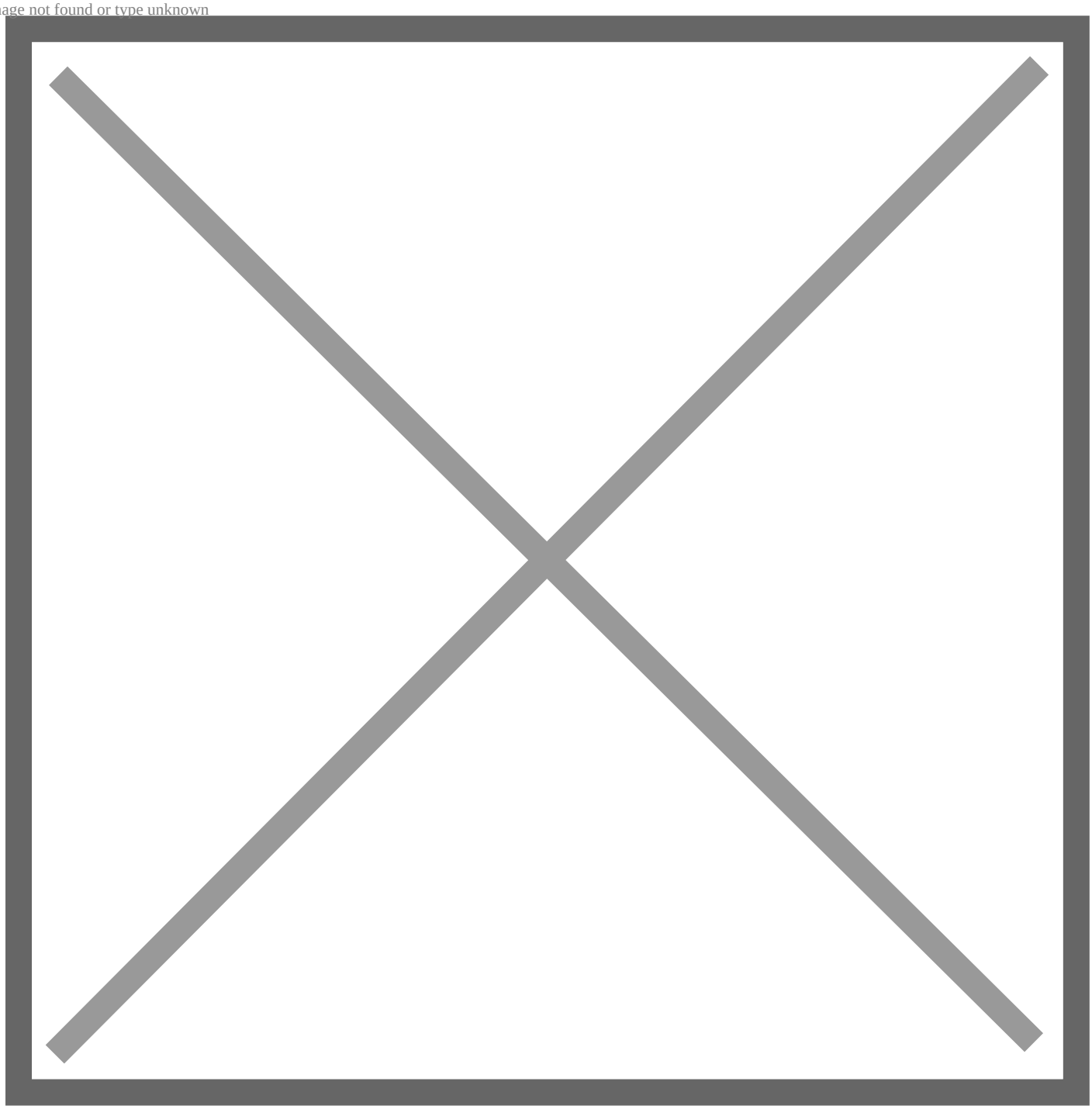
# Toyota’s Driving Possibilities Program Makes Inroads in Michigan

February 06, 2025

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- *STEM initiative focused on career readiness and community engagement to prepare youth for the careers of tomorrow*
- *Lincoln Consolidated, Ypsilanti Community Schools are beneficiaries of project-based learning and student exposure to STEM-related career opportunities*
- *Eastern Michigan University leads STEM Ed Institute as a community-driven hub to promote STEM education and careers*

Nearly two years since the initiation of Toyota USA Foundation's Driving Possibilities program in Michigan, Washtenaw County school administrators, teachers, parents and students are seeing benefits and experiencing the lasting impact.

"We're giving kids the opportunity to see themselves in the jobs of the future so that they can realize their dreams and aspirations," Robert Jansen, Superintendent of Lincoln Consolidated Schools said recently during a Global Mobility Forum panel discussion at the Detroit Auto Show.

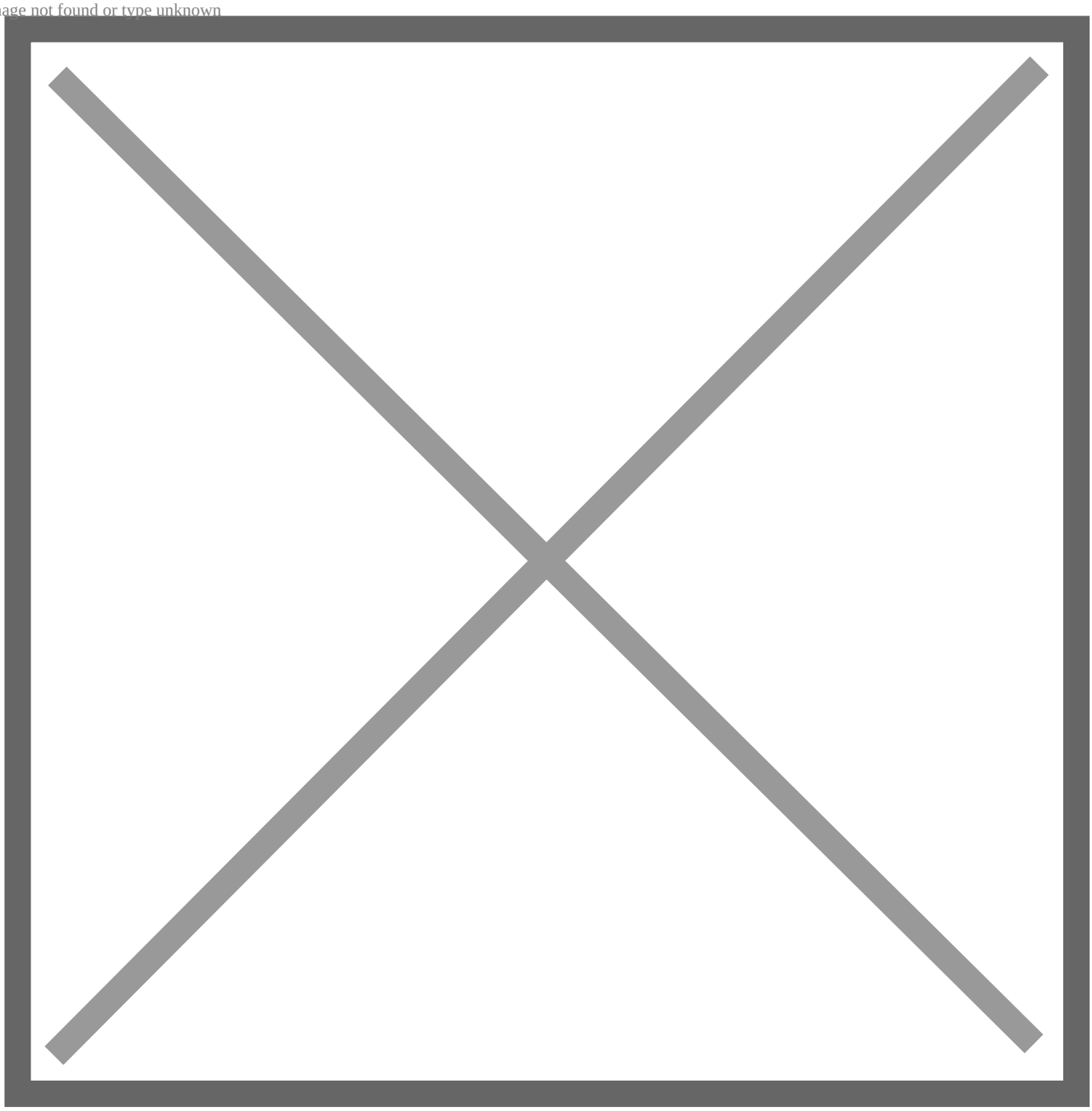
Lincoln Consolidated is one of two Washtenaw Intermediate School Districts supported by Driving Possibilities, a nationwide career readiness and community engagement initiative to prepare youth for the careers of tomorrow. In 2023, the Toyota USA Foundation committed to granting nearly $10 million over five years in southeast Michigan in local support of the program. To date, $3.9 million in grants have been awarded to both school districts.

"We're now able to collaborate and have STEM-engaged opportunities so that we can deepen our learning," said Dr. Alena Zachery-Ross, Superintendent of Ypsilanti Community Schools, the other local district benefiting from Driving Possibilities. "If we're going to make sure that our students are ready for these jobs in the future, we have to ensure the lessons at every single grade level can prepare our kids for this new world of work."

The Driving Possibilities program represents Toyota's largest financial commitment of this nature, designed to be hyperlocal and completely collaborative at every level. Working with local community leaders and schools from K-12 as well as colleges and universities, Driving Possibilities co-creates innovative educational programs and approaches that strengthen communities and get young people excited and prepared for high-growth, high-demand careers in STEM.

Eastern Michigan University (EMU) serves as the hub of Michigan's program. EMU created and leads the STEM Ed Institute to deploy STEM resources to and from Lincoln Consolidated and Ypsilanti Community Schools. EMU recently appointed Dr. Sibrina Collins as Director of the STEM Ed Institute. Two local institutions of higher learning – the University of Michigan College of Engineering and Washtenaw Community College – serve as educational and subject matter experts to create new learning opportunities for teachers, students and families across the community.

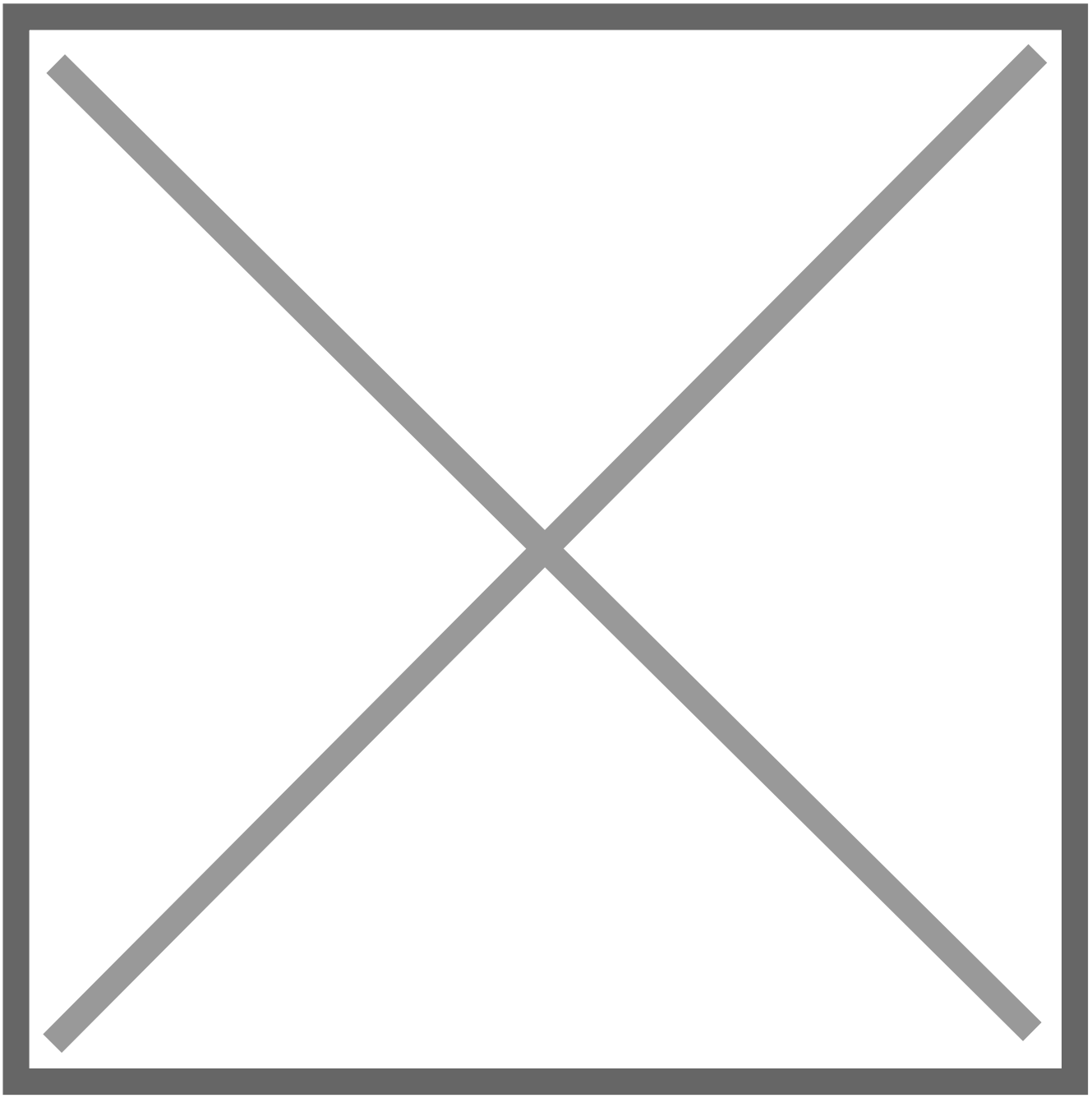
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“We need talent to fill the future jobs of tomorrow, so it’s important now that students understand how STEM shapes their daily lives and experiences,” said Dr. Collins. “My priority is relationship building, to build trust with district leaders and teachers so that we can do this work in a collaborative manner.”

The STEM Ed Institute focuses on three key areas to help prepare and motivate students: (1) Education, developing an experiential STEM curriculum aligned with industry needs; (2) Outreach, including field trip experiences and guest speakers in the classroom; and (3) Workforce Development, where every high school student has an opportunity to earn at least one stackable STEM credential.

Driving Possibilities is also helping in other ways. As part of a needs assessment when building the Michigan program, Toyota identified transportation as a critical area needing support. As a result, Toyota donated six Sienna minivan models in 2024, three for each district, to help transport students between buildings and for afterschool programs.



“Not all parents have the ability to get kids back and forth,” said Jansen. “We can now give them access to these experiences in an equitable way, so we’re removing barriers.”

Toyota hopes that other companies in southeast Michigan can join the initiative and help foster the seeds that have been planted.

“Driving Possibilities is a collaborative effort and designed to be sustainable into the future,” said Jeff Makarewicz, Group Vice President for Technical Research & Resources at Toyota Motor North America R&D in Saline, Mich. and a director on the Toyota USA Foundation board. “We hope other organizations and community members can join us in this journey.”

More information about the Driving Possibilities program, including the community collaborators in Michigan, can be found on the interactive map at Toyota Effect – Driving Possibilities.

Details on the STEM Ed Institute, including contact information for Dr. Sibrina Collins to become involved, can be found at https://stem-ed-institute.emich.edu/about.