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CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-3065 / TELEPHONE 547-7000

NESTOR GARCIA
Councilmember
Council District IX
(808) 547-7009 {Voice}
(808) 523-4220 {Fax}
ngarcia@co.honolulu.hi.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Darrell Young
Cellular: 294-4760

MAKAKILO TRAGEDY TRIGGERS TRAFFIC SAFETY REMINDER

Honolulu City Councilmember Nestor Garcia is encouraging all concerned citizens to join the residents of Makakilo and the Honolulu Police Department Friday morning between 6:30 and 8:30 a.m. along Makakilo Drive, between Panana and Palahia streets, in a Community Traffic Awareness Partnership (C-TAP) sign-waving reminder to observe traffic safety. The community remains in shock over Monday's car accident that claimed the life of Kapolei Middle School student Nathan Curry when he apparently tried to cross Makakilo Drive to catch a mauka-bound school bus.

"Our hearts go out to Nathan's family and friends," Garcia said. "We are all deeply saddened. Nathan was a part of our Makakilo family, but let's all understand that this is not just a Makakilo problem – it's an island-wide problem. One of the best things we can do to help the healing process is to take meaningful steps to see that it doesn't happen again."

Since Monday, Garcia has been in contact with the Honolulu Police Department, the state Department of Education, Palehua Community Association, Makakilo Communitiy Association and other community leaders to organize a cooperative effort to raise awareness of traffic safety and to remind drivers and pedestrians to travel safety.

Garcia commended the leadership of the Kapolei Police Station for swiftly responding to participate in Friday's effort and he welcomed the DOE's decision to move the uphill school bus stop closer to crosswalks in the hope of discouraging students from jaywalking to catch the bus, and the decision to add two downhill bus stops on Makakilo Drive to enhance student safety.

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Garcia said proposed solutions to improve traffic safety in the past have met with mixed results in Makakilo and in communities throughout Oahu. Traffic calming devices, for example, often become a contested issue between those who live next to the roads and those who travel on it.

"Sometimes in the past, when our City traffic experts proposed solutions for a community, they are criticized by those more concerned over convenience than safety," Garcia said. " Before I took office, my predecessor, John DeSoto, tried to identify areas suitable in Makakilo for traffic calming. Of the three proposed solutions, the community supported the one fronting Mauka Lani Elementary School but overwhelmingly rejected the others."

"History notwithstanding, I am prepared to advocate for a traffic calming device, a mid-block signalized crosswalk, or a pedestrian overpass on Makakilo Drive, provided the community is willing to support that effort," he added.

Garcia said a mechanized or engineered solution is one thing, "but the real answer will come when each one of us personally chooses to make traffic safety a top priority. Only then will drivers drive slower and pedestrians religiously use the crosswalks."

The Honolulu Police Department C-TAP program is designed to heighten driver awareness of speeding and hazardous movement violations in residential areas. Police and neighborhood residents hold signs as a reminder to motorists to drive safely. Friday's C-TAP effort is expected to receive corporate donations from Castle & Cooke, the Estate of James Campbell and Schuler Homes.

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