

COLUMBUS INQUIRER
APRIL 29, 1987

State's 'Supercomputer' Will Be in Huntsville

Both Industry, Schools Will Reap Benefits

Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. -

Huntsville will be the site of a lightning-fast "supercomputer" that Gov. Guy Hunt said Tuesday will be an important tool in luring new industry to Alabama and enhancing the reputation of the state's colleges.

Hunt signed a six-year contract Tuesday with the Boeing Co. to operate the project, which goes into operation in January 1988 and will provide research assistance to Alabama universities and industries. The state will pay Boeing \$6.2 million a year.

"This is great day for Alabama," Hunt said at a Statehouse news conference. "This supercomputer will help thrust Alabama into the forefront of economic, scientific and academic research."

Jim Woodward, executive vice president of the University of Alabama at Birmingham and chairman of the state Supercomputer Authority, said the project "enhances Alabama's reputation as a forward-thinking state."

"This is a pivotal time for this state," he said. "We are squarely at the forefront of advanced computing."

Peri Widener, a spokeswoman for Boeing, said the Alabama supercomputer is similar to one in Texas, but it will be the first one in the country that can be used by both colleges and industry.

Boeing, selected from six companies that bid for the project in December, will provide training and access to the supercomputer, which will be located at a research park in Huntsville.

Ms. Widener said the city of Huntsville had given the state the land to construct an as-yet-unfinished building to house the project.

The computer will have access locations at the University of Alabama branches in Huntsville, Tuscaloosa and Birmingham, Auburn University, the University of South Alabama, and Troy State University, Woodward said.

Also, he said, branches will be placed in Montgomery, probably at the state Finance Department, and at a Tennessee Valley Authority facility in Muscle Shoals.