

# PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

## Political forum maps out Tech Belt concept

By Rick Stouffer  
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Pittsburgh and Cleveland can cooperate to turn the Rust Belt into a Technology Belt, create jobs and compete nationally and internationally, according to two members of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Jason Altmire and Tim Ryan on Monday brought together more than 100 politicians, academics and business people to talk regional cooperation.

Altmire, D-McCandless, and Ryan, D-Niles, Ohio, whose district includes Akron, Canton and Youngstown, are hoping to get technology, life sciences, health care and manufacturing leaders within the Cleveland-Pittsburgh corridor to work together.

"We want to create a Technology Belt -- we're tired of hearing about the Rust Belt," said Altmire by phone from an all-day forum yesterday at Youngstown State University.

"In these regions, Cleveland to Pittsburgh, we have so many assets competing with each other -- Cleveland with Case Western University and the Cleveland Clinic -- and Pittsburgh with UPMC, CMU and Pitt. We wanted to bring the leaders together to compete as a region," Altmire said.

Altmire said he and Ryan can't pass region-specific legislation, but they can push laws that take advantage of the region's assets. Altmire sponsored the Small Business Investment Expansion Act of 2007 passed by the House last week by a vote of 325-72.

Cooperation across state lines already is under way, between the Pittsburgh Life Sciences Greenhouse and its Cleveland counterpart, BioEnterprise.

"This corridor is rich with assets, and the group brought together is pretty dynamic," said Greenhouse CEO John W. Manzetti yesterday. "It's good to take advantage of common interests."

Dan Flynn, CEO and founder of Accipiter Systems Inc. in Pine, feels the Altmire-Ryan proposal is on the right track. His five-year-old company designs and builds equipment that allows computers to communicate.

"We need to build teams of experts working together," Flynn said.

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