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Tritium, President Biden announce 500-job plant in Lebanon to make fast chargers for electric vehicles



Image: Tritium DCFC Ltd.

The PKM150 model of the fast chargers for electric vehicles made by Tritium DCFC Ltd.



By Adam Sichko – Senior Reporter, Nashville Business Journal
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An Australia-based company that makes chargers for electric vehicles has selected Middle Tennessee for its U.S. manufacturing hub, pledging more than 500 jobs in a deal that has the attention of President Joe Biden.

Tritium DCFC Ltd. (Nasdaq: DCFC) announced Tuesday that Lebanon will house its latest factory, where workers will make direct current fast chargers for electric vehicles. The facility at 1420 Toshiba Drive will open in the third quarter, containing up to six production lines. The 21-year-

old company plans to initially make 10,000 fast charger units per year in Lebanon, with the potential to triple that capacity at peak activity.

On Tuesday, Tritium CEO Jane Hunter will join Biden at the White House for a formal announcement about the Lebanon investment, located east of Nashville.

The jobs deal shows Tennessee's continued momentum among the states racing to win once-in-a-generation investments as automakers speed into a future they believe will prominently feature electric cars, trucks and SUVs. Tennessee will have four automakers making electric vehicles inside state lines, once General Motors (NYSE: GM) begins making its all-electric Cadillac Lyriq in Spring Hill this quarter and Ford Motor Co. (NYSE: F) powers up its \$5.6 billion electric vehicle campus between Memphis and Jackson.

Tennessee wagered aggressively to land those projects. Ford alone received \$884 million of incentives, with GM netting another \$125 million of cash for vehicle production and its Ultium Cells joint venture that will make lithium-ion batteries to power the Lyriq and other vehicles.

The addition of Tritium points to a trend state officials and industry experts anticipate — the arrival of suppliers to the electric vehicle industry and, in this case, companies making chargers that will be vital to convincing more consumers to buy electric.

There were 16,902 electric vehicles registered in Tennessee at the end of last year. The group DriveElectricTN, spearheaded by electric utility Tennessee Valley Authority, has a goal of boosting that to 200,000 by 2028. Last month, TVA installed the first fast chargers in its seven-state territory, aiming to have stations every 50 miles on the interstate.

TVA joined the state in providing incentives to Tritium, though precise amounts were not publicly released on Tuesday. Tritium did not announce how much it will invest in Lebanon; that information, along with state incentives, will become public within 30 days per state policy.

Tritium expects to add the jobs over five years. Spokesman Jack Ulrich declined to disclose what it's investing in the Lebanon facility. Ulrich declined to discuss the types of jobs involved or their pay scale; he noted that "our typical manufacturing process includes skilled and unskilled labor."

Tritium scouted about a dozen locations in the central time zone, which executives preferred because it allowed them to scoot a little closer to the company's global headquarters in Australia, said John Boyd Jr. He's principal of The Boyd Co. Inc., which Tritium used to guide its search.

"The ability to service a national market is obviously a critical site-selection component that Wilson County can bring to the table," Boyd said. "Tennessee, on the heels of the major Ford project and now with Tritium, is positioned as a global leader in this new booming industry."

Tritium ran its site search under the code name Project Lance, according to G.C. Hixson, executive director of the Joint Economic & Community Development Board of Wilson County. Hixson said

his team had worked on the project for about 10 months. No local incentives have been offered to the company.

Tritium marks another notable jobs deal for Wilson County, coming off a year in which the county attracted 1,400 jobs from Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc. (NYSE: TMO) as well as investments from outdoor retailer REI and multiple Amazon facilities, among other projects.