

## TRIANGLE BUSINESS JOURNAL

### **Global automaker shortlists NC for manufacturing plant, thousands of jobs**



North Carolina is in the running for an automobile plant - again.

By Lauren Ohnesorge – Senior Staff Writer, Triangle Business Journal - Aug 9, 2019

More than a year after North Carolina lost out on a Toyota-Mazda plant, it looks like it has another real shot at winning an automotive assembly operation - and potentially thousands of jobs.

Indian automotive manufacturer Mahindra Automotive North America confirms North Carolina is on the shortlist for a new manufacturing plant.

But, as with Toyota (which ultimately ended up picking Alabama), the state faces major competition.

Company spokesman Richard Ansell says that, in addition to “a site in North Carolina,” the company is considering locating in South Carolina, Texas, Arizona and Michigan.

And the company already has an operation near Detroit, Michigan, where its first manufacturing site launched. That site already employs more than 500 people “all with the common goal of putting Mahindra vehicles to work on (and off) North American roads,” according to its website. And Michigan has another big advantage, and that’s the vacated Buick City site in Flint, which Mahindra has reportedly confirmed it’s exploring.

Mahindra would be a big win, as Ansell confirms the company is looking for a labor pool that can support 1,650 to 4,500 jobs “over the next 7 – 10 years.”

Mahindra is prioritizing industrial brownfield sites with “adequate utilities” in close proximity to rail and highways, It’s looking for between 140 and 340 acres for the multi-phase project. And it’s prioritizing communities with good educational systems.

Mike Walden, professor and economist at North Carolina State University, says a win would be bigger than the plant itself, “when supply chain impacts are included.”

“N.C. has sites already assembled for this type of firm, so that may help us in the competition,” he says. “N.C. has worked for 40 years to land a vehicle assembly plant – the time may be now!”

Site selection expert John Boyd says Mahindra would be a “trophy project” for North Carolina.

“After a string of big pharmaceutical, IT and HQ wins, Mahindra would make the statement that N.C. is now a player in the highly coveted automotive sector,” he writes in an email.

And he thinks the state could have a shot.

“In my view, N.C.’s low cost of doing business, excellent workforce training program, abundance of IT and engineering skill sets, right to work legislation and proximity to other automotive companies in the Southeast make the state attractive for Mahindra,” he says.

It's unclear what site Mahindra is considering, but Toyota-Mazda considered multiple options.

Toyota-Mazda looked at both the Moncure Megasite and the Chatham Siler City Advanced Manufacturing site before zeroing in on Greensboro-Randolph Megasite. And the state was prepared to step up with more than \$1.5 billion in incentives to lure the project.

N.C. Commerce Secretary Tony Copeland said at the time that the fact that Alabama has a built-in supply chain played a major role in the decision to go to Alabama instead of the 1,900-acre site in Randolph County.

North Carolina Department of Commerce declined to comment specifically on Mahindra, citing its policy against talking about active projects.

"However, it's no secret that North Carolina and several of our local communities have been making the necessary preparations to attract an automotive assembly plant or other large-scale manufacturer," spokesman David Rhoades says in an email.

"North Carolina offers an attractive package that includes world-class transportation infrastructure, education and training systems, and local and state leaders that understand the needs of manufacturers. Combined with the robust automotive supply chain that's already here, and our skilled manufacturing workforce, North Carolina remains an excellent choice for this industry."

Mahindra, according to its website, works to ingrain its "rugged, work-proven automotive heritage in vehicles fit for the world's toughest roads."