



## Editorial: Inland Port deserves Rawlings' focus

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Mayor Mike Rawlings was smart to follow the example of his predecessor and use Asia as a launching point for his effort to lure new foreign investment to Dallas. International trade figures offer indisputable evidence that strong ties to Asia, particularly China, are essential to sustaining economic growth.

The mayor's main focus on his current trade mission to China and South Korea, which continues until Tuesday and includes a meeting with China's vice president, is working to expand air links between Asia and Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport. The potential economic impact is in the hundreds of millions of dollars if he persuades Chinese and South Korean airlines to establish nonstop flights here.

Those figures pale in comparison to the economic impact Asian businesses could have on the International Inland Port of Dallas, which merits at least equal attention on the mayor's trade and investment agenda. Now is the time to be making the pitch, given the current expansion of the Panama Canal and expected boom in Asian cargo business at the Port of Houston and surge in truck cargo from Mexico.

It's concerning that the mayor is not making the Inland Port a top priority on this trip, considering that the port is a major pillar in his GrowSouth initiative for southern Dallas. If he wants to generate jobs and improve living conditions in southern Dallas, he must market the Inland Port aggressively at every opportunity.

Just go to the city's Inland Port website and you'll instantly notice signs of back-burner status. The site appears not to have been updated in years. Tom Leppert is still listed as mayor. Most statistics about cargo trade date to when George W. Bush occupied the White House.

Here's what Rawlings would be wise to tout: The Inland Port boasts about 8.4 million square feet of warehouse space, 7 million of which is already leased. Loading docks at gigantic warehouses are now bustling. The big Union Pacific railroad intermodal yard on Interstate 45 is packed with cargo containers.

Kohl's, Home Depot, Whirlpool and American Standard are among the major corporations moving in to exploit the unique intersection of three interstate highways and two major rail networks within the boundaries of the 234,000-acre port. The Dallas Logistics Hub, the flagship 6,000-acre port investment launched in 2007 by the Allen Group, has reorganized and emerged from bankruptcy.

No doubt, North Texas can benefit greatly from increased airline links with Asia. But the Inland Port is where thousands of jobs hang in the balance in an area that the mayor has already declared a top development priority. Now is one of those times he can make good on his promises to southern Dallas.

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