The future of mobility



Ulrich Quay, vice president of BMW i Ventures, speaks on the first day of the two-day InnoMobility conference at the TD Convention Center on Tuesday. The conference focuses on opportunities in mobility. HEIDI HEILBRUNN/STAFF

Three companies may bring county 2,000 jobs

By Rudolph Bell
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Companies could create up to 2,000 jobs in Greenville County under a trio of projects taken up by County Council Tuesday night.

Council members voted unanimously to give the companies property tax breaks and other incentives in exchange for the jobs and at least $172 million in investment.

Council members declined to identify the firms, saying Greenville was still competing with other locations.

Council Chairman Butch Kirven did tell GreenvilleOnline.com that together the three projects could mean between 1,500 and 2,000 jobs.

"We think there might be some good announcements coming out of this before the end of the year," Kirven said.

Paperwork related to the proposed incentives refers to the companies by code names only and provides scant details.

A project called Project Wrigley involves an investment by a manufacturer of at least $75 million and an existing building, the paperwork said.

For Project Lotus, the investment would be at least $85 million, and Project Gem, a new factory, would mean at least 50 jobs and a $12 million investment.

In other action, Council unanimously approved new Council districts to reflect the results of the 2010 Census. The U.S. Justice Department will have to review the plan.

Council also adopted an emergency ban on the possession or distribution of certain synthetic drugs, including "bath salts" and synthetic marijuana.

Councilman Joe Dill said he'd gotten calls about the danger of the synthetic drugs from law enforcement officers.

"We need to do something right," said Councilman Sid Cates.

Council also agreed to form a special committee to study bicycle safety instead of lobbying state lawmakers to add penalties for unsafe cycling.

Dill had intially proposed lobbying for a change in state law, but he recommended the special committee instead after seven cyclists spoke out against the original proposal during a hearing.

Council also approved new guidelines for distributing money from a 2 percent tax on hotel stays.

Earlier guidelines created controversy by giving special treatment to Freedom Weekend Aloft and the Greater Greenville Scottish Games and Highland Festival.

Council also presented a proclamation honoring Edvard Tchivzhel, conductor of the Greenville Symphony Orchestra.