

# Strategies can cut oil dependency

## THE CHAMBER VIEW

by Pamela Tumpap



As fuel costs go up, people are realizing how truly dependent on oil we are. More are understanding

that oil can be linked to nearly every aspect of our lives — energy production, transportation, water delivery, building and development, manufacturing of goods (including essentials like food and clothing), distribution of goods, etc. It is at the basis of so many things that we have almost become numb to our overdependency; that is, until prices reached a level that negatively impacted our quality of life.

Now, with increased understanding from this wake-up call, we have a distinct opportunity to make a difference and diminish our oil dependency and carbon footprint. This sentiment was echoed at the County Council's Planning Committee meeting of July 24, where resolutions were adopted to encourage the U.S. and state governments to reduce our dependency on oil. The meeting also included a panel discussion on programs that can be undertaken by the county to decrease oil use and support our economy. Many of the suggestions tie into Chamber priorities and issues the community is currently addressing. As we move forward with these matters, the fuel link is important to connect.

Here are some of the recom-

mendations related to present Chamber activities.

- Incorporate Smart Growth Principals in the Maui Island Plan.

Recognizing that energy, water, housing and transportation are all interrelated, the importance of employing "Smart Growth" principles in developments was noted as a key measure for reducing fuel consumption.

Smart Growth communities have mixed uses with regional stores/resources, walking/biking paths, green areas, etc., that cut vehicular travel needs and fuel costs, while heightening a sense of community and improving our quality of life.

- Allow Home-Based Businesses.

Telecommuting was mentioned as another way to save on fuel and ties in with home-based businesses, which we believe should be allowed when they do not negatively impact neighborhoods.

- Streamline Permitting Processes.

Streamlining county and state permitting processes is a way to save money and encourage entrepreneurs/businesses to move into alternative energy businesses and assist developers in building additional "green" projects.

- Provide Additional Ag Support.

Food sufficiency is important on many levels. Purchase of Maui-grown produce benefits resident farmers and their employees, keeps dollars at home, and aids in disaster preparedness, in addition to saving transportation costs. However, our ag

industry faces tough competition from cheaper imports. Ag subsidies were discussed.

- Support Alternative Energy.

While there are federal and state initiatives to encourage the development and use of alternative energy, several suggested the county could also provide incentives, such as subsidies for biofuel crops, real property tax incentives for properties with solar systems, support for research and development efforts, etc.

- Improve Public Transportation.

Our public transportation system is growing by leaps and bounds and was applauded for progress to date. In addition to expanding routes, covered shelters to make the system more accessible are planned. A suggestion was made to work with employers to create convenient employee transportation systems to help employees save money and reduce fuel and carbon emissions.

- Public/Private Partnerships.

Entrepreneurs and businesses are pioneers, blazing trails and commercializing technologies for the public good. If we are to change systems and make great strides on reducing our reliance on oil, public/private partnerships are essential. Government can ease burdens and offer incentives to facilitate private-sector enterprises that will benefit us all.

- Encourage Self-Sufficiency.

While long educated on the need for natural disaster preparedness, we often neglect economic disaster preparedness.

Just as it is important for businesses to set aside funds for rainy days, it is equally important for residents to have a self-sufficiency mindset. Self-sufficiency aids in disasters and overall sustainability efforts. Each of us can look at ways to conserve resources (including energy and water), cultivate gardens to support our foods needs, and recycle/reuse items to save money now and safeguard resources for the future.

- Buy Maui First.

Purchasing materials locally is always beneficial and helps insulate our community from tough times. By keeping dollars at home, we help people stay employed, ensure needed products/services are available, strengthen our economy, trim dollars spent on importation costs, and reduce fuel use.

Diversifying our energy portfolio, creating public/private partnerships and incentives to expeditiously move initiatives forward that shrink oil use, using best planning practices as we move forward, buying more goods and services locally, and taking personal responsibility to lower our personal oil use are all important and should be included in the county's overall oil-reduction plan. Best practices exist for each of these suggestions, and each correlates with issues being addressed now. So, let's move forward with these recommendations as oil prices are still rising and it is up to us to do what we can.

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