

CSX Files Winter Haven Site Plan for Approval

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THE LEDGER

Published: Thursday, December 15, 2011 at 11:27 p.m.

WINTER HAVEN | Evansville Western Railway, a CSX subsidiary that will build the new rail terminal in Winter Haven, applied for site plan approval with the city of Winter Haven today, according to the city spokeswoman.

The move is in line with an October CSX announcement that it intended to submit the application to the city well before the Jan. 4 deadline set forth in the contract between the city and CSX.

The first phase of construction is expected to begin in the middle or second half of 2012.

The Winter Haven rail terminal is needed to handle freight train traffic moving from Orlando-area rail lines to the line that runs through Polk County and downtown Lakeland.

Evansville Western Railway has said it expects to create 800 construction-related jobs during the initial construction and plans to work with Polk Works to hire additional help.

The company also plans to use Polk County suppliers and subcontractors when possible.

Estimates for the project's total jobs impact have been as high as 6,000, counting jobs at the rail terminal and at a surrounding business park to be built on 932 acres around the terminal.

Some Lakeland and Wahneta residents have opposed the new rail terminal because they said the increased freight train traffic running through Polk County will decrease their quality of life.

Some have even called the downtown Lakeland rail lines Florida's "new freight superhighway."

CSX will still utilize the rail lines SunRail will use, but only when SunRail is not operating.

Residents in Winter Haven who live near the proposed site also have voiced concerns about the amount of noise from the rail terminal and added traffic on nearby roads.

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