

# Critical Issues for North Carolina's Eastern Region

A support paper presented by the  
Chambers of Commerce of North Carolina's Eastern Region....*a coalition of businesspersons and General Assembly members from throughout the 13-county Eastern Region*

## Transportation

### Eastern North Carolina Regional Transportation Plan

- Highway transportation improvement in the eastern region is continuously plagued by delays. We applaud the DOT Board members who have worked to establish a plan for the region. We support the Eastern North Carolina Regional Transportation Plan and request special emphasis on the following :
  - Streamline the permitting process
  - Hwy 70 corridor bypasses
  - 4 lane highway 43 (and alternatives) between New Bern and Greenville
  - Hwy. 17-corridor completion
  - Funding for Hwy. 11 four-laning
  - I-95 Enhancement

### Port of Morehead City

- One of the only ports with expansion possibilities on the Eastern Seaboard is located at the Morehead City Port on Radio Island. The Environmental Impact Study has been completed and therefore it represents future growth in the economy for Eastern NC and the State. Funds to develop this port expansion are critical.

### Air Service

- High costs and non-direct flights impair air travel in the east. We encourage and support efforts of the DOT to enhance air service within the Eastern Region of North Carolina.

### Rail

- We support Enhancement and initiation of Passenger Rail Service in the Eastern Region.

## Education

## **No Child Left Behind**

- “No Child Left Behind” is comprised of some admirable goals that, while challenging to public education, can be achieved with adequate time and resources. With that in mind, we ask that North Carolina take a leading role in lobbying the federal government to adequately fund NCLB. Specifically:
  - Provide full funding for Title I schools so that adequate resources will be available to bring students of poverty to grade level.
- Likewise, there are components of NCLB which are humanly impossible to implement. No amount of funding and no amount of time can bring about the required results. Therefore, we ask that North Carolina take a leading role in lobbying the federal government to amend the No Child Left Behind Act in the following ways:
  - Re-structure the standard of “grade level” for Exceptional Children.
  - Re-structure the standard of “grade level” for children of Limited English proficiency. (Once they become proficient enough to be tested with age-equivalent students, they are no longer considered limited in English proficiency).
  - Provide a two-year extension before sanctions are placed on schools which do not make AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) so that allowing schools of choice and transporting students does not become such an expense to school systems that academics suffer.

## **K-12 Education**

- We support creative financing to assist counties with funding for facilities.
- We support funding for 0-5 age programs
  - Smart Start
  - More at Four

## **East Carolina University**

- As stated via Resolution in 2003, we support the establishment of the CardioVascular Diseases Institute.
- Additionally, we support funding for our region’s only public university on par with the UNC campuses in Chapel Hill and Raleigh.

## **Community Colleges**

- We support full funding for North Carolina’s Community Colleges.
- We support the multi-county biotechnology initiative

# **Economic Development**

## **Industrial Recruitment**

- We support continued recruitment of industry to eastern North Carolina by the North Carolina Department of Commerce and local economic developers to include traditional as well as emerging industries, such as in the area of bio- technology.

## **Small Business**

- We support the development of new ways to help our small businesses grow and thrive in eastern North Carolina. We applaud the formation of the Joint Select

Committee on Small Business Economic Development and the issues this committee will seek to improve for small businesses. The Chambers of Commerce of North Carolina's Eastern Region looks to be a conduit for working with the state in developing small businesses in eastern North Carolina. Specifically we support:

- Increased funding for SBTDC's and SBC's
- Development of incentives and funding sources for entrepreneurs
- Funding for the development of business recruitment partnerships
- Continuation of the Rural Entrepreneurship Institute
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- Development of affordable health care plans for small businesses
- Work Force Development efforts to re-train displaced workers

### **Global Transpark**

- We support the continuation of funding for The Global Transpark. The GTP still has the potential to be the greatest economic development project eastern North Carolina has experienced in 50 years.

### **Incentives**

- We support Local Option Self-Financing Bonds

### **Infrastructure**

- Establish a plan to meet the future water, sewer and natural gas needs of the Eastern Region.

## **Military**

### **Protection and Expanded Use of Facilities**

- With over 100,000 military and civilian employees, a payroll that exceeds \$4 billion and a final impact on its local economies that exceeds \$10 billion, the military represents one of the largest economic drivers in the state. For example, The Naval Aviation Depot located at MCAS Cherry Point is the largest employer east of I-95 and employees over 4000 civilians with an average annual salary of \$49,000. Acknowledging that this type of industry would be virtually impossible to replace if lost, and in light of the BRAC 2005 process, the state has to take a stand in not only protecting existing facilities but also in expanding usage of assets that already exist. Goals that must be considered include the following:
  - Reduction of the state excise tax on gasoline purchased on base. The money saved would go toward Community Services which supports military families on our bases.
  - Active involvement with government entities in partnering for usage of lands adjacent to military installations. By partnering with corporate and state entities for the use of adjacent lands, the relationship that exists between these military installations and the community is strengthened, the economy of these areas is improved and the efficiency and productivity of the bases is improved.
  - Development of plan for promoting our bases as viable alternatives for increased usage during BRAC 2005. Some of our bases have excess capacity in housing and operational areas and could easily accommodate increased

- usage of their assets. These capacity issues need to be examined, clarified and used to present our bases as logical sources for expansion.
- o Maintain a lobbyist in Washington DC to protect and promote our military interests.
- o Enhance efforts to retain retiring and exiting military into the North Carolina Workforce.
- o Increase North Carolina's share of contractor/supply business with the military.

## ***About Chambers of Commerce of North Carolina's Eastern Region.....***

Chambers of Commerce of North Carolina's Eastern Region is a coalition of Businesspersons and General Assembly members from throughout the 13-county Eastern Region of North Carolina, convened and unified through the local Chambers of Commerce in the region.

It began in June 2002, when chamber executives and business leaders from an eight-county region met in an effort to identify common issues. The main theme that emerged was the need to have identifiable regions and to build political unity in those regions to eventually effect change.

With this in mind, the eight-county partnership expanded to work within the already defined boundaries of the Eastern Economic Development Region, which includes the counties of Carteret, Craven, Duplin, Edgecombe, Greene, Jones, Lenoir, Nash, Onslow, Pamlico, Pitt, Wayne and Wilson.

Subsequently, it was decided and approved that a steering committee be formed to provide leadership in uniting business and government throughout the region and to identify issues of common interest.

This Steering Committee is comprised of the 24 senate-and-house members from throughout the region, business representatives from each of the 13 counties and chamber of commerce executives. There are several at-large regional business representatives as well.

Legislative co-chairs are Senator A.B. Swindell (D-Nash) and Representative Jean Preston (R-Carteret, Onslow). Business Leader Chairman is Joel Butler of University Health Systems of Eastern Carolina. Chamber Executive Co-Chairs are Bruce Beasley of Wilson and Susanne Sartelle of Greenville.

The current 13-county confederation of Chambers of Commerce is uniquely qualified to take on the task of uniting business and government in this central core of eastern North Carolina. We believe that it must be the business community, which is the foundation of our region's economy, that must provide significant leadership in building this unity and working for the betterment of the Eastern Region, which, in turn, will positively affect all of Eastern North Carolina.