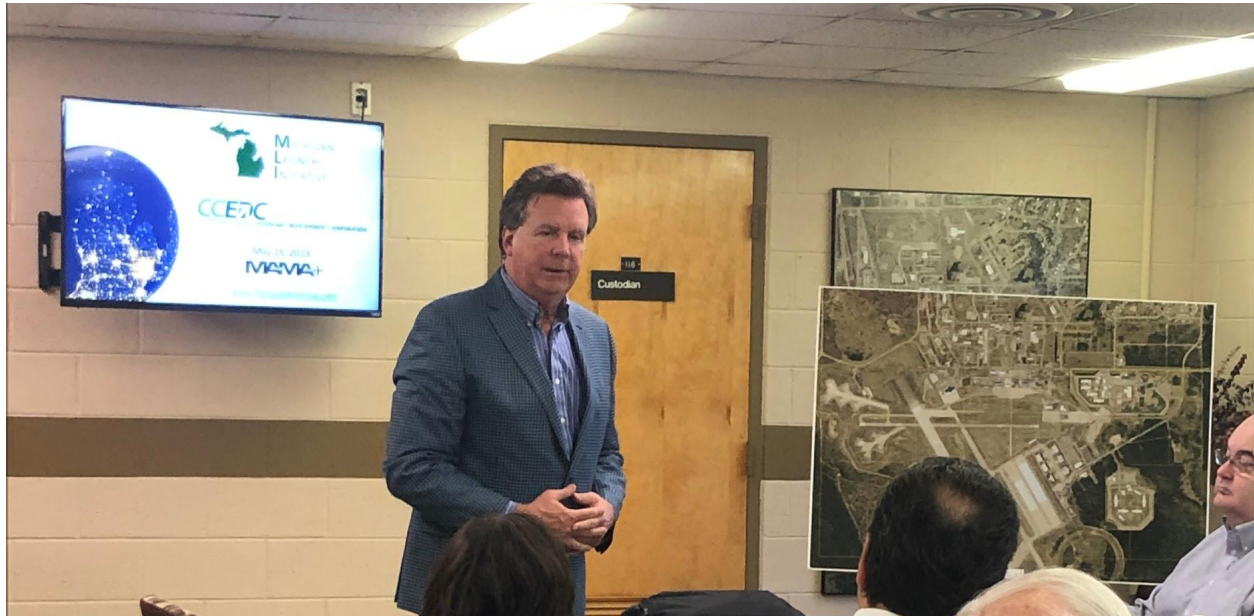


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## Chippewa County Potential Spaceport

*Michigan Aerospace Manufacturing Association discuss Potential Spaceport in Chippewa County*



Gavin Brown, executive director of the Michigan Aerospace Manufacturers Association, speaks to local officials at the Chippewa County EDC about a potential Northern Michigan spaceport in Chippewa County. Chippewa County International Airport is one of five sites in Northern Michigan under consideration for the proposed spaceport. Brown plans to announce the site selection in September 2019.

**CIU-** Chippewa County International Airport is one of the five airports in the state being considered as a potential site for a proposed northern Michigan spaceport.

Local officials gathered Thursday at the Chippewa County Economic Development Corporation to host the Michigan Aerospace Manufacturing Association's (MAMA) Executive Director, Mr. Gavin Brown. The purpose of the meeting was to have MAMA present the Michigan Launch Initiative, the site selection process, and the significant economic impact a spaceport would have for Chippewa County.

The Michigan Launch Initiative's intent is to establish spaceport operations in northern Michigan, with a public-private partnership (3P) organized by MAMA, with backing from a private investment group. "Our mission is to highlight the resources in the state of Michigan regarding aerospace and defense," Brown stated.

*"Northern Michigan's geographical position to the polar orbit, low population density, engineering and manufacturing capacity, extensive restricted airspace, and access makes it an ideal satellite launch facility," Brown said.*

Among Chippewa County International Airport, others in the running for site selection include Sawyer International Airport in Marquette, the former Wurtsmith Air Force Base in Oscoda and sites in Rogers City and Alpena.

*"There are multiple reasons why Chippewa County International Airport is a prime site for the spaceport,"* says EDC President, Chris Olson. He states, *"CIU is an active commercial airport, centrally located to the great lakes, 2.0 miles from Interstate I-75, rail access to main line, and large building capacity that could support this type of satellite launch activity."*

The Chippewa County EDC Air and Industrial park covers over 800 acres with adjoining state owned land that could significantly expand that footprint. The launch site could also be used in combination with Racoon, a former missile launch site that has another 800 acres. CIU offers two runways, one of which could be reactivated to 12,200 ft.

The spaceport site selected would need approximately 650 acres, which would require the EDC to work with the State of Michigan and Local Township to acquire the land needed close to the airport. With the airport land and/or potential Racoon site, Chippewa County can provide the requirements needed for the launch site.

Mr. Brown was asked if CIU provides any competitive advantages over the other potential sites. He responded, *"Kincheloe's proximity to I-75 and offering commercial aviation are two very important criteria for selection."*

Brown states that the proposed spaceport project could bring in up to 1,000 jobs to the county, which would create a significant economic driver, along with millions of dollars of investment. As well as, *"an entire ecosystem of businesses related to the spaceport such as private industry, education and research, and tourism,"* Brown said.

Michigan's proposed spaceport would focus exclusively on low-Earth-orbit, or LEO, satellite launches into polar orbit, rather than the equatorial orbit that is better reached by more southerly launch sites such as Texas and Florida, Brown said. *"There is a growing demand for LEO satellite launches, with over 80,000 launches projected to occur over the next 12 years,"* he said. The spaceport would conduct vertical launches that take off directly from the launch pad, and horizontal launches that would be launched from an airplane.

It is estimated that there would be approximately 25 LEO satellite launches per year, with estimated revenue of \$4 to \$15 million per launch. Conventional satellite launches at sites like Cape Canaveral cost on average \$40-\$60 million per launch. The project is estimated to cost around \$90 to \$120 million, Brown said. In its first year of operation, the spaceport could have revenue of nearly \$250 million and growing to \$750 million-\$850 million in the following years. *"This is truly an economic vehicle that will continue to contribute,"* he stated, *"it's similar to an annuity program, because once you start launching, these satellites have a limited life of about six to eight years and then you have to keep launching,"* Brown stated.

*"What will make the Michigan site more efficient is the focus on the LEO launches along with running at the speed of business and not the speed of government,"* Brown said, *"There is an economic picture there that will actually demonstrate a cost efficiency that nobody else has."* Another key distinction is that the new spaceport would be the first "green" spaceport in the world and nation.

*"We are going to use biofuels to make this as environmentally friendly as possible,"* Brown stated.

Before a site can be selected, a FAA questionnaire must be completed and an extensive site assessment. MAMA has requested \$2 million from the state to conduct the surveys and is currently awaiting the state house and Governor Whitmer's approval. The request was originally denied in the Governor's new budget. *"The governor and her staff wanted the language clarified,"* Brown said, *"We're clarifying that language through a new bill introduction that should be done hopefully this week."* The selected site is scheduled to be announced at the Michigan Space Symposium held on Sept. 9-10 in Traverse City. Groundbreaking is slated for 2021, with the first launch scheduled to take place in 2022. Mr. Brown stated the original timing for the site selection was February 2019. Although the selection timing has been delayed, the timing leading up to the launch activity has not changed.

Michigan is only one of the several states competing for this type of FAA approval. Brown expects that only two licenses will be given out in the U.S., and he believes that Michigan has the competitive and compelling business case.

The Chippewa County of Commissioners and the EDC have adopted resolutions supporting MAMA's effort and request for state funding. Several more local units of governments are expected to submit similar resolutions and letters of support. Brown indicated that support from local governments, as well as private industry, will be key for the establishment of such a site. The substantial economic impact will be felt in the region and the entire state. Brown said that thus far, the county EDC have been very effective communicating with its legislators. *"This future trillion dollar industry could be as transformational to the state of Michigan as the auto industry was so long ago,"* Brown stated.

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