High-tech's ties to cars may hurt

AP — The heavy reliance by advanced manufacturing technology in Michigan on the auto industry may cloud the technology's future, according to a study released Friday.

The state Department of Compares study hoved 325 companies.

The state Department of Com-merce study showed 325 companies in the state are Involved in high-technology generating 54.4 billion in sales each year. About 33,000 people are employed by the companies. However, 82 percent of those com-panies are located in "Automation Alley," an are that runs through Oakland, Macomb and Washtenaw courtle"

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The study questioned whether nonautomotive markets for advanced
manufacturing firms can be developed.

"This is a matter of great moment

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"This is a matter of great moment for Michigan," the study sald, "par-ticularly if, as some have stated, the massive 1980-87 wave of investment in upgrading automotive manufac-turing facilities is giving way to a long period of reduced capital com-mitments."

The study said some of the companies have seen a sharp drop in em-ployment and flattening sales since the Big Three automakers began cutting orders 15 months ago. DESPITE THE caution expressed a some of the report. Commerce di-ector Doug Ross praised the success t the new technology as "a major art of Michigan's diversification

of the new teams of the property of Michigan's diversification strategy."

The future of America's industrial competitiveness will depend be action at the property of the pro

er-based control systems and design technologies.
The study also sald:
— The average age of companies in "Automation Alley" is 23.6 years. and 17 percent were founded after 1981.
— The average age of robotics companies is 29.6 years.
— Average annual sales of all types of advanced manufacturing companies is \$19.5 million.
— Three-quarters fo the companies are family-owned.

Hills-based Medar wins Ross' praise

a press conference Oct. 2, said that Medar and 324 other companies in Southeast Michigan are quickly out-pacing the high-tech growth of Cali-fornia's Silicon Valley.

pacing the high-tech growth of California's Silicon Valley.

KNOWN AS Automation Alley, companies employing 33,000 workers exist in a corridor stretching through Wayne, Oakland, Macomb and Washtenav countles.

Ross called this area, which includes Medar, a "key part" in developing what was once almost exclusively auto-related into a more diversified high-tech sector serving more than just auto companies.

"Now, more than 40 percent of our customers are not auto-related but companies that use computers and guidance systems," Ross said.

The unveiling o, the study was held at Medar's headquarters at 35700 Grand R'ver to show how the company's technological advancements are used in a manufacturing setting, Res explained.

"What you see here is a company that reflects trends going on in the industry," he said, adding that Medar is increasing Michigan's ability to compete globally with foreign markets.

Medar, which experienced a 50 percent growth rate since 1982.

markets.

Medar, which experienced a 50 percent growth rate since 1982, employs 250 workers at its Farmington Hills and Howell offices.



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ed companies, it also designs auto-mated systems for the aerospace and pharmaceutical industries and exports many of its products over-seas.

THE KEY to success stories like that found in Medar and others in "automation alley" is diversification, Ross stressed. Not only will it accelerate "tremendous growth" but will allow companies to integrate new technologies.
"This is our strengh — new machine tools," Ross said. "Companies like Medar are eager to find new markets. You cannot win the long you rely on old technology. If you do, you'll pay more for it than in Japan or in other foreign markets."
Charles Drake, Medar president and board chalrman, agreed that companies must diversify to successfully compete with other markets.



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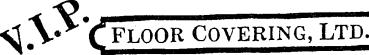
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