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OPINION

Micron's impact report is public information. Release it now (Editorial Board Opinion)

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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



By Advance Media NY Editorial Board

Behind the scenes there's a tug-of-war going on between Onondaga County and syracuse.com involving [Micron Technology's big report on its proposed semiconductor complex in Clay](#) (["County refuses to release Micron's huge impact report. Public record experts say it should,"](#) April 21, 1025).

This fight is not about paperwork. It's about the principle that government works for the people. Almost all efforts undertaken by the government to avoid transparency are bogus. They are an affront to taxpayers and voters.

The county doesn't want you to see Micron's draft environmental impact statement, even though you are entitled to see it, right now, under the law.

Since December, Syracuse.com staff writer Glenn Coin has been asking for the DEIS, under state and federal Freedom of Information statutes, from every level of government with a hand in the project.

That is the role of journalists: to find information in the public interest and report on it. It takes expertise, resources and perseverance. Coin has been denied, ignored and denied again.

Sure, we'll all see it eventually. The Onondaga County Industrial Development Agency plans to release the voluminous report in June. It is expected to contain thousands of pages of charts, data and maps detailing the plant's impact on air and water pollution, traffic, emergency services, job creation and housing demand, among other things.

Release of the report will kick off a 45-day comment period this summer; there is no commitment yet to hold public hearings. Once Micron responds to the comments and incorporates those responses into a final environmental impact statement, OCIDA, the U.S. Department of Commerce and several other government agencies will affix their stamps of approval. Construction can begin in the fall.

It's been two and a half years since Micron's big announcement. The wait for something — anything! — to happen is a source of frustration and cynicism. The editorial board is as eager as anyone to see shovels in the ground.

We stipulate that New York state's environmental review process is onerous; that's an editorial for another day. That doesn't change this fact: The public deserves to be heard about a project that depends on \$20 billion in taxpayer subsidies to move forward.

The county's tight timetable appears to be designed to limit public participation and thus limit public input and opposition. This will energize the opposition, not neutralize it. It also has the potential to delay the project even more, if the county is pressured to extend

the public comment period beyond 45 days.

Why not let people start digesting the report now?

The county has thrown up all manner of roadblocks, delays and denials to keep it a secret. Coin was told he petitioned the wrong agency for it. He was told it's too voluminous. Then it got really absurd: Following deadlines in the FOIL statute off a cliff, the county will hand over the report to Coin in July – after it's already been released in June. A request for the much shorter executive summary will be fulfilled in August – two months after its public release.

The county claims that the report is exempt from the FOIL law because it is “intra-agency or inter-agency communication.” That contradicts a ruling by the state's highest court and the opinion of the state Committee on Open Government, which administers FOIL.

These perverse efforts to not disclose usually don't work. In this case, refusing to release the DEIS is clearly contrary to both the plain language and the spirit of the law.

Onondaga County government is a partner to Micron — but it answers to you, the taxpayer and the voter.

Join us in calling on County Executive Ryan McMahon and the Onondaga County Industrial Development Agency to stop stonewalling and release the Micron DEIS now.

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