

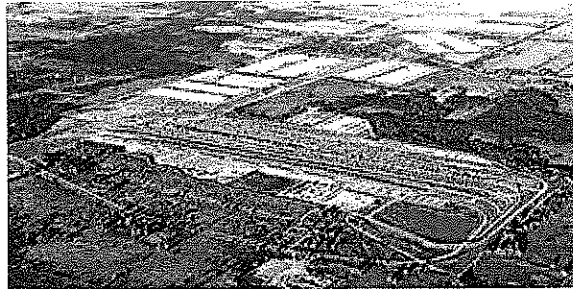
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Rail center may generate 2,000 jobs

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A national rail line today announced construction plans for a large distribution park and rail facility that will bring up to 2,000 jobs and spark significant economic development in far west Fort Bend County. In making the announcement, an official with Kansas City Southern railroad hesitated to pinpoint an exact impact figure, but using conservative economic multipliers said "it would not be a stretch" to say the development will bring more than \$1 billion in economic impact to the area immediately west of Rosenberg.



West Fort Bend County residents will soon see an intermodal logistics center similar, but much smaller, than the one shown above in Elwood, Ill. To be developed by Kansas City Southern railroad and CenterPoint Properties, the center will receive, store and disburse containerized cargo via trains and trucks throughout Texas, the U.S. and Mexico.

Officials with KCS and CenterPoint Properties, a Chicago developer specializing in transportation and logistics, told The Fort Bend Herald in an exclusive interview Tuesday the \$300 million development, known as an intermodal center, will be on 800 acres north of Kendleton, on the west side of U.S. 59.

According to Warren K. Erdman, KCS executive vice president, the development will include an intermodal facility and a 636-acre industrial park.

7.5 million square feet

The facility can develop more than 7.5 million square feet of industrial warehouse space, which will be used to receive, store and disburse by rail and truck containerized cargo across Texas, other parts of the U.S. and Mexico. Texas currently has only two other such intermodal centers, both located in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Construction is set to begin immediately, said Michael M. Mullen, CEO of CenterPoint Properties, and Phase I could be completed as early as May.

Officials said the industrial build-out would span 12-15 years, beginning in 2010. It would include more than \$16 million in new infrastructure, such as roads, utilities and stormwater management throughout the park.

"It's a project that we think will have a lot of good benefits for this community," said Erdman. Erdman called CenterPoint the "premier logistic park developer in North America, and we're very proud to have them as our development partner." He emphasized that the development work would be master-planned and officials would work in partnership with the local communities.

Lots of new jobs

He said the center will provide between 750 and 2,000 permanent jobs, as well as thousands of construction jobs. Local contractors, architects and engineers will be used where possible, said Mullen, even local legal counsel would be retained. "Its growth will come slowly and over time," he said. "It won't all happen at once, but it will grow incrementally, and as it does we will bring even more jobs to the community."

These jobs will be "relatively good-paying jobs and create tax base for your community," he said.

The total economic impact to Fort Bend County won't be determined until later because there are too many variables, said Erdman, but he promised it would be huge. When pressed for a figure, he conceded more than \$1 billion "would not be a stretch." Erdman said the location was selected primarily because of its proximity to the Houston marketplace, but also because the site is ready to go and will be easier to develop because of its topography and its accessibility to San Antonio and Houston. KCS acquired the land two years ago, Erdman said.

Meeting with local officials

On Tuesday, the officials met with economic development authorities and elected officials from Fort Bend County and the cities of Rosenberg and Kendleton, including County Judge Bob Hebert, Rosenberg Mayor Joe Gurecky and Kendleton Mayor Carolyn Jones.

Mullen discussed a similar but larger facility his company developed in Elwood, Ill, which includes such distributors as Sanyo and Wal-Mart. That project is roughly three times larger than the Fort Bend project.

"To put things in perspective, it's two miles long, north to south, and it's about 3 1/2 miles long east to west," Mullen said about the Elwood development.

Intermodal centers allow transporters to move containerized cargo from one mode of conveyance to another without ever opening the container, Erdman explained.