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It's a historic day for the Port of Gulfport. Today a port of the future ground-making ceremony signals the start of a multimillion dollar development. Just about a year ago port officials unveiled an ambitious master plan that would expand the port by almost five times.

It would create a world class port just in time to handle the extra traffic coming through the expanded Panama Canal in 2012. In addition it would create needed jobs. Many stevedoring jobs were lost following Hurricane Katrina when freezer space was washed away. New roadways would be built to handle additional port truck traffic and keep port traffic out of downtown. And the rail line service would be improved as well.

One official last year said a large project like this requires time and money. Governor Haley Barbour has committed 570 million dollars in block grant money to the project. While there is a lawsuit pending against use of the funds, we hope the court will soon rule in favor of the port and the project can proceed.

It is estimated that the first phase of this ambitious project would take five to seven years. No doubt the Port of Gulfport is one of the economic engines of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Hopefully today is just the first of many milestones for the Port of Gulfport.

That's our opinion, we would like to hear yours. Email your thoughts to editorials@wlox.com, or post your comments below.