

BUSINESS

Gevo's biofuels awaiting takeoff

Plant-based aviation fuels maker gets cold shoulder from investors this week.

NEAL ST. ANTHONY

Patrick Gruber, chief executive of biofuels producer Gevo, got an investor cold shoulder this week.

Gevo has reached sales agreements with Japan Airlines, Delta, Alaska and other airlines for its next-generation fuel. But the firm surprised investors Monday morning when it sold \$150 million in equity at \$4.50 a share, with warrants that could double the take to close to \$300 million.

Gevo's value dropped 33% this week to about \$3 per share, down about 65% from its 52-week high of \$9.65. That compares with a 20% overall decline of the Russell 2000 index of small companies over the past year.

"No math justifies our current stock price," said Gruber, a University of Minnesota-trained Ph.D. in biochemistry who once ran Cargill's green-technology business. "The decline in price is disproportionate. We need to have enough money on the balance sheet" if the economy takes a downturn as some have predicted.

Gruber, 62, who grew up in St. Paul, has developed a thick skin since he was recruited in 2007 to start Gevo. He has diluted existing investors numerous times over the years to develop its isobutane-based fuel and raise capital necessary to build an aviation fuel plant in South Dakota.

Gevo operates an upgraded ethanol plant in Luverne, See **ST. ANTHONY** on D10 ▶

Sun Country mechanics to unionize

Airline says it supports "the employees' right to choose" representation.

By GITA SITARAMIAH
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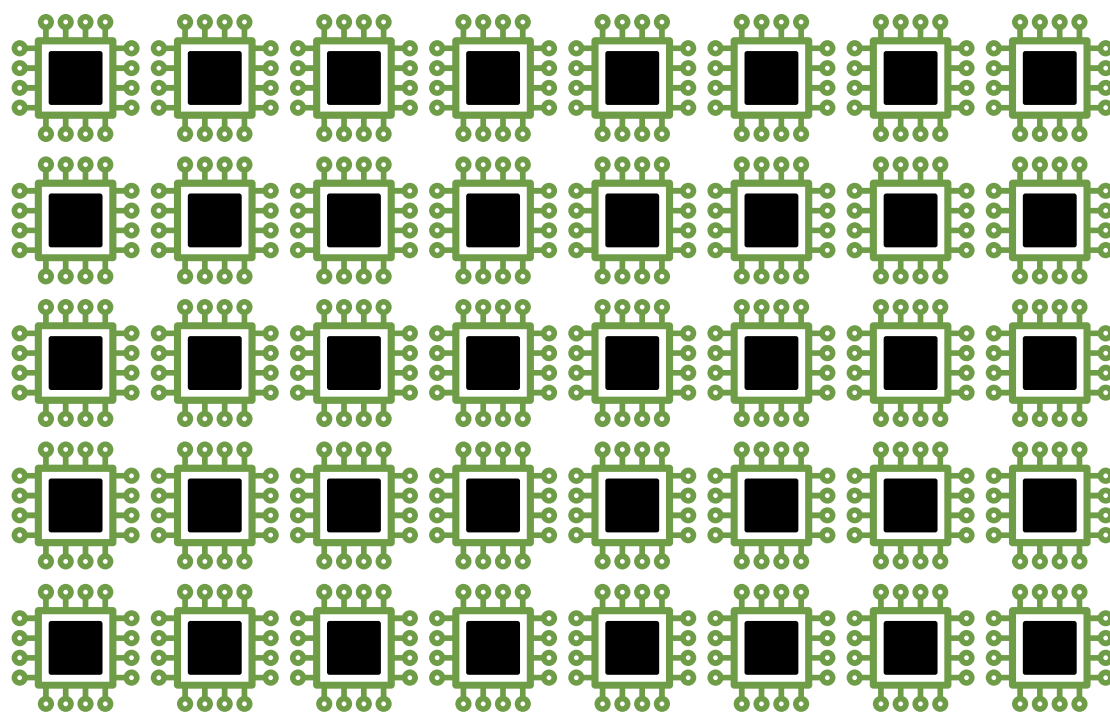
Frustrated by their wages and work rules, Sun Country Airlines mechanics voted to unionize.

Sun Country's aircraft maintenance mechanics and related employees voted to elect the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association (AMFA) as their collective-bargaining agent, the National Mediation Board announced Thursday. The vote was 75-30 for union representation of 131 eligible employees.

Sun Country said it supported "the employees' right to choose whether they wanted to be represented by a union, and we respect the outcome of this vote."

In a statement, the airline added, "We appreciate everything our technicians do to support the safe operations and success of our airline, and we value our discussions during this process about how to make Sun Country an even better place to work."

Sun Country has lost one-third of its mechanics and See **UNION** on D10 ▶



A wealthy group aims to reinvigorate semiconductor chipmaking in the U.S., but also seeks \$1B from taxpayers to fund effort

BILLIONAIRE BOOST

By EPHRAT LIVNI • New York Times

Amid the debate about how the United States can bring more manufacturing of semiconductors back to the country and worries it has become a national security concern, a surprising group of well-connected billionaires has quietly assembled to influence the way Washington approaches this thorny challenge.

Over the past several months, without attracting much notice, Eric Schmidt, the former CEO of Google and a longtime Democratic donor, has joined Peter Thiel, a co-founder of PayPal and a vocal Trump supporter, to back an unusual nonprofit venture capital fund to invest in chipmaking across the country. The group also includes a cadre of former government officials, including Ash Carter, a former secretary of defense, and H.R. McMaster, a former national security adviser.

The billionaires aren't simply funding the effort themselves: The group has met with lawmakers in Congress hoping that U.S. taxpayers will help foot the bill.

The ask: \$1 billion. The group, called America's Frontier Fund, describes itself as "the nation's first deep-tech fund that invests for the national interest."

And its influence has already become clear: Late last month, the White House directed the fund to lead the Quad Investor Network, which the White House describes as "an independent consortium of investors that seeks to advance access to capital for critical and emerging technologies" across the United States, See **FUND** on D10 ▶



Carter McMaster Schmidt Thiel

Medtronic calls its pump data promising

The MiniMed 780G is available in 40 countries but not yet in the U.S.

By BURL GILYARD
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Medtronic says it has promising data on the effectiveness of its next-generation insulin pump from patients in Europe and Chile.

The MiniMed 780G insulin pump, which was cleared in 2020 for use in Europe, is not yet available in the U.S.

Current standards from the American Diabetes Association (ADA) recommend that diabetes patients be within the recommended glucose guidelines at least 70% of the time, a measure called "time in range." Medtronic's newest data show that patients currently using the 780G, which offers continuous glucose monitoring, are consistently exceeding that range.

"The pump is delivering insulin every five minutes," said Dr. Robert Vigersky, chief medical officer for Medtronic's diabetes business. "It's a really advanced algorithm."

Medtronic's diabetes business has faced challenges recently. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued a warning letter in mid-December raising concerns over how the company's California-based diabetes unit had handled complaints, assessed product risks and managed recalls for some insulin pump devices.

Analysts began to worry those issues may have delayed FDA approval for the 780G.

The 780G is available in more than 40 countries.

Robbie Marcus, an analyst See **MEDTRONIC** on D10 ▶

Huge U.S. beef plant planned

\$1.1 billion facility to be built in Rapid City, S.D., with Minnesota partner.

By CHRISTOPHER WALLJASPER and TOM POLANSEK
Reuters

A fifth-generation cattle rancher and consultant plans to build the country's largest beef plant in South Dakota with capacity to slaughter 8,000 head of cattle a day.

The \$1.1 billion project could help address the Biden administration's concerns about rising food prices and a lack of competition in the meat sector, though it would not be running until at least 2026.

The project, Western Legacy Development Corp., is spearheaded by Kingsbury & Associates and Sirius Realty, both run by Megan Kingsbury of a South Dakota ranching family. She told Reuters she expects construction on the Rapid City plant to begin in 2023 and take three years.

Earlier this week, the group announced Farmers Union Industries of Redwood Falls, Minn., as a partner and said the partnership expects to supply 2,500 jobs. Kingsbury said in a news release that the group is See **BEEF** on D10 ▶