

## **NESA's annual report shows strides in economic development**

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FLORENCE — The North Eastern Strategic Alliance has made measurable strides in its long-term goals, according its annual report for 2007.

“Our four measurable base goals are making people more aware of the business opportunities in our region,” said Jeff McKay, NESA’s executive director. “NESA has set itself up as a valuable marketing program for the region and we are continuously developing and structuring the organization so that we are a more viable force for folks when they are considering us and this location for industry.”

NESA is a 50-50 split, public/private partnership that represents the economic development interests of Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Georgetown, Horry, Marion, Marlboro and Williamsburg counties.

McKay said NESA’s goals include continuing to pursue aggressive industrial recruitment for the region, continuing with mission trips and attending trade shows.

Last year alone, the organization went on 13 major marketing mission trips including three out of the country to Germany, Japan and a tour across Europe.

“They have done a lot more mission trips and are really beginning to make themselves a lot more visible,” said Cherry G. McCoy, executive director of the Chesterfield County Development Board. “This past year we have seen a lot more business opportunities at NESA that we are pleased with, and they are certainly there when we need them.”

Of those trips, McKay said, there were more than 50 meetings with companies that served as more than just question and answer sessions. In addition, eight major project relocations were discussed.

McKay said continued collaboration with local developers and development allies, like county economic development partnerships, is key to success in 2008.

“NESA has been like the big brother I can lean on when I need help,” said Floyd Butch Mills Jr., executive director of the Marlboro County Economic Development Partnership. “Naturally as a rural county, I don’t have all the financial resources needed to run an economic campaign, but being a member of NESA, I have access to run with the larger counties.”

Mills said that when he was out of the office for some time, NESA sent someone over to help run things in his absence.

“You don’t always like to pay those dues,” he said. “But there were some crucial projects that we would’ve lost while I was out, but they sent someone over that knew what they were doing.”

One of the continuing projects for NESAs is Interstate 73. The proposed interstate — which would link Myrtle Beach to Michigan — would cost \$2 billion, take 10 years to build and cross Marlboro, Dillon, Marion and Horry counties. McKay said plans for the interstate took a while to come to fruition, but it’s important not to forget about projects like it.

Other NESAs projects include a regional international airport to serve the Pee Dee and Grand Strand, as well as the proposed Myrtle Beach International Trade and Convention Center.

“These are ongoing efforts,” he said. “We want to keep pushing and promoting these concepts to make sure they aren’t forgotten about. You have to make sure the squeaky wheel gets the grease.”

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