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## Officials break ground for new toll road.

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Federal, [state](#) and local dignitaries gathered Thursday near Old Port Isabel Road on FM 511 to break ground on a \$34 million toll road designed to improve truck movement to the Port of Brownsville.

The new roadway, State Highway 550, will eventually run along the center of FM 511 from U.S. 77/83 to State Highway 48, creating an alternate route to the port and Olmito.

At the groundbreaking, officials lauded the construction of SH 550, also dubbed the Port Spur Project, as a step forward in improving access to a congested trade route.

The highway “makes the movement of goods more efficient. It reduces the cost of moving those goods. ... It also makes the roadways safer,” said Greg Nadeau, federal highway deputy administrator for the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Funds for the Port Spur project came from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

The highway is being built in phases. The first comprised the construction of an overpass at FM 511 and Paredes Line Road, where toll lanes are currently being installed.

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Officials broke ground Thursday on the second phase of the project, which entails the construction of two main lanes down the center of FM 511 that will extend about 3 miles and connect FM 3248 to State Highway 48 and the future entrance of the port.

This new road will be called State Highway 550. The frontage roads will remain toll-free.

The final phase of the project will include the construction of a \$160 million, 10-mile road with tolled main lanes that will extend SH 550 and link it to U.S. 77/83.

The project's planning and development was a collaborative effort among the Federal Highway Administration, the Texas Department of Transportation, the Cameron County Regional Mobility Authority and the Brownsville Navigation District.

The Cameron County Regional Mobility Authority will be in charge of maintenance and operation of the toll road once the project is completed. The Texas Department of Transportation will maintain the non-tolled access roads, officials said.

"A lot of people have worked hard," U.S. Rep. Solomon P. Ortiz said at Thursday's groundbreaking. "And sometimes, though the odds seemed to be against us, we stuck together. And that is why we are here today."