

## **Leaders envision 'Tech Belt' connecting region to Cleveland**

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By Bill Toland, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

It has happened again and again -- Pittsburgh start-ups seeking investment from the coasts would make a pitch, only to be told that a group from Cleveland had made a similar pitch previously.

"You guys should work together," was the advice.

Regional business and academic leaders met with their Cleveland counterparts yesterday with that advice in mind, hoping to build a "Tech Belt" connecting the research and workforce resources both regions offer.

Convened by U.S. Reps. Jason Altmire, D-McCandless, and Tim Ryan, D-Ohio, the convention sought to expand on the ideas already being tossed around by the cities' biotech sectors and liaison groups, such as Pittsburgh Life Sciences Greenhouse and Cleveland's BioEnterprise.

The ideas are these -- that Pittsburgh and Cleveland, together, have a great collection of old money and research institutions; that the cities should spend less time competing at the state borders and more time cooperating; and that there's the potential to build an investment corridor on par with the Research Triangle near Durham, Raleigh and Chapel Hill, N.C., or Minneapolis-St. Paul.

"Today was a broader look at all the technology areas -- manufacturing, computer IT, life sciences," said John Manzetti, head of the Greenhouse. "Now it's up to us [to] keep the ball rolling."

Developing Pittsburgh-Cleveland into a self-sustaining R&D mega-region, and building the cachet of the "Tech Belt," will take years, something Mr. Altmire recognizes. "Tim Ryan is 34, and I'm 39," he said. "We take a very long-term view of this."

He also acknowledged that the cooperative spirit goes only so far when big projects are at stake. As an example, "when it comes time for Westinghouse to decide whether to locate in Pittsburgh or in Cleveland, obviously we're going to fight to make it Pittsburgh. ... But the first step is for us to work together, instead of competing with each other."