



Excerpt:

CHATTANOOGA_ "...The use of technology such as magnetic levitation to power a train at speeds of 300 miles per hour between Chattanooga and Atlanta is to undergo study within weeks <<http://www.acmaglev.com/>>. Joe Ferguson, who heads Chattanooga's Enterprise Center, said a multimillion-dollar contract is expected to be awarded to a study team around mid-March. It will spend the next 24 to 36 months evaluating a potential route between the cities and the environmental impact of high-speed rail. Construction of just the first 40 miles of the 120-mile link, if it is approved and funded, has been estimated at providing a \$1.5 billion cash infusion and creating an estimated 6,000 jobs. Maglev technology, which uses powerful magnets to propel a train on a cushion of air, produces zero emissions. In addition, supporters say, the train would take a lot of vehicles off Interstate 75 each day."

Chattanooga, Tenn., economic growth officials target alternative energy firms

Chattanooga Times (Free Press, TN) (KRT)

Mar. 4--Wind tower maker Aerisyn is whipping up business and hiring employees at a clip brisker than it expected since it chose Tennessee last year for a new plant.

The facility on Chattanooga's riverfront hopes to be up to 175 workers by the end of 2006, said Wally Thompson, the company's chief operating officer.

"We're competitive here and hopefully worldwide. We may export from here," Mr. Thompson said.

The city's economic development officials are targeting alternative energy companies such as Aerisyn, especially in the wake of President Bush's call for breaking the nation's oil addiction. Officials believe hundreds of new jobs, many in the manufacturing sector, could be created and help the environment at the same time.

"We do see the alternative energy sector with a very strong potential for creating jobs and attracting investment," said J.Ed. Marston, the Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce's vice president for marketing. "We already court these companies when we have the opportunity."

Among the possibilities are:

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--Fuel cells

An innovative fuel cell producing electricity and hydrogen created by Silicon Valley-based Ion America started undergoing evaluation at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga earlier this year.

Eventually, Chattanooga officials would like to see a manufacturing plant making the units as UTC puts together a plan to help take the fuel cell to the marketplace.

U.S. Rep. Zach Wamp, R-Tenn., said the Tennessee Technology Corridor, which aligns the city with research institutions at Oak Ridge and Knoxville, is in "a real live partnership with the Silicon Valley."

"The potential is huge," he said.

--Fast train

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--Biodiesel

Researchers from the U.S. Department of Energy's Oak Ridge National Laboratory believe the time may be right for developing biorefineries to make biofuels from agricultural crops. Biodiesels typically are made from vegetable oils or animal fats and mixed with petroleum diesel to produce different blends.

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Ross Benton, president of Chattanooga-based Benton Oil Co., said pump sales of biodiesel are "better than ever." In 2005, he said, the company sold close to a million gallons and there's "a good chance" of topping that figure this year.

"It's domestic. That's one of the beauties of the product. Middle East unrest doesn't affect the price of biodiesel itself," Mr. Benton said.

In addition to these products and technologies, existing companies such as Tennessee Valley Infrastructure Group and Big Frog Mountain are involved in the alternative energy business.

TVIG has designed and installed wind towers around the world, while Big Frog has installed electricity-generating solar panels at residences and businesses throughout the United States.

However, one difficulty in trying to recruit alternative energy businesses is that the sector is a diverse one, Mr. Marston said.

"There are lots of different companies to go after. The challenge is to figure out the best way to go after those," he said.

Aerisyn recently exercised an option to lease another 95,000 square feet at its Chattanooga location, adding to its original 155,000-square-foot manufacturing space, according to Tom Kale of NAI Charter Real Estate Corp. Aerisyn is leasing the space from Alstom Corp., and the site has 1,000-foot-long bays and an 800-ton crane, said Mr. Kale.

Mr. Thompson said the company wants to produce annually 450 wind towers, which can be up to 300 feet tall. When the company announced it was coming to Chattanooga early last year, it had hoped to employ 150 people in three years, but it's ahead of schedule.

Wind turbines offer a clean and renewable source of electric power, and the demand is growing, according to the company. Officials said wind generation capacity was installed to power more than 600,000 homes in the United States from 2002 to 2004.

Aerisyn officials said they were going to invest more than \$7 million in what officials said is the first automated wind-tower production site in North America.

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