

Cluster aims to connect distribution industry

In an effort to provide a formal structure through which transportation, distribution and logistics companies in South Carolina can collaborate, New Carolina: South Carolina's Council on Competitiveness launched the Transportation, Distribution and Logistics Cluster in February of 2008.

Since then, nearly 40 business professionals from industry, government, education and trade groups have come together to increase efficiency and innovation within the industry and to work on improving competitiveness on regional, national and international fronts.

The group's first major initiative has been development of a statewide strategic communications plan to create a better understanding of the critical nature of the cluster and its impact on South Carolina's overall economy. It hired Chernoff Newman to conduct the study and create the plan, which should be released in the fall.

"The plan provides the communications strategies necessary to secure the future competitiveness of the industry, which will result in increased prosperity for South Carolinians at all economic levels," said Deepal Eliatamby, president of Alliance Consulting Engineers and co-chairman of the cluster. "The cluster is putting the finishing touches on the report and will launch it statewide starting in the fall with a series of presentations and hosted events in the Upstate, Midlands and Lowcountry."

Guided by Eliatamby and co-chairman Bill Smith, CEO of Red Rock Developments, New Carolina is preparing to mobilize the cluster by creating stewards, engaging stakeholders and providing a mechanism to support cluster actions.

"With a strong system of interstate highways, one of the world's most efficient ports, two rail companies operating track throughout the state, airports with an international scope and a growing network of distribution centers, our state is positioned to become a hub for the global marketplace," Eliatamby said.

Members of the cluster include leaders from S.C. State Ports Authority, S.C. Trucking Association, S.C. Department of Commerce, World Trade City Orangeburg, Hillwood Investment Properties, S.C. Power Team, ATS Logistics, Milliken & Co., Greater Columbia Chamber of Commerce, Orangeburg County Development Commission, Engineered Products and WSI of the Southeast.

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