

Amazon bringing 1,500 jobs to Etna Township



[Chad Klimack](#), Reporter 12:09 p.m. EST November 18, 2015

ETNA - After months of waiting, likely with their fingers crossed, Etna Township officials learned Wednesday that Amazon intends to build a new distribution center next to Interstate 70.

The online retail giant, which is headquartered in Seattle, made the announcement official Wednesday morning.

Amazon calls its distribution centers fulfillment centers, and the one coming to the western Licking County township will cover 855,000 square feet and generate as many as 1,500 jobs, Etna Administrator Rob Platte confirmed.

"The number of jobs will fluctuate, increasing during seasonal times," Platte said.

Amazon, in a press release announcing the news, indicated it intends to place one fulfillment center in Etna and another in Obetz in Franklin County.

"We are very pleased to continue investing in Ohio by building our first fulfillment centers in the state," Mark Roth, Amazon's vice president of North America, said in the press release. "This investment will create thousands of jobs that will have comprehensive benefits on day one. Our expansion in the Buckeye State will also help us increase our already fast shipping times to our customers."

Etna Trustee John Carlisle struggled to suppress his excitement when asked about Amazon's plans.

"It's huge," he said. "This puts us on the national stage. People who didn't know where Etna was at before. ... Well, now they'll know."

"I feel fortunate Amazon chose us, but it also speaks to what we have to offer."

News of the potential Amazon project first surfaced in July, but Amazon and local and state officials remained mum on the potential project in the ensuing months.

No information was leaked even after the state in late July approved a tax credit for the project. The credit sought to entice Amazon by not requiring the retail giant to pay 75 percent of certain taxes on new jobs created for 15 years, starting Jan. 1, 2017. In exchange, the company must create a combined 2,000 jobs at both Ohio sites.



(Photo: Chad Klimack/The Standard)

Work crews in recent months have been preparing the site for the construction of a future building. However, it was impossible to know whether the project related to the Amazon proposal because Prologis builds speculative buildings, which it uses to attract future tenants to its corporate parks, both in Etna and elsewhere.

Prologis owns the site on which Amazon intends to locate, and Prologis currently is erecting the 855,000-square-foot building in which Amazon intends to place its new fulfillment center.

"They're going to be fast-tracking (the construction) to have it done and open by next fall so it's ready for the Christmas season," Platte said. The site stands on the south side of U.S. 40, across from Prologis' existing corporate park.

Platte estimated Amazon will make a \$90 million investment in the project.

Aside from the local recruiting effort, the region, through Columbus 2020, and the state, through JobsOhio, worked to lure Amazon to Etna and Obetz.

"Ohio is stronger today thanks to Amazon's growing commitment to expand in our state," Gov. John Kasich said in a statement. "We are thrilled to see this additional investment that will bring thousands of new jobs to our state. This is another big win for JobsOhio and their partners, great news for Ohio families, and a big step forward as we continue to diversify and strengthen our economy."

Licking County Commissioner Tim Bubb said Amazon's decision to pick the site in Etna likely was influenced by the site's close proximity to Interstate 70, in addition to the county's workforce.

Bubb added he was waiting on "pins and needles" for months in anticipation of Wednesday's announcement.

"It's a huge investment by Amazon in Licking County, and it will mean (a lot of new) jobs, and you can't help but be excited about it," he said.

Bubb added Amazon's decision could lure even more industry to the township and the rest of the county.

"It's a game changer because it's not only a huge project, it's a big name in Amazon," Bubb said. "You put that name and stamp on Licking County, and others will follow."

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