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 <a href="#">Anthony Westbury St. Lucie County's salivating over this proposed new campus</a>	09/30/2009	Jupiter Courier	<a href="mailto:anthony.westbury@scripps.com">anthony.westbury@scripps.com</a> (Anthony Westbury)

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ST. LUCIE COUNTY Most people wouldnt know a regional intermodal logistics campus if one hit them in the face.

And yet two St. Lucie cities have given their blessing to one.

Allow me to translate.

Think of the intermodal whatsit as a gargantuan freight yard and distribution center.

Now that were talking the same language, a little history is in order.

For years, state and regional transportation planners have sought to reduce truck traffic congestion in South Florida, especially on Interstate 95.

Many of those trucks come out of the ports of Miami, Port Everglades and Palm Beach.

If the ports are to expand without adding to traffic congestion, some of their activities could be moved to an inland site, a inland port.

The Port of Palm Beach is looking for suitable sites and hopes to examine candidates by mid-October.

Four of the six sites submitted are in Palm Beach County: Moore Haven, Belle Glade and two sites straddling the Beeline Expressway. Another site is near Lake Placid, northwest of Lake Okeechobee.

And then theres ours a 7,000-acre piece of land that fronts Glades Cutoff Road and the rail line in western St. Lucie County a few miles west of Tradition and Torrey Pines.

The land is owned by three separate agricultural and rock mining interests. It has direct rail access, plenty of space for expansion and is accessible from I-95 and the turnpike.

The inland port concept can be split into two parts, according to Fort Pierce attorney Johnathan Ferguson, who represents one of the landowners.

The Port of Palm Beach would have sovereignty over a fenced 500-acre parcel that would include Customs and other port-related uses. A further 3,500 acres outside the fence would be set aside for warehousing, off-loading and possibly manufacturing facilities to support the port. Its this larger area that has local politicians salivating over jobs, jobs and more jobs maybe 25,000 of them.

But hold your horses. As you might expect with a prize this big, theres a whole lot of politics involved.

The sites nearest Lake Okeechobee may have problems because theyre also close to the Everglades Restoration area; one could impinge on Gov. Charlie Crist's controversial land deal with U.S. Sugar.

The cities of Port St. Lucie and Fort Pierce, however, have officially embraced the concept in principle, ahead of seeing any details. A couple of county commissioners Ive spoken to seem less certain.

Port St. Lucie is entertaining the prospect of the site being annexed into the city, believing it could become a gigantic economic engine to fuel our ailing economy. Indeed an earlier proposal from the three landowners made assets out of our high foreclosure and unemployment rates. Plenty of affordable housing nearby. Workforce ready to go!

Were at the beginning of what will certainly be an extremely long process. In addition to annexation, the citys comprehensive plan would have to be amended. And there will be hundreds of hours of discussion and argument about a proposal this huge.

And thats only if were taken seriously by a group of port officials who might prefer this thing to stay well to our south.

Ferguson is trying to remain realistic.

Candidly, were probably not at the top of the list. However, a couple of the other sites have environmental or access issues. Itll be a long process, but if were in position to go ahead, some of the others may fall away. Were positioning ourselves to be the logical location.

We should know if we are that logical by Oct. 16. Then the fun will really begin. Ill keep you posted.

Anthony Westbury is a columnist for Scripps Treasure Coast Newspapers. This column reflects his opinion. Contact him at [anthony.westbury@scripps.com](mailto:anthony.westbury@scripps.com) or (772) 409-1320. Read more columns at [TCPalm.com](http://TCPalm.com).

