

a. Straight Trucks

A straight truck is a self-propelled vehicle carrying its load on its own wheels, with cab, engine and cargo space all mounted on one chassis.

Comparatively easy to manoeuvre, straight trucks are favoured for city pick-ups and deliveries and make up the majority of trucks used in the motor carrier industry. Cement trucks, dump trucks, garbage trucks and department store delivery vehicles, for example, all fall into the category of straight trucks.

b. Tractor-Trailers

A tractor-trailer consists of a tractor, which provides the motive power, and a trailer, or a series of trailers, in or on which cargo is loaded. Trailers can be coupled or uncoupled in a matter of minutes and couplers are fairly standardized.

The number of axles on a tractor, along with the spacing between them, determines the gross carrying capacity for which a vehicle can be registered, subject to provincial and territorial weight laws. Regulations also cover the number of trailers that may be operated in combination, and the width, height and length of the tractor.

The maximum load for any combination of motor carrier equipment is 63 500 kg (140 000 lb.)¹ — a striking contrast to the 85-ton capacity of a single railway boxcar. Still, for commodities such as food, beer, timber and general freight, truck transport is often the optimum mode, in spite of the limited size of equipment and provincially regulated maximum load limits.

Rail Transport

1. General Service Features

The development of Canada as a nation is inseparably linked with the development of its rail systems. Today, railways are still an important force in Canadian transportation, providing the most economical way to move bulk commodities and large loads inland over long distances.

¹ This is a maximum gross weight allowed on a vehicle or combination with seven or eight axles, under certain restrictions in Ontario and Vancouver. Figures are given for comparative purposes only and date from 1984.

Unlike marine transport, railways are not bound by natural geographical routes. Building, expanding and maintaining rail lines, however, is expensive and the system remains confined to established lines running primarily through major centres. Consequently, short-distance hauls are seldom feasible.

Except for companies owning or leasing sidings, door-to-door delivery often means interlining with highway carriers or other modes of transportation. Intermodal services increase the railways' ability to meet customer needs.

2. Distribution Terminal Services

In addition to transport, railways provide services and facilities for receiving, loading, unloading and interchanging freight.

a. Cartage

Cartage service is available at some points in Canada through existing contracts between railways and local cartage companies.

b. Sidings

Sidings are the "side tracks" where railway cars are loaded and unloaded. Private sidings are owned or leased by private companies. But "team tracks," which are railway-owned, are for public use.

Team tracks are usually situated at convenient points throughout large cities, offering shippers and receivers a choice of locations. Some are equipped with forklifts, cranes, platforms, etc.

c. Switching

Railways will "switch" or move a railway car on its track, or from one track to another, at private sidings, terminals and junctions, or between railways. Rates vary with the type of switching required.

3. Rail Transport Equipment

a. Rolling Stock

Railways maintain a diversified fleet or "rolling stock," with each type available in various sizes. Boxcars, for example, range from 85 m³ (3 000 cu. ft.) to 156 m³ (5 500 cu. ft.) and carry up to 94 tons of freight. Other equipment includes hopper cars, flat cars and tank cars.