

Hawaii expands push to fuel hydrogen cars

January 11 2011, By Susan Carpenter

Hawaii may be the first state in the nation to successfully build a fueling infrastructure that will support thousands of hydrogen fuel cell cars.

In December, the Detroit auto manufacturer General Motors, in partnership with the Honolulu-based utility the Gas Co., announced they are partnering with 10 additional companies, government agencies and universities to help implement a plan that would tap into Oahu's 1,000-mile utility pipeline and supply hydrogen to the many fuel-cell vehicles expected to come on the market in 2015.

"We have 12 organizations all combining resources to work on a plan that will lay out a hydrogen infrastructure in Hawaii and make hydrogen a reality," said Charlie Freese, executive director of global fuel cell activities for General Motors.

General Motors is providing 20 Equinox fuel cell vehicles to the project known as H2I, or the Hawaii Hydrogen Initiative. The Gas Co., which makes hydrogen as a byproduct of the state's synthetic natural gas production, is providing the hydrogen. The two entities formed a partnership over the summer to help further Hawaii's Clean Energy Initiative, a 2008 plan for the state to generate at least 70 percent of Hawaii's energy needs through clean, renewable sources.

Joining the GM-Gas Co. partnership is UC Irvine, which has been involved in the siting of hydrogen stations in Southern California; the university will help determine the best locations of hydrogen fueling stations on Oahu. The University of Hawaii also will provide simulations

to help optimize the rollout of the island's nascent hydrogen infrastructure.

The National Renewable Energy Lab will determine the cost implications of different infrastructure configurations.

Aloha Petroleum, one of the largest fuel station operators in the state of Hawaii, may be involved in the operation of hydrogen fueling stations. Louis Berger Group will do the actual construction of the refuelers.

Also involved are Fuel Cell Energy, maker of stationary fuel cell systems; the County of Hawaii, which may expand the Oahu initiative to Hawaii's big island; the U.S. Pacific Command, supported by the Air Force, Army and Marine Corps in the Pacific, all of which may be using fuel-cell vehicles on the island; and the U.S. Department of [Energy](#).

"We're setting up Hawaii to be the first hydrogen state in the country," Freese said. "It's not enough for a company like us to pledge to make [fuel-cell](#) vehicles. We need to have the vehicles and infrastructure come together at the same time in a coordinated way."

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Citation: Hawaii expands push to fuel hydrogen cars (2011, January 11) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-01-hawaii-fuel-hydrogen-cars.html>

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