



## Analysts predict big things to come from Volvo announcement

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By Debi Chard



BERKELEY COUNTY, SC (WCSC) -

Analysts are predicting big things to come following the announcement that Volvo would build a car plant in Berkeley County.

An industry analyst says he wouldn't be surprised if we didn't see more Volvo Car operations here in the Charleston area, possibly even the Volvo Car U.S. headquarters.

John Boyd, whose New Jersey company, The Boyd Company, Inc., scouts locations for big industry, said it's not a far stretch to think Volvo would settle here in a big way.

"We have to remember Mercedes has left New Jersey," he said. "There's talk of Volvo perhaps being the next shoe to drop. Now that South Carolina is home to this new product facility, South Carolina puts itself at the top of the list in terms of a prime place to consider for the North American Headquarters," Boyd said.

Boyd also mentioned the economic benefit of suppliers locating here. And he points out that Volvo Car was more than likely attracted to this right-to-work state after having a bad union experience in Canada.

Volvo Cars is owned by Geely Holding, the holding company of a Chinese car manufacturer. Industry analyst Mike Randle of the Southern Auto Corridor says he thinks this plant is an entryway for the Chinese automaker, Geely.

Volvo Cars hasn't said what kind of vehicle will be produced in Berkeley County, but when the single production line plant grows in time, Randle predicts the rest of the lines will be Geely. Randle says our state has a history with the Chinese, the first state in the US he says to have a Chinese manufacturing plant.

Since 1999, Haier Group has called Kershaw County home with its appliance manufacturing facility in Camden.

But in an email, a South Carolina Commerce Department spokeswoman said the Volvo Car facility is being classified as a "European (Swedish) company despite ownership by a Chinese holding company.

Both Boyd and Randle talked about Mexico landing more than a half dozen major manufacturers in recent years.

"This breaks the Mexican string," Randle said.

Boyd called South Carolina's Volvo deal, "a trophy project for the Charleston area."