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MICRON

Micron submits environmental study, a critical step toward breaking ground on NY chip plant

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Micron Technology plans to build a massive chipmaking complex in the town of Clay. This conceptual rendering shows the scale of the development, which could be several times larger than the New York State Fairgrounds. Onondaga County



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Syracuse, N.Y. – [Micron Technology](#) has submitted an exhaustive environmental report for its proposed chipmaking plant in the town of Clay, a critical next step in the project's development.

Micron submitted what's called the draft environmental impact statement to Onondaga County, County Executive Ryan McMahon said today in his state of the county address.

"This is an incredible milestone," McMahon said. "We are now on a path for the environmental review to be complete this fall and a November groundbreaking for this project."

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The report, nearly two years in the making, is a legally required step in Micron's plans to build up to four fabrication plants, or fabs, in Clay. The report looks at a wide range of potential impacts, including air and water quality, traffic, job creation and housing.

The Onondaga County Industrial Development Agency and the U.S. Department of Commerce are simultaneously overseeing the project's environmental review.

In December, Micron took the unusual step of showing a preliminary version of the report to key agencies like the county and the state Department of Environmental Protection. Today's formal submission of the report starts the regulatory clock ticking.

The two lead agencies now have 45 days to decide if Micron's report adequately addresses all the potential impacts and provides enough detail on how to mitigate those impacts. Once the agencies decide the report is ready, they will release it publicly.

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At that point, the public will get 45 days to comment, although environmental groups have already said they will ask for more time because the project and potential impacts are so enormous. Commerce and the county must then respond to those comments and issue a final environmental impact statement.

The Micron project, projected to sprawl across a 1,400-acre wooded parcel at Route 31 and Caughdenoy Road, would be the biggest development in the history of New York state, officials say. McMahon said earlier today that

Micron's is "the most rigorous environmental review in the history of the United States."

Construction could take 20 years, and the fabs and ancillary structures would cover an area more than three times the size of the New York State Fairgrounds. Micron's fabs would consume more water than the city of Syracuse and more electricity than the states of New Hampshire and Vermont combined. The complex could employ 9,000 people at Micron and generate 40,000 spinoff jobs.

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For projects like Micron's that could have a substantial impact on the environment, state and federal law require the creation of a draft environmental impact statement, or DEIS. The report must answer two essential questions: What harms could the project bring, and how much of that harm can be avoided or at least lessened?

Those answers will be used by government agencies to decide what Micron can build and what the company must do to offset any potential environmental damage.

The report will likely run to thousands of pages. It is expected to consist of 26 chapters plus a number of data-dense, technical appendices. The study for the I-81 reconstruction project through Syracuse ran to more than 10,000

pages.

A similar but less detailed report prepared for just one fab that Micron is building in Boise, Idaho, was nearly 2,800 pages long, including appendices. The Clay project is much larger and has the potential for more environmental effects, including the destruction of hundreds of acres of wetlands.

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The environmental study will tackle the topics we normally think of as environmental impacts: air and water pollution, energy and water use, hazardous wastes generation, greenhouse gas emissions.

The effects of the project would be much broader, and the environmental report is designed to capture that. The study will examine how many jobs the Micron complex would generate, what pressure the project would apply to an already tight housing market, where and by how much traffic would increase, and what kind of community growth, from new schools to grocery stores, the project would induce.

The aim of a report like this is to not just identify the potential impacts, but to offer ways to lessen, or mitigate, them. The final chapter of the report, titled "Mitigation," will seek to tie it all together and explain how Micron will ease the potential impacts.

For example, the report is expected to suggest ways to alleviate traffic congestion by widening surface streets and adding a new interchange on Interstate 81 in Cicero. Micron is also likely to be required to set aside or create hundreds of acres of wetlands in exchange for destroying more than 200 acres on the building site.

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Micron is proposing to build four fabs, but the report must also evaluate alternatives. Among those will be the building of just two fabs and several possible rearrangements of the buildings to reduce environmental effects.

The county and the Commerce department are required to make sure the report is ready for public review. Neither agency is a disinterested party: Commerce has pledged \$4.6 billion to Micron to build the fabs, and OCIDA is offering \$1.5 billion or more in tax breaks. Micron could also reap an \$11.5 billion subsidy from the federal government and \$5.8 billion in tax credits from the state.

State law doesn't require a public hearing, but at least one is likely for a project of this magnitude.

After the comments are all in, the agencies must review and respond to each point raised by the comments when they issue the final environmental impact study. After that, the agencies will issue what's called a record of

decision, which is basically an approval or denial of Micron's plans.

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That's only the beginning of the approvals Micron would need before it could start construction. Micron needs permission from the state and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to fill in the wetlands and more than a mile of streams. The company will need a variety of approvals from the town of Clay, from the overall site plan to building permits for plumbing and stormwater drainage.

Micron will face a tight schedule to get all approvals done this year.

At the same time, it can't start cutting trees on the site until Nov. 1 because two species of endangered bats were found to be roosting on the site. By November, the bats have left the trees and are hibernating in a nearby cave.

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