

Resolution 26-29 Testimony

MISC. COM. 93(26)

Zoning & Planning



MEMBER OF BW DIGITAL

March 5th, 2026

Zoning & Planning Committee

Honolulu City Council

Uploaded to: <http://hnlldoc.ehawaii.gov/hnlldoc/testimony>

Re: Written Testimony in Strong Support of Resolution No. 26-29: Granting a Special Management Area Major Permit to Allow for the Hawaiiki Cable Landing Station Expansion Project in Honolulu, Oahu.

Aloha Chair Kia`aina, Vice Chair Waters, and Members of the Committee,

My name is David Slessor, and I'm here on behalf of Hawaiiki to share a brief overview of our project to expand our existing cable-landing facilities. The project site sits mauka of Farrington Highway, between the Waimanalo Gulch Sanitary Landfill and the HECO Kahe Power Plant.

Hawaiiki has been invested in Hawai'i for nearly a decade, ever since we brought our trans-Pacific subsea cable on-line in 2018. That privately funded system opened the door to long-needed competition in a market once dominated by a few incumbent operators. It added significant new capacity and helped strengthen Hawai'i's digital resilience. Today, the Hawaiiki cable connects Hawaii with the U.S. West Coast, American Samoa, New Zealand, and Australia, with branching options that allow Pacific neighbors to join as their needs grow.

We've already seen how this connectivity enables new possibilities. Our network supports the 3D holographic learning program between the University of Hawai'i and the American Samoa Community College, allowing students to interact in real time with life-size projected instructors. And right now, we are bringing Tonga onto the system to improve its resilience after the 2022 volcanic eruptions severed both of its subsea cables and forced the country to rely temporarily on low-speed satellite links.

This proposed project is the next step in that ongoing commitment. Our goal is straightforward: keep Hawai'i a preferred landing point for future subsea cable systems, particularly as several of the state's domestic and international cables approach the end of their typical 25-year lifespans. In recent years, several international cables have bypassed the state due to perceived permitting complexity, and we want to help remove those barriers so Hawai'i remains globally connected.

To do that, we are proposing to install three underground conduits from our project site, extending roughly 3,000 feet offshore. **It is important to emphasize that no new subsea cables are being installed at this stage.** The conduits simply prepare the site so that future cable systems, proposed by other parties, can land here without the need for repeating nearshore construction activity. They will exit the seabed in sand at about 60 feet of water depth and then sit safely two to three feet below the seabed until needed. Any equipment used to terminate and activate future cables using these conduits will be located inside our existing facility.

We're using Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) to install the conduits. HDD is a trenchless and environmentally sensitive method that burrows through bedrock up to 150 feet below the seabed, minimizing disturbance to the shoreline and nearshore environment. This approach ensures the work is done as carefully and respectfully as possible.



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It also provides two clear land-use advantages. First, it avoids repeated shoreline construction when a new cable is proposed to land in the area, significantly reducing cumulative impacts over the coming decades. Second, it positions Hawai'i as a more attractive, less complex landing point at a time when global network planners are choosing their routes.

This work also builds on strong local partnerships, construction by FV Coluccio, land surveys by Engineers Surveyors Hawaii Inc. (ESH), archaeological engagement through ASM Affiliates (ASM) , and community liaison support from Lei'a Haff of Wai'anae. We rely heavily on local workers, local expertise, and local contractors throughout this project. Our existing landing facility is staffed locally through DRFortress, and data from the Hawaiiki system is carried statewide by Hawaiian Telcom, Spectrum, Lumen, the University of Hawai'i, T-Mobile etc. to reach mobile devices, homes, schools, hospitals, and businesses. Ultimately, it's the backbone behind everyday services like Netflix, Google, Zoom, Amazon, and more.

Since September 2024, we've met extensively with community members, particularly the Nānākuli-Mā'ili Neighborhood Board and Land and Water Committee, the Makakilo-Kapolei-Honokai Hale Neighborhood Board, kupuna councils, coral restoration groups, and nearby residents. We also held open door engagement sessions in both Nānākuli and Kapolei, giving residents the opportunity to speak directly with our technical, cultural, and environmental teams. For neighbors who couldn't attend, we conducted targeted mail outs, distributed flyers throughout the community, and created a dedicated email inbox for questions and feedback. In parallel, we consulted closely with key environmental advocates to ensure their perspectives shaped our approach. This feedback directly influenced the project design, most notably in reducing the number of proposed conduits from six to three in response to concerns about potential effects on the coral ecosystem.

For west side communities, these improvements translate into more reliable connectivity for education, remote work, and mobile service as carriers gain access to more diverse international routes. Over time, greater diversity and competition in subsea infrastructure help moderate prices for residents and businesses. We are also supporting the community through an annual scholarship program designed to encourage and support the development of local talent.

We've seen what these investments can deliver. In Hawai'i, household access to high-speed internet has increased from roughly 84% to over 91% in recent years as new, neutral capacity entered the market. In American Samoa, the activation of the Hawaiiki branch helped drive internet participation from about 50% to 75%. These improvements are not abstract; they show that resilient subsea infrastructure directly supports digital equity, economic opportunity, and community resilience.

By preparing this conduit system now, Hawai'i becomes a simpler, more predictable landing point for future cables, bringing greater capacity, stronger competition, and ultimately better service for residents and businesses.

For your convenience, I have attached to my testimony and Question & Answer Sheet. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify and for your leadership in planning for Hawai'i's long term digital future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. S. S.' or similar, written in a cursive style.



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Hawaiki Cable Landing Facilities Expansion Project

Community Q&A Handout

1. Where is the project located?

Hawaiki's existing cable landing facilities are at 92-384 Farrington Highway (TMK 9-2-051: 011), located between the Waimanalo Gulch Sanitary Landfill and the HECO Kahe Power Plant. The project site is located on the adjacent land parcel directly to the north (TMK 9-2-051: 001).

2. Is Hawaiki installing a new submarine cable?

No.

This project installs three offshore subsurface conduits – empty protective pathways. They allow any future cable operator to land a cable system without repeating nearshore construction. The conduits remain unused unless a future proponent undertakes its own project.

3. Why is this work happening now?

Several recently deployed trans-Pacific subsea systems have bypassed Hawai'i due to perceived permitting and construction complexity. By preparing conduits now, Hawai'i becomes more attractive for future systems, which:

- Increase data capacity into the state
- Improve competition among carriers
- Strengthen resilience and redundancy

These benefits support affordability and service quality over time.

4. What does this mean for west side communities?

More reliable long-term connectivity for education, remote work, mobile service, and household internet. This supports greater digital equity on the west side, where connectivity challenges have historically been more pronounced.

5. Will local workers be used?

Yes.

Major project elements are delivered by local contractors, including:

- FV Coluccio – construction
- Engineers Surveyors Hawaii Inc. – land surveys
- ASM Affiliates – cultural and archaeological engagement
- Lei'a Haff (Wai'anae) – community liaison

The existing landing facility is also maintained by local Hawai'i staff through DRFortress.

6. What community outreach has been done?

Since September 2024, Hawaiiki has engaged with:

- Makakilo–Kapolei–Honokai Hale Neighborhood Board
- Nānākuli–Mā'ili Neighborhood Board & Land & Water Committee
- Wai'anae Moku Kupuna Council
- Kuleana Coral Restoration group
- Hālau Kiawekūpono O Ka Ua
- Ho'ōla Hānī'o
- Direct neighbors and property users
- Community open door meetings in Kapolei and Nānākuli

Community feedback directly shaped project refinements.

7. Is Hawaiiki providing Community Benefits?

Yes.

Initiatives focus on:

- Digital access improvements
- Education support and a scholarship program
- Local workforce opportunities in telecom and infrastructure

These ensure west side communities share in long term advantages.



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8. Are there environmental impacts?

Impacts are minimal.

The project uses **Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD)**, a trenchless method that keeps all work underground until the conduits emerge offshore at depth. This avoids trenching, avoids nearshore disturbance, and places conduits 2 to 3 feet beneath the seabed.

9. Does this set a precedent for shoreline development?

No.

The project extends an existing permitted utility use. It does not expand the shoreline footprint, add new structures, or increase daily activity.

10. What are the long-term benefits for Hawai'i?

- Stronger digital resilience
- A more competitive broadband market
- Easier landing for future cables
- Reduced future shoreline construction
- Greater opportunity for education, innovation, and local business
- Reinforces Hawai'i's role as a Pacific connectivity hub

11. How does this benefit the wider Pacific region?

The Hawaiiki system has already improved digital access in the Pacific.

American Samoa's internet participation rose from ~51% to 77% after gaining modern fiber capacity. Hawai'i has seen similar gains, with household high speed internet use now above 91%. These outcomes show how subsea infrastructure supports digital equity and economic resilience.

12. What if the conduits are never used?

Nothing changes.

They remain safely buried underground. The project simply creates future options that would be more disruptive and costly if built later.

13. Who can I contact for further information?

You can reach us at: community@hawaiki.us