

Public radio has AM plans

By Alan Matsuoka

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Hawaii Public Radio, which started up a second FM station in October, has purchased an AM station on Oahu and has obtained Federal Communication Commission permits to extend its reach on the neighbor islands.

Cliff Eblen, president and general manager, last week said public radio bought KLNI 1380 AM for \$525,000 in a deal closed in November. The station's call letters will be KIPO and initially it will be used to simulcast the jazz, classical and the news and talk programming heard on KIPO 89.3 FM.

The 5,000-watt station should begin broadcasting after a new transmitter is installed, possibly in March, he said. "We just need to get the transmitter installed and plug it in." Public radio is applying to double the wattage.

For years the frequency was used by KPOI, which has gone FM. Since then the frequency has changed ownership; public radio bought it from Henry A. Younge Jr., former owner of Air Molokai.

Under Younge, KLNI played big-band music, but it went off the air last year and was put on the market in September 1988.

Although the AM station will not broadcast in stereo, it should help reduce listener complaints about KIPO-FM's reception. KIPO-FM — the station that began in October — is licensed to broadcast at 10,000 watts, but has been operating at less than 4,000 watts because of possible interference with an FCC monitoring station.

Its signal has been good down-

town and in West and Central Oahu, but weaker in valleys. Testing will be done next month to see if the power can be increased.

"AM has different coverage patterns than FM and can be heard in places where FM can't," Eblen said. "And there are thousands of cars in this state with AM-only radios, so the large potential audience is another reason for AM."

But the main reason for the addition is Hawaii Public Radio's long-range plan: to have its three Oahu stations — KIPO, KIPO-FM and KHPR 88.1 FM (its first station which began broadcasting in 1981) — all offering separate programming. KHPR will be entirely classical, KIPO-FM predominantly jazz with alternative music, and KIPO all news and talk.

However, Eblen said that won't happen until KIPO-FM is up to full power. "In the meantime, I think the AM-FM combination will work very well," he said.

In the last few weeks, public radio also obtained construction permits for transmitter stations on Kauai and in Hilo. Its only current neighbor-island transmitter station is on Maui, with a signal that reaches Kona and northern parts of the Big Island.

The 25,000-watt Kauai station will be in Lihue with the call letters KIPU-FM. Eblen hopes work on a transmitter building would begin this summer. Hilo will have a 3,000-watt FM transmitter; there are no call letters yet and no construction timetable.

Both stations essentially will carry KHPR's programming microwaved from Honolulu, and agreements have been reached to share