

Ka Lau

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The Bus Situation

Parents may have noticed that the school vans seem to be getting a lot of use this year. Here's what's going on.

Shortly after the charter conversion, LCPCS purchased two good quality used buses for its own. However, as LCPCS Business Manager Gerry Delgado points out, "our buses get beat up pretty bad, given our territory." There are super steep hills to navigate, lots of twists and turns, and in some cases, even a stretch or two of gravel road. At the end of November, one of our buses suffered a severe break-down which would cost around \$15,000 to fix.



LCPCS bus drivers Elizabeth (Sweetie) Kaula-Sakamoto (left) and Doris Komomua stand in front of one of LCPCS's two buses.

The other issue this year has been that in September, one of our drivers left to join a commercial tour company. With all the tour companies on this island, bus drivers are in high demand, and, despite constant advertising, LCPCS simply could not find anyone to apply for the job. Fortunately, that driver recently decided to return. Now, one driver is driving the bus, and one is driving a van, which is giving school staff members, who had been filling in for months, a bit of a break.

"We're exploring options right now," says Mr. Delgado. The school may repair the old bus, it may buy a "new" used bus, or it may try to do both, in order to have a back-up bus to fill in when one of the others is out of commission.

In the mean time, the two school vans are filling in for the disabled bus, along with all their regular trips for sports events, club activities, and school field trips. Each van takes two trips to fill in for the disabled bus, plus, each is used to transport kids home after the Malamalama Program, on the "late bus run." The late bus run is a pretty big deal. Most schools use A+ to provide after-school care, and no transportation is offered. LCPCS's late bus run is included in the fee for the Malamalama Program, and allows a lot of kids to take part in the enrichment activities that might otherwise not be able to due to a lack of transportation. Right now, the school is putting about 10,000 miles on each van annually. Mr. Delgado says the school is also hoping to buy another van this spring, but budget options are still being explored.

Parents and community members may remember that at the time of the conversion, there was some fund-raising for a hybrid bus. Those funds are still being held for that purpose. Besides costing more at the outset, the buses require regular maintenance. Unfortunately, shops that service buses are limited, but buses, with the tourist industry on this island, are not. Mr. Delgado says that the school is hoping to explore the hybrid option when there's more infra-structure in place to

service hybrid buses. In the meantime, he says the school is definitely interested in the possibility of a hybrid, or at least “greener” kind of van, in the shorter term.

It’s probably safe to assume that Seasideers are not on their best behavior on the bus, but both drivers are passionate about their jobs and about Laupāhoehoe. “I love Laupāhoehoe; this is my community,” said Doris Komomua, whose husband and son both graduated from the school here. “I love it, coming back,” is how Elizabeth (Sweetie) Kaua-Sakamoto put it. “I have too much friends here. I love the people here.” Ms. Kaua-Sakamoto lives in Waiākea, and parks the bus at her house at night. She commutes back and forth between runs, though. That’s a lot of driving, and a lot of dedication! Mahalo to our two drivers!

About 170 kids are registered to ride the bus, although there are never that many riding on any given day. Some families pay for bus transportation, and some do not, depending on income level. LCPCS buses cover the coast from Pepe‘ekeeo to Pa‘auiilo, and cost the school, annually, about \$65,000 in driver salaries, and \$50,000 for fuel and maintenance.

Calendar

- Wednesday, April 12, 5:00 pm — Hui Makua meeting **CANCELED**
- April 13, 3:00 pm — WASC Visiting Committee Report, LCPCS gym (light refreshments served)
- Friday, April 14 — NO SCHOOL: Good Friday
- Tuesday, April 18 — Selected 6th through 8th graders to attend a “career tour” at Hilo Medical Center
- Friday, April 21 — Earth Day; elementary to UH-Hilo; secondary — various activities planned
- Monday, April 24 — NO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS; professional development day for teachers
- April 25 through April 28 — Class of 2017 to Kauai

A Note from Director Garcia

The 2017 Laupāhoehoe Music Festival was an amazing event that showed the strength and richness of our community and the broad support we have from residents of, and visitors to, Hawai‘i Island. Mahalo to all of the volunteers (students, staff, parents and community members) who worked very hard to prepare the Laupāhoehoe Point Park for the festival, which brought musicians, hula dancers, vendors and several hundred people to enjoy a beautiful day. Thank you also for the time and effort committed throughout the day. For me, it was another one of the “firsts” that I will experience in my first year as the Director. I am continually blessed and honored to be in this position.

In addition to the many things we celebrated, there was a learning opportunity for our entire community. Some may have heard that, unfortunately, around \$500.00 was taken from the 7th grade fundraising booth. The response from the community was amazing. Personal donations started coming forward, and \$2,845.42 was raised. In addition, much of the money that was originally taken has been returned. The generosity of the people and the sense of responsibility in our parents and students demonstrate what a great community we live in.

Mahalo for helping me to have an amazing year of “firsts” and for being a community that supports our students and teaches them responsibility, excellence, compassion and aloha.