

Maritime Routes of the Greater Caribbean, A Strategic Platform for Foreign Trade Connectivity in the Region



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The Maritime Routes of the Greater Caribbean Platform (RMDGC) is a tool that offers an updated map of the regular service routes by container ships in the region. This platform is free and accessible to any user interested in obtaining this information.

This platform offers various logistics players a clear view of the maritime connections available between the countries that make up the Greater Caribbean, and between them and the rest of the world, with the aim of improving the efficiency of the logistics chain through the use of data on services, port calls, sailing days, and the shipping lines that offer them.

RMDGC displays an interactive map where users can view the available ports of call, according to their commercial needs, with information on the capacity and frequency of each of these services. In this way, the platform contributes to the planning of logistics operations, ensuring the conditions under which goods can be transported, using the contacts of shipping agencies in each port, available on the maps generated with each search.

Prior to the development of RMDGC, logistics stakeholders faced challenges due to the lack of a unified system for consulting these services, as the information was fragmented across multiple sources and, in many cases, was not free.

RMDGC was created precisely to solve this problem. It was created during the Third Meeting of the Special Committee on Transport (CET) of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) to consolidate information and facilitate access to updated data. The technical team developing the platform is comprised of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), the Cuban Ministry of Transport, the Panama Maritime Authority (AMP), and the Central American Maritime Transport Commission (COCATRAM).

The impact of RMDGC on maritime trade in the Greater Caribbean has been significant. By

providing an open-access platform, it has facilitated access to information on maritime routes and services, allowing any company to access the information they need to efficiently plan their operations.

One of the most relevant aspects of RMDGC is understanding how the Greater Caribbean countries that make up the Association of Caribbean States (ACC) are connected by sea. These include the Insular Caribbean, the Caribbean coast of Central America, the northern coast of South America, and Mexico on the Gulf Coast, and their interconnection with other regions of the world. The platform facilitates the identification of the best available maritime connections.

Furthermore, the system also plays an important role in the sustainability of maritime trade. By offering optimized routes, it helps reduce the carbon footprint associated with maritime transport. Choosing shorter, more direct routes means less fuel consumption and, therefore, fewer polluting gas emissions. This is especially relevant in the current context, where sustainability and responsible trade have become key objectives for many companies. The platform also improves companies' ability to react to changes in market supply and demand. By accessing up-to-date information, they can adjust their routes or shipping times based on market conditions. In a globalized environment where flexibility is essential, this ability to adapt quickly is a differentiating factor.

RMDGC has undergone a constant development process since its inception in 1999. The initiative began as an effort to improve connectivity in the Greater Caribbean region, but over the years, the platform has evolved significantly in terms of functionality and reach.

After its official approval in 2006, this project began to be implemented, funded by various international stakeholders, including the Government of Turkey, the Republic of Korea, and the Association of Caribbean States. This digital version allowed users to access updated route and service information, significantly improving the visibility of maritime transport in the region.

Technological development has been a key factor in the platform's expansion, as in its initial versions, the system was relatively basic, offering only data on specific routes and services. However, over time, the platform has expanded to include more detailed information, such as total TEU capacity, service frequencies, and sailing times between ports. These improvements have allowed users to obtain a more complete and detailed view of the maritime transport network in the Caribbean.

Since its inception, the platform has shown a steady increase in the size and capacity of the fleet serving the Greater Caribbean. As shown, in 2015, the region was served by 70 shipping lines through 182 services, with a total capacity of 1.95 million TEUs, reflecting an average of 2,818 TEUs per vessel and 258,447 reefer plugs. As of February 2024, these figures had increased significantly, with 80 shipping lines, 158 services, and a total capacity of 3.05 million TEUs, an average of 5,008 TEUs per vessel, and 330,408 reefer plugs. Preliminary figures indicate that despite the 13.2% decrease in services, TEU and reefer plug capacity increased by 56.4% and 27.8%, respectively, while the average vessel size increased by 77.7%, primarily due to the massive volume of vessels generated largely by the expansion of the Panama Canal.

RMDGC is complemented by the Cruise Platform, which offers information on cruise lines, ports of call, and total passenger capacity. Likewise, the Ferry Platform provides details on ferry lines, ports of call, and service frequencies, primarily in the Insular Caribbean. Furthermore, the Pacific Maritime Routes Platform expands access to routes beyond the Greater Caribbean, providing a more comprehensive view of maritime connections between both regions. This interconnection strengthens competitiveness and facilitates logistics planning for companies operating in both areas.

RMDGC has established itself as an essential tool for maritime trade in the Greater Caribbean region. Its ability to centralize crucial information on maritime routes and services has significantly contributed to improving trade efficiency in the region, benefiting both exporters and importers, as well as logistics players.

As global trade continues to expand, the platform will continue to play a pivotal role in facilitating maritime trade information in the Greater Caribbean, helping companies navigate the complexities of international transport more easily. With its focus on sustainability and accessibility, RMDGC will continue to be a valuable tool in the coming years.

Source: Mapas de Rutas Marítimas del Gran Caribe (cocatram.org.ni)