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Much needed rail investment encouraging

The Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMTU) is encouraged by the funding boost to the country's rail network, and is welcoming an apparent commitment to retaining it in public hands.

"\$750m over 3 years is much needed investment," RMTU General Secretary Wayne Butson said.

"The long term plan for KiwiRail has many important elements, including wagon and locomotive upgrades, affirmation of the connected network (so that any line closures cannot block the network linkage) and an investment in infrastructure to undo the neglect of 18 years of private ownership."

"We are also encouraged to hear John Key say that the government is committed to improving and retaining the network, and the apparent discounting of a future privatisation of rail. We should never repeat mistakes, which is what the privatisation years between 1993 and 2008 are now regarded as, that end up costing more to us as citizens and taxpayers."

He said that the union was involved in discussions about improving productivity, noting KiwiRail already had some of the most innovative and productive operating systems in the world, such as remote controlled shunts, track warrant control and single person train crewing.

"We also hope that when it comes to further locomotive and wagon upgrades that the Government and KiwiRail will look for them to be built by our skilled New Zealand workforce, and thereby provide much needed income and work for our struggling manufacturing sector employers," Wayne Butson said.

Ends.

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