

Aloha.

My name is Sean Lester. I am a 22 year full time resident of Maui. I live near Hana and came in specifically to testify on the HIREP PEIS tonight. It's a pretty far drive but worth it to testify on a project that can foster extraordinarily good change for the future of our island counties and state.

In 1999 MECO decided to build a 400 million dollar diesel fired generating station in the middle of Maui. This happened to be less than eight miles down the hill from my small farm in Kula. The lack of foresight in regards to alternatives to fossil fuel by the utility motivated my decision to become involved in assuring such a plant would not be built, and that alternative energy would have a future in Hawaii. A dozen years later, after serving on Maui County government and non-profit boards I finally get to testify on a visionary project. We have all fought and worked hard to have this become a reality, and the underwater interconnect is vital to seeing our energy future become more like a real grid than a hodgepodge of insulated island systems that are highly vulnerable in many ways.

If you look to any part of the world now, underwater direct current cables are being utilized to interconnect generation and grids serving millions of people. In Western Europe alone there are 29 medium to large HVDC interconnects already being used, built or under consideration. And many of them are undersea cables. This isn't rocket science, and it's not something new that has to be invented. It's simply applying technology that is available today.

The capacity to have such an interconnect between Oahu, Molokai, Lanai and Maui would insure the future capacity of our islands to stabilize not only the energy of a single island, but all the islands together as a single network of energy. In the future our electric circuits which now feed the customers will be sophisticated enough to buy and sell power coming from the circuits, alternative energy sources and utility power based on local, neighborhood, area, island and statewide needs of an island to island interconnected grid. It's necessary, I would say vital for expansion of our energy security and insures costly non-renewable power plants don't have to be built out of necessity due to local needs. Just look at Kauai if you want to see what happens when such is the case.

An example of the positive outcome of such a cable would be the ability to directly interconnect to Oahu and Maui Island proper. It's great to look at Lanai and Molokai as places for wind farms to grow, however we have a very large area here on this island that could generate a large amount of wind for use state wide – wind that cannot be built due to MECO's insistence on local circuit constraints. Please remember the success of the First Wind venture here on Maui. It's up and running and generating a great deal of energy. Maui itself has the capacity to generate far more, and an interconnecting cable would insure that wind generation is not discarded by the utility because there is no local use for the power generated on Maui at a time when the wind is blowing and the power is available. Instead, it would be sent to Oahu – thus helping to insure fossil fuel isn't used in generation plants because of lack of renewable energy on that island.

Remember one thing, we are all interconnected in the cost of fossil fuel. It's not just the cost of gas at the pump, it's the cost in jobs and small businesses that fold when oil goes up. So it's not just about

Maui or Oahu or Molokai, its about our ability to survive in a world that dictates how many Maui or Oahu citizens will have a job next month just due to the cost of a single commodity – oil.

Honestly, there can be no dependability of the island's infrastructure until some type of interconnect is built. It can very well be the basis of a unified rate structure for state-wide costs to consumers instead of the extraordinary differences between islands as we see now. You can set the stage to help the emerging technologies utilize the intelligence of an interconnected system in a very promising future.

I hear OTEC and other stand alone technologies offered as an alternative. They are like apples and oranges in regards to the cable. OTEC is a specific technology with great future potential. On the other hand, the undersea cable is technology neutral in regards to what types of alternative energy are transmitted over its system.

And the transmission can go both ways in the future. Imagine no need to build any more old technology systems. If Maui or Big Island or Oahu has someone build a new technology that is significant, the technology can be built on a large and more economic scale without the artificially applied restraints of local load curves which the utilities zealously enforce. Instead the power can be fed into the overall interisland grid. This is done between utilities all the time on the mainland at great advantage to the customers in cost and reliability. If one generation system goes down another can pick up the load. Maui is quite vulnerable in this aspect.

Another point is the cable will allow a more rapid expansion of renewable power. People who invest in alternative energy look for system stability and the availability of alternative markets for the power. This cable simply makes alternative energy a better investment overall than it is with isolated small energy grids as we have now.

Please help to insure all the work citizens like myself have done fruition. Give us the flexible and forward looking capacity such an interconnect would allow. It's really the chance of a lifetime to accelerate the great thought of self sustainability to the next level.

Thank you for your time,

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