



# ROANE ALLIANCE

## 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

PUBLISHED MARCH 2021  
[ROANEALLIANCE.ORG/ANNUALREPORT](https://roanealliance.org/annualreport)  
PHOTO CREDIT: TENNESSEE RIVERLINE

# ABOUT THE ALLIANCE



**Thank you to our 2020 Roane Alliance Contributors** for your continued support of the work we do to make Roane County a great place to live, work and play. Without your support, none of what we do would be possible. This year, we also had five businesses who became 'Gala Champions' when they donated their 2020 Gala Sponsorship, that made all the difference for the Alliance in ending the fiscal year with a positive balanced budget. The cancellation of the 2020 Gala also affected the FY21 Roane Alliance Budget, which had to be revised. Our Chamber Champions also play a vital role. They are not only leaders in the county, but their level of Chamber support is vital in maintaining a strong Chamber, which is important for our business community.

## Alliance Contributors

City of Harriman  
 City of Kingston  
 City of Oak Ridge  
 City of Rockwood  
 CNS Y-12  
 Earl Duff Subaru  
 East Tennessee Economic Council  
 Energy Solutions  
 ETEC

Harriman Utility Board  
 ORUD  
 Roane County Board of Education  
 Roane Medical Center  
 TCAT Harriman  
 TVA  
 UCOR  
 UT Battelle/ ORNL  
 Youth Opportunity Investments

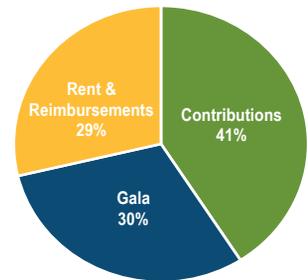
## Chamber Champions

Centrus Energy Corp  
 CNS Y12  
 Coldwell Banker Jim Henry & Associates  
 Regions  
 UT Battelle/ORNL

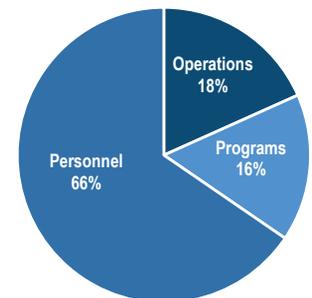
## Gala Champions

CNS Y-12  
 Earl Duff Subaru  
 Energy Solutions  
 ORUD  
 UT Battelle/ORNL

FY21 Roane Alliance Budget Plan for Revenue, \$192K



FY21 Roane Alliance Budget Plan for Expenses



**The Roane Alliance became official in May 2001.** Modeled after the Blount Partnership, it provides a driving force behind the county's economic development efforts. Bringing together the Roane County Industrial Development Board (RCIDB), Visitors Bureau and Chamber under one roof creates an atmosphere where teamwork is required and accomplishments are valued. To find more information about economic development efforts in Roane County, visit [roanealliance.org/media](http://roanealliance.org/media).

*“ Though progress doesn’t come as fast as we would like, so much has been accomplished in economic development because of the Roane Alliance, not in spite of it. Other communities in Tennessee and even South Carolina have called for advice on how to form the kind of organization we have here in Roane. So, it frustrates me that after close to 20 years, there are still some in the county who do not see us as a valuable partner. I hope this annual report will show how willing we are to not only partner, but to also make our county and its citizens top priority at a moment’s notice.*

**Pam May, President/CEO**

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**2020 is not a year anyone cares to repeat.**

And so far, 2021 hasn't been much better. The Roane Alliance Annual Report is a snapshot of the year, so the pandemic will have to be a big part of our story. However, this report will focus on the successes and accomplishments, and there were actually quite a lot of those in Roane County. Again, I think that speaks volumes to the Alliance team and the board members who lead the teams, but in 2020 it was especially those contributors and partners that support us and work alongside us to bring economic prosperity to our citizens. Here are a few of the highlights you will learn more about throughout this report:

- Largest net job gain in 10 years;
- \$14.5M in new investment was announced;
- Roane County named 2020 Tennessee Riverline Community Partner of the Year and a RiverTown;
- 1st annual Jingle & Mingle Market helped 30+ local businesses end the year in the black;
- New Get Outdoors brochure is now available, promoting recreation in Roane;
- Sales tax collections increased 7% across the county, with cities increase averaging 11.5%;
- 28% of the Class of 2020 graduated as a TN Scholar during a pandemic, 3rd highest for the program;
- Forward Together Facebook group launched with 1,464 members + record 2,234 posts;
- Travelers seeking recreation kept occupancy tax collections positive in the county by 1%;
- Roane Chamber retained 413 members;
- Social media reach increased 23%, with 17,675 followers across all platforms; and
- Roane's unemployment ended at 6.6%, well below the State and U.S. averages.

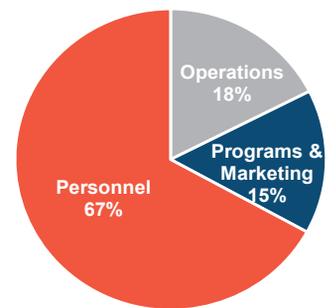
**The Roane Alliance Funding Comes From**

contributions, annual event, rent and reimbursed expenses from the three partner organizations. The Roane Alliance runs on a fiscal year beginning July 1 to June 30, with each organization having its own fiscal year budgets and own Board of Directors.. Expenses are paid by the Roane Alliance, which is reimbursed by the appropriate partner organization. \$1,100 per month in rent is also paid to the Roane Alliance by each partner, with a portion of that rent held in a building fund to ensure any planned or unforeseen improvements can be made to the building. The primary activity of the Alliance is to promote the county and its assets by recruiting industry, business and visitors. Personnel is therefore, the primary asset of the Alliance, in order to tell Roane County's story effectively to key markets across numerous channels. To find the most current Marketing and Workplan visit [roanealliance.org/plans](http://roanealliance.org/plans).

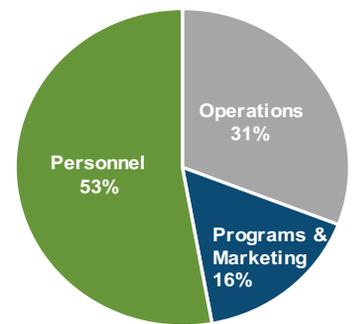
The RCIDB and Visitor's Bureau is funded by the county, established by resolution and Private Act of 1992 for "a consistent level of funding." Therefore, the County Commission's Tourism Committee and Liaison Committee oversee those programs.

*\*Budgets were cut across all partners, while expenses were not. The Alliance team did well at reducing operating expenses during the pandemic; however, in hard times, it is recommended that marketing continue to maintain market share. Programs/marketing and personnel expenses did not increase but they did remain close to the pre-pandemic levels. Percentage changes depicted in the pie charts are primarily due to a reduction in each budget.*

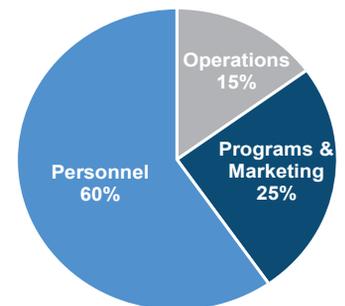
**FY21 Chamber Budget Plan, \$140K\***



**FY21 RCIDB Budget Plan, \$372K\***



**FY21 Visitor Bureau Budget Plan, \$110K\***



# INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT



After less than a year from breaking ground, E-Jay Thermo opened its 35,000 sf manufacturing facility in RRBTP, celebrating with local leaders on October 21 with an open house and ribbon cutting.

## 2020 began as one of the busiest on record

for the RCIDB, with three prospect visits scheduled for January alone. The pandemic all but ended any chance of in-person prospect visits, but that didn't seem to affect the IDB's recruiting efforts. 48 Requests for Information (RFI's) were received, around the same as 2019, with Roane County qualifying for nearly half of those RFIs with a total capital investment of \$344M. While the majority of leads come from TVA and the state, we receive an increasing number of leads directly from local developers, contractors, brokers or consultants. One such relationship led to the sell of seven acres in Roane Regional Business & Technology Park (RRBTP) by the end of 2020. Hamilton Equipment Company is another locally-owned company who made the decision to build their new manufacturing facility in Roane County, just like E-Jay Thermo did last year.

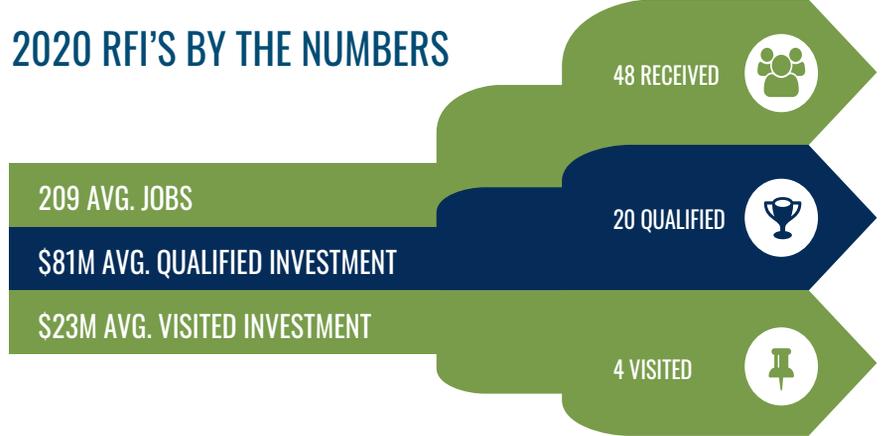
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*We work with new prospects in hopes they choose to move their business here, and we have had a couple of those wins, even in a tough year like 2020. Usually, 80% of new jobs come from existing industries, so when they are ready to expand and grow, and I can help keep them in Roane County, that is just as rewarding.*

**Justin Snow, Vice President of Economic Development**

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## 2020 RFI'S BY THE NUMBERS



**And there was even more good news,** with Earl Duff Subaru opening its new 23,000 sf facility. Officially opening its doors in December, the newly constructed dealership on Gallaher Road in Kingston, has a gorgeous 2,100 sf showroom. The existing Harriman dealership, Earl Duff Pre-Owned Center, will remain open for maintenance and service and used car sales. The IDB partnered with Earl Duff Subaru on a PILOT Incentive to lessen upfront costs and help bring the project to completion. Congratulations to this business for 52 years and growing!

### ORGANIZE MY DRAWER

In April 2020, Organize My Drawer moved to Roane County, investing \$500,000. The company makes patent-pending customer-designed acrylic drawer & cabinet organizers. They are located at 231 Sam Rayburn Parkway in an existing building in RRBTP that had been vacant for four years.

### ROANE SPECIALIZED SERVICES

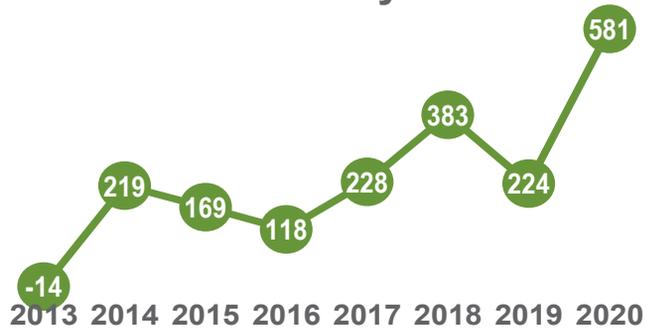
Roane Transportation & Roane Metals purchased 45 acres across the street from their location to build a new corporate office, truck fleet parking, storage space for existing customers and a 50,000 sf warehouse, a \$4M investment. Located in RCIP, this trucking and scrap metal business began in 1996 and has another location in Texas and a customer base across both states.

### HAMILTON EQUIPMENT COMPANY

In November, the RCIDB agreed to sell 7 acres in RRBTP to Hamilton Equipment, who plans to build a 60,000+ sf fabrication and finish shop. This is a \$5M investment, with construction expected to begin early 2021 on the new road in the park to be named after the first tenant – Hamilton Industrial Way.

**2020 Realized the Largest Net Job Gain in Ten Years.** Compared to last year, Roane County's industries reported a net job gain that more than doubled over 2019, which is very good news since 2019 was a net loss when compared to the previous year's survey. Compared to the trend in the last five years, the jobs gained almost tripled and was the largest increase since 2009. Despite the unprecedented unemployment across the nation that occurred due to the pandemic, Roane County fared much better when compared to the national and even the state's average. In fact, Roane's unemployment rate ended at 6.6%, just 0.1% above the 2015 unemployment rate. And while many across the nation experienced unemployment rates similar to those in 2009 after the recession, Roane did not, which is likely due to the many government agencies who continued operations as usual during the quarantine. The State's unemployment for the year averaged 7.5% for the year, while the US averaged 8.1%.

## Net Job Growth in Roane County



## Roane's Career Technical Education (CTE) Programs Expand

to include Building Construction Technology at Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) Harriman. CTE was a ThreeStar S.M.A.R.T. goal selected in 2019, as a requirement by the state. A ThreeStar Community since 1988, the Roane Alliance administers the program on behalf of the county. As a S.M.A.R.T. Goal, funding and support is available from the state, so the Roane Alliance submitted a grant application to help TCAT get funding to start the new program. The \$50K 100% reimbursable grant provided rent for a new space for the program for one year, so the Building Construction Technology program launched on September 28, adding yet another CTE course for Roane's students and future workforce.

Roane County Schools, Roane State Community College (RSCC) and TCAT have collaborated and partnered for years, creating CTE courses that would meet the needs of local employers. Roane's students have the opportunity to gain the necessary skills to enter the workforce with good paying technical jobs through those programs. And already recognized by Tennessee's Education Department for having 12% of the state's Tennessee Pathways in our schools, Roane's educational institutions are working to add even more CTE classes, with the construction course just being the first.

### Industrial Parks

-  **Roane County Industrial Park (RCIP), Rockwood**
-  **Roane Regional Business & Technology Park (RRBTP), Kingston**
-  **Heritage Center, Oak Ridge**
-  **Horizon Center, Oak Ridge**

## New Emergency Response Training Facility (ERTF) Coming to Roane, the only

one of its kind in the nation. The state-of-the-art facility will be located on Highway 95 across from the Horizon Center, in a campus-like setting with a new federal training facility, built using federal funding. Local, state and federal personnel from all across the country and beyond, will be coming to both training facilities to develop skills necessary to handle disaster incidents. Between the trainees and the estimated 900 jobs it will create, the ERTF is expected to bring a large economic impact to the area.

As the largest project, the RCIDB has worked on, the Roane County ETC Project LLC was formed to oversee the project on behalf of the IDB. In spite of the pandemic, the project moved forward, a Statement of Work was published and proposals accepted in the spring. By Summer the team of Lawler Wood, Merit Construction and Design Innovation were awarded the contract to design, build and manage the ERTF. By Fall, the state's full \$15.1M appropriations for the project had been received. A ground-breaking is expected for Spring of 2021 and completion date is Spring 2022. For more details about the project visit [roaneecd.com/ERTF](http://roaneecd.com/ERTF).





## Tourism is the 2nd Largest Industry in Tennessee.

Each year the U.S. Travel Association reports to the state each county's estimated visitor spending. Per the 2019 report, Roane County had the largest one-year increase in nearly ten years (since 2011). Visitor spending increased 4% over the prior year, amounting to \$3M more for a total of \$74M economic impact in Roane County in one year. Given Roane County's trend of visitor spending increasing, on average, \$1M year over year (YOY) every year but two since 2006, tourism has become a top industry for Roane as well.

**A New Get Outdoors Recreation Guide** was one of the projects the Roane Alliance completed in 2020 to promote not just the Tennessee River but all of Roane County's natural assets and recreation opportunities. In addition to a printed brochure, a new landing page was created to highlight new content for local bird watching sites, hiking trails, and even plants and other wildlife that you might encounter along the way. Multiple billboards also went up in 2020, two located west bound on I-40 and one visible east bound on I-40 and east bound on Hwy 70, promoting the lake and the new webpage to the 55,000+ vehicles that travel through the county each day. In May, we launched the Get Outdoor Contest that we promoted through social media and direct email marketing. The contest ran from May 28 to July 31 encouraging outdoor enthusiasts to subscribe to our tourism newsletter for their chance to win a weekend getaway in Roane County. The prize package included a weekend stay in Roane County with a campsite, camping gear, kayaks, boat slip, snack and drinks included. The contest resulted in over 1,300 new subscribers interested in receiving information regularly about Roane County.

**Did Recreation Help Save Occupancy Tax Collections for the County?** By all accounts, it appears it just may have. With just a 1% increase in collections for the county and City of Kingston, that normally would not be exciting news, but in the year of a pandemic, when travel was frowned upon and all but ended, this is great news. And in fact, given the motel tax collection trend the first three months of 2020, it should have been a record year for the entire county, with nearly double the collections as the same months in 2019 – and that was just the taxes collected by the county. In addition, this came after a year that had 10% growth in the county and 9% growth in tax collections overall. This should provide a reassurance that this county can and should rely on recreation as one of the top revenue generators. Soaring Eagle Campground had a record year, and as reported consistently by Caney Creek RV Resort, occupancy averages more than 90% year-round, and so does Riley Creek Campground.



“

**Overall, Roane's motel tax collections declined by 20% but compared to the decline realized by many other counties, it could have been much worse. According to our motels, workers filled their motels, making up some of the difference; and considering the increase in camping during the pandemic, that could account for the 1% increase in the County's collections since all the campgrounds are located in the county. Not to mention, more short-term rentals are available in the county and were also preferred by travelers in 2020. We should all want to see recreation grow in this county, specifically those destinations that consistently bring in revenue for our cities, county and even every household.**

**Pam May, President/CEO**

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**Recruiting Retail Did Not Stop Because Of A Pandemic,** though many in-person opportunities to meet and discuss available sites with potential site selectors were cancelled. Three Alliance team members participated in the 2nd year of the Tennessee Economic and Community Development's Retail Academy. Through the course, a top property was identified for each city to create branded marketing materials for those sites to help promote and increase interest from retailers. The pandemic did affect the program, when RealMassive filed bankruptcy and would no longer update the new commercial database created just for Roane County. The Roane Alliance had just contracted with them in 2019 to create the database, housed on our website, in hopes that it would become a good resource for retailers and others looking for available commercial properties in Roane. We hope to find a replacement so we can continue to provide all available properties in one place.



**The Retire Tennessee Program** is a program that Roane County has been part of since 2008. Typically, qualified leads are received from the State's attendance at around ten Ideal Living Shows in the fall and winter. 2020 winter shows took place before the pandemic but the fall shows went virtual as a safety precaution. In 2020 Roane received 3,979 requests for information (RFI) that turned into interested retirees who receive our quarterly newsletter promoting the county's events and attractions. RFIs are also answered with visitor guides, relocation packages and maps, when requested. Additionally, Roane County is represented on RetireTennessee.org which is heavily promoted by the state, receiving more than a quarter million visitors each year. In Spring of 2020, the state pulled its digital campaign because of COVID which impacted the overall site numbers. However, despite that, Roane County numbers were up year over year with 2,322 viewers clicking through to the Roane County page.

**Ideal Living Show in Rochester, Michigan L-R: Former Director Ramay Winchester, State of Tennessee; Anne Ross, Morristown; Margot Fosnes, Robertson County; and Kaley Hill, Roane Alliance.**

**Roane's Leads Provide Valuable Information for Advertising.** In 2020, 2,406 of the leads acquired through contest entries and RFIs were studied and profiled. Using Mosaic, a service offered by Experian, Designsensory dug a little deeper into those interested in Roane County and what they enjoyed. It wasn't surprising to learn the primary age groups from the study were boomers, since the leads used came from the 2019 Relax in Roane contest targeting affluent retirees in northern states, but there were some interesting facts and a couple of surprises. It was no surprise that activities like hiking and biking were among the interests of our audience, but it was a surprise to learn just how popular birdwatching is, among that group. And what is really helpful is seeing that our social advertising that acquired those leads correctly targeted future visitors.



Photo credit: Tennessee RiverLine

We already knew that future retirees love to travel and visit communities before making a decision and, because of the pandemic, many have decided to make that change sooner than later. Not to mention, the influx of people moving to our state from California and Illinois, just to name a few. The Roane Alliance will use this information to plan advertising in key markets like before, but now can refine Roane's message to more effectively reach our future visitors.

### **Roane County is now a Tennessee RiverTowns Community.**

As one of the 5 pilot communities when the Tennessee Riverline program launched, Roane has been on the forefront of branding the 652 miles of river from Knoxville to Paducah, Kentucky, the 'North America's next great regional trail system.' Now there are 15 communities in the program, so it was very exciting when Roane County was recently named the 2020 Tennessee Riverline Community Partner of the Year for our initiative and enthusiasm. Roane planned the first group paddle on the Tennessee in 2019, and in spite of a pandemic, held two more paddles in 2020. Roane was also one of the first to take advantage of the 55,000+ driving along I-40 each day to promote the riverline with a billboard, and by the end of 2020 had three billboards promoting the one thing people could still do during a pandemic – Get Outdoors! A video shoot was also held in the fall to add this valuable asset to our digital marketing kit.



For the next two years, the entire community will work together to focus on four benchmarks to grow the Tennessee Riverline brand even more, which should also be a catalyst for economic development efforts in the county and cities. A committee was also formed for this initiative, that includes county and city representation, as well as local recreation enthusiasts and experts. To learn more about this and the entire Tennessee Riverline visit [visitroane.com/riverline](http://visitroane.com/riverline) or [tnriverline.org](http://tnriverline.org).

Thank you Kingston City Manager David Bolling and the Roane State Baseball players for taking time to hang on the lake with us for our Get Outdoors / TN RiverLine video shoot!

**53,562**

**Population (2020)**

Population **grew by 792** over the last 5 years and is projected to **grow by 444** over the next 5 years.

**21,499**

**Jobs (2018)**

Jobs **grew by 1,252** over the last 5 years and are projected to **grow by 988** over the next 5 years.

**\$50K**

**Median Household Income (2018)**

Median household income is **\$10.3K below** the national median household income of \$60.3K.

**22,376**

**Households (2018)**

**< \$800**

**Average Property Taxes**

**362**

**Building Permits Issued (2020)**

**\$20M**

**Sales Tax (2020)**

Sales Tax **increased 7%** overall, as compared to 14% in 2019 without a pandemic

**88.91%**

**High School Graduate or Higher**

With Roane State Community College and Tennessee College of Applied Technology, 1,173 degrees were awarded in 2018

**3**

**Top Industries in Roane**

1. Scientific Research and Development Services
2. Architectural, Engineering, and Related Services
3. Education and Hospitals (State Government)

\*Source: U.S. Census Data, 2019, from population over 25  
 \*Source: TVA, Emsi Q1 2019 Data Set, www.economicmodeling.com

## Education Impact in Roane



**28%**

of the Class of 2020 graduated as a TN Scholar, the 3rd highest percent since program began



**9.6%**

of residents hold an Associate's Degree, 1.0% above the national average

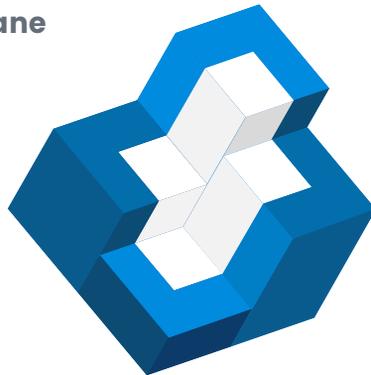


**1,289**

college graduates, a 12% increase over the last 5 years

The highest share of these graduates come from:

1. Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies
2. Emergency Medical Technology/Technician (EMT Paramedic)
3. Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse



## Visitor Impact in Roane



**\$74.3M**

Sales in local hospitality businesses



**\$8.28M**

In local and State taxes



**\$12.79M**

Payroll for hospitality employees



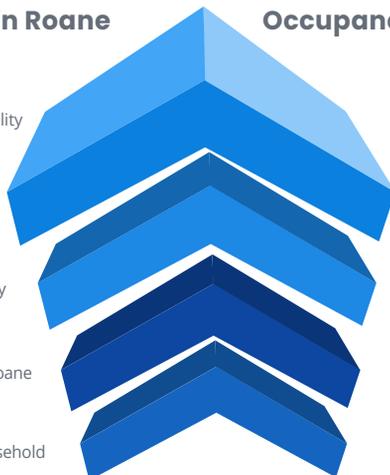
**490**

Hospitality jobs in Roane



**\$396.15**

Tax savings per household



## Occupancy Taxes Collected



**\$95,936**

County  
1% increase



**\$186,515**

City of Harriman  
-31% change



**\$267,473**

Total Tax Collections  
-20% change





**\$14.1 M**  
Total New Investment



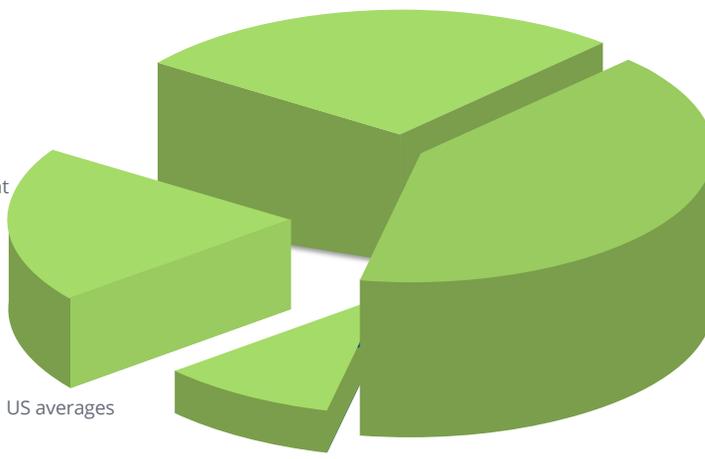
**581**  
Total Net Job Gain



**6.6%**  
Unemployment Rate  
Well below State and US averages



**48**  
Requests for Information (RFI)



### Marketing Impact



**322,786**  
All website pages viewed



**93,581**  
Website visitors



**17,675**  
Followers across all social platforms,  
a 23% increase

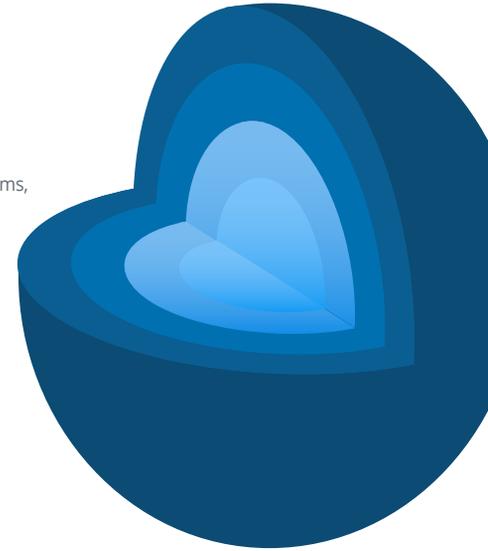


**4,316**  
Leads / RFIs



#### Top 5 States Requesting Info

1. New York
2. Illinois
3. Michigan
4. Indiana
5. New Jersey



**413**  
Active Members



**Retail Trade**  
2nd Largest Industry in Roane



#### 2020 Businesses of the Month:

- Edward Jones Financial Advisor – Deric Runge
- BenchMark Physical Therapy
- Surf's Up Car Wash
- Handee Burger
- Bunch Marine
- Los Primos
- Live & Let Live Drug Store





**Chamber Membership Remained High.** With 413 active members as of 12/31/20, less than 1% of the memberships dropped in 2020 when compared to 2019. Chamber revenue was down. This was primarily from non-dues revenue, down 60% due to cancellation of workshops and the primary fundraiser. Revenue from membership dues, down 14%, was also expected given the struggle of many businesses during the pandemic. It was reassuring, however, that most businesses didn't take advantage of our offer to defer renewals to help them during tough times and ensure they could retain their membership.

**Roane Chamber Member Directory** is printed annually by Roane County News. Each member receives an alphabetical listing as well as a listing by category. In addition to the printed directory, members are listed in the online directory, in up to three categories. The online member directory is one of the most-viewed pages on the Chamber website.

*"I believe, behind every successful community, is a strong chamber. By joining together local businesses and professionals, our voice is not only stronger, but adds tremendous value to the overall well-being of Roane County."*

**Tori May-Holt, Roane Chamber Manager**

**RoaneChamber.com Strengthens The Chamber's Voice and Reach.** In the first three months of 2020, visits to the Chamber's website increased 54% to 354%. This followed a year that saw a consistent increase month over month. Though the year saw a drop in traffic overall, by all accounts, the Chamber's voice was getting stronger and reaching more people online. And don't think that voice went quiet once the pandemic hit, their voice just moved to many different locations, and even created new ones. Moving Forward Together also became a focus for the Alliance, and especially the Chamber business community. And from Kaley and Tori's idea, that philosophy became the name of a new Facebook Group the Alliance launched during the pandemic (mentioned on page 11 of this report). To learn more about Chamber membership visit [roanechamber.com](http://roanechamber.com).

**Shop Local** wasn't just a marketing slogan in 2020. The Roane Chamber launched several new initiatives and expanded existing ones to encourage safe shopping based on state recommendations and protocols allowing shops to open. The annual Christmas shopping contest kicked off early, while the *Show Your Love for Local* campaign helped businesses by encouraging people to follow safety protocols and get out and shop. Newspaper ads, social media and contests were all designed to help people feel comfortable about shopping local; while the Jingle & Mingle Market created a safe environment for businesses and shoppers to enjoy a little Christmas spirit in tough times and for many of the businesses surveyed, their sales meant the difference between red or black.



The *Chalk the Town* contest used color and heartfelt messages on sidewalks to show businesses just how much they were appreciated, receiving the 2nd highest reach of all Chamber social posts at 7,000, with 500 engaged and 200 likes for the winning post. *Roane Restaurant Bingo* cards were created and shared across our social media platforms reaching 6,000 people with 550 clicks and 120 post engagements. A new Facebook group, *Forward Together - Roane County*, gave a voice for local businesses to share hours, merchandise and important announcements to more than 1,500 members (and still growing daily). For more details on these initiatives visit [shoproane.com](http://shoproane.com).

## Jingle & Mingle Market

- 30+ Businesses
- Locally-made and sourced products
- Masks & locally-made hand sanitizers handed out
- Temperatures taken at the door
- Created non-dues revenue & helped local businesses
- Increased membership when 4 vendors joined
- 2021 Jingle & Mingle will be a 2 day event
- November 13-14 at The Barn at Maple Creek
- [jingleandminglemarket.com](http://jingleandminglemarket.com)

## Sales Tax

Average change within our city limits April - June:\*

- Sales receipts more than doubled on average by \$155K
- Percentage increase in sales tax more than doubled by 11.5%
- \$12K more, or 29% tax increase, realized in Oliver Springs, compared to a decline in 2019
- Oak Ridge sales tax remained same, but that follows a 43% increase previous year

\*Only includes Harriman, Kingston & Rockwood

Sales tax revenue pays for essential services and specifically Roane County Schools. In a typical year, visitor spending makes a big impact in our sales receipts, but not in 2020. Leave it to a pandemic to not only make shopping local a necessity, but also help prove the point that Shopping Local Helps Us All! We hope this will encourage you to shop local as much as possible all year long.

**COVID Resources Became A Priority For Our Team In 2020.** We kicked off the year with some great workshops, with very good attendance. On average, there was an average of 16 people who attended each workshop, which was more than the 2019 average. Out of the fifteen workshops held, 147 attended. Because of the pandemic, the last workshop we held was in March. With extra time, the Alliance team focused on becoming experts on all things COVID related, especially making sure the ever-changing information we received got out to the membership and partners as fast as possible. This was not just a matter of forwarding emails, but also involved many conference and zoom calls to learn as much as we could about resources and answers to the questions that so many people were asking. We were learning as much as we could, as quickly as we could so that we could share the information to the community.

Webpages were created and kept updated, while informative emails and social posts were sent out daily, or as needed. More than 200 Chamber members were contacted just in the first weeks, while the most important emails sent out about the PPP and EIDL loans reached, on average, 679 people and was opened nearly 2,000 times. We could not have done it without the help from our partners who helped us take care of Roane County, like the Small Business Development Center, Senator Yager and Representatives Calfee and Travis; the Tennessee and US Chambers – even the Knoxville Chamber. We were truly in this together with everyone across the state and entire country, but the Alliance team focused on getting Roane County and its citizens the information and resources necessary to get through the pandemic in one piece. To view these webpages visit [roanealliance.org/covid-19-resources](https://roanealliance.org/covid-19-resources).

**The Chamber Ambassador Program** is a program that was created as a way for business professionals to represent the Chamber within the business community by attending ribbon cuttings, grand openings, and other networking events. With 29 active members, this program is one of the Chamber’s most successful. In addition to supporting the business community, the Ambassador Team also strives to give back to the community. In 2020, despite the pandemic, the ambassadors found one very special way to ‘give back’ to the community in a less traditional way - collecting holiday wreaths for residents of Sycamore Trace Assisted Living. For more information about the Ambassador Program visit [roanechamber.com/ambassador-program](https://roanechamber.com/ambassador-program).



**The 2020 Business Award Winners** were announced at the end of 2020 and were recognized for their contributions, dedication, and overall support of Roane County with individual videos highlighting their accomplishments. Due to the Roane Gala being cancelled in light of the pandemic, we reached out to Matt Waters from Roane State Community College to help us create special personalized videos for each of our winners. These videos were shared through a press release, on our website and across our social media platforms. Congratulations to each of these wonderful individuals and businesses who have not only embraced these awarded honors but continue to live up to it each and every day. To view the videos visit [roanechamber.com/banquet-awards](https://roanechamber.com/banquet-awards).



Paul Cowell Distinguished Service Award: Marilyn Calfee



Business of the Year: ORUD



Industry of the Year: Volkswagen Group of America



Woman of the Year: Toni Haba



Ambassador of the Year: Nikki Adkisson



Paul E. Goldberg Young Professional of the Year: Ben Briley

**The Young Professionals of Roane County (YPRC)** is a new program facilitated by the Roane Chamber, which endeavors to empower young professionals with an organization dedicated to networking, educational and leadership opportunities, and other personal and professional development. Members of YPRC engage not only with each other, but also with the Roane County community overall, gaining insight into how they can have a role in the bright future of our county. For more information about YPRC visit [yproane.com](https://yproane.com).



**The Workplan and Marketing Plan,** are important documents created internally every year. The Workplan lists programs and efforts that we are working on as a team; while the Marketing Plan helps to plan advertising and other initiatives, while keeping us on track. The plan reminds us who we are – “a unified voice representing all that Roane County has to offer businesses, citizens and travelers” – and who our target markets are. It also provides a plan for distribution to reach those markets and the budget we have to work with. The pandemic changed much of the advertising and distribution channels in our original plan, but we were able to just re-work our messaging to include a safe travel message. The workplan helped us make sure important programs weren't forgotten while the staff worked from home and took on new challenges brought by the pandemic.

Shifting the primary focus to day trippers close to Roane who wanted to get away safely and enjoy recreation outdoors and unique shopping experiences, allowed us to help make an impact for our local businesses and economy. Since the RCVB is funded by the motel taxes collected annually from the county and Harriman City, we traditionally spend more on advertising and promotions targeting those who enjoy coming to Roane to stay the night - outdoor enthusiasts and potential retirees, just to name a few. But they were staying home, and so were industries and businesses who might otherwise be looking for a future site to move or expand, which is where the majority of the IDB marketing budget is spent. However, we didn't stop promoting Roane County to travelers and prospects. We just became more strategic in our spending for those markets since they weren't traveling or making decisions. In fact, one of those strategic initiatives were postcards targeting businesses damaged or destroyed during riots, in hopes they would consider moving their business to Roane.





**Website Traffic** The two new covid resource pages on roanealliance.org amounted to 22% of all traffic to the website and were the 2nd & 3rd most visited pages, only under the home page at 25% of the traffic. The page views also increased by 45% on roanealliance.org, while users increased 32%.

**Roanechamber.com** received the majority of views across all sites, with 66% of the views; with roanetourism.com next at 24% of all views. Roaneecd.com individual visitors increased 34%, while roanealliance.org increased 33%; there were 33% more new visitors to each of those sites over the previous year and roaneallianc.org saw an 83% increase of returning visitors, which we have attributed to the new covid resource pages at **roanealliance.org/covid-19-resources**. The new Get Outdoors landing page, **RoaneOutdoors.com**, was added on 4/30/20 and was the 3rd most visited page on the website, with half of the traffic coming directly to the page via the promoted url. **VisitRoane.com** had a 6% increase in overall traffic.

**The TN Promise Program Mentor Recruiting** is led in Roane County by the Roane Alliance and the overall program is managed by tnAchieves. Mentors are recruited to help high school seniors successfully transition to college. Every year Roane County exceeds the recruiting goals set by tnAchieves, and this year is no exception, with 76 mentors recruited, exceeding the goal of 65. For more details visit **educationmatters2roane.org/programs**.

**Tennessee Scholars** graduates made up 28% of the Class of 2020. Though this was just Roane County's third-highest percent since the program began, it was accomplished during a pandemic, with the schools closed. This means that 114 seniors graduated as a Tennessee Scholar in Roane County. Roane State Community College again awarded a \$500 scholarship to one Tennessee Scholars (TS) Graduate from each of the five high schools. Additionally, thanks to a Community Investment Grant from the Roane County United Way, 2020 is the first year that five TS Graduates received \$200 scholarships for educational, career, and work-related expenses. The winner's names were drawn live on Facebook on May 13. In January, 294 sophomore and junior students were recognized as being "on-track" to be a scholar when they graduate.

**Youth Leadership** started the 2020-21 year with 12 students the last week of June. The program was able to go on with numerous changes made to adhere to safety guidelines. Sessions were held in larger, open venues and outside as much as weather permitted. All students completed their requirements of attending two civic meetings, primarily via zoom, three in person after school sessions and a formal dining experience at Whitestone Country Inn. After visiting the Greenwood School in June, the students decided they wanted their class project to be to provide a children's library for the center. The students collected more than 5000 books as well as several hundred dollars to help defray the cost of shelving for the books. To learn more about the Leadership program visit **roanechamber.com/leadership**.

**High School Career Day** was held on March 12, before the pandemic caused schools to close. 466 high school juniors and 30 seniors came to Roane State Community College to meet and interact with 125 representatives from more than 50 businesses and educational institutions. Students were able to discuss career fields from a wide variety of industries such as construction, healthcare, and marketing; while six labor unions and all but one military recruiting office attended. There were some of the more entertaining industries also, like WECO radio, Ripley's Aquarium and the Tennessee Smokies. In fact, WECO Radio broadcast live during the event, interviewing both educators and students. The Roane Alliance was represented at the event by Kaley Hill and Tori May who spoke to over 200 students, providing them with information about Marketing, Chamber and the overall mission of the Roane Alliance. The Middle School Career Day set for the fall had to be cancelled. For 2021, both career days are currently set to be held together during a Virtual Career Week on May 3rd through the 7th.





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 Buddy Holley, Vice Chair  
 Jim Owens, Treasurer  
 Suzie Clay, Secretary  
 Kendall Bear  
 Mayor Wayne Best  
 Marilyn Calfee  
 Mayor Omer Cox  
 Lynn Farnham  
 Junior Hendrickson  
 Sean Hensley  
 Leigha Humphries  
 Kevin Ironside  
 Mitchell Kyker  
 Gail Lyke  
 Dr. LaDonna McFall  
 Mayor Tim Neal  
 Jim Palmer  
 Jason Pilant  
 Becky Ruppe  
 Barry Stephenson  
 Danice Turpin  
 Candace Vannasdale  
 Mark Watson  
 David Webb  
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 Ron Woody

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 Teddy Haywood  
 Joe Heckman  
 Bob Kite  
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 Dana Peterka  
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 David Bell  
 Ron Berry  
 Charlotte Cunningham  
 Ben Wilson

### 2020 – 2021 Roane Tourism Commission Committee

Junior Hendrickson, Chair  
 Ron Berry  
 Ben Gann  
 Mike Hooks  
 Jerry White





## CONNECT WITH US!

[RoaneAlliance.org](http://RoaneAlliance.org)

[VisitRoane.com](http://VisitRoane.com)

[SoakinRoane.com](http://SoakinRoane.com)

[RoaneChamber.com](http://RoaneChamber.com)

[RoaneECD.com](http://RoaneECD.com)

[EducationMatters2Roane.org](http://EducationMatters2Roane.org)

[RetireRoane.com](http://RetireRoane.com)

[RoaneOutdoors.com](http://RoaneOutdoors.com)

[JingleAndMingleMarket.com](http://JingleAndMingleMarket.com)

[RoaneStrong.com](http://RoaneStrong.com)

[facebook.com/roanealliance](https://facebook.com/roanealliance)

[facebook.com/visitroane](https://facebook.com/visitroane)

[facebook.com/wattsbarlake](https://facebook.com/wattsbarlake)

[facebook.com/roanechamber](https://facebook.com/roanechamber)

[facebook.com/roanecountygreenteam](https://facebook.com/roanecountygreenteam)

[facebook.com/jingleandminglemarket](https://facebook.com/jingleandminglemarket)

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[twitter.com/visitroane](https://twitter.com/visitroane)

[twitter.com/roanecochamber](https://twitter.com/roanecochamber)

[instagram.com/roanesweetroane](https://instagram.com/roanesweetroane)

[instagram.com/roanecountychamber](https://instagram.com/roanecountychamber)

[youtube.com/c/RoaneAllianceTN](https://youtube.com/c/RoaneAllianceTN)

#RoaneAlliance

#RoaneECD

#RoaneChamber

#VisitRoane

#SoakinRoane

#RoaneSong

#RoaneSweetRoane

#TNRiverLineRoane

#RetireRoane

#RoaneChamberMember

#EducationMatters2Roane

#ShopRoane

#ShowYourLoveForRoane

#UniteRoane

#RoaneOutdoors

#RoaneStrong

#JingleMingleMarket2020

#ChristmasInRoane

**Looking Forward...** is usually easy as our team pulls this report together and starts planning for the new year. In the midst of a pandemic, it's not as easy. We are more hopeful, though, and are looking forward to when we can get back to the 'old normal' with in-person meetings and events where we can collaborate, plan and laugh without distance requirements. And with a renewed appreciation for our county and the resources that got us through a very tough year, I am hopeful that we will remain Roane Strong, faring better than other counties and proving that's more than a catchphrase on a mask.

Believe me, others envy me, you, this location, our natural beauty, recreational opportunities, and on and on. So, I also hope you will read this report and be proud of these accomplishments, not because we want the credit or praise, but because its good positive news about Roane County that every citizen, leader and business played a part in. The Roane Alliance just happens to be well at telling Roane County's story – after all, it is our job, so if we don't tell that story, who will? I also feel the Alliance is part of the solution that makes Roane County's story such a good one – and, if we aren't part of the solution, who is?

Thankfully, 2021 began as busy as 2020 and with the end to the pandemic hopefully in sight, the momentum should continue this year at least. Two months in, there have already been several industrial site visits, announcements of new retail, and new homes built. The Alliance will look forward and will plan for better days and take advantage of every opportunity to help increase economic prosperity for our county. We also plan to celebrate every step of the way, including our annual fundraiser – set for Friday, June 18 (with fingers crossed).

I am proud of our county's successes and the role the Alliance has and will continue to play. I challenge you with this – instead of seeing the Roane Alliance as competition, or worse an enemy, read this report as part of Roane County's accomplishments and see the Alliance as part of the solution that helps foster growth and change in the county. Let's all start looking forward instead of backward and work together, not separate, making Roane County even better and stronger. Finally, I hope that you will join us, partner with us, become a contributor for economic development efforts, or just appreciate the hard work and efforts we make every day on this county's behalf – and I especially hope to see you soon!

*Camela D. May*

# Roane Alliance Organization Chart

