The economic fallout from the construction of a nuclear science research facility at Michigan State University is already being felt in Livingston County.

Since 2009, about $3 million in procurement and labor costs has been spent in Livingston County on the project known as the Facility for Rare Isotope Beams — FRIB for short — according to Tom Nowak.

Nowak is the business operations and procurement manager for FRIB, and he spoke about the $730 million project at Tuesday morning's Good Morning Livingston breakfast at Cleary University in Genoa Township.

"We've done a few jobs in Livingston County with some folks, we've hired quite a few folks from this area as well. It's been a great asset for us," Nowak said.

While he had no details of specific companies or people from Livingston County working on the project, Nowak said there will be many opportunities for businesses over the next several years.

"From the business standpoint, the key for us is manufacturing. We have a lot of technical equipment that we need to buy, and we need solid manufacturers who understand how," he said. "We also do a lot of heavy machining of large-size items, welding, so your basic manufacturing."

He said more information about doing business with FRIB is available at http://frib.msu.edu.

Howell Area Chamber of Commerce President Pat Convery said she was "very geeked" about the possibilities after listening to Nowak's presentation.

"I think it's exciting that $3 million has already been spent in Livingston County, and he's talking about using machine shops in the Howell area and employees from the Howell area," Convery said.

"As I've said before, we are not surrounded by a wall here in Livingston County — what happens in East Lansing generally spills over to us, especially something this big," she added. "This is just a game changer for Michigan and this region."

FRIB's overall economic impact has been estimated at $1 billion. The project is expected to create 5,000 construction jobs and 400 permanent jobs, and bring more than 800 research scientists to Michigan to conduct their studies.

Civil construction of the 227,000-square-foot building began in March 2014, and technical construction began in October.

The facility is scheduled to be fully operational in 2022, but Nowak said work is ahead of schedule.

The linear accelerator tunnel for FRIB is 570 feet long, 30 feet wide and buried 32 feet underground, Nowak pointed out. Over a 26-hour period this month, 370 concrete trucks poured 265 tons of concrete.

Isotopes are defined as two or more atoms with similar chemical properties but different physical properties. FRIB is expected to provide researchers with more than 1,000 new rare isotopes never before produced on Earth. Isotope technology is used in fields including medicine, energy, industry and national security.

"We try to create those rare isotopes and use them for different applications," Nowak said.

The Good Morning Livingston breakfast series is sponsored by the Howell Area Chamber of Commerce.

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