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Automaker backed by Amazon passes on NC, focuses on Texas for potential \$5B project



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An electric vehicle maker backed by Amazon (Nasdaq: AMZN) and Ford (NYSE: F) considered North Carolina before zeroing in on Texas for a \$5 billion project.



Rivian is pursuing plans for a second U.S. manufacturing facility to produce its electric vehicles. Rivian

California-based Rivian has been aggressively courting Fort Worth, Texas, as it scouts sites for a 7,500-job facility. Multiple states have reportedly vied for the project and, while it hasn't officially announced Texas as the winner, Rivian was recently approved for a \$440 million incentives package to locate in Fort Worth, making an announcement appear imminent.

Rivian is an all-American, all-electric vehicle manufacturer that specializes in trucks and SUVs. The company has more than 7,000 employees nationwide with its headquarters in Irvine, California. The firm is under contract with Amazon for a 100,000 vehicle order of all-electric delivery vans.

Prior to the incentives deal in Texas, North Carolina was at least in the mix, a fact confirmed by David Rhoades, spokesman for the North Carolina Department of Commerce.

A Rivian spokesman told *TBJ* that a final decision has not been made.

"Rivian is in discussions with multiple locations as part of a competitive process for siting a second manufacturing facility," said James Chen, the company's vice president of public policy. "This may include Rivian being involved in certain public-facing processes at potential locations. Involvement in these processes does not indicate a final decision."

But, as N.C. Commerce only comments on active projects, whatever talks the state had with the company appear to have fizzled. It wasn't immediately clear where in North Carolina Rivian had considered. Nor was it clear how far the state had gotten with the automaker in negotiations.

Rivian's apparent rejection is the latest blow for North Carolina's search for an automaker to bring major operations to the state. Last year, the state dangled training incentives in front of Canadian vehicle maker ElectraMeccanica in a failed effort to land its 205-job plant in Lee County. The state has also tried to woo Indian automaker Mahindra and Elon Musk's Tesla (Nasdaq: TSLA) in recent years.

Three years ago, the state lost the Toyota-Mazda plant to a competing bid in Alabama. Four years ago French automaker Peugeot rejected the state for its North American headquarters. And six years ago, the state tried unsuccessfully to reel in Volvo and Mercedes-Benz.

But lately, the state's luck has shifted.

Arrival Automotive, a British electric vehicle maker, announced recent plans to set up its North American headquarters in Charlotte. And the project comes with two nearby manufacturing locations – though one is technically in South Carolina.

John Boyd, a site selection consultant based in Florida, said he's not surprised to see Rivian at least consider North Carolina, particularly in light of Arrival's commitment. And he said the state has a real chance to win the next project.

"The emergence of the (electric vehicle) sector is an entirely new ballgame for the state," he said. "No longer are traditional auto-related and internal combustion engine-related supply chain concentrations – which have evolved in the Deep South around a number of assembly plants – leading the site selection process for the EV industry. It is more of a high tech playbook and market access with other considerations related to a state's posture on EV legislation. North Carolina shows well on all these fronts now."

Rivian could be a big win for Texas, where it's eyeing a 2,000-acre site that could one day host multiple facilities.