

## **Cooper adding global tech center to enhance product development**

FINDLAY, Ohio—Cooper Tire & Rubber Co.'s plans to add a global technical center at its Findlay research and development complex are aimed at accelerating the growth of the company's advanced tire and material technologies. Cooper will spend more than \$40 million in a five-year span on the new operation, according to a spokeswoman for the Ohio Third Frontier, a state agency that is funding a portion of the project. The center will create about 40 full-time jobs over the next three years if the expansion project clears its final hurdle, a spokeswoman for the tire maker said. The state of Ohio, through the Ohio Third Frontier program, has approved \$2.8 million in funding to support the addition. The award is contingent upon the OK of the agency's controlling board, which is expected to make the decision in late March. The funding is based on Cooper selecting Findlay as the location for the new center, the Ohio Third Frontier spokeswoman said. However, it is unlikely the tire maker would select any other location than Findlay, which serves as its global headquarters and the home of the firm's North American region technical center. The city also houses one of the company's tire plants. Cooper's global technical center will occupy the second floor of the tire maker's North American tech center, the firm's spokeswoman said. The entire floor, currently unused, will be refurbished, she said, adding that the facility was built by Cooper with room to grow. Work on the global center is expected to begin shortly, and Cooper hopes to complete the expansion project by year-end. All the new staffers hired by the company will be technical center employees, including engineers, scientists, technicians and technical managers, the spokeswoman said. Cooper has not released other details on the addition as yet and won't until the Ohio Third Frontier's controlling board officially has approved its funding for the project. The primary function of the center's staff will be to take the lead in developing advanced tire and material technologies and turn them over to the firm's other regional R&D centers—all located relatively close to tire production plants—for ultimate use in products, she said. "This will help in the development of all of our manufacturing operations," the spokeswoman said. In addition to its Findlay operation, the company has regional technical centers in Melksham, England, and Shanghai, China. Ohio Third Frontier, a technology-based economic development initiative charged with changing Ohio's economy, said the global center's aim is to accelerate R&D of advanced tire and material technologies that can be incorporated into new products made at the Findlay factory and its other plants around the globe. The agency, with \$2.3 billion in funds, supports existing industries that are being transformed with new, globally competitive products. Ohio Third Frontier's Industrial Research and Development Center Program (IRDCP) was put in place to help attract and expand large corporate, nonprofit or federal R&D centers to Ohio. The IRDCP supplements Ohio organizations' proposals for centers by providing funding. Launched in 2002, Ohio Third Frontier "is

geared toward promoting entrepreneurship,” the spokeswoman said. “Since then we’ve created 95,510 jobs.”