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'Inland port' may create 30,000 jobs

By Chris Heinbaugh

LANCASTER — The ribbon was cut on Friday for what Dallas Mayor Laura Miller has called the most exciting economic development she's ever seen in the southern sector.

Burlington Northern also announced it would build its own intermodal facility in southern Dallas County.

Already, Far East products are flowing in through Union Pacific's Southern Dallas Intermodal Terminal's giant facility, which moves 1,000 containers every day. The tractor-trailer sized containers carry freight from West Coast ports. The intermodal center routes the on trucks and other trains, and move them somewhere else.

But the "inland port" is set for a quantum leap.

Burlington Northern has purchased the option to buy up to 490 acres alongside this track.

While presently the land is being used for farms and crops, a trade complex will soon rise over a thousands of acre area, which could create tens of thousands of jobs. Dubbed "America's Inland Port," The Dallas Logistics Hub will be a major center for international trade.

"We will not see this kind of development for a very long time," said Dallas mayor, Laura Miller.

"It is as significant, in my opinion, as the development of D/FW International Airport 30 years ago."

"Economic development, which has been absent from the southern sector, of Dallas is coming. And that is why we are so excited," said Mayor Artis Johnson of Hutchins.

A San Diego developer, The Allen Group, purchased 6,000 acres in Dallas, Wilmer, Hutchins and Lancaster to create the major logistics hub. Eventually, the Dallas Hub will house 60 million square feet of warehouse and industrial space.

It will sit between two major Railroads, Union Pacific and Burlington Northern. Lancaster Airport sits to the south, with more room to expand. It's also surrounded by several freeways, which are key routes for trucking.

For southern Dallas County, the overall good news will be the jobs. The project itself has created 30,000, and another potentially 30,000 could arise from the businesses that spring up around it.

Construction is set to begin on the first two of those warehouses that will be 800,000 square feet. The Allen Group said it's just the start.

The inland port is the creation of numerous city, county and state officials and their political cooperation that is not often seen.

"Because of that desire, because of that will, because we were wanted, we were willing to make that investment," said Richard Allen, The Allen Group.

Local leaders said the region is poised for an economic boom.

"What that represents, I truly believe, is an economic driver that will equal D-FW in ten years," said Bill Blaydes, Dallas City Council. "Mark my word."

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