

Morton a Chrysler finalist

Simon says it's between Peoria and Indianapolis; Michel aide agrees

By SCOTT WILLIAMS
of the Journal Star

U.S. Sen. Paul Simon, D-Ill., said Tuesday he has been told by Chrysler Corp.'s No. 2 man that Peoria actually is competing against only one other city for the automaker's new mini-van plant.

Simon said Chrysler Vice Chairman Gerald Greenwald told him about two weeks ago that only the site in Peoria and another site in Indianapolis, Ind., are being considered for the plant.

"Obviously I'm not a spokesman for Chrysler, but it looks like it's primarily

between Indianapolis and Peoria," the senator said in a telephone interview from Chicago. "As I understand it, it is the decision by Chrysler that it is between Indianapolis and Peoria."

Chrysler on Tuesday would not confirm or deny what Simon said, acknowledging only that Simon and Greenwald talked about locating the plant in Peoria.

The local site being considered is a 600-acre piece of Morton property owned by Caterpillar Tractor Co. A partially-built warehouse that could be adapted to house an auto plant sits on the site.

An aide to U.S. Rep. Robert Michel,

R-Peoria, said Tuesday that Chrysler Chairman Lee Iacocca told Michel last week that Peoria and Indianapolis were the only two cities still under consideration.

The aide asked to remain anonymous but said he sat in on the meeting with Iacocca in the congressman's office in Washington, D.C.

"Mr. Iacocca said that the Morton site was an extremely good choice economically for them," the aide said. "He called it 'an awfully good deal.' "

Chrysler sent a site-selection team to examine the Caterpillar property on Feb.

1 — roughly the same time Simon says he was assured the only other possible location for the plant was Indianapolis.

At the time of the site inspection, a Chrysler spokesman said hundreds of sites from around the country were being considered.

But the Michel aide said Iacocca indicated last week that the original pool of potential sites for the plant numbered nowhere near hundreds.

"Just from the tone of the conversation, we think that there may have been a

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