

State Representative Josh Green's Commitment to Improving Road Safety

In the past several months we in West Hawaii have witnessed a series of deadly traffic accidents that have shocked and saddened our community. We have lost some of our best.

Our recent losses have painfully reminded us that both our roads and current safety measures in West Hawaii are inadequate for a community our size, which continues to grow at one of the fastest rates in the state.

With the addition of the super-ferry in 2007 and many other new developments on the way, we can expect much heavier use of our roads and, if nothing is done now, more tragic accidents.

Simply put, we have too many cars traveling on too few roads, with too few safety measures in place to prevent accidents.

As your State Representative, I am committed to doing everything in my power to improve our roads and safety measures both immediately and in the years to come as our community continues to grow.

The tragedies in West Hawaii opened all of our eyes and prompted me to gather a panel of traffic and safety experts together on March 5th to speak with our community and help us formulate a plan to make West Hawaii safer immediately.

The speakers included Glenn Yasui, the highways administrator from the Department of Transportation, Dan Olson, co-chair of the Kona Traffic Safety Committee, social scientist David Holzman, Major John Dawrs of the Kona Police Department and Dr. Sharon Vitousek of the North Hawaii Outcomes Project.

Panel members agreed that Hawaii County has the highest incidence of fatal car crashes in the entire state (3.5 times higher). The panel also agreed that the causes of our accidents are many, including driver fatigue from long drives, difficult environmental conditions, poor attention, speeding, and a high incidence of substance use on the island.

Most importantly, we were all were in agreement on one critical point: no matter what the cause of our accidents, a DIVIDED HIGHWAY is the only solution that will prevent head-on collisions.

I have alerted the Governor and the Mayor that we have an actual public safety emergency in West Hawaii and we need their help immediately.

Going forward with this commitment, the details of my plan are:

PHASE 1: Immediate small scale safety measures including 2-4 electronic speed signs, very direct safety statements on the highway where tragedies have occurred, and more effective rumble strips in the center of the highway. We will pursue immediate state and private funding together as a community in order to complete this project as quickly as possible.

PHASE 2: Construction of a divided highway from the airport to Kawaihae instead of the currently envisioned widening of Queen K from the airport northward.

This 2-phase plan will require:

- 1) Immediate planning funds from the State Legislature and/or private sources;
- 2) A strong public expression of need to elevate the status of this project to the highest priority (State Transportation Infrastructure Priority, or STIP) with Mayor Kim and Governor Lingle; and
- 3) Securing an 80:20 match from the federal government to accomplish this goal based on the STIP.

Meanwhile, as we put safety measures into place, we will do everything in our power to support our law enforcement officers to control traffic speed and to provide public education to make people drive more safely. But adequate safety from head-on collisions will come only from a divided highway, and it will only happen if we all clearly express our community's need to Governor Lingle and the State Legislature.

Please help solve the traffic safety problem by signing the on-line petition I am making available at joshgreen.org in the next 100 days.

For my part, I will deliver it personally to Governor Lingle, Mayor Kim and the Department of Transportation and I will continue to try to influence their decisions about roads and safety measures in West Hawaii.

Working together, we will make it safe to drive in West Hawaii again.

Sincerely,

Josh Green M.D.
State Representative
6th District, Kailua-Kona