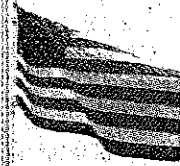


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Boeing gets state grant for high-tech project Heath facility to build Virtual Manufacturing Center, add 10 jobs

By KENT MALLET
Advocate Reporter

HEATH — The Ohio Department of Development announced Monday that Boeing Guidance Repair Center will receive a \$200,000 grant to be used toward a \$1.25 million high-tech expansion at its Heath facility.

The company, located at the Central Ohio Aerospace and Technology Center, plans to reconfigure a 10,000-square foot section of its existing facility

and complete onsite infrastructure work to establish an interactive, real-time visualization system called the Virtual Manufacturing Center.

The grant, administered by the Ohio Department of Development, was one of several approved Monday by the State Controlling Board. The project will help retain the existing 587 positions and require an additional 10 jobs at the Boeing facility.

"The (Virtual Manufacturing) Center will visually provide a display that communicates real-time engineering and technical information in order to determine solutions to manufacturing processes," according to the description on the ODOD Web site. "The machinery and equipment to be purchased includes fixed computer display walls, high-fidelity projectors, a wireless tracking system, stereo glass, a three-dimensional sound system

and related equipment."

In this system, a person can have a real-time visual experience with prototype products that haven't been produced yet.

Construction will begin by the end of the year and finish by the second quarter of 2008, said Dawn Pettit, spokeswoman for Boeing Guidance Repair Center. The company has a similar facility in Anaheim, Calif.

"Its greatest potential is how it could link people from different

parts of the country to one place," Pettit said. "It's very advanced technology. You can go in from a remote site and see it being put together and make changes, and you can get on from sites all over the country."

Rick Platt, director of the Heath-Newark-Licking County Port Authority, which oversees COATC, said the Port Authority will combine its funds with an untapped 2006 state planning grant to buy \$300,000 in equip-

ment it will lease to Boeing for the project.

"Boeing will get to use the equipment and the Port Authority will own it, but Boeing can use it exclusively," Platt said. "Ten jobs, it may seem modest, but this is significant."

"The Base has been around 45 years, and this is a significant development in the history of the Base."

Platt credits credits Lt. Gov. Lee Fisher and state Rep. Jay Hottinger, R-Newark, with helping the project become reality.

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Boeing

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"I think it would not happen if not for the personal involvement and personal attention of Lt. Gov. Lee Fisher," Platt said. "That helps. That stuff really makes a difference. Boeing was convinced of the project's extreme importance to Ohio because of Fisher's personal attention and the state-local incentive package."

"Representative Hottinger championed this project with the state from the start and he stayed on it until the grant approval," Platt added.

Hottinger, a member of the State Controlling Board, said the project is important because it ensures Boeing's presence at the former Newark Air Force Base for the future.

"Boeing is not only able to maintain, but expand," Hottinger said. "The future is bright there. Not that those jobs were in any jeopardy, but Boeing isn't going anywhere anytime soon."

Boeing is the world's largest aerospace company and the largest manufacturer of commercial jetliners and military aircraft combined. With headquarters in Chicago, the compa-

ny designs and manufactures electronic and defense systems, missiles, satellites, launch vehicles, and advanced information and communication systems.

The state grant, one of eight announced Monday, is a Rapid Outreach Grant, a program that assists companies and communities creating or retaining jobs in Ohio. The eight grants, worth \$1.14 million, will help create 459 jobs and retain 3,296 positions, ODOD stated.

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