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Allen Provides Intermodal Site Details at Special City Reception

By Steve Snyder

We are for real and still coming here was the message April 6.

Lancaster residents and civic leaders got a little more information about a planned 6,000-acre intermodal transportation business park at a special reception that date.

The reception was for the Allen Group and its CEO, Richard Allen. He was at the reception along with Director of Community Relations Leslie Jutzi.

The Allen Group has bought 4,500 acres of the land it plans to acquire. Its facility will generally be located north and northeast of Lancaster Airport and will include land in Lancaster, Wilmer, Hutchins and Dallas.

"It will be close to 6,000 acres by the time we get done," Allen said.

Of course, people want to know when get done might be, and when the first construction work, the next visible sign of getting done, might start. Allen said his company expected to buy the final 1,000-1,500 acres in 60-90 days.

Jutzi and Allen answered the timeline questions.

"In the next year to year and a half, we should start construction," Jutzi said.

This is a 35- to 40-year buildout, Allen added. This isn't of regional or state significance, it's of international significance.

Allen dropped one business tidbit to reinforce that fact.

"BNSF (railroad Burlington Northern Santa Fe) is interested in putting another intermodal terminal here," he said.

Intermodal terminals are for coordinating railroad shipment of semi trailers, a business that has exploded in recent years with the rapid rise of Chinese exports. Allen added that Union Pacific, which already has an intermodal terminal on I-45, was expected to double the number of its lifts for trailers.

"The location next to three interstate highways and the UP terminal is what made the area so valuable to the Allen Group," he said.

But the Allen Group site will be more than an intermodal port, or even more than a general business park.

"This will also have retail and residential components," Allen said.

He told the reception it took 27 partnerships and a year and a half to purchase the first 500 acres at the site.

www.allengroup.com



Lancaster city officials, meanwhile, hope the major development boosts expansion plans at the airport.

Development of an airport like Lancaster's as a cargo airport is a goal of the NAFTA Trade Corridor. And Lancaster is on its way toward that goal.

The airport has received a \$333,334 grant from the Texas Department of Transportation's Aviation Division, out of that agency's Federal Aviation Administration state-level funds. The money would fund the lengthening of the current 5,000-foot runway to 6,500 feet, with an eventual goal of 8,000 feet.