



A crane lifts a 737-700 out of the integration section at Spirit. The 737-700 is the 5,000th one made in Wichita and it's for Southwest Airlines.

Photo by Jaime Oppenheimer/The Wichita Eagle

Aviation company announces Kinston expansion

By Jonathan B. Cox, Staff Writer

A Kansas aviation-parts company will expand at the Global TransPark in Kinston, creating more than 1,000 jobs and providing a boost to Eastern North Carolina's economy.

Spirit AeroSystems of Wichita, Kan., makes aircraft components such as fuselages and wings for companies including Boeing and Airbus. The company will pay average annual salaries of \$48,000. That's well above the \$27,042 average for Lenoir County.

To attract the project, North Carolina officials promised a rich package of financial incentives.

The Golden LEAF Foundation, which manages more than \$700 million in public funds stemming from the national tobacco settlement, announced this morning it will provide \$100 million. That's the largest grant in the foundation's history.

In addition, the state's Commerce Department approved incentives worth more than \$25 million, if the company creates and keeps the jobs it has promised.

"The Global TransPark was built to help this region make the transition from a tobacco-dependent economy to one that attracts knowledge-based, high-tech industries," said Gov. Mike Easley, in a prepared statement. "Today's announcement not only shows that eastern North Carolina can successfully compete in today's global marketplace, but that North Carolina continues to be a leader in the aerospace industry more than 100 years after the Wright Brothers made their historic first flight at Kitty Hawk."

The expansion will be a boon for the TransPark, which was created by the legislature in 1991 as an economic catalyst for a rural region. It has failed, though, to live up to expectations and been criticized as a boondoggle as officials struggled to find an anchor tenant.

Spirit was attracted partly by the park's proximity to military bases and the state's ports in Wilmington and Morehead City. The company plans to invest \$570.5 million and create 1,031 jobs over the next six years.

"The state of North Carolina met our requirements for financial incentives and this location offers a strong industrial base, a runway and port access, a growing labor force and an excellent technical training system," said Spirit President and CEO Jeff Turner.

The publicly traded company was formed in 2005 when a Canadian company bought a division of Boeing.

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