

FROM THE EAST

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Join our "Advocacy Team"

Contact Vann Rogerson

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Next Partners Meeting is

April 15 at 11:00am

Message from the Chairman

During the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, NC East, like many others saw a slowdown in its traditional organizational activities. This gave the NC East Board time to talk with allies, time to assess regional strengths and weaknesses, and time to refocus its operations. We are now:

1. **Supporting our existing industries.**
Assisting with workforce deficiencies, recruiting missing industry suppliers.
2. **Expanding our successful STEM East education initiative.**
3. **Continuing targeted company recruitment.**
4. **Leading regional advocacy.**
NC East is a convenor of stakeholders who identify, discuss, and support important regional issues and pursue solutions.

This first newsletter will focus on our recent advocacy activities. Although some challenges are highlighted, our board believes that a group of "energized partners" can move our NC East region forward. Let's make a difference and be problem solvers – together.

Quarterly Partners' Meeting Recap – January 2021

NC East held its first Quarterly Partners Meeting in January, 2021. All partners were encouraged to identify regional problems, issues, or concerns that need to be addressed. All comments were confidential. A few recurring regional issues were identified and are listed below.

1. **Support is needed for the completion of Interstate 87.**
Follow up on the NC DOT Eastern Freight Logistic Study Recommendations. Investigate the "enhancement of barging" in the Eastern NC Waterways and support the continued development of I-87.
2. **Across the region, there is an acute need for skilled workers.**
Almost all partners echoed the need for a larger, more highly trained workforce.
3. **Improve the perception of rural Eastern NC.**
Multiple partners expressed the need for better regional advocacy, better regional branding. We must demonstrate that Eastern NC is a cool place to live; a region that is full of adventure.
4. **Rural Broadband limitations are a universal concern.**
Federal legislation making NC Broadband a utility &/or a Starlink satellite solution for the Rural East were ideas noted for further consideration. Tele-Health, Tele-Medicine, remote worker access, small business accessibility to global markets - they are clearly in jeopardy with our poor current broadband coverage.
5. **Our existing industries need our support**
A company's labor shed originates in multiple counties. Permitting and tariff support for industry will become even more important in the future. The region's manufacturers should identify suppliers who need to be recruited to our region to better support our industries.
6. **Support our Rural Health Care System**
Our region's future depends on it.
7. **Prepare for the Offshore Wind Economy**
This presents a huge economic development opportunity for the region

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Webinar Recap

Check out our upcoming webinars below!

7/29/2020 NC Northeast Aerospace Business Development Briefing

Description: NC East Alliance hosted The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Division of Aviation's regional Aerospace Business Development Briefing. Partners from the Division of Aviation discussed North Carolina's new aerospace business development plan and discussed how we can partner in this initiative to expand our aerospace sector and "propel aerospace in northeastern North Carolina".

Webinar Conclusions:

Eastern North Carolina has a strong existing aerospace industry and supply chain. Buildings, sites, utilities, talent, and workforce development programs exist to support the expansion of the industry. To continue to support the industry, the region must have all buildings and sites in the state database, start an industry roundtable, assess transferable skills, and create talent development programs. The continued development of the I-87 corridor will help advance the aerospace industry in the east, allowing companies to have better access within and outside the region.

9/10/2020 Rural Health Care: The impact of COVID 19 and the Health Insurance Gap

Description: NC East Alliance partnered with Care4Carolina to host a virtual forum discussing the impacts of COVID-19 and the influence of the health insurance coverage gap in Eastern North Carolina.

Webinar Conclusions:

The economic impact of closing the health insurance gap was highlighted during the webinar. Getting better healthcare coverage has a huge economic value throughout rural eastern North Carolina. Data generated by Regional Economic Models Inc (REMI) shows that Medicaid expansion could lead to the creation of 11,446 rural jobs, 279,891 new Medicaid enrollees, \$1.976 billion increase in GDP, and \$33.6 million in local tax revenue (in rural NC counties by

2022). "There is hardly anything we can do for rural ENC that would have the economic impact that Medicaid expansion would have" says Jason Gray, Senior Fellow for Research and Policy, NC Rural Center. The Northeast Region itself will gain 1,259 jobs by 2022. The NE Region will also benefit from a \$233 million economic impact as well as \$3.2 million increase in tax revenue. "This is a pro-business and pro-community position, not just a healthcare position. When hospitals close in communities, it is the beginning of the closure of that community." – Dr. Michael Waldrum CEO Vidant Health.

10/22/2020 NCDOT Freight and Supply Chain Studies

Description: NCDOT's Office of Logistics and Freight highlighted two recent studies focused on eastern North Carolina. The first study introduced and discussed was the 2019 Eastern North Carolina Regional Freight Mobility Plan, an in-depth look at how freight moves throughout the region. The second study dove into Rural Freight Transport Needs.

Webinar Conclusions:

Support is needed for regional supply chain development in planning, investment, and policy. The region needs to improve multimodal connectivity to both the regional economic marketplace and key-freight handling assets. The region also needs to support future interstate highway development and corridor growth, as well as expand key two-lane rural routes. The promotion of a cohesive coordinated regional economic development strategy built on robust engagement would assist in achieving these goals. "I'll commend NC East for not only their regional legacy but what they are continuing to do today hosting sessions like this." - Dana Magliola NCDOT Office of Logistics and Freight added that "Additional resources for an organization such as NC East Alliance could help accelerate business growth in the region."

11/18/2020 Industrial Supply Chain Webinar

Description: Panelists from across eastern North Carolina discussed current supply chain issues caused by COVID-19 and how their organizations have adapted. Panelists also discussed what they see in the future for the local and international supply chain.

Webinar Conclusions:

Panelists shared insight on how their organizations have fared and adapted during the pandemic: "Having a strong domestic supply base is the best hedge against global uncertainty," said Andy Street from Hyster Yale. Andy also shared, "Don't waste 2020; learn from the impact and be prepared when the next event occurs." The consensus among the panelists was that companies saw a dramatic halt in business during the initial shutdown, but many have now returned to full production. Aaron Oullette from the Port of Virginia spoke on the status of multiple industries. Pharmaceutical companies are moving a lot of volume. Home improvement and furniture are doing well. Companies supplying hotels and restaurants are struggling. Automobile parts started slow but grew throughout 2020. Hygiene products are doing well. Another observation from the Port of Virginia was that many companies have started building inventory rather than using an international just-in-time inventory system.. Thomas Lorenzo from Domtar reminded us that when China stopped shipping products in the pandemic, there were no ships at the USA ports to ship USA manufactured products back to Asia. International logistics were initially difficult during the pandemic. And finally, Anna Mangum shared that the North Carolina Manufacturing Extension Partnership is an excellent resource for companies looking for new "made in America" suppliers.



Webinar Recap Cont.

12/2/2020 EPDNC Onward As One: Northeast Region

Description: NC East Alliance hosted the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina's (EDPNC) "Onward as One" webinar highlighting the northeast region. Panelists from EDPNC and regional industry discussed the effects, challenges, and opportunities faced by businesses in the Northeast Region. The Northeast Region had the highest attendance of all regions for the "Onward as One" Webinar.

Webinar Conclusions:

Despite the pandemic, business recruitment remained strong in North Carolina. The Northeast had some success as well, including the expansion of Nebraska Plastics to Edenton and the expansion of Pamlico Air in Washington. Mr. Paul German shared the journey that Nebraska Plastic made to begin operations in NC. Martyn Johnson shared Pamlico Air's expansion story in Beaufort County. Vann Rogerson discussed NC East's mission refocus to include more industry support, additional workforce education support, regional advocacy, and action on critical issues in the region. EDPNC highlighted some of their services including assisting existing industry with workforce development, capital resources, international trade, and general business support. EDPNC also provides multiple services at no cost: COVID Recovery and Resources, Grant & Loan Expertise, Workforce Development Connections, Supply Chain Reshoring Opportunities, and export assistance.

12/18/2020 Eastern NC Economic Update

Description: Laura Ullrich, Regional Economist for The Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond discussed the effects of COVID-19 on the economy from a national, regional, and local perspective. Laura also gave her glimpse into the future and how the economy may respond.

Webinar Conclusions:

Despite the pandemic, multiple eastern North Carolina counties have seen short term employment growth, and a few have continued to see short term and long-term growth. Although the rural eastern NC counties suffered continued employment decline due to the pandemic. North Carolina has overall fared better during the pandemic and is recovering quicker than most of the country. The future rate of recovery is uncertain as the public changes its behavior due to increasing COVID cases. Minorities (black) have been impacted greater by the pandemic and are struggling to recover, shown by a lower labor force participation rate. A survey of CFOs showed that most expect to return to pre-pandemic levels of production by 2022 or later. 42% of CFOs said they would never fully return to in person (office) work. Continued migration to rural communities due to the ability to work remotely could influence the improvement of rural broadband infrastructure

1/14/2021 I-87 Work Session

Description: Partners discussed the history and importance of the I-87 corridor. NCDOT updated participants on the development of each segment of I-87. Next steps were discussed on how to support the continued development of this critical eastern North Carolina corridor.

Webinar Conclusions:

"A future interstate will provide an economic lifeline for the northeast by linking key metro suburban job centers while providing several counties with direct interstate access." – Joe Milazzo, Regional Transportation Alliance. "I-87 will improve safety for those in eastern North Carolina, create economic opportunity, and improve quality of life." – Marc Finlayson, Highway 17/64 Association. I-87 is more than an interstate rather a means to connect all infrastructure assets in the region including the ports, road, barge, rail, and aviation. NC East hopes to partner with the Highway 17/64 Association and county/state allies to secure federal rural infrastructure money. Broadband could be packaged together with rural infrastructure funding. Continued development of the corridor will be essential to the Offshore Wind Industry. NC East will act by contacting legislators to identify funding to move the corridor forward. NCDOT will dedicate staff to focus on "corridor development". Senator Bob Steinburg mentioned that a completed I-87 paired with Foreign Trade Zone #20 could help attract growth to Northeastern North Carolina.

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To view recordings of our previous webinars please visit

<https://nceast.org/eastern-nc-advantages/regional-webinars/>

or

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCPW5SRyJ2Xryg-qugVDWCiQ>

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Upcoming Webinars

Cybersecurity and Industry 4.0

11:30am February 25

The Future of Retail - Post COVID

11:00am March 2

Offshore Wind

TBA

Quarterly Partners Meeting

11:00am April 15

Industry Cluster Work Session - Boatbuilding

11:30am May 6

2021 - FEBRUARY



Please join our "Advocacy Team". We need you. We need your vision, your connections, your resources, and time. Help us elevate Eastern North Carolina.

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