

# Improvement in the Performance of P-Type Tunnel Oxide Passivated Contact Solar Cell With Selective Tunneling Junctions Underneath the Contacts on Front Side

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**Abstract**—Industrial silicon solar cells are now moving further from passivated emitter and rear contact (PERC) toward Tunnel Oxide Passivated contact (TOPCon) technology. The efficiency of the PERC solar cell is improved by TOPCon technology, in which the rear side is fully passivated by an oxide/poly-Si tunneling junction. The performance of a TOPCon solar cell may further be improved by the incorporation of selective tunneling junctions underneath the front contacts. Some fabrications have been reported on a similar structure for an n-type Si substrate but they have not achieved the expected results. Also, a detailed study has not been done yet. Using 3-D sentaurus technology computer aided design (TCAD) simulation software, a detailed analysis has been done on the modified structure through the optimization of the tunnel oxides, the interfaces, the  $n^{++}$  poly-Si layer, the selective ( $\text{SiO}_2/n^{++}$ -poly-Si) tunneling junctions underneath the front contacts, etc., which has not been done earlier. It is seen that a thick  $n^{++}$  poly-Si layer causes parasitic absorption of light, whereas a very thin poly-Si layer cannot provide sufficient field for tunneling of carriers. A thicker tunnel oxide produces a high series resistance, whereas a very thin tunnel oxide cannot restrict the minority carriers to reach to the contacts. Therefore, an optimization is required and the optimization is done based on a fabricated bifacial p-TOPCon solar cell reported in the literature

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with an efficiency of 21.2% and bulk lifetime of 200  $\mu\text{s}$ . After performing all the modifications in the fabricated reference cell and optimizing different parameters, the efficiency is improved by 3.5% in absolute. The efficiency is further improved to 25.4% with the bulk lifetime of 1 ms.

**Index Terms**—Passivating contacts, pinholes, poly-Si, selective tunneling contacts, tunnel oxide, tunnel oxide passivated contact (TOPCon) solar cell.

## I. INTRODUCTION

A N emerging technology called Tunnel Oxide Passivated contact (TOPCon) solar cell with higher conversion efficiency has been most attracted by the industry due to its great potential to replace the existing passivated emitter and rear contact (PERC) technology [1], [2], [3], [4], [5]. The Fraunhofer ISE achieved an efficiency of 25.8% in the laboratory and 23.6% in commercial grade TOPCon solar cells [6], [7]. Conversion efficiencies of 26.1% in small-size wafer in lab scale, 25.2% in industry R&D laboratory, and 24.5% in production line with large cells are also reported [8], [9], [10], [11]. For passivating contact solar cells, the main focus is on n-type TOPCon solar cell due to its higher conversion efficiency than a p-type TOPCon solar cell [1], [8]. But an efficiency of 25.2% in R&D of a p-type TOPCon solar cell is announced by LONGI [12]. The improvement in efficiency of a partial rear contact solar cell is mainly due to the reduction of the recombination of minority carriers at metal–semiconductor interface ( $J_{0,\text{met}}$ ) [13], [14]. In a TOPCon solar cell,  $J_{0,\text{met}}$  is substantially suppressed due to full-area rear-side passivation [14], [15], [16], [17], [18]. The performance of TOPCon solar cell may further be improved by incorporating poly-Si-based carrier selective tunneling junctions underneath the front contacts (see Fig. 1).

Fabrication of this type of structure requires few add-ons in the existing process line for TOPCon solar cells. The processes for the deposition of tunnel oxide and poly-Si layers on front side are the same as the layers are deposited on rear side of a TOPCon solar cell. For a p-type substrate, front-side polysilicon is  $n^{++}$  and rear-side polysilicon is  $p^{++}$ . Now, selective regions, i.e., where the front contacts will be formed, are protected using

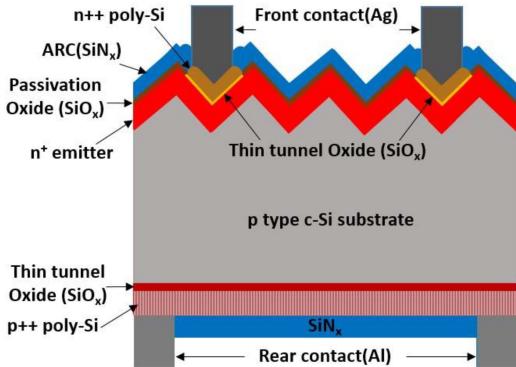


Fig. 1. Bifacial p-type TOPCon solar cell with selective passivating contacts on front side.

UV laser masking or ink-jet masking and the nonmasked regions are etched up to emitter. After that passivating layer stacks are deposited. Implementing this structure on a large area substrate, an efficiency of 23.2% is achieved so far [19], [20]. Similar modification may also be done on the front side of a PERC solar cell [21].

In this work, a fabricated reference bifacial p-TOPCon solar cell is simulated using 3-D Sentaurus technology computer aided design (TCAD) simulation software. Then the performance of the reference TOPCon solar cell is improved step by step through the modifications in the cell structure and optimizations of different parameters. The tunnel oxide thickness,  $n^{++}$  poly-Si thickness ( $d_{n^{++}}$  Poly-Si) and doping concentration ( $N_{D\text{-poly}}$ ), ratio of tunneling junction width to front contact width( $R$ ), the interfaces and few basic parameters have been optimized through this simulation study.

## II. SIMULATION MODELS AND PARAMETERS

Sentaurus TCAD basically uses empirical equations that make simulation results more practical. It can simulate both optical and electrical simulations simultaneously and can also handle complex device structures with layer thicknesses of few nm to cm [22].

For optical simulation, advanced ray-tracing model [23] is used as an optical solver and quantum yield model [23] is used for optical generations. For all materials (e.g., Si,  $\text{Si}_3\text{N}_4$ , etc.) used in this simulation, complex refractive indices have been considered [23], [24], [25]. In electrical simulation tunneling, current through barrier (oxide) is modeled by Tsu–Esaki model [26]. All other parameters for optical and electrical simulation are briefed in Table I.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### A. Validation of Simulation Model

To validate our model, first we have simulated a bifacial p-type TOPCon solar cell, which has been fabricated by Sebastian Mack et.al. [29]. The dimensions and parameters have been considered for their best cell and the results are compared (see Table II). The parameters for bulk and interface properties of

TABLE I  
PHYSICAL PARAMETERS FOR THE SIMULATION STUDY

Physical Parameters	Value
Front contact	10 $\mu\text{m} \times 40 \mu\text{m}$ Ag fingers with spacing 1.4mm, shading 2.8%, resistivity 1.51 $\mu\Omega\cdot\text{cm}$ , SRV 10 <sup>7</sup> cm/s [29].
Front surface	Textured (upright random Pyramids with max. base width 6 $\mu\text{m}$ and height 4 $\mu\text{m}$ ) with 80 nm thick ARC( $\text{Si}_3\text{N}_4$ ) [29], [30].
Front emitter	0.3 $\mu\text{m}$ Phosphorus doped with sheet resistance of 90 $\Omega/\text{sq}$ . [29], [30].
Substrate	p-type Boron doped mono c-Si wafer with thickness 190 $\mu\text{m}$ ; Resistivity of 1.5 $\Omega\cdot\text{cm}$ [29].
Tunnel oxide layer	$\text{SiO}_2$ : $E_g = 8.92\text{ eV}$ , $m_b = 0.33m_0$ and $m_e = 0.42m_0$ . [31], [32]. $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$ : $E_g = 7.6\text{ eV}$ , $m_b = 0.36m_0$ and $m_e = 0.40m_0$ [33], [34].
In-diffusion	Boron diffusion from $p^{++}$ poly-Si to the substrate and phosphorus diffusion from $n^{++}$ poly-Si to the substrate considered by analytical doping profile [27], [29].
Rear contact	10 $\mu\text{m} \times 50 \mu\text{m}$ Al fingers with spacing 0.6 mm, shading 7%, resistivity 2.45 $\mu\Omega\cdot\text{cm}$ , SRV = 10 <sup>7</sup> cm/s. Rest area is passivated with 80 nm thick $\text{Si}_3\text{N}_4$ [29].
$\text{SiO}_2/\text{Si}$ interface	Acceptor type defects with exponential distribution from 0.4 to 0.5 eV below the CB with peak concentration 1E10 $\text{cm}^{-2}$ , Fixed charge = +1E11 $\text{cm}^{-2}$ [35], [36].
Poly-Silicon layer	Both Donor and Acceptor type defects at 0.37 eV above VB and below CB, respectively [37], [38]. $p^{++}$ poly-Si thickness = 240 nm[29].
$\text{SiO}_2/\text{poly-Si}$ interface	Acceptor (p-poly) and Donor (n-poly) type defects at 0.45 eV below CB with concentration 1E12 $\text{cm}^{-2}$ , Fixed charge = +2E11 $\text{cm}^{-2}$ [39], [40].
Mobility	Klaassen mobility model [41], [42].
Other models	Lifetime, recombination, BGN, etc., models are considered as per literature of Altermatt. [43]
Light source	AM1.5G with intensity 1 kW/m <sup>2</sup> (ASTM G173-03) [44].
Device Temperature	300 K

TABLE II  
COMPARISON OF RESULTS FOR FABRICATED [18] AND SIMULATED (WITH THE PARAMETERS IN TABLE I) P-TOPCON SOLAR CELLS

Cell Type	Voc (mV)	Jsc (mA/cm <sup>2</sup> )	FF (%)	η (%)	R <sub>s</sub> ( $\Omega\cdot\text{cm}^2$ )
Fabricated Ref.	671.0	39.5	80.0	21.2	0.55
Simulated Ref.	674.8	39.3	80.1	21.2	0.53

different layers are taken from different literature works, which are briefed in Table I. The tunnel oxide thickness ( $d_{\text{SiO}_2}$ ) of 1.2 nm, pinholes of radius 4 nm, and density 1E4  $\text{cm}^{-2}$  in the tunnel oxide layer( $\text{SiO}_2$ ),  $p^{++}$  poly-Si doping of 8E19  $\text{cm}^{-3}$ , and bulk lifetime ( $\tau_{\text{Bulk}}$ ) of 200  $\mu\text{s}$  is considered to achieve the outputs of fabricated reference cell.

The open-circuit voltage (Voc), short-circuit current (Is), series resistance ( $R_s$ ), fill factor (FF), etc., of a TOPCon solar cell are very much dependent on pinhole radius, pinhole nature, pinhole density, rear tunnel oxide ( $\text{SiO}_2$ ) thickness, and poly-Si layer [27]. So, these parameters should be optimized, and for a p-TOPCon solar cell, these parameters are optimized

in the previous work [28], which is not reported here. The optimized parameters are: pinhole radius = 4 nm, pinhole density =  $5 \times 10^{22} \text{ cm}^{-2}$ , tunnel oxide thickness ( $d_{\text{SiO}_2}$ ) = 1.2 nm,  $p^{++}$  poly-Si thickness = 240 nm, and doping =  $8 \times 10^{19} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ . Pinholes are 60% completely through and 40% partially through. Considering these optimized values, the efficiency of the simulated reference cell has improved to 22.6% with  $V_{\text{oc}}$  of 673.7 mV,  $J_{\text{sc}}$  of  $39.6 \text{ mA/cm}^2$ , FF of 84.6%, and series resistance ( $R_s$ ) of  $0.16 \Omega \cdot \text{cm}^2$  (see Table IV). The improvement in the efficiency of simulated reference TOPCon solar cell is mainly due to higher FF, which results from lower series resistance ( $R_s$ ) of the cell.

### B. Improvement in Front-Side Passivation and Bulk Doping

For the fabricated p-TOPCon solar cell, the front side is textured and passivated with nitride and  $\text{Si}_3\text{N}_4/\text{Si}$  interface possess higher defects [45] than  $\text{SiO}_2/\text{Si}$  interface. After PSG removal, the wafers are annealed [29], so a thin  $\text{SiO}_2$  layer (1–2 nm) may be formed or deposited ( $\sim 5$  nm) [30] before deposition of silicon nitride on front side. The low value of open-circuit voltage ( $V_{\text{oc}}$ ) of 671.0 mV may be due to higher defects at the  $\text{SiO}_2/\text{Si}$  interface. Therefore, in the simulation, the front  $\text{SiO}_2/\text{Si}$  interface is considered of poor quality with high interface defects of  $2 \times 10^{11} \text{ cm}^{-2}$  and obtained  $V_{\text{oc}}$  of 673.7 mV (see Table II). Now front  $\text{SiO}_2/\text{Si}$  interface can be improved by considering acceptor-type defects with exponential distribution from 0.4 to 0.5 eV below the CB with peak concentration  $1 \times 10^{10} \text{ cm}^{-2}$ , electron capture cross-section =  $1 \times 10^{-14} \text{ cm}^2$ , hole capture cross-section =  $1 \times 10^{-14} \text{ cm}^2$ , and fixed charge =  $+1 \times 10^{11} \text{ cm}^{-2}$ , which is most common and reported in literatures (see Table I). This reduces the Shockley–Read–Hall (SRH) [46] recombination at  $\text{SiO}_2/\text{Si}$  interface which in turn reduces recombination current density ( $J_0$ ) by  $94.5 \text{ fA/cm}^2$  and improves  $V_{\text{oc}}$  to 690.1 mV, efficiency to 23.2% with  $R_s = 0.17 \Omega \cdot \text{cm}^2$ .

The performance is further improved by optimizing the Boron (B) doping in the substrate ( $N_{\text{A,subs}}$ ). The B doping concentration is varied from  $8 \times 10^{15} \text{ cm}^{-3}$  to  $4 \times 10^{16} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ . Highest efficiency of 23.8% is achieved at  $N_{\text{A,subs}} = 4 \times 10^{16} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ . With the increase of B doping concentration in the substrate from  $1 \times 10^{16} \text{ cm}^{-3}$  mainly, the short-circuit-current density ( $J_{\text{sc}}$ ) increases and reaches to  $40.7 \text{ mA/cm}^2$  at  $N_{\text{A,subs}} = 4 \times 10^{16} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ . Further increase of  $N_{\text{A,subs}}$  results in decrease of  $J_{\text{sc}}$ . On the other hand, with the decrease of  $N_{\text{A,subs}}$  from  $1 \times 10^{16} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ ,  $J_{\text{sc}}$  decreases. The increase in  $J_{\text{sc}}$  is mainly due to the improvement in tunnel current [26] and the conductivity of the substrate. For optimized  $N_{\text{A,subs}}$  ( $4 \times 10^{16} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ ),  $R_s$  is reduced to  $0.15 \Omega \cdot \text{cm}^2$  and FF is improved to 84.9%.

### C. Improvement With $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$ Tunnel Oxide on Rear Side

$\text{SiO}_2$  has been used as the tunneling oxide but it has positive fixed charge  $\sim +1 \times 10^{11} \text{ cm}^{-2}$  (see Table I), which induces minority electrons on the rear side and increases SRH recombination at  $\text{SiO}_2/p\text{-Si}$  interface. This recombination loss can be reduced by considering a tunneling oxide which has negative fixed charges. In this context,  $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$  has been used as tunnel oxide [47], [48] with tunneling masses  $m_h = 0.36m_0$ ,  $m_e = 0.40m_0$  and negative fixed charge  $\sim -5 \times 10^{12} \text{ cm}^{-2}$  (see Table I). Now,  $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$  layer is

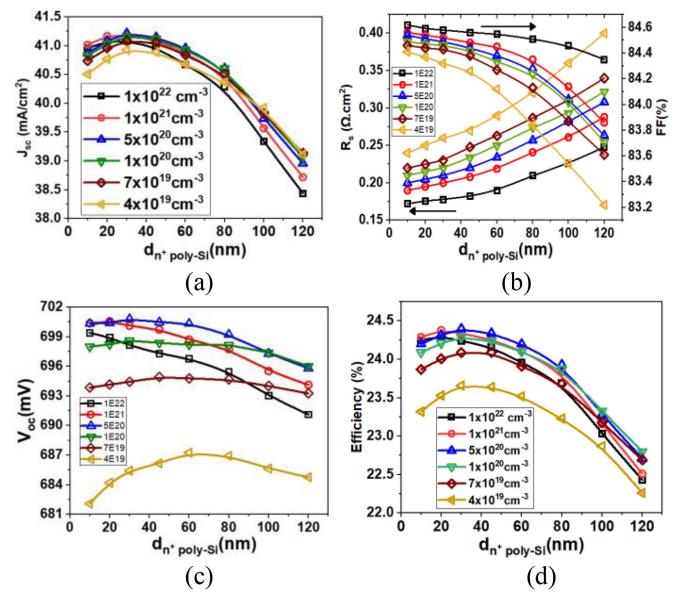


Fig. 2. Variation of (a)  $J_{\text{sc}}$  (in  $\text{mA}/\text{cm}^2$ ), (b)  $R_s$  (in  $\Omega \cdot \text{cm}^2$ ) and FF (in %), (c)  $V_{\text{oc}}$  (mV), and (d) efficiency (in %) with  $d_{n^+ \text{poly-Si}}$  (in nanometer) taking  $N_{\text{D-poly}}$  (in  $\text{cm}^{-3}$ ) as parameter.

optimized to achieve better performance of the cell. The highest efficiency of 23.9% is achieved with  $V_{\text{oc}}$  of 693.3 mV,  $J_{\text{sc}}$  of  $40.8 \text{ mA/cm}^2$ , FF of 84.5%, and  $R_s$  of  $0.2 \Omega \cdot \text{cm}^2$  for oxide thickness of 1.2 nm, pinhole radius of 4 nm, pinhole density of  $5 \times 10^{22} \text{ cm}^{-2}$  (60% completely through and 40% partially through),  $p^{++}$  poly-Si doping concentration of  $8 \times 10^{19} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ ,  $p^{++}$  poly-Si thickness of 240 nm, p substrate doping of  $4 \times 10^{16} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ ,  $n^+$  emitter doping of  $2 \times 10^{19} \text{ cm}^{-3}$  and bulk lifetime of  $200 \mu\text{s}$ .

### D. Further Improvement by N-TOPCon Structure Underneath the Front Contact

Now for further improvement in conventional p-TOPCon solar cell, selective n-TOPCon structures are formed in between front contacts and emitter (see Fig. 1). Initially,  $d_{\text{ox-F}} = 1.2 \text{ nm}$ ,  $d_{n^+ \text{poly-Si}} = 30 \text{ nm}$ ,  $N_{\text{D-poly}} = 1 \times 10^{20} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ , the ratio of tunneling junction width to front contact width ( $R$ ) = 2 and in the tunnel oxide layer on front-side pinholes with radius 4 nm, and density of  $1 \times 10^{17} \text{ cm}^{-2}$  are considered [19], [20], [28]. In the next steps, the above-mentioned parameters for n-TOPCon structure are optimized. Considering these initial parameters, the efficiency is improved to 24.3% with  $V_{\text{oc}}$  of 698.6 mV,  $J_{\text{sc}}$  of  $41.2 \text{ mA/cm}^2$ , FF of 84.5% and  $R_s$  of  $0.22 \Omega \cdot \text{cm}^2$ .

1) *Thickness and Doping Optimization of Front  $n^{++}$  Poly-Si Layer:* The thickness of front  $n^{++}$  poly-Si is varied from 10 to 120 nm, considering phosphorus doping concentration ( $N_{\text{D-poly}}$ ) as parameter which is varied from  $4 \times 10^{19} \text{ cm}^{-3}$  to  $1 \times 10^{22} \text{ cm}^{-3}$  (see Fig. 2). In this step, front tunnel oxide thickness is kept constant at 1.2 nm.

It has been seen that with increase in  $n^{++}$  poly-Si thickness, initially  $J_{\text{sc}}$  increases and after a certain thickness it starts to decrease [see Fig. 2(a)]. This is because thin polysilicon layer cannot provide sufficient field for majority electrons to tunnel through oxide barrier. It is also seen that the minimum thickness

for sufficient field for tunneling depends on the doping concentration ( $N_{D\text{-poly}}$ ). In Fig. 2(a), it is seen that the peak of  $J_{sc}$  shifts toward thinner polysilicon ( $d_{n+}\text{Poly-Si}$ ) with higher  $N_{D\text{-poly}}$ . The highest  $J_{sc}$  achieved is  $41.2 \text{ mA/cm}^2$  for  $d_{n+}\text{poly-Si}$   $30\text{--}45 \text{ nm}$  and  $N_{D\text{-poly}} 1E20\text{--}1E21 \text{ cm}^{-3}$  range. For  $N_{D\text{-poly}} > 1E21 \text{ cm}^{-3}$ , highest  $J_{sc}$  cannot be reached even for thinner poly-Si due to unavoidable Auger recombination and free carrier absorption [49]. Again the decrease in  $J_{sc}$  with thicker poly-Si, which is different for different  $N_{D\text{-poly}}$ , is due to absorption of incident light in the poly-Si layer. Higher the thickness, higher is the absorption, and as poly-Si layer is defective (see Table I), a large number of generated minority holes are recombined without contributing to the total current. It is seen that light can enter into  $n^{++}$  poly-Si region due to inclined incidence of light [50] and diffraction of light [51] at metal/silicon-nitride interface even if it is covered by the metal fingers.

In Fig. 2(b), it is seen that  $R_s$  increases with increase in  $d_{n+}\text{poly-Si}$  in a nonlinear manner and the slope is steeper for thicker poly-Si.  $R_s$  increases with  $n^{++}$  poly-Si thickness because carriers have to travel longer path before collection. Also, the slope of  $R_s$  for thicker poly-Si is steeper because the electric field becomes weaker with increasing thickness of poly-Si leading to higher recombination of minority holes. Again, the slope is steeper with lower  $N_{D\text{-poly}}$ . It is well known that higher is the  $R_s$ , lower is the FF of the cell. We can see in Fig. 2(b) that with increase in  $d_{n+}\text{poly-Si}$ , the FF of the cell decreases. Similar to  $R_s$ , the slope of decrement is steeper with lower  $N_{D\text{-poly}}$ . In the range of variation, we achieved lowest  $R_s$  of  $0.17 \Omega\cdot\text{cm}^2$ , highest FF of  $84.6\%$  at  $d_{n+}\text{poly-Si} = 10 \text{ nm}$  and  $N_{D\text{-poly}} = 1E22 \text{ cm}^{-3}$  and highest  $R_s$  of  $0.41 \Omega\cdot\text{cm}^2$ , lowest FF of  $83.1\%$  at  $d_{n+}\text{poly-Si} = 120 \text{ nm}$ , and  $N_{D\text{-poly}} = 4E19 \text{ cm}^{-3}$ .

$V_{oc}$  of the cell also decreases with increase in  $d_{n+}\text{poly-Si}$  but the slope of decrement is flat [see Fig. 2(c)]. The decrease of  $V_{oc}$  with thicker poly-Si is due to higher SRH recombination in the poly-Si region. Also, very high doping in poly-Si layer results in lower  $V_{oc}$  due unavoidable auger recombination. Due to different nature of variations of  $J_{sc}$ ,  $V_{oc}$ , FF, and  $R_s$ , the efficiency of the cell varies, as shown in Fig. 2(d). The efficiency increases with increase in  $d_{n+}\text{poly-Si}$  and reaches to a peak then decreases. The peak efficiency again increases with increase in  $N_{D\text{-poly}}$  and reaches to maximum then decreases. The highest efficiency achieved in this stage is  $24.4\%$  at  $d_{n+}\text{poly-Si} = 20 \text{ nm}$ ,  $N_{D\text{-poly}} = 1E21 \text{ cm}^{-3}$  and at  $d_{n+}\text{poly-Si} = 30 \text{ nm}$ ,  $N_{D\text{-poly}} = 5E20 \text{ cm}^{-3}$ .

2) *Optimization of Front Oxide Thickness and Ratio of Tunneling Junction Width to Front Contact Width:* To achieve the best performance, front tunnel oxide thickness ( $dox_F$ ) and the ratio of tunneling junction width to front contact width (R) should be optimized. For this purpose,  $dox_F$  is varied from 1.0 to 1.7 nm considering R as parameter which is varied from 1 to 3.

As  $dox_F$  increases from 1 nm, initially  $J_{sc}$  increases and reaches to a maximum and then decreases [see Fig. 3(a)]. Initially, when front tunnel oxide is very thin, it allows minority holes to transport from emitter to  $n^{++}$  poly-Si and Ag contacts which are lost due to recombination without contributing to output current. As front tunnel oxide gets thicker, it blocks minority hole to transport from emitter to front contact and

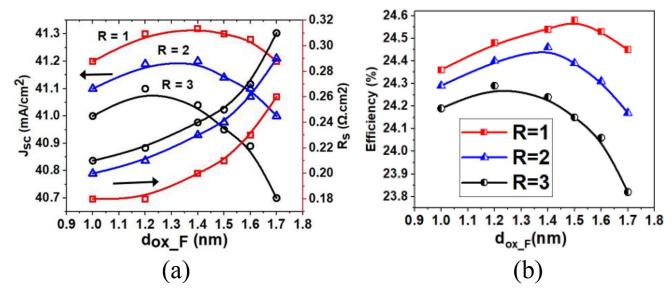


Fig. 3. Variation of (a)  $J_{sc}$  (in  $\text{mA}/\text{cm}^2$ ) and  $R_s$  (in  $\Omega\cdot\text{cm}^2$ ) and (b) efficiency (in %) with front tunnel oxide thickness ( $dox_F$  in nanometer) taking ratio of tunneling junction width to front contact width (R) as parameter.

TABLE III  
OPTIMIZED PARAMETERS

Parameters	Value
Resistivity of Substrate (p-type)	$0.9 \Omega\cdot\text{cm}$ ( $4\times 10^{16} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ )
sheet resistance of front emitter	$90 \Omega/\text{sq}$ .
Front contact	$10 \mu\text{m}\times 35 \mu\text{m}$ with spacing 1.7 mm, and shading 2%.
$d_{n+}\text{poly-Si}$	30 nm
$N_{D\text{-poly}} / N_{A\text{-poly}}$	$5\times 10^{20} \text{ cm}^{-3} / 8\times 10^{19} \text{ cm}^{-3}$
$dox_F / dox_R$	1.5 nm / 1.2 nm
Rear contact	$10 \mu\text{m}\times 50 \mu\text{m}$ with spacing 0.6 mm, and shading 7%.

these holes reach to the junction and gets separated contributing to the output current. Hence,  $J_{sc}$  increases with thicker front tunnel oxide. But it happens up to a certain thickness; after that tunneling probability [26] of majority electrons decreases which in turn decreases output current. Again as R increases from 1 that is when tunneling junction (oxide +  $n^{++}$  poly-Si), width becomes greater than the front contact width then  $J_{sc}$  decreases rapidly. This is due to the absorption of light in the  $n^{++}$  poly-Si region. The highest  $J_{sc}$  achieved is  $41.3 \text{ mA}/\text{cm}^2$  for  $R = 1$  and  $dox_F = 1.2\text{--}1.5 \text{ nm}$ . In Fig. 3(a), it is also seen that  $R_s$  increases with increase in  $dox_F$ . This is because of the reduction of tunnel current with increment of  $dox_F$  [26]. This increase in  $R_s$  results in a lower value of FF of the cell. The nature of variation of  $V_{oc}$  with  $dox_F$  and R is similar to  $J_{sc}$ . Therefore, depending on the variations of  $J_{sc}$ ,  $V_{oc}$ , and FF, the efficiency of the cell varies, as shown in Fig. 3(b). The highest efficiency achieved in this step is  $24.6\%$  with  $V_{oc} = 704.5 \text{ mV}$ ,  $J_{sc} = 41.3 \text{ mA}/\text{cm}^2$ , FF =  $84.5\%$ , and  $R_s = 0.21 \Omega\cdot\text{cm}^2$  for  $R = 1$ ,  $dox_F = 1.5 \text{ nm}$ ,  $d_{n+}\text{poly-Si} = 30 \text{ nm}$ ,  $N_{D\text{-poly}} = 5E20 \text{ cm}^{-3}$ , and  $\tau_{\text{Bulk}} = 200 \mu\text{s}$ .

The efficiency is further improved by decreasing the front contact percentage from 2.8% to 2%. Further decrement of front contact percentage decreases the efficiency. The increment in efficiency is due to the reduction of front shading by metal contacts. But very low percentage of front contact increases the contact resistance and carrier crowding in the contacts and, hence, efficiency decreases. The highest efficiency achieved is  $24.7\%$  with  $V_{oc} = 705.0 \text{ mV}$ ,  $J_{sc} = 41.5 \text{ mA}/\text{cm}^2$ , FF =  $84.5\%$ , and  $R_s = 0.22 \Omega\cdot\text{cm}^2$  for the optimized parameters listed in Table III. Therefore, performing all the improvements in the reference TOPCon solar cell, the efficiency is improved by 3.5%.

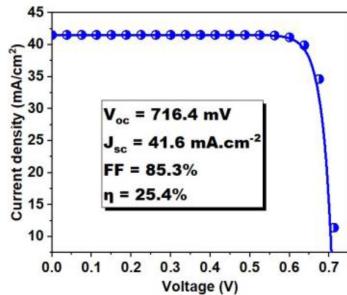


Fig. 4. Current density ( $J$ )–Voltage ( $V$ ) characteristics of the best cell for front contact percentage = 2%,  $R = 1$ ,  $\text{dox}_F = 1.5 \text{ nm}$   $d_{n+}$  poly-Si = 30 nm,  $N_{D-\text{poly}} = 5E20 \text{ cm}^{-3}$ , and  $\tau_{\text{Bulk}} = 1 \text{ ms}$ .

TABLE IV  
SUCCESSIVE IMPROVEMENTS

Steps	Efficiency
Initial reference cell (both fabricated and simulated)	21.2%
After optimization of tunnel oxide thickness ( $\text{SiO}_2$ ), pinhole radius, density, and nature	22.6
After front-side passivation improvement	23.2
After optimizing substrate doping	23.8
Using $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$ as tunnel layer on the rear side	23.9
Integration of front poly without optimization	24.3
After front poly thickness and doping optimization	24.4
After optimizing oxide thickness	24.6
After decreasing metal area coverage on front side	24.7
After increasing bulk lifetime from 200 $\mu\text{s}$ to 1 ms	25.4

This efficiency can further be improved to 25.4% with  $V_{oc}$  of 716.4%,  $J_{sc}$  of  $41.6 \text{ mA}/\text{cm}^2$ , FF of 85.3%,  $R_s$  of  $0.34 \Omega \cdot \text{cm}^2$ , and overall reverse saturation current density ( $J_0$ ) of  $40.5 \text{ fA}/\text{cm}^2$  by increasing the bulk lifetime( $\tau_{\text{Bulk}}$ ) to 1 ms (see Fig. 4).

#### IV. CONCLUSION

To achieve optimum performance of a TOPCon solar cell oxide/Si interface, tunnel oxide thickness, density, nature, and radius of pinholes in the oxide layer and the poly-Si layer should be optimized. The  $\text{SiO}_2$  tunnel layer in a p-TOPCon solar cell may be replaced with a tunnel oxide layer that has negative fixed charge, provided that the hole tunneling mass is not sufficiently large and the oxide/p-c-Si interface does not have significant interface defects (e.g.,  $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$ ). The performance of a p-TOPCon solar cell can further be improved by passivating the front contacts with n-type tunneling junctions. As the  $n^{++}$  poly-Si/ $\text{SiO}_2$  layer stack is on the front side and light enters in the cell through front side, hence the optimization of tunnel oxide thickness,  $n^{++}$  poly-Si thickness and doping and the width of  $\text{SiO}_2/n^{++}$  poly-Si tunneling junctions underneath the front contacts become important. Optimizing all the parameters, the efficiency of the reference p-TOPCon solar cell has been improved from 21.2% to 25.4%, and the reverse saturation current density is reduced to  $40.4 \text{ fA}/\text{cm}^2$  from  $221.4 \text{ fA}/\text{cm}^2$ . The successive improvements are indicated in Table IV.

This efficiency may further be improved by increasing the bulk lifetime. In fabrication of this structure, the main challenges are the control of the width of the openings and deposition of

thin poly-Si with high doping concentration of phosphorus (such as  $5E20 \text{ cm}^{-3}$  for 30 nm poly-Si,  $1E21 \text{ cm}^{-3}$  for 20 nm poly-Si, etc.) on the front side which is textured. Overall, there is a scope of improvisation of TOPCon solar cell by this type of structure but it requires lots of experiments.

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