



US 70 Corridor Commission

DIRECTOR'S REPORT FOR MONTHS OF MARCH & APRIL, 2016 M. DURWOOD STEPHENSON, DIRECTOR

Welcome to our Spring issue for March and April. It is encouraging to witness and experience events in our region that are proof of the commitment and effort all of you have persistently pursued during the past several years.

The initial report of 2016 (January & February) looked to the past in reflection acknowledging deficiencies, citing programs and achievement while planning forward.

We engage the challenges of the future with more tools for coping than at any time during our recent history of approximately six (6) years: the FAST Act with a 5-Year commitment for increased funding and Interstate designations for Eastern North Carolina's high priority corridors and future Interstates; the Governor's 25 Year Transportation Plan supported by transportation friendly legislation enacted by last session of North Carolina's General Assembly are all factors that make the challenges of our agenda less improbable and more attainable.

The U.S. 70 Corridor Commission held a quarterly scheduled meeting at LaGrange Community Center on March 17. I encourage you to review Marcia's meeting minutes for a complete and informative review of events and presentations at the meeting.

It is noteworthy to mention a few highlights of the meeting. A major objective and recent achievement with the designation of U.S. 70 as a future Interstate has been a topic of much conversation. We have been celebrating the historic legislation and planning a celebratory creation of Future Interstate signs along the Corridor. Federal Highway Administration Division Administrator, John F. Sullivan III detailed the Interstate signing process. The installation of the first Future Interstate sign is scheduled for a new section of Goldsboro Bypass, scheduled to open officially by June 1, 2016. The sign erection celebration was held on March 30. The event was well attended and included appearances by Congressman G.K. Butterfield, Governor McCrory, NCDOT Secretary Tennyson, Mayor Chuck Allen, Wayne County Commission Chairman, Joe Daughtery and Johnston County Commissioner and U.S. 70 Corridor Commission Chairman, Ted Godwin. A large number of DOT officials and Division 4 DOT Board Member Gus Tulloss joined a contingent of Corridor Commission Directors from all five member counties. The event was well publicized with media coverage throughout Eastern North Carolina.

I am attaching a copy of Press Release of the event.

M. Durwood Stephenson
Director

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We can now turn our attention to the numbering of the future Interstate.

The number will be assigned by American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). We are hopeful the number will be assigned at next meeting scheduled for May. The number currently being discussed is I-36. It has been the position of the Corridor Commission that we do not care what number is approved, we just want a number as soon as possible. The justification for I-36 consideration as suggested by Kevin Lacy is attached.

North Carolina State Ports Authority Chief Executive Officer, Paul J. Cozza gave an update on our ports citing the increase in use and revenue. Under the direction of Mr. Cozza, the North Carolina Ports Authority is focusing on marketing/sales to compete with other southeast ports. The CSX Central Carolina Connector, if located in Eastern North Carolina, will be a transformational state-of-the-art intermodal rail terminal and could be the largest economic development project in recent years for Eastern North Carolina. According to Mr. Cozza more than 90 percent of Ports customers have expressed need and support for this project. According to Mr. Cozza, the CCX project is a game changer for our ports that are playing "catch-up" with competitor ports to the South in Charleston and Norfolk in Virginia.

Every citizen, business, elected official and resident of the 41 counties of Eastern North Carolina are encouraged to promote the project by any means possible including letters, contacting elected officials, newspaper editors, social media and CSX officials. This is, without a doubt, the greatest opportunity in recent history to resurrect the economic future of rural, Eastern North Carolina.

Although the project enjoys strong region-wide support, the Campaign to capture the project was seized earlier by opposing forces through social media with misinformation.

Recognizing the impact of the few vocal opponents, we began jousting with verbal gymnastics exposing and rectifying the misinformation and falsehoods.

It is an effort that must be continued daily and diligently until CSX is comfortable in locating this major economic accelerator in Eastern North Carolina. Please give it your attention and priority. It is that important for all of us and our children and grandchildren.

On March 29, I was interviewed by Kevin Litwin, a writer with the 2016 Eastern North Carolina Economic Guide published by NC East Alliance to promote business and economic activity in Eastern North Carolina. His article focused on Transportation and the U.S. 70 planned Interstate designation. It was a positive and appreciated article in support of our agenda. A copy is attached for your review (Reprinted by permission from Kevin Litwin, author and Bill McMeekin, Business Director for Eastern North Carolina Regional Economic Development Review).

The News & Observer editorial on April 3 documented the evolution of the North Carolina Rural Center and the continuing impact the Agency offers for rural North Carolina. Under the direction of President, Patrick Woodie and staff, the Rural Center has evolved and remains a vital and critical agent for change, quality of life and economy opportunities. The editorial states the obvious, **"The N.C. Rural Economic Development Center is making a comeback so that rural N.C. might do the same."** Although specific routes to our ultimate goal may vary, the end objective is a common agenda leading to a more promising economic future for our region. We walk hand-in-hand with the Rural Center as our partner and welcome them to the challenge.

The North Carolina Association of Regional Councils of Government partnered with North Carolina Rural Center for a conference on April 18 & 19 entitled **NC Tomorrow: Building Communities for Tomorrow's Jobs**. We look forward to a report on the discussions and ideas at our Corridor Commission meeting on May 26 in New Bern.

The promising news that began this report continued into April with the release of SPOT rankings. A vital section of U.S. 70 in Kinston ranked high enough to be funded at the Regional Level. The battle against expanding WYSE Fork Battleground becomes more significant in our quest to complete an Interstate Corridor.

On April 20, North Carolina's East Alliance presented NC East 2016 State of the Region by President and CEO, John Chaffee and a great line-up of interesting and informative speakers.

The North Carolina Chamber gave us a most relevant topic on April 28. **Transportation & Infrastructure Summit** reminded us again of the importance, especially in our rural regions, of connectivity of rural and urban via transportation and maximizing the invaluable assets within our region: Ports, rail, geography for tourism, workforce, global Transpark, available land and work ethic of population.

The Rural Prosperity Task Force of 2000 documented the decline of non-urban South: A decline that has continued the "slide" with more than two-thirds (2/3's) of our State still at pre-recession levels.

For more than two (2) decades rural North Carolina has been in decline with a large number of rural Eastern North Carolina Counties losing population at an alarming rate. A decline the 2000 Rural Prosperity Task Force described as an irreversible trend.

A premise that we cannot accept nor tolerate. Admittedly, however, these trends have continued since noted in the 2000 report for the past sixteen (16) years. The era of big tobacco and small cut and sew operations in our region are in the past and we must find new economic sources. Problems don't get better with age. They get better with "fixes." It is our task to identify and offer economic "fixes" to revitalize Eastern North Carolina.

We live in a fast-changing world. But there are "givers" and "certainties" beyond death and taxes. Change is not easy nor quick, but persistence and determination cannot be denied.

As our friend and logistics expert, Charles Edwards, reminds us logistics is an industry of the future. There are an estimated 5,000+ jobs in logistics now vacant and available; logistics jobs cannot be transferred off shore, but offers benefits and wage scales generally above rural Eastern North Carolina incomes. Another reason to aggressively push for the CSX Intermodal Hub to locate in North Carolina.

The future is unpredictable and we often do not know how to plan for the uncertainties of tomorrow. Too frequently we put off the future thinking of it as a 'down the road' decision. But the future is not down the road, it is in the moment and must be handled and planned daily with continuous updates. The problem identified in 2000, has continued the decline during the past sixteen (16) years. It is our belief that basic infrastructure and connectivity of regions, states and global marketplace are a road to change for our region.

Although we must continue to push, prod and advocate for our region, history has proven we cannot rely on economic development incentives. A recent study by Good Jobs First concluded that more than two-thirds (2/3's) of economic development spending benefits big businesses primarily in urban and suburban neighborhoods. In short we in rural America are on our own and pretty much are forced to the "boot-strap" mentality to reverse economic decline trends.

Exploring new technologies and embracing the era of logistics, we must protect and assist economic assets now residing in our region: Ports, rail, Global Transpark, agriculture, tourism and a major payroll, Military personnel. Growth and maintenance of these invaluable assets is dependent on improved infrastructure.

We are living in a world on edge. Nearly every moment of our daily lives is infected with uncertainty, fraught with peril, struggling at every challenge with controversy that must be proved baseless. Critical analysis has been replaced with self-indulgent arguments through social-shaming and unconfirmed personal attacks by non-personal social media campaigns that discredit the most noble of intentions and productive economic pursuits. Too often silence is the only peace, but at a future challenging cost.

For the past several years, logistic experts have been touting the promise of the great benefits of the expansion of the Panama Canal. These experts cite the ability of an expanded Panama Canal to service larger cargo vessels that can only be accommodated by larger, deeper ports. The great day of promise for larger expanded canal has arrived, but the plan for larger cargo vessels cannot be accommodated because of drought induced water levels. The lakes that feed the canal are at dangerously low levels which have caused water levels in the Panama Canal to drop so severely that authorities are now banning large, deep-draft ships from the waterway. Beginning in April, 2016, ships with hulls deeper than 39 feet are banned from passage until water levels have risen significantly. The low price of oil coupled with the pricey tariffs of Panama and Suez canals are adapting to the low water levels by utilizing the old routes and niche ports. Often times the best laid plans of mice and men go awry."

I am fortunate to work for and with an organization driven by a mission to reverse decades of economic decline. As we move forward, we will remain focused on executing our strategy, providing a path to a future for the children of rural Eastern North Carolina.

Many of the traditional jobs of the past will not return. The jobs of the future, many that have not yet been identified, necessitate educational preparation. STEM curriculums and New School venues are a basic requirement to prepare our work force for the expanding and new global workforce. It is disappointing the New Schools directive has failed financially – a good idea that evidently was not well executed. The promise of the New Schools failure must be re-examined, failures corrected and the promise fulfilled. I can only speculate the reason for the lack of success because I know many of the personalities and I know their passion for the cause. Perhaps we as a community did not offer or provide the support needed.

It is said, “Intelligent and curious people want to learn what they don’t already know.” Although my first objective with the report is always to continue to push a primary agenda and to keep our directors informed on agenda programs, but hopefully there is new information for you to absorb and some ideas that we should explore further. I will follow-up later with appropriate groups on these new ideas.

In addition to the noble achievement of securing Interstate Designation status for U.S. 70, and our greater purpose of promoting commerce in the Eastern region, we continue to collaborate with our partners and fellow rural advocates in promoting every conceivable economic opportunity. For the past several months, I have been engaged in assisting in promoting the extension of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline to provide natural gas service to unserved areas of the State as we work daily to assure CCX Intermodal Rail Hub is a part of our future.

The North Carolina Chamber, a strong advocate for commerce and economic growth throughout North Carolina, recognizes the inequitable distribution of growth and economic opportunity between urban, suburban and rural North Carolina and have made a bold push to minimize the inequities. One of the more promising ideas is a joint effort between North Carolina Chamber Foundation and North Carolina Commerce Rural Division to develop a public-private funded partnership to assist nonurban counties to develop an action agenda to enhance opportunities. The effort will target ten (10) new communities each year and prioritize regional efforts. A great idea that we should support and expand.

I am available to explore any/all opportunities you deem appropriate and to continue fighting with you for our agenda and our future.

I am frankly amazed at the inquiries and calls that come to me daily from throughout the State and Region; a large number of them relating to future Interstate 70. Hopefully, a number will be assigned in May and then we can add an Interstate Shield to our sign and add more signs along the way.

See you on May 26 and thanks!

From: McCrory Communications [mailto:mccrorycommunications@nc.gov]

Sent: Wednesday, March 30, 2016 12:54 PM

To: Steele, Greg <greg.steele@nc.gov>

Subject: Press Release: Governor McCrory Unveils Future U.S. 70 Interstate Sign



Press Release

Governor McCrory Unveils Future U.S. 70 Interstate Sign

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(919) 814-2100

Wednesday, March 30, 2016

govpress@nc.gov

Goldsboro, N.C. – Governor Pat McCrory unveiled a future U.S. Interstate 70 sign today during a ceremony in Goldsboro.

"Today is a great day for eastern North Carolina and our entire state," Governor McCrory said. "Enhancing the U.S. 70 corridor continues our administration's focus on preparing North Carolina for the future, connecting North Carolina and supporting our military, agriculture and overall economy."



Improving the U.S. 70 corridor is a major part of Governor McCrory's 25-year Transportation Vision.

Funding for the project was provided by the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act which was signed into law in December. Governor McCrory called for Congress to pass a long term transportation funding bill in March 2015 when he testified before the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee on behalf of the state and as a member of the National Governors Association Executive Committee. At the ceremony the governor thanked North Carolina's congressional delegation for its bipartisan work on securing passage of the bill.

The U.S. 70 Corridor was designated as future Interstate in the FAST Act and will utilize portions of U.S. Highways 70 and 117 to better connect Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, the North Carolina Global TransPark, Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point and the Port of Morehead City with the rest of North Carolina and the eastern seaboard.



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Durwood Stephenson

From: Little, Timothy M <tmlittle@ncdot.gov>
Sent: Thursday, April 14, 2016 8:31 AM
To: Stephenson, Durwood
Subject: FW: Future I-36

Please call me when you get a chance...

Thanks
Tim

From: Lacy, Kevin
Sent: Thursday, April 14, 2016 8:18 AM
To: Rouse, John W <jwrouse@ncdot.gov>; Little, Timothy M <tmlittle@ncdot.gov>; Holder, Michael L <mholder@ncdot.gov>
Subject: RE: Future I-36

The why for 36 is: It is an east west number in the vicinity of numerical range for national interstate numbering system. The east west numbers state with the low even numbers to the south and increase to the higher even numbers to the north. This is one of the few two digit numbers that did not have a conflicting number in our state (no US or NC route) and there is not currently an Interstate 36 in any other state. Other two digit numbers in the range had conflicts with an US or NC routes. A three digit number was possible a derivative of 40 or 95 (340, 595 or similar) but we would prefer to have a two digit number if we can get one.

No, we cannot ask for multiple numbers. That committee typically reviews what is submitted and either concurs or denies.

I do not recall anything about soliciting suggestions from the 70 Corridor Commission, but when I was prodding people for suggestions, I go blank stares.

This whole number business is what I was asking several months back if anyone has any particular suggestions.

The turn in for the next meeting is this week. We have sent in I 36, if the desire is to pull that from consideration, that is fine, but it will be September when the next meeting occurs.

I am certain, that if we pull the application and wait until September, regardless of what number is selected , there will be people who oppose it.

My recommendation is to stay with 36; however, I really do not care what the number is.

From: Rouse, John W
Sent: Thursday, April 14, 2016 7:57 AM
To: Little, Timothy M; Lacy, Kevin; Holder, Michael L
Subject: RE: Future I-36

TRANSPORTATION



Corridor of Possibility

INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS
EXTEND TRANSPORTATION IN
EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA



PHOTO COURTESY OF PORT OF VIRGINIA

Eastern North Carolina offers access to the Port of Virginia at Norfolk, one of two Panamax-ready ports on the East Coast.

By Kevin Litwin

With direct connectivity to a major interstate artery along the Atlantic Seaboard and proximity to one of the longest U.S. interstates stretching east to west, Eastern North Carolina provides businesses with excellent proximity to markets nationwide – and that access is about to get even better.

The region currently offers access to I-40, I-95, I-495 and I-795, along with U.S. highways 17, 64, 70, 117, 158, 258 and 264.

To advance highway transportation even further, officials are moving forward with plans for two new freeways.

North Carolina’s congressional delegation has introduced legislation to turn U.S. Highway 17 and U.S. Highway 64 into a future interstate, while U.S. Highway 70 is being planned as another interstate. Both projects would bring increased commerce and jobs to the region.

“These well-traveled U.S. highways currently go through towns with traffic signals, and big trucks have to navigate through

those communities,” says Durwood Stephenson, director of the Highway 70 Corridor Commission. “The goal for Highway 70, for example, is to eventually establish a nonstop freeway from I-40 in Raleigh to the Port of Morehead City.”

Stephenson says the two projects will take time, but have the support of North Carolina Gov. Pat McCrory and several state representatives.

“It will take a combination of federal and state funding, but progress is already occurring,” he says. “A bypass along U.S. 70 in

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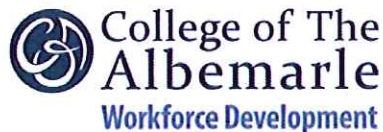


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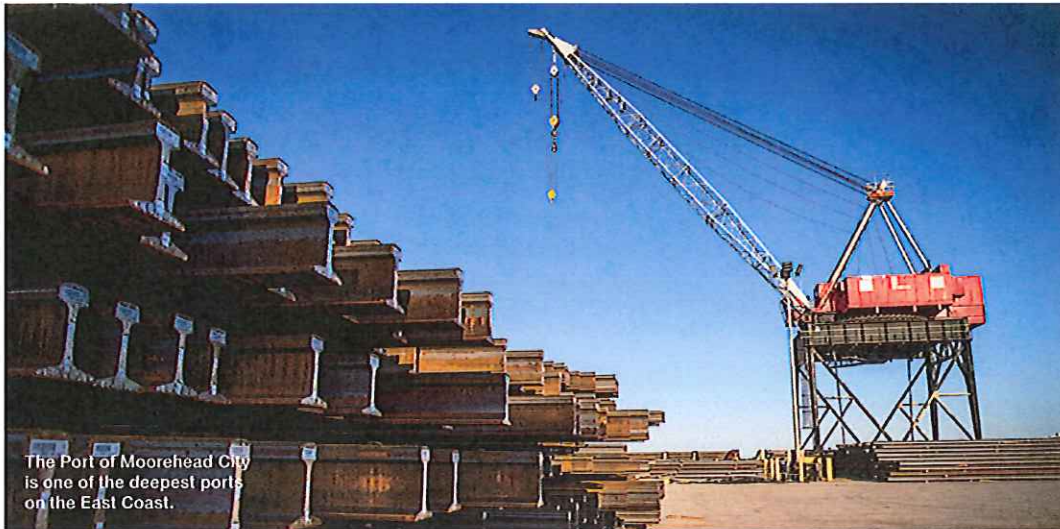
www.vidanthealth.com

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The Port of Morehead City is one of the deepest ports on the East Coast.

Goldsboro is under construction and should be completed by the spring of 2016 to give trucks better access to I-795 and I-95. Harvey Parkway (NC 148) has been completed to provide four-lane access for truckers to merge onto Highway 70 from U.S. 258.”

On the Move

A Class I rail system, with Norfolk Southern and CSX serving as main freight haulers, and carriers such as Carolina Coastal Railway and Nash County Railroad provide shortline service.

The region also includes the deepwater seaports of Morehead City and Wilmington. Several regional foreign trade zones are being reorganized under the 24-county FTZ #214 in Wilmington. The reorganized FTZ will be operational by 2016, providing importers and exporters with more protection from custom duties related to international trade. Eastern North Carolina also offers proximity to the Ports of Virginia at Norfolk – one of the two Panamax-ready ports on the East Coast.

Air travel is easily accessible with regional airports in Greenville, Jacksonville and New Bern providing daily service to Atlanta, Charlotte and Philadelphia, and two airports

nearby – Raleigh-Durham and Wilmington – offering international connections. The NC Global TransPark features an 11,500-foot runway, and general aviation airports are abundant throughout the region.

Convenient Access

The NC Global TransPark is an industrial park that spans 2,500 acres, offering convenient access to air, rail, highways and North Carolina’s two international ports. Corporate tenants currently operating at GTP include CrateTech Inc., DB Schenker, MJE Telestructure, North Carolina Forest Service and Spirit AeroSystems.

Recently, GTP struck an agreement with LGM Enterprises to bring \$5 million in aircraft to expand private jet charter services at the airport.

“The TransPark is near major colleges and universities as well as several metropolitan centers, including the state capital of Raleigh,” says Rudy Gupton, NC Global TransPark executive director. “We have a 5.8-mile rail spur and provide an ideal location for a variety of business types, especially companies involved in the aerospace sector and logistics. We still have good land available for tenants, including some tracts adjacent to the runway.”

Impacting Transportation

One successful logistics-based company in the area is Transportation Impact, which helps negotiate best-rate pricing for shipping costs and tracks packages to ensure accuracy and time-efficient delivery.

The technical software company was founded in 2008 by two former senior-level UPS executives – Travis Burt and Keith Byrd – and is breaking ground on a new corporate office in Emerald Isle.

“We now have 32 employees and 425 clients, and we can’t say enough good things about doing business in Eastern North Carolina,” Byrd says. “A good workforce exists, plus the region is a beautiful place to live.”

SITE SPOTLIGHT: PORT OF MOREHEAD CITY

- » Located just four miles from the Atlantic Ocean
- » Second-largest importer in the nation for natural rubber
- » Leading exporter of phosphate
- » Features a dry-bulk facility with a 225,000-ton capacity warehouse and other open storage, plus a 177,000-square-foot warehouse to house high-value commodities such as paper, steel and lumber