The Hawaii Center for Advanced Transportation Technologies has awarded a $707,550 contract to U.S. Hybrid to build a fuel cell plug-in hydrogen fuel and battery-powered bus for the Big Island.

The 25-passenger bus should be ready by 2015. This will be the first hydrogen-powered bus that the county and state of Hawaii will use.

“My vision is to leverage opportunities like this to introduce clean energy transportation services that utilize our own renewable energy resources to the benefit of our local economy, while helping the people of Hawaii get where they need to go,” Gov. Neil Abercrombie said in a statement.

U.S. Hybrid is based in California but has some employees in Honolulu, said Stan Osserman, director of the Hawaii Center for Advanced Transportation Technologies.

The fuel cell and battery will power the bus’ power train, air conditioner and auxiliary systems. The batteries are charged by the power of the brakes.

Big Island Mayor Billy Kenoi said that the bus is the first step in transforming Hawaii County into one that uses the island’s renewable energy resources.

“Instead of exporting our citizen’s hard-earned dollars offshore, we will be able to keep this
money in our local economy creating new jobs and protecting us from the swings of the fossil fuel markets,” he said.

The contract includes the vehicle, conversion from an internal combustion vehicle to a hydrogen fuel cell electric drive train, a limited warranty and some support equipment, Osserman said.

“We are looking at pretty much moving the Big Island’s mass transportation to a hydrogen-based transportation infrastructure,” he said.

Meanwhile, Honolulu will get $5 million to replace 10 buses.

The money will come from the Federal Transit Administration, U.S. Sen. Brian Schatz, D-Hawaii, said in a statement Friday.

Honolulu will buy 10 60-foot articulated diesel replacement buses for public bus system, which is operated by Oahu Transit.

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