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Curtiss-Wright's Electro-Mechanical Division in Harmar will develop a full-size demonstration model of an advanced propulsion motor for the Navy's new electric drive ships.

The project was made possible by \$800,000 in federal funding that U.S. Rep. Jason Altmire, D-McCandless, presented to the company on Friday.

The money will support 20 full-time jobs in engineering and drafting, and has the potential to support as many as 100 jobs in the future, according to the company and Altmire's office.

"This is an exciting project," Altmire said. "Everyone can see we're in difficult economic times. We've lost almost 2 million jobs around the country just this year alone.

"Curtiss-Wright has actually expanded. They're hiring people and they're growing their operations, and it's because of projects like this."

Curtiss-Wright is facing three to four competitors for the project, said Al O'Neil, director of government affairs for the company. Their motor is now in preliminary design, and the demonstration unit could be ready in 2012.

The company developed a small-scale demonstration model of an electric drive ship propulsion motor with funding from the Navy.

A full-size demonstration model will improve the company's chances of getting a Navy contract, said Jim Drake, general manager of Curtiss-Wright's EMD.

"The funding Congressman Altmire secured will help Curtiss-Wright EMD show the Navy that Western Pennsylvanians can create the best propulsion motors for its new electric drive ships," Drake said.

O'Neil said Curtiss-Wright's motor is more powerful than those proposed by its competition. It would be used in a future Navy cruiser.

"It's smaller and it's lighter than their competing designs, therefore it affords EMD an advantage," O'Neil said. "If you want to build a ship, and you're concerned about speed and maneuverability, you don't want to add additional weight to the ship."

Curtiss-Wright employs more than 700 employees at its Harmar facility making large rotating equipment such as motors and compressors.

