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BNSF buys option on 387 acres for possible terminal

By Andrea Jares

LANCASTER -- BNSF Railway has purchased an option to buy 387 acres to build a logistics terminal at the Dallas Logistics Hub, a 6,000-acre distribution development in southern Dallas County.

The deal moves the plans for a BNSF terminal in Lancaster closer to reality but doesn't guarantee it.

"It just allows us to be able to evaluate the site," said Suann Lundsberg, a BNSF spokeswoman.

Union Pacific already operates a terminal at the hub. Having competing rail terminals at the site would give companies with distribution operations there more choices, executives with the development company, **The Allen Group**, say.

Allen announced the BNSF deal, signed Thursday night, at an open house for the hub Friday at Lancaster Municipal Airport. The hub sits in parts of Dallas, Wilmer, Lancaster and Hutchins.

Allen also announced that it will start work on two speculative buildings totaling 843,000 square feet within 60 days. It plans to spend \$35 million on the project.

The open house included more than two hours' worth of speakers, who lauded the hub's role in helping North Texas capture more cargo from Asia.

The rapidly growing volume of Asian cargo typically arrives by ship at West Coast ports. In recent years, the preferred practice has been for companies to bring the cargo inland, to sites such as Texas, to unload or assemble it.

"We will not see this kind of development for a very long time," said Dallas Mayor Laura Miller, whose city recently approved \$33 million in bonds for hub infrastructure.

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

BNSF remains committed to the intermodal terminal it has at Alliance Airport, Lundsberg said. It handled 587,000 "lifts" last year. The railroad has plans to expand there, but capacity has not become an issue yet, she said.

Joe Arbona, a Union Pacific spokesman, said that given how rapidly Asian imports are growing, there is plenty of room for both terminals.

"There's so much demand by the public and need by the public for goods and transportation by rail because of environmental and congestion in our highways that we welcome the competition," he said.

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