

# FROM THE EAST

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## QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Join our "Advocacy Team"

Contact Vann Rogerson

252-916-2562

rogerson@nceast.org

Next Partners Meeting is

August 19 at 11:00am

## Message from the Chairman

In January 2021 NC East Alliance hosted an I-87 work session with partners from NCDOT, Hwy 17/64 Association, and Regional Transportation Alliance. The current state of the corridor was discussed by NCDOT Engineers and NC East CEO Vann Rogerson lead a discussion of what the next steps should be. Over 200 business leaders, economic developers, university representatives, and elected officials attended the meeting. In April 2021 Business NC published an [article](#) discussing the Biden Infrastructure plan and the importance of developing I-87 to the northeastern NC economy. In March 2021 NC East was notified that NCDOT had applied for a federal INFRA grant to accelerate the development of the corridor and lay fiber alongside the interstate. In addition to submitting a letter of support to NCDOT and USDOT, NC East requested partners and communities throughout the region to submit letters of support to USDOT. Please ask your US congressional delegation to support I-87 by contacting the USDOT and sharing how important the I-87 corridor is for eastern NC. Our region has supported this interstate corridor for a long time. Vann Rogerson and the NC Northeast initially submitted a support letter for I-87 on May 11, 2011 – 10 years ago. Happy Anniversary.

NC East continues to pursue solutions to regional issues identified by partners. If you support NC East's mission to move eastern North Carolina forward, please consider joining our advocacy team.

## Regional Ally Survey 2020

NC East surveyed all partners in 2020 to identify regional problems, issues, and concerns that need to be addressed. The following recurring issues were identified:

- 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!

### 2/25/2021 Cybersecurity and Industry 4.0

**Description:** Panelists from academia and multiple industries discussed the future of manufacturing and the onset of the 4th industrial revolution known as "industry 4.0". Current initiatives in the region to help industries transition to industry 4.0 were discussed as well as current examples of technologies that are transforming industry.

**Webinar Conclusions:** Dr. Harry Ploehn, ECU kicked off the webinar by discussing what is Industry 4.0 and the new ECU Smart Manufacturing Lab. Dr. Ploehn discussed how digital transformation is fueling this 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution known as Industry 4.0. Dr. Ploehn also discussed the importance of cybersecurity and ECU's plans for Cyber Ranges for cybersecurity training in the Eastern Region Pharma Center and the Smart Manufacturing and Maintenance Center. ECU hopes to hear from industry on workforce and continuing education needs to best develop the Smart Manufacturing and Maintenance Center for the region. Following Dr. Ploehn, Steven Warwick of Connected Devices LLC discussed 5G cellular networks. Steven explained how 5G allows for increased data and voice capacity compared to 4G. 5G also significantly reduces latency. Steven continued on to discuss how cellular networks are best fit for industrial environments due to the larger coverage area, better security, and lower latency compared to Wi-Fi. Steven and Connected Devices assists industry with 4G/5G LTE modem integration, network architecture, and testing. They also assist with the deployment of private cellular Network Infrastructure. Following Steven was John Powell, substations and controls engineer with Greenville Utilities Commission. John works with Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition integrations known as SCADA. SCADA integrates and allows for the management of all GUC Assets. John discussed the recent cyber attack in Florida and the risk of poor cybersecurity.

John discussed how information technology and operations technology have remained different over time but are slowly integrating with the onset of Industry 4.0. GUC has created a data communications standards group to align goals and strategies of the OT and IT departments. GUC has also created a cybersecurity task force to address cybersecurity company wide and has led to the creation of response plans for cyber events. John mentioned that Cloud Computing, Artificial Intelligence, and machine learning are all potential technologies to be incorporated in utilities operations. The final speaker was Matt Zimmerman who is the CEO of Beast Code. Matt has 10 years of experience in digital transformation. Beast code works with various organizations to take their data and convert it to 3D interactive models also known as digital twins. During the webinar Matt showcased their technology by giving the audience a tour of a 3D digital model of a spaceship. These models are created for a variety of uses including troubleshooting problems and identifying the quickest routes to maximize efficiency. These models can assist organizations with virtual training for maintenance and industrial processes.

### 3/2/2021 The Future of Retail Post COVID

**Description:** Lacy Beasley, President of Retail Strategies, Elliott Scott, Director of Real Estate for Retail Strategies, and Jennings Gray, Senior Retail Development Specialist of ElectriCities of NC discuss retail development and answer a range of questions in regards to e-commerce, how to market to retailers, and the effect of daytime population increase on retailers.

**Webinar Conclusions:** Lacy started off the webinar by discussing the impacts of COVID on retail. She explained how businesses were forced to adapt to survive the new

business environment impacted by COVID. QR codes became more prevalent among retailers such as restaurants to avoid physical contact. Online shopping became more popular as did drive-throughs and pick up orders. Cities and businesses had to work together to account for pick up locations and outdoor venues. Brands that were unable to adapt and increase their online presence failed. Retail sales were up 5% in 2020. Some further conclusions were that retail is going to continue to change due to millennials being the largest consumer in America. Local downtown businesses saw significant support during the pandemic emphasizing the importance of having a downtown development director. Temporary free rent, lighting, and walkability were factors mentioned that makeup a great downtown. Retail Strategies offers a walkability assessment for downtown areas to assess what is walkable within 20, 10, and 5 minute radiuses. Mobile tracking data is a new asset that communities can use to analyze frequently trafficked areas. Retail Strategies has the ability to geofence locations to identify consumer patterns. Tracking data can be collected and used to recruit businesses to available downtown buildings. The panelists also mentioned that consumer traffic increases after 5pm and businesses should stay open to take advantage of that traffic. Ghost Kitchens and shared spaces were mentioned as innovative ways to fill space in downtowns. Finally, the panelist encouraged all communities to be involved in the Main Street Americas program. For more information on how Retail Strategies can assist your community please contact Lacy Beasley (lacy@retailstrategies.com). If your community is interested in mobile tracking data please contact Jennings Gray (jgray@electricities.org).



## STEM East Update

### Museums@home

Thanks to a \$10,000 STEMx Challenge Grant awarded in October 2020, STEM East was able to develop the museums@home program aimed at bringing teachers, museums, students, and families together in a virtual collaborative environment. The first museums@home event featured The Aurora Fossil Museum, the second featured Sylvan Heights Bird Park, and the third and final event featured the Fossil Museum again. One of the outcomes of the museums@home program was a series of virtual planning sessions called the "Inquiry Design Studio" (IDS). The purpose of the IDS was to collaboratively design inquiry-based activities integrating museum resources with teacher lessons. Overall the IDS and museums@home program has led to growing relationships between teachers and regional museums. STEM East continues to connect educators, museums, industries, and more, further developing the regional STEM Ecosystem. Read the full museums@home report [here](#).

### STEM Ecosystem National Community of Practice - Recommendations to Biden-Harris Admin.

STEM East recently worked with STEM leaders across America through the STEM Learning Ecosystems Community of Practice to offer recommendations for the Biden-Harris administration on education and career pathways. A list of 5 recommendations was developed on how the new

administration as well as individual states can improve STEM learning for all. The top recommendation was "Foster collaboration to engage, leverage and link all relevant community resources – adoption of the STEM Learning Ecosystems model." The other four recommendations can be found [here](#).

### Leap into Science

STEM East is a part of the North Carolina STEM Ecosystem that has submitted a proposal to the Franklin Institute in 2020 to coordinate Leap into Science training for early childhood educators across North Carolina. Leap Into Science is a national program developed by the Franklin Institute Science Museum in Philadelphia, PA. It is designed to build interest and skills in science and literacy for children ages 3–10 and their families, in community settings like libraries, museums, and out-of-school programs. The NC Leap into Science program is just beginning efforts to build regional groups of workshop presenters. They will be hosting virtual trainings in May and June of workshop presenters using the Leap into Science *Light & Shadow* curriculum. Educators who are trained will become part of a statewide network of workshop providers and have access to kit materials and expanded curriculum offerings. The training and materials are offered at no cost to interested educators. Leap Into Science is the first statewide project the NC STEM Ecosystem has undertaken together. [Learn more here](#).

### STEM Corps East

STEM East continues to assist STEM Corps East by connecting the program to local school districts in the region. STEM Corps East is an Americorps STEM tutoring and enrichment program designed to help increase student interest and achievement in math and science classes. The program typically recruits high school seniors from a current 5-county focus area of Pitt, Beaufort, Greene, Lenoir, and Jones counties. Minimum, Quarter, and Half-time tutor positions are available to students. Student tutors receive a monthly living allowance and education award for their service. From 2015 to 2019, Lenoir County Public Schools has had 20 student tutors and has seen a Math 1 Proficiency increase from 8.8% to 44%. Tutors served 7,200 hours, received \$9,600 in living allowances, and \$29,296 in education awards. STEM Corps East is interested in partnering with local non-profits and school districts. If your organization or school is interested in the STEM Corps East Program please contact Nichelle Shuck at [shuckn@ecu.edu](mailto:shuckn@ecu.edu).

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

### American Rescue Plan Opportunities for Eastern North Carolina

10:30am June 25

### NC Northeast Alternative Energy Workshop

July TBA

### Opportunity Zones

July TBA

### Offshore Wind Support Vessels

August TBA

### E-commerce – Reaching Millions of Customers Online

September TBA

### Industrial Cybersecurity

October TBA

### East NC Logistics Update

November TBA

### Economic Update

December TBA

2021 - June



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

***Please contact Vann Rogerson (252-916-2562 or [rogerson@nceast.org](mailto:rogerson@nceast.org))***

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