

Michelin may grow in

Company considers Anderson County for plant that may add to state's growing presence in tiremaking industry

By Rudolph Bell

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The tire industry is once again eyeing South Carolina for expansion, and this time the Upstate may get the prize.

Greenville-based Michelin North America is talking to Anderson County officials about a possible property tax break in exchange for new investment somewhere in the county, according to a published public notice.

The economic development project —

dubbed Project Cougar — involves a potential corporate investment of between \$150 million and more than \$1 billion and between 150 and 300 new jobs, according to an incentives proposal that Anderson County Council is scheduled to vote on tonight.

County officials are negotiating with the company about an "expansion project" as well as an "existing project," according to the incentives paperwork.

County Councilman Francis Crowder cautioned, however, that the deal isn't necessarily done.

"We're still in competition with other places around the country and even outside the country," he told GreenvilleOnline.com.

A two-sentence statement issued by Michelin provided little additional information.

"Incentives such as those being considered by Anderson County pave the way for the potential of future investments down the road," Michelin spokeswoman Lynn Mann said in the statement.

"While Michelin routinely considers a variety of business opportunities, we have nothing to announce at this time."

The French tiremaker already oper-

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WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2012

Upstate

MICHELIN NORTH AMERICA

\$7.25 billion in annual sales

18 plants

16 locations

22,270 employees

Michelin manufactures tires in five states: Alabama, Indiana, Oklahoma, North Carolina and South Carolina.

EMPLOYMENT BY STATE

South Carolina: 7,711

Alabama: 1,950

Oklahoma: 1,783

Indiana: 1,603

North Carolina: 425

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ates two plants in Anderson County.

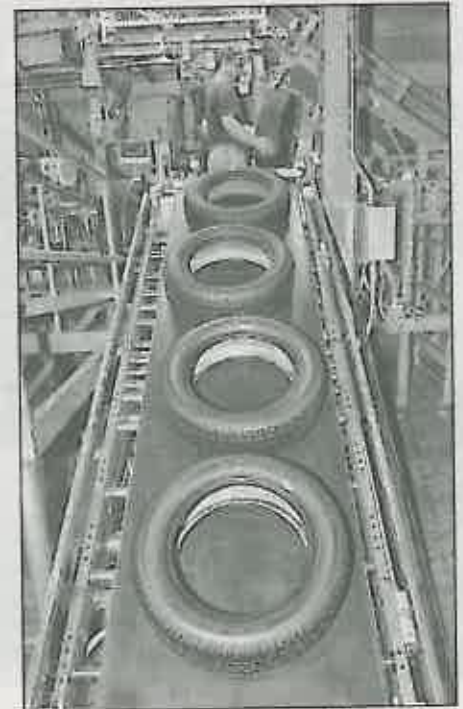
If Anderson County does land the new jobs, it would be the third major tire industry announcement for South Carolina since the summer.

In September, Bridgestone said it would spend \$1.2 billion building a new tire plant and expanding an existing one in Aiken County, adding 850 jobs, including contract workers, to its South Carolina work force.

In October, Continental Tire announced plans to spend \$500 million building a new plant in Sumter County that it said would generate 1,700 jobs over a decade. The company's North American headquarters is in Lancaster County.

Those two announcements, combined with plants that Michelin and Bridgestone already had, made South Carolina the country's top tire state in terms of the number of plants and production capacity, according to Jim Smith, editor of Tire Review, and Bruce Davis, special projects reporter with Tire Business.

Both trade publications are in Akron, Ohio.



Michelin North America is talking to Anderson County officials about a property tax break for new investment in the county. OWEN RILEY JR./STAFF