

## Tech View

Cliff Miyake

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# Hawaii must keep improving telecom infrastructure

Every year Hawaii hosts a world class telecommunications conference called PTC (Pacific Telecommunications Conference). It's attended by telecom executives, academics, researchers and other industry professionals from around the world.

A huge topic of interest that always pops up during the conference are plans for fiber- optic cables between Asia and the mainland. Because of our strategic location between the Australasia and the United States, Hawaii residents benefit from these transoceanic pipes. Like the old trans-Pacific airlines that used to land here to fuel up, many cables connect to our islands on their way to destinations across the Pacific Rim. More often than not, we have the opportunity to utilize the huge capacity of bandwidth that these "pipes" deliver.

Why is this important?

The more bandwidth we leverage, the more high-tech tasks we can undertake. That means everything from modeling weather systems on supercomputers to empowering doctors with robotically assisted surgery technology.

Despite our geographical advantages, I don't think we're leveraging the bandwidth fully. My opinion is shared by many others in Hawaii's telecommunications industry and by savvy legislators who understand that better use of broadband translates into a more robust economic base for our state.

The good news is that a bi-partisan, broadband task force championed by legislators such as Senators Carol Fukunaga and David Ige and Rep. Gene Ward has been meeting recently to study these issues and consider bandwidth policy that will positively impact economic development in the Aloha State.

In order to sustain a competitive edge, we need to vastly improve on what we have by deploying more fiber to businesses and expanding fast Internet capabilities to our tourist plant -- as is already available in Asia.

We'll also need vast amounts of bandwidth to leverage telemedicine and weather-modeling systems. But there are numerous other applications fostered by broadband:

- » High-end call centers staffed by IT professionals.
- » Entertainment apps such as video on demand for hotels and residences.
- » Real-time simulation modeling.
- » "Smart home" applications for energy management, sensors, Web cams, biometric access and other security systems.
- » Video- and movie-editing technologies so that skilled editors can work on films in Hawaii from anywhere in the world.
- » 3-D social networking sites and high-end gaming.
- » Advanced distance-learning applications.

To deploy these applications we'll need to install more fiber and antennas that will increase connection speeds for businesses, individuals and every school in Hawaii.

We must also smooth over the patchwork of regulations that govern local infrastructure improvements to foster a better telecommunications environment for locals and tourists who demand first-class technology.

Think of where Hawaii would be without sophisticated telecommunications.

The advances have been extraordinary just in my own lifetime, and if we're going to compete with Japan, Korea and other countries that have generously deployed bandwidth, we need to move aggressively to keep improving our telecom infrastructure

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