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Freight Data Essential For Informing Policy Makers, Says Shipping CEO

The Ministry of Transport's new Freight Information Gathering System (FIGS) is an essential step towards making informed transport policy decisions, says Pacifica Shipping chief executive, Steve Chapman.

Addressing last week's National Infrastructure Summit, Mr Chapman said FIGS would fill a gap that has existed for years in monitoring domestic freight data across road, rail and sea modes.

He said numerous Government and private sector studies had covered freight demands, transport costs and charges, port performance, coastal shipping, infrastructure planning and related topics.

"However little of value has emerged from these reports to provide a basis for an over-arching freight transport policy for New Zealand," he said.

"In many cases the authors readily conceded there was insufficient data available, especially from the maritime and rail sectors.

"The absence of comprehensive inter-modal information has handicapped our ability to plan for and invest in the most efficient forms of surface transport," he said.

"We cannot assess the economic, social or environmental impacts of each mode's activities in the big picture without a detailed understanding of freight movements on a continuous basis."

Mr Chapman said the advent of FIGS was a positive move and he hoped all transport operators' representatives, as well as port companies, would co-operate with it fully.

"It is in all our interests to have quantitative as well as qualitative data which transport planners can rely on for advising Government leaders setting policy.

"In an informed climate, we will see investments in the most appropriate forms of transport that deliver results of lasting benefit to the country as a whole.

"Used properly, FIGS will help deliver an economically viable and sustainable transport network in which road, rail and sea play complementary roles."

Contact: Steve Chapman, Pacifica Shipping Tel 021 327 401