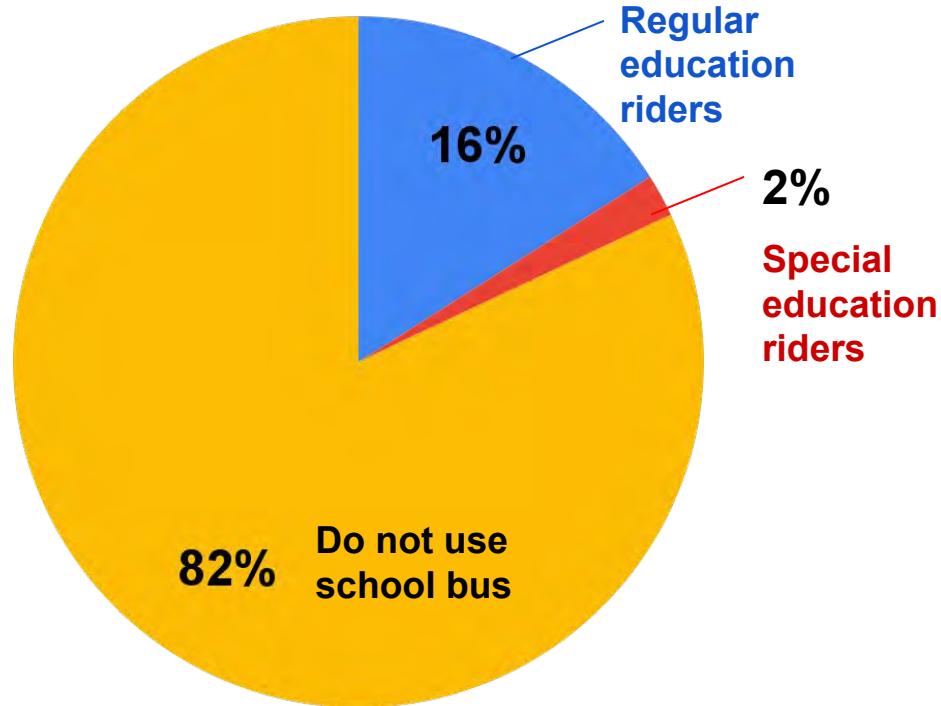


Hawai'i Administrative Rules (HAR) § 8-27-4,5

- Elementary students who reside a mile or more from school in their public school attendance area.
- Secondary students who reside 1.5 miles or more from school in their public school attendance area.



Student ridership breakdown SY 2023-2024



Transportation	Students
Regular education school bus - 16%	25,906
Special education school bus - 2%	3,129
Total	29,035
Do not use school bus service - 82%	138,612

**No transportation eligibility requirement for EXPRESS



Student transportation budget, SY 2024-25

Revenues

Legislative appropriation	\$85.4 million
Fare collections	\$2.2 million
Total	\$87.6 million

Cost per student rider

Regular ed	\$1,632
Special ed	\$13,578

Expenses

Bus contracts	
Regular education	\$42.3 million
Special education	\$43.0 million
Mileage, bus passes	\$2.2 million
Administrative	\$3.1 million
Total	\$90.6 million
Net surplus (deficit)	(\$3.0 million)



New bus contract period

- New contract period (2024-31)
- Organized by 15 complex areas
- All islands (excluding Molokai) experiencing contractor shifts
- Contractor adjustments will impact driver availability on every island (except Molokai)



School bus at Kapolei Middle School.

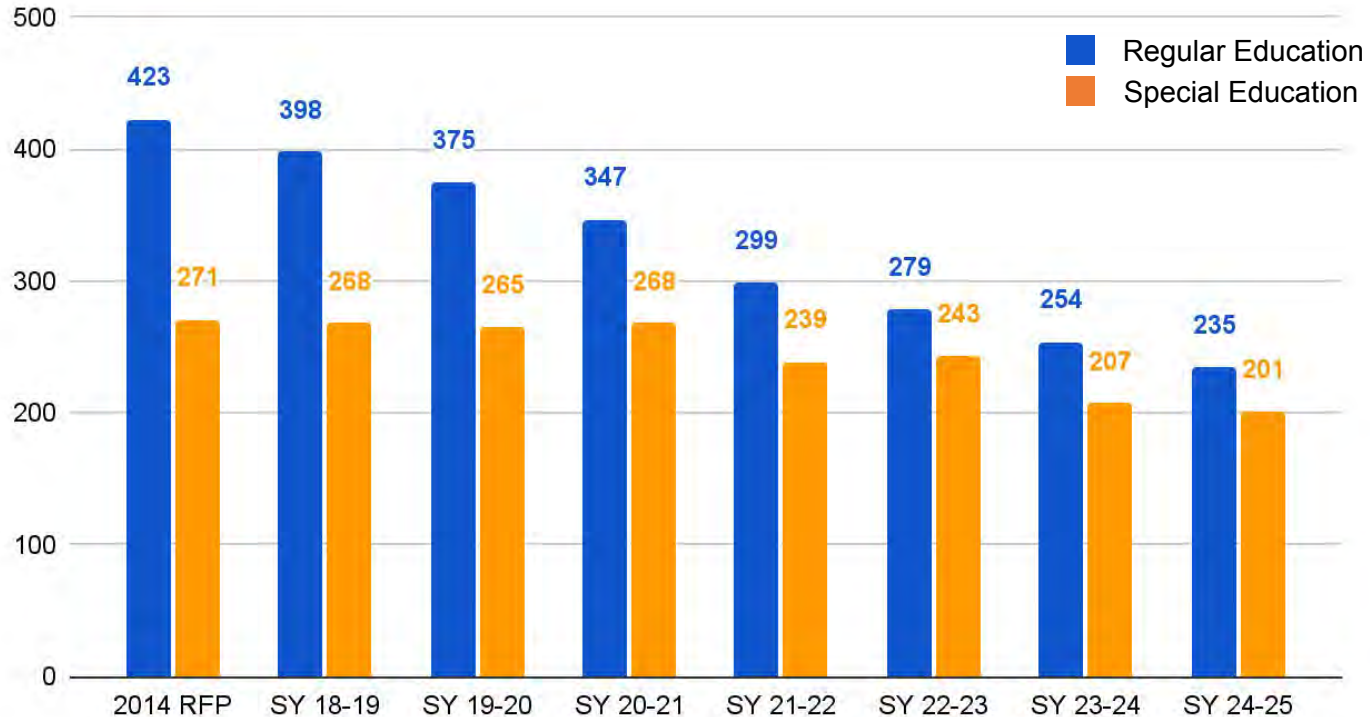


Number of buses under current contracts

	Regular education	Special education	Total	No. of Contractors
Kaua'i	45	16	61	2
O'ahu	143	179	322	2
Molokai	15	4	19	3
Maui	83	41	124	2
Hawai'i Island	87	54	141	2
	373	294	667	



Historical driver trend





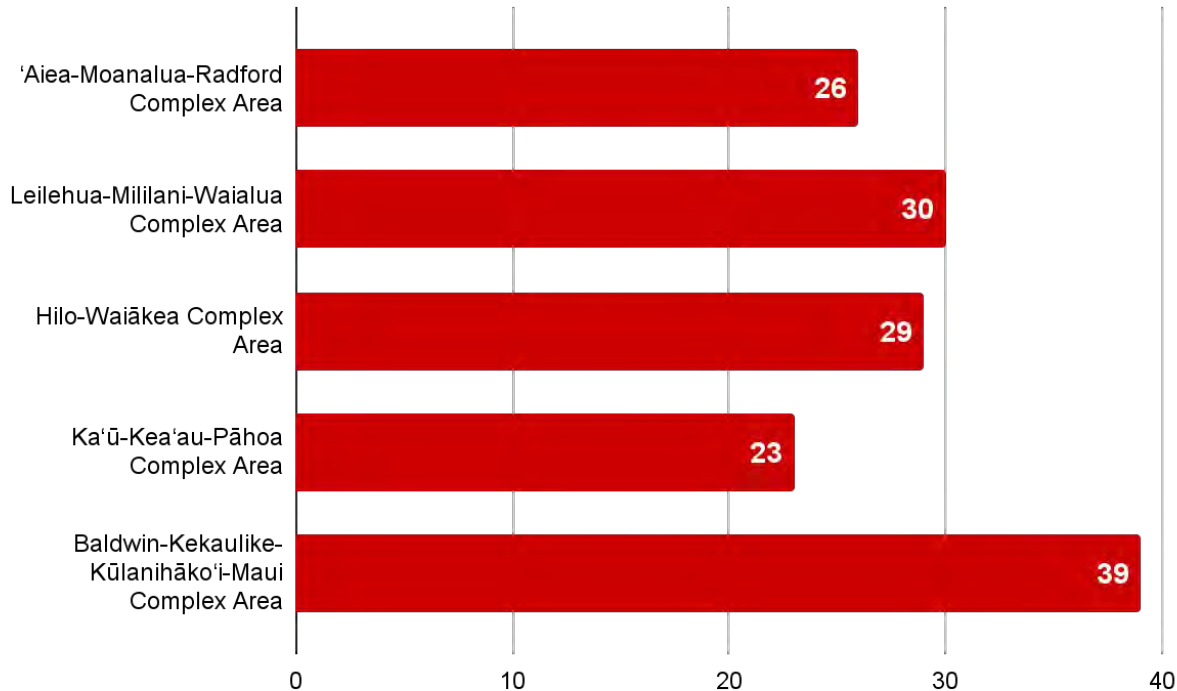
Current situation

- Bus contractors kept us informed of driver availability/shortages but thought they could be adequately staffed by the start of school short of drivers.
- We determined on July 30 (O'ahu and Hawai'i Island) and Aug. 2 (Maui) that some bus routes could not be served.
- Factors considered in determining which bus routes to suspend:
 - Special education students must be served.
 - Availability of public transit.
 - School level – elementary, middle, high.
 - Population demographics.
- Alternatives offered:
 - Free bus passes on O'ahu for middle and high school students. County buses are already free for students on Maui and Hawai'i Island.
 - Parent mileage reimbursement.
 - Distance learning options.



Routes temporarily suspended

Aug. 1 & 2 announcements, effective Aug. 5



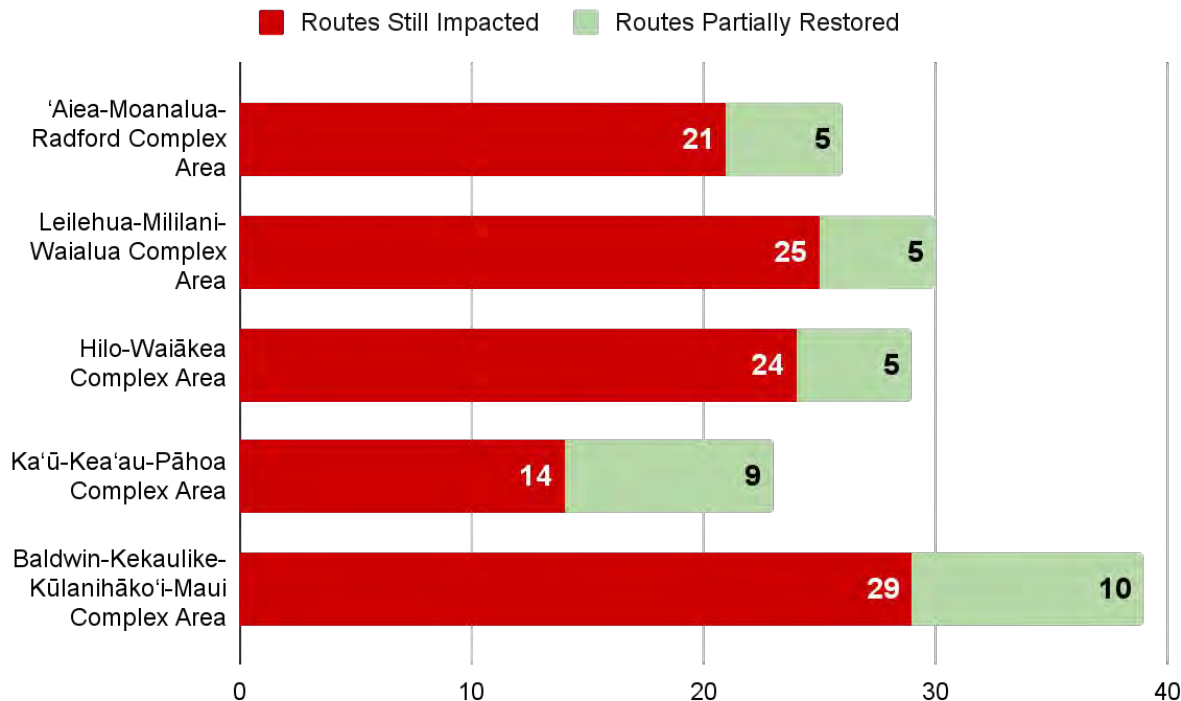
Approximate number of
students affected

3,720



Routes impacted

Aug. 8 announcement, effective Aug. 12



Approximate number of students
with service restored

1,200

Number of routes restored

34



Routes impacted

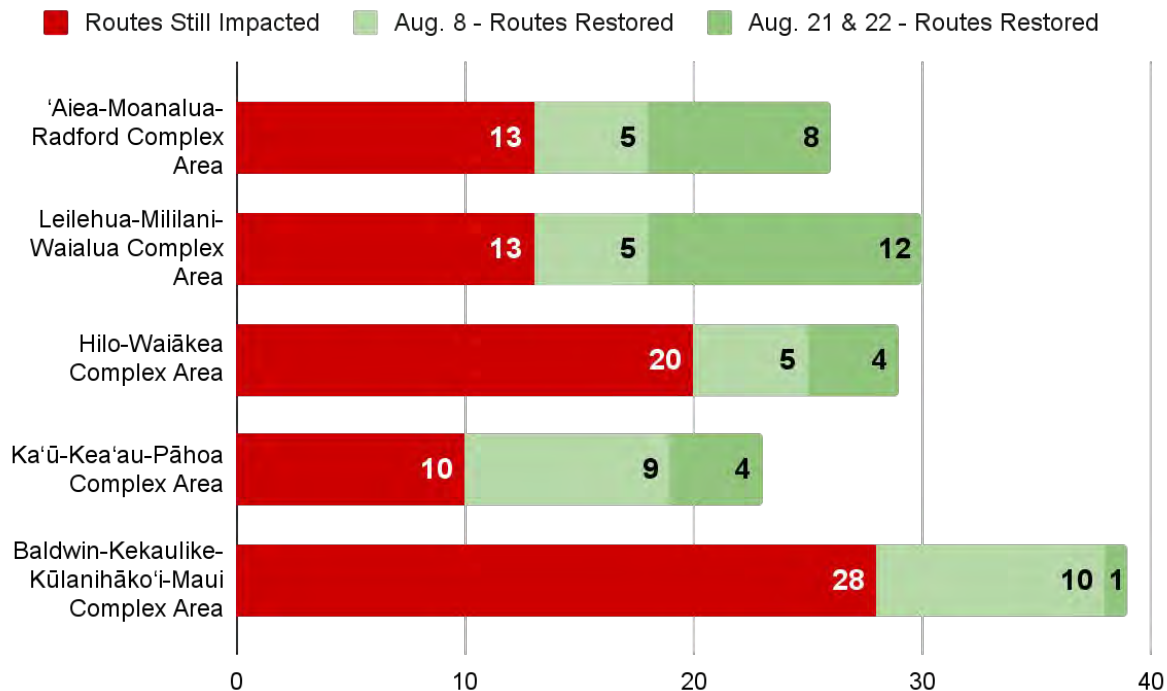
Aug. 21 & 22 announcements, effective Aug. 26

Approximate total number of students with service restored

2,004

Total number of routes restored

63





Governor's emergency proclamation

- Allowed the Department to contract directly with Roberts.
- Allowed Ground Transport to subcontract with tour bus operators.
- Allowed bus contractors to utilize non S-endorsed CDL drivers to operate big school buses.
- Enabled the Department to ask Hawai'i National Guard for assistance.
- Enabled the Department to use school-owned small buses for home-school-home transportation.
- Enabled Maui Economic Opportunity to consider assisting us.



External communications for bus updates

- **Immediate notification for route restoration**
 - Direct notification to impacted families via school mass messaging platforms (robocalls, text, emails).
 - Schools to post updates to website or social media if messaging amplification is required.
- **Broader state-level updates**
 - Updates to impacted families will be communicated as they occur via parent letters, news releases, Department website updates, and Department social media (Facebook, X, Instagram) updates.
 - Schools to post messaging to website and social media.
- **Ongoing support**
 - Dedicated school transportation hotline has been established for ongoing questions and assistance.



How to minimize recurrence of situation

- Department initiated after-action review: What happened, why, what can we do better?
- Create a 0.75 full-time employee school position so school employees can also work as bus drivers.
- Look at staggered school start times.
- Work with the counties to optimize county bus service for students.
- Make available a parent carpool app.



Acknowledgements and mahalo

- Parents, students, school staff, complex area staff, student transportation staff.
- Governor for the emergency proclamation.
- Legislators for good questions and helpful advice.
- Roberts and Polynesian Adventure for helping to fill some of the pukas.
- County mayors and transportation officials.
- Others, in advance, who are going to be part of the solution.