

The Pros and Cons of Shipping by

RAIL

Rail is great for shipping very large volumes over long distances and can carry the freight of 300 trucks.



PROS

- Cost effective
- Comparable speed to truck
- Ability to transport large volumes at one time
- Reliable transit times and schedules
- Environmentally responsible and fuel efficient



CONS

- If you do not have tracks at your facility, coordination with trucks for first and last mile may be challenging
- Limited reach in some instances
- Very small shipments often do not yield tremendous cost savings



COST

Rail is considered one of the most cost effective modes of transportation, especially for large volumes traveling long distances. Due to its ability to move major quantities at one time, rail has a lower cost-per-ton-mile (the cost of moving one ton one mile) than truck. In fact, a train requires less energy to move from Point A to Point B and can carry the freight equivalent of 300 trucks.



SPEED

While you might think trucks travel much faster than trains, transit times for rail and over-the-road trucking can be comparable. Plus, trains are less susceptible to traffic congestion and road construction delays and have the ability to move shipments over long distances quickly and efficiently.



CAPACITY

Unlike trucks and planes, rail offers huge carrying capacities that can adjust as your business grows or shipping needs change. Rail can also accommodate shipments of many shapes and sizes, from grain to wind turbine blades.



REACH

You may be surprised to learn that railroad tracks span nearly 140,000 miles across the U.S., reaching all major markets from coast to coast. Even if you do not have tracks at your door, most railroads can help coordinate a door-to-door solution through intermodal transport or transloading.



SHIPMENT VISIBILITY

Typically, most locomotives are tracked via GPS and the majority of railroads offer shipment management solutions that help you trace your shipments in real time. Automatic Equipment ID tags are on all rail cars and readers are positioned throughout the United States to offer a high level of shipment visibility.



RELIABILITY

Weather delays can have an impact on rail shipments. Today's railroads are focused on reliable transit times and schedules — and shipments can be expected to arrive within a pre-determined timeframe.



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Rail is by far one of the most environmentally responsible transportation modes. On average, railroads move one ton of freight nearly 500 miles per gallon of fuel, and trains are four times more fuel efficient than trucks. Plus, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency data show freight railroads account for only 0.6% of total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions and only 2.0% of the transportation-related sources.