

Rail Freight Transport Market Size & Share Analysis - Growth Trends and Forecast (2026 - 2031)

> **Industry:** Freight Forwarding & Multimodal (Logistics & Supply Chain)
> **Source:** https://www.mordorintelligence.com/industry-reports/rail-freight-transport-market
> **Scraped Date:** 2026-09-17

Executive Market Summary

Market Metric	Details
Base Market Size	USD 340.5 billion
Projected Forecast (2031)	USD 340.5 billion
Growth Rate (CAGR)	4.48 %
Largest Market Region	N/A
Fastest-Growing Region	N/A

Market Visualizations & Infographics

! [Major players in Rail Freight Transport industry] (images/chart_2.png)

! [Rail Freight Transport Market Size] (images/chart_3.png)

! [Rail Freight Transport Market Share by Cargo Type, 2025] (images/chart_4.png)

! [Rail Freight Transport Market Share by Traction Type, 2025] (images/chart_5.png)

! [Rail Freight Transport Market CAGR (%), Growth Rate by Region] (images/chart_6.png)

! [Rail Freight Transport Market Concentration] (images/chart_7.png)

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Comprehensive Research Analysis

Overview Points List Flex 49 Share Feature End

Market OverviewStudy Period | 2020 - 2031 |
Market Size (2026) | USD 340.5 Billion |
Market Size (2031) | USD 423.87 Billion |
Growth Rate (2026 - 2031) | 4.48 % |
Fastest Growing Market | Asia Pacific |
Largest Market | Asia Pacific |
Market Concentration | Medium |
Major Players*Disclaimer: Major Players sorted in no particular order

Market Overview

Rail Freight Transport Market Analysis by Mordor Intelligence
The Rail Freight Transport Market size is estimated at USD 340.5 billion in 2026, and is expected to reach USD 423.87 billion by 2031, at a CAGR of 4.48% during the forecast period (2026-2031).

The rail freight transport market is benefiting from decarbonization mandates, nearshoring, and infrastructure modernization, even as competitive pressures from low-cost trucking persist. Containerized and intermodal volumes are accelerating, alternative-fuel traction is scaling, and allied maintenance services are seizing higher margins. Cross-border corridors, especially in Asia-Pacific and North America, are drawing capital as supply chains reroute around geopolitical and climatic risks.

Key Report Takeaways* By cargo type, dry bulk accounted for 41.75% of the rail freight transport market share in 2025, while containerized and intermodal freight are advancing at a 6.23% CAGR through 2031.

* By service type, transportation accounted for 83.14% of the rail freight transport market size in 2025; allied services are expanding at a 7.49% CAGR to 2031.

* By service type, transportation contributed 83.14% of 2025 revenue; allied services are expanding at a 7.49% CAGR to 2031.

* By traction, diesel remained dominant at a 64.41% installed base in 2025, yet hybrid-hydrogen-LNG locomotives are growing at a 10.62% CAGR through 2031.

* By destination, domestic services captured 61.28% of 2025 volumes; international and cross-border freight is enlarging at a 6.68% CAGR through 2031.

* By region, Asia-Pacific is expanding at a 6.21% CAGR to 2031.

Key Market Trends

Market Trends and Insights
Drivers Impact Analysis of Rail Freight Transport Market
Driver | (~) % Impact on CAGR Forecast | Geographic Relevance | Impact Timeline |

Decarbonization Mandates Driving Modal Shift on Long-haul North-South Corridors | +1.1% | EU & North America, extending to Asia-Pacific | Medium term (2-4 years) |

Nearshoring of heavy manufacturing to Mexico and CEE | +0.8% | North America (U.S.-Mexico), Europe (CEE) | Short term (≤ 2 years) |

Energy-transition commodities requiring bulk rail capacity | +0.6% | South America (Andean), Australia, North America | Medium term (2-4 years) |

China-EU Land-Bridge Resilience Programs | +0.5% | Asia, Europe, Middle East corridors | Medium term (2-4 years) |

Tier-1 Port Congestion Spurring Inland Rail-Intermodal | +0.4% | Asia-Pacific, spillover to global hubs | Short term (≤ 2 years) |

Government Stimulus for Hydrogen-ready Freight Locomotives | +0.3% | Germany, Japan, select North American routes | Long term (≥ 4 years) |

Source: Mordor Intelligence |

Competitive Landscape

Competitive Landscape

The rail freight transport market is regionally concentrated yet globally fragmented. In North America, seven Class I operators control the majority of ton-miles, leveraging precision-scheduled railroading, double-stack intermodal, and fuel surcharges to sustain margins. BNSF, Union Pacific, and CPKC continue multibillion-dollar capex programs targeting key growth corridors and allied services like car repair.

Europe hosts national incumbents DB Cargo, SNCF's Hexafret, PKP Cargo, plus agile entrants such as SBB Cargo and Genesee & Wyoming Europe. Liberalization enables price competition but erodes individual share, pushing incumbents toward specialization, automated coupling, and hydrogen traction pilots.

Technology uptake separates leaders from laggards. Rio Tinto's 99.7%-reliable AutoHaul raises the bar for autonomous heavy haul. Wabtec supplies digital braking and diagnostics that raise uptime and support emissions compliance. Compliance with ISO 14001 and Science-Based Targets now influences shipper choices, granting operators with credible decarbonization roadmaps a pricing premium in the rail freight transport market.

Rail Freight Transport Industry Leaders* BNSF Railway

- * Union Pacific Railroad
- * Russian Railways
- * Canadian National Railway
- * DB Cargo

* *Disclaimer: Major Players sorted in no particular order
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Scope Methodology P Space

This market covers revenues earned from transporting goods by rail, where freight is moved on rail networks using freight trains and related operating services. The sizing focuses on paid freight movement services delivered by licensed rail operators for commercial customers.

Scope exclusions: passenger rail services (including commuter and high-speed), pipeline transport, and in-plant industrial shunting are excluded from this market sizing.

Segmentation Container

- * By Cargo Type* Containerised / Intermodal
- * Dry Bulk (Coal, Ores, Grains)
- * Liquid Bulk (Crude, Chemicals)
- * Break-bulk and Project Cargo
- * By Service Type* Transportation
- * Services Allied to Transportation (Maintenance of Railcars and Rail Tracks, Switching of Cargo, and Storage)
- * By End-user Industry* Mining and Minerals
- * Oil, Gas and Chemicals
- * Agriculture and Food
- * Manufacturing and Automotive
- * Retail and FMCG
- * Construction Materials and Forestry
- * By Traction Type* Diesel
- * Electric
- * Hybrid / Hydrogen and LNG
- * By Destination* Domestic
- * International / Cross-border
- * By Geography* North America* United States

- * Canada
- * Mexico
- * South America* Brazil
- * Peru
- * Chile
- * Argentina
- * Rest of South America
- * Asia-Pacific* India
- * China
- * Japan
- * Australia
- * South Korea
- * South East Asia (Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Philip
pines)
- * Rest of Asia-Pacific
- * Europe* United Kingdom
- * Germany
- * France
- * Spain
- * Italy
- * BENELUX (Belgium, Netherlands, and Luxembourg)
- * NORDICS (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden)
- * Rest of Europe
- * Middle East And Africa* United Arab of Emirates
- * Saudi Arabia
- * South Africa
- * Nigeria
- * Rest of Middle East And Africa

Frequently Asked Questions

How large is the rail freight transport market in 2026?

The rail freight transport market size is USD 340.50 billion in 2026, expanding toward USD 423.87 billion by 2031 at a 4.48% CAGR.

Which cargo type is growing fastest through 2031?

Containerized and intermodal freight leads with a 6.23% CAGR, driven by e-commerce logistics and flexible supply-chain needs.

What traction technologies will gain share?

Hybrid, hydrogen, and LNG locomotives are projected to grow at 10.62% CAGR as operators comply with decarbonization rules and fuel-cost volatility.

Which region posts the highest growth rate?

Asia-Pacific registers the fastest expansion at 6.21% CAGR, supported by Belt and Road investments and India's dedicated freight corridors.

How are nearshoring trends impacting rail volumes?

Manufacturing shifts to Mexico and Central and Eastern Europe are adding density to north-south and east-west rail lanes, lifting cross-border volumes by double digits.

What is the biggest operational restraint today?

Capacity bottlenecks on U.S. Midwest grain routes are lengthening transit times and risking modal shifts to trucking and barges.