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BUSINESS

Dallas inland port may recruit BNSF Railroad could build intermodal terminal in southern zone

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Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corp. is taking a first step toward building an intermodal terminal in southern Dallas County, which would help spur development of the economically depressed area.

The railroad said Friday that it is negotiating with the Allen Group for an option to purchase several hundred acres of land in the Dallas Logistics Hub, a 6,000-acre logistics and industrial park marketed by the California real estate developer.

The option would give the Fort Worth-based railroad 18 months to conduct due diligence and market analysis before deciding whether to purchase the property.

Burlington Northern currently operates an intermodal terminal at AllianceTexas, a mixed-used development north of Fort Worth. It employs 400 contract workers there.

"Here is an opportunity to at least explore something that might be needed as demand continues to grow," Burlington Northern spokesman Richard Russack said.

The company stressed that it's not abandoning its hometown.

"We are a Fort Worth-based company and we will continue to be a Fort Worth-based company," Mr. Russack said. "Alliance is terribly important to us."

But the growth in trade has made it difficult to ignore the potential of southern Dallas County.

The area is situated along key highway and rail routes that have become more important, thanks to the flood of Asian imports.

Dallas and other city officials have been working to create an inland port in southern Dallas County, which would include the Dallas Logistics Hub, other developments and a Union Pacific intermodal terminal that opened last year.

A Burlington Northern terminal would provide a major boost to those efforts.

Allen spokesman Jon Cross said the companies are negotiating on a parcel ranging from 387 acres to 530 acres, west of a Burlington Northern rail line.

It's not uncommon for Burlington Northern to have more than one intermodal terminal in an area, Mr. Russack said. The railroad has four in Chicago and two in Southern California, with a third one on the way.

CHART(S): / MAP(S): (TROY OXFORD/Staff Artist) LOGISTICS HUB; Detail

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