

Pacific Business News (Honolulu) - January 22, 2007
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PACIFIC BUSINESS NEWS

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New trans-Pacific fiber-optic ring will run through Hawaii

Pacific Business News (Honolulu) - January 19, 2007 by [Howard Dicus](#) Pacific Business News

Asia Netcom has lined up more than \$600 million in capital to lay a new 14,600-mile trans-Pacific fiber-optic ring network called EAC Pacific that will run through Hawaii.

"It's a big deal," said David Lassner, the information technologies chief for the University of Hawaii. "More capacity and choices will lower prices and increase reliability by increasing route diversity."

The EAC Pacific network will be built, Asia Netcom said, on a northern route from Japan to the U.S. West Coast and on a southern route from the U.S. West Coast to Hawaii, Guam and the Philippines. The Hawaii route will be the first Internet backbone route from the United States to Asia that does not pass through Japan.

"EAC Pacific is designed to enhance the connectivity options of the fast-growing South Asian region," said Asia Netcom CEO Bill Barney, who has raised \$636 million to make the network operational by July 2008.

The advantage of a ring system is that data transmitted on beams of laser light can be rerouted "the other way around" in the event of a cable break.

Riding colors of light

The network will support a minimum design capacity of 2.56 terabits per second, enough to transmit the entire contents of the Library of Congress in a few seconds. It will use dense wavelength division multiplexing, so different data streams ride different colors of the light spectrum racing through the fiber-optic strand.

"Hawaii needs lots of big bandwidth to support the innovation economy we talk about," Lassner said. "For example, moviemakers should be able to send 'dailies' back to Hollywood over networks."

Big bandwidth is even more critical in the research world.

"The new telescopes and other sensors generate massive data sets here; terabytes per day are not uncommon," Lassner said. "And our scientists similarly need access to huge amounts of data generated elsewhere."

The Internet backbone business is looking for new cable routes after an earthquake in the Philippines broke six of the seven cable networks with lines in the Luzon Strait.

"There is clearly a need for more diversity between Asia and the U.S.," said Asia Netcom's Barney.

This is not the only new trans-Pacific fiber-optic network on the drawing boards.

A separate venture called Trans-Pacific Express, founded in recent weeks by China Telecom, China Netcom, China Unicom, Chunghwa Telecom, Korea Telecom and Verizon Business, plans by late next year to open a new trans-Pacific loop that links China, Taiwan, Korea and the U.S. Mainland. No Hawaii landfall is planned.

Demand is soaring

In the 1990s, Internet backbone companies built more capacity than needed, then ran out of cash as bandwidth prices crashed. Some of the biggest players went into bankruptcy. But Internet traffic has been more than doubling every year. Capacity demand is soaring.

"Now is the time for additional facility either through new build or through upgrade of existing infrastructure," wrote Stephen McClelland, a writer for Telecommunications Magazine who attended this week's Pacific Telecommunications Conference in Waikiki. "Either way, more money needs to be spent."

What's driving it is increasing viewing of full-motion video online, from teleconferencing to movie trailers to YouTube videos. Telecoms giant KDDI said Japanese Web surfers are getting into YouTube applications and the company is seeing bandwidth demand explode.

It's not only the kind of edgy homemade humor seen on YouTube that's driving bandwidth demand. The Daily Telegraph of London reports that the Archbishop of Canterbury has begun posting sermons on YouTube.

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