



Single wagon load

Why choose single wagon load transportation?

The client will choose single wagon load transportation when he wants to dispatch one or several wagons at the time but does not have enough quantity to fill a full train.

How does it work

Logistically the SWL system is comparable with a “hub and spoke system” (a system where all goods are brought into a central point – the hub – for sorting and are distributed out from the centre in all directions). It is a network system which consists of customer sidings, stations and marshalling yards:

If the customer has railway tracks, the operator will send a feeder service [1] to collect the wagons (and give the customer empty wagons to fill). These are then hauled or pulled to a marshalling yard (assembly point for the goods to comprise a wagon load).

If the client does not have railway track access, he will transport the goods to a terminal by truck where the goods are loaded onto a railway wagon and then brought to the marshalling yard.

In the marshalling yard further wagons (from other customers) are added and the train is built up for departure to the next hub / marshalling yard in the network. All departures within the network are scheduled and depart at predefined times.

The wagons are transported from one hub/ marshalling yard to another and wagons are added and taken away at each stop.

Once the wagon has reached the hub nearest to its destination, it is taken off the train and is transported either by truck or by track to the final destination.

Single Wagon Load is a very flexible system which gives the customer full adaptability in terms of dispatch volatility. Basically the client can choose how many wagons he wants to dispatch. From one day to another the quantity of dispatched wagons can vary. He can decide when to load the wagons, which is a major benefit to the trucks which very often use a time slot loading system with penalties if they cannot dock at the right time. As the routes are fixed in advance, the customer can as soon as he needs to, add wagons to a train.

More details

With an annual freight volume of around 100 billion tkm, Single Wagon Load (SWL) accounts for approximately 50% of Europe’s total rail market. SWL transports are a crucial supply chain element for Europe’s predominantly midsized and geographically dispersed industry and agriculture. But most European Railway Undertakings are losing money with their SWL activities. Closing down this business segment does not appear to be a valid option, since SWL is connected with Full Train Load business and Intermodal traffic via operations, i.e. provides feeder and repositioning services for the latter.

Currently, the international market share is still by far lower than the domestic one. International traffic could benefit of the better economics of longer distances.