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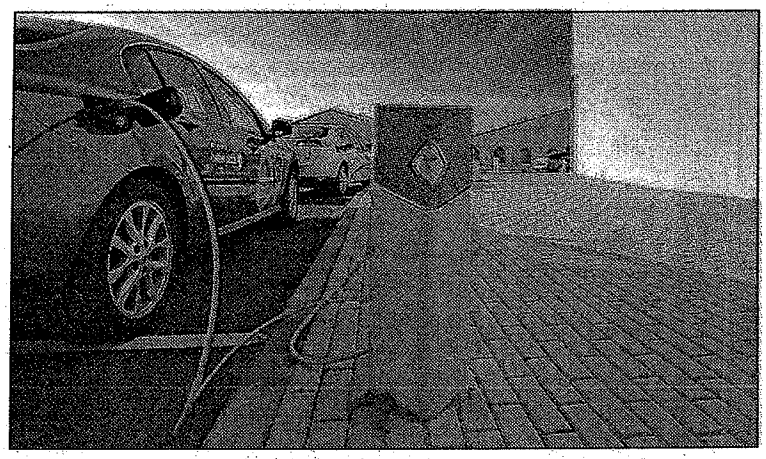
Quinn to visit factories on trip to Israel next week

Gov. Pat Quinn will head to Israel next week on an education mission paid for by the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago, his office said Thursday.

Quinn leaves Monday and will spend about a week in the country, a close U.S. ally that many American politicians have visited.

"This is an educational mission and it's going to be wide-ranging and cover a lot of different areas," said Brie Callahan, a spokeswoman for the governor.



Gov. Quinn's stops will include the Better Place Center, an electric car company in Tel Aviv.

The Chicago Democrat has a busy schedule for the trip, including a visit to a facility of Schaumburg-based Motorola Solutions, which was formed because of the breakup of Motorola Inc. Motorola Solutions makes police radios, bar-code scanners and other products for corporate and government customers. Motorola Mobility makes cellphones.

Quinn also will visit a site of the electric car company Better Place, which is building a network of charging stations in markets around the world including, Israel and Denmark.

Other highlights of Quinn's trip include signing a sister lakes agreement between Lake Michigan and Lake Kinneret, also known as the Sea of Galilee.

He'll also attend a ceremony for an agreement between Ben Gurion University of the Negev and the University of Illinois at Chicago that will promote faculty exchange, joint research and other partnerships, said Aaron Cohen, vice president of communications for the Jewish United Fund.

It was not immediately clear how much Quinn's trip would cost.

AP

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CHAMPAIGN COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORP.

Firm's task: How best to run airport?

Study to compare other operations' decision making with Willard's

By DON DODSON
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CHAMPAIGN — A consulting firm will study four possible operating structures for Willard Airport in Savoy and report on how long it might take each to approve decisions.

Eugene, Ore.-based Sixel Consulting Group has been hired by the Champaign County Economic Development Corp. to research the operating structures and compare them with Willard's current governance.

The University of Illinois-owned airport now operates under the UI's Office of Real Estate Planning and Services. Sometimes airport decisions must await approval by the UI Board of Trustees, delaying implementation.

The four structures Sixel will study include:

— An airport set up as a department of a city, county or university.

— An airport set up as a district, possibly with an elected commission.

— An airport that operates under an airport authority with an elected or appointed board.

— An airport set up to be run by a private management company.

Specifically, Sixel is to look at airports — preferably in Illinois and the Midwest — that fit those categories and determine "the average time in days, weeks or months that it takes to get approval" for airport initiatives.

Sixel is also supposed to report on the advantages and disadvantages of each system.

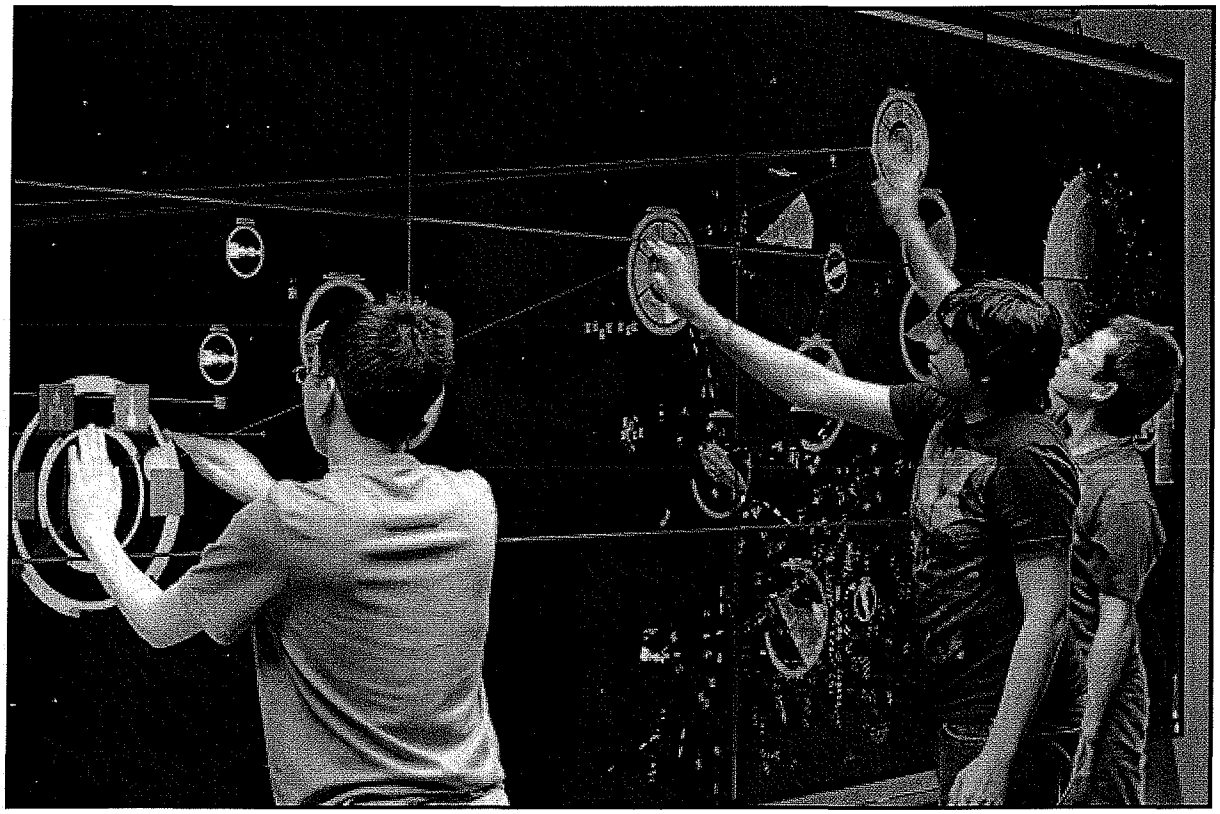
The economic development group allocated up to $15,000 for the study. Separately, the university has commissioned a study to determine how much business Willard loses to other airports — and why.

— Innovation summit planned. Laura Frerichs, director of the UI Research Park, said work is under way on an "innovation summit" that would help acquaint local private-sector employers with university resources.

The summit, modeled after a statewide initiative of Gov. Patrick Quinn, would likely be held in August or September. The city of Champaign and the UI's Office of the Vice President for Research are collaborating on the project.

Wall of Touchscreens Makes *Fleet Commander* a Hutt-Size *Star Wars* Game

By Jason Schreier



I told you never to call me on this wall! University of Illinois at Chicago grad student Arthur Nishimoto (L) and fellow students play Nishimoto's *Fleet Commander*, a massive multitouch strategy game based on *Star Wars*.
Image: L. Renambot/Electronics Visualization Laboratory

There have been some big *Star Wars* videogames, but none as big as *Fleet Commander*.

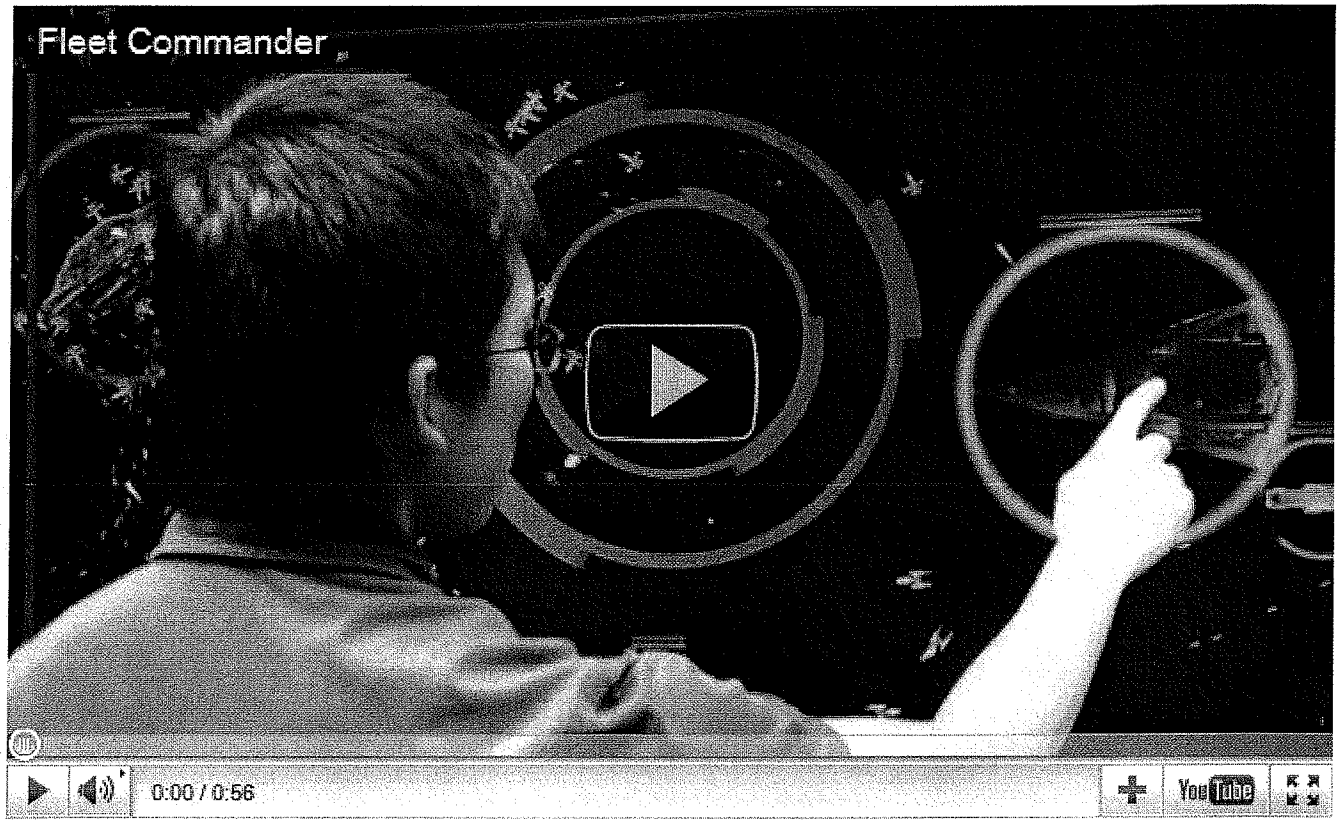
Arthur Nishimoto, a graduate student in the University of Illinois at Chicago's Electronic Visualization Laboratory, has developed his real-time strategy game to be played on a wall-size LCD screen. Players are divided into two opposing teams that take control of X-wings, TIE fighters and even Death Stars, all with a touch of their fingers.

"The purpose of [*Fleet Commander*] was to explore how a complicated application like a real-time strategy game … could be played in a large, multitouch environment," said Nishimoto in an e-mail to Wired.com.

Because of the screen's sheer size, any number of players can jump in and start moving ships around, Nishimoto said, limited only by how many people can cram themselves around the 20-foot-wide display.

Since the launch of Nintendo DS in 2004, touch-based controls have become a tantalizing new frontier of game design, delivering a more immediate connection between the player and the game. Development of iPhone software continued the trend, and Apple's iPad has made it possible to create much more complicated, sometimes multiplayer, touch-based games.

With touch, bigger isn't just better, it's markedly different — you'll never be able to crowd 20 players around an iPad.



In *Fleet Commander*, players control their ships through simple touch-based gestures, as Nishimoto demonstrates in a video he released this week (above). They can drag starfighters throughout the map or touch individual ships to open radial menus for additional options, like prioritizing targets. The game ends once one side takes out the other's main base.

The wall of screens is part of the Electronic Visualization Laboratory's Cyber-Commons, an experimental, high-tech conference room built in 2008. Another student project Nishimoto participated in was a virtual canvas that lets users mix paint colors utilizing an iPad as a palette, then paint on the LCD wall using fingers or an actual paintbrush.

Fleet Commander is playable right now, but Nishimoto says there's still plenty of work left to be done. The original plan was to let players land their ships on planets and deploy ground troops. As it stands, it's more of a technical demo than a finished game design, but Nishimoto said LucasArts, the game-development arm of *Star Wars*' parent company, has reached out to him to discuss potential commercial applications for *Fleet Commander*. (LucasArts did not return requests for comment.)

Nishimoto's work is reminiscent of the origins of videogames themselves: The first computer game, *Spacewar!*, was developed at MIT on a PDP-1 computer that was the size of four refrigerators and carried a price tag just shy of $1 million in 2011 money. Not exactly consumer-level tech, either.

Nishimoto says he'll continue to tweak his game and push it even further into bleeding-edge technology.

"I plan to continue using *Fleet Commander* as a platform for exploring multi-user, multitouch interaction techniques," he said. "Other future work may involve a 3-D LCD wall."

Jason Schreier is a contributor to Game|Life and an NYC-based writer/editor. But he really just wants to be your friend.
Follow @jasonschreier and @GameLife on Twitter.