

June 11, 2007

Mega distribution projects focus locations on world trade

By Karen Thuermer

Regardless of whether shipments are for an import or export warehouse, regional distribution center (DC), supplier, manufacturer, store network, or end-user, speed is the key. Today customers demand that their distribution networks move products better, faster and cheaper. An optimum location for logistics operations is a must have.

In this regard, Texas has just become bigger. On April 13, 2007, the Dallas Logistics Hub was added to its stock. With over 6,000 acres master-planned for the development of 60 million vertical square feet of logistics and manufacturing space, the "Hub" is deemed the largest new logistics park under development in North America.

"It is strategically located to become an important intermodal site," says Jon Cross, the marketing director for The Allen Group.

Executives with The Allen Group, developers of the project, see the Hub as a key piece of the NAFTA infrastructure.

"We came to the Dallas Metroplex because of its potential for good freight movements and shipping routes," explains Cross. "The project is being developed to take advantage of the coming improvements in the state's transportation system."

At the heart of those improvements is Loop 9, better known as the Trans-Texas Corridor (TTC). This proposed multi-billion dollar highway and rail corridor is currently planned to run along the South boundary of the Dallas Hub.

I-35, otherwise known as the NAFTA Trade Corridor, runs three miles West of the Dallas Hub and is planned to be part of the TTC. Already I-20, the primary East/West trucking corridor for the southern United States, borders the park's North entrance. I-45, the direct interstate to the Port of Houston, is adjacent to the park's East entrance.

The Port of Houston, which currently ranks first in the United States for foreign tonnage and is the sixth largest port in the world, will see an increase in traffic once the Panama Canal is widened to accommodate the larger steamship vessels traversing Pacific Rim trade routes. The Dallas Logistics Hub will be a key component for the port by operating as a major inland port bringing products by rail from the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific for regional and national distribution.

A key component in that effort is the 360-acre Union Pacific Miller Intermodal facility that borders the Hub. With a 365,000 lift capacity and 4,000 parking stalls, the facility more than doubles UP's intermodal capacity.

"At full expansion, the facility will have a 600,000 lift capacity," says Cross.

Its Dallas Intermodal Terminal (DIT) provides quick access to the counties that comprise 97% of the Dallas metroplex population, and serves as the gateway for intermodal goods to the major population centers in the Central and Eastern United States. A main feature of DIT is its 10-lane high-tech, biometric secured AGS (automated gate system) entrance.