

Speech at Wiri Freight Hub rail connection opening
Jens Madsen
11 May 2010

Tena koutou, Tena koutou, Tena koutou katoa

Good morning ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the official opening of the rail link between the Wiri Freight Hub and Ports of Auckland's Waitemata sea port.

For those of you who were able to join me on the train journey here, I hope you enjoyed the rather unique scenic view offered by rail.

I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank KiwiRail for putting on this train for us. It is much appreciated, and signifies the very good partnership we are celebrating today.

On behalf of Ports of Auckland Chairman John Lindsay and myself, a particular welcome today to the Minister of Transport – The Honourable Steven Joyce; to the Chairman of KiwiRail – the Right Honourable Jim Bolger; and to all our other distinguished guests.

I would like also to acknowledge the teachers and children from Wiri Central School for their presence at this event and thank them for their spirited performance.

For those who do not know, Ports of Auckland partners with Wiri Central School, as well as Te Papapa School in Onehunga, as part of the very worth while Ed & Co initiative from the Committee for Auckland.

Ed & Co partners schools with corporate businesses. The programme's focus is the provision of management expertise and mentoring.

For Ports of Auckland, the arrangement offers the opportunity to form grass-roots relationships in the communities in which we operate, and is something I find personally very rewarding.

I would also like to acknowledge our customers and our partners in this project.

It was 9 months ago that some of you were here to celebrate the physical start of the construction to link our Wiri freight hub to the Waitemata Harbour via rail.

I say physical start, because from conception, through planning to development this has been a much longer project than 9 months.

But good things can take time.

And what we have achieved here is a very good thing.

It is good for our customers, good for South Auckland, good for the Auckland region and good for New Zealand.

The opening of the Wiri Freight Hub rail link is a culmination of a long project of cooperation involving numerous parties from both the public and private sectors.

Parties involved included: Ministry of Transport, Treasury, Ministry of Economic Development, Auckland Regional Transport Authority, Auckland Regional Council and Auckland Regional Holdings, Auckland City Council and the New Zealand Transport Authority.

The rail link is an industry driven concept that has been jointly funded by the public and private sector, project managed by Ports of Auckland, with the physical build work being carried out by Brian Perry Civil and KiwiRail.

The opening of this rail facility really is representative of a new era.

It demonstrates the sustainable view being taken by New Zealand's importers and exporters and supply-chain innovators to lessen their impact on the environment by thinking of smarter more efficient ways of conducting business.

It is a high quality development built to deliver long term benefits.

This multi-modal and multi-functional facility is operated by an equally diverse and multi-skilled company, CONLINXX Limited, which is a subsidiary company of Ports of Auckland Ltd and the transport, stevedoring and logistics company NZL Group.

This company will be - and is - capable of combining road, rail and sea freight options, offering customers a seamless and efficient service for the movement of their containerized cargoes through the Auckland region.

Acting General Manager Reinhold Goeschl is also here today.

I am pleased to say that CONLINXX has already seen an increase in market uptake attributed to the Wiri rail service.

The development we are opening includes three rail sidings, 2,000m of rail track and a hardstand about the size of the Britomart station. The format means two trains can be worked simultaneously with a third track ultimately available for repositioning locomotives.

What does this mean? It means flexibility and efficiencies.

A lot of the Wiri Freight Hub's current customers are based within ten kilometres of the Freight Hub. By using the rail link to the seaport, this group will be able to reduce

the carbon emissions of transporting their containers by up to 40%, with an average of 25% overall.

There are also big potential benefits for the community through reduced road congestion.

When functioning to full capacity, Wiri will eventually save around 100,000 inner city truck trips - or 2.5 million kilometres - per annum.

For South Auckland, we see this investment as contributing to a bright future for Wiri as a 'freight hub' that will attract new import and export businesses and jobs to the area.

The intermodal connections that Wiri offers will also help Ports of Auckland – in conjunction with exporters, importers and shipping lines – work smarter;

- taking cost out of the supply chain
- increasing productivity, and
- offering customers and other users more flexible options for moving their goods.

Importantly it helps to free up capacity at the Waitemata seaport enabling us at Ports of Auckland to prepare for further growth.

Why is this so important?

Because trends in international shipping towards hubbing and larger ships will see even more of New Zealand's cargo being focused on Ports of Auckland in the future.

So from an economic and a community perspective it's vital that the right supporting infrastructure is in place.

This Wiri development – particularly with the incorporation of rail into the mix – is a major step forward as Ports of Auckland and New Zealand prepare to serve that need.

But it is not our last step.

As you can see, we have some more land to develop here – we are currently utilising around half of our 15 hectare site – and with a long term goal to establish Wiri as a staging post for cargo between the Waitemata seaport, South Auckland and ultimately linked by rail to the Waikato and further south.

I'd like to acknowledge now the Government's contribution to this project to date, and the support and cooperation we have received from KiwiRail and ONTRACK without whom we would not have been able to progress this important initiative.

It is a very exciting time for us all, and I hope you share my enthusiasm for the opportunities this rail link opens up.

Thank you and it is now my great pleasure to introduce to you the Chairman of KiwiRail, Jim Bolger.

ENDS