



## Improved service for rail users in the Antwerp port area

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A year ago, Railport and Port of Antwerp-Bruges announced the launch of a more sustainable and efficient operational model for Single Wagon Load in the Antwerp port area. Since 1 January of this year, all freight payers have been able to use it, so the time has now come to take stock of the situation.

### **Rail bundling**

For Railport and Port of Antwerp-Bruges, the aim is to improve the quality of rail transport. The rail vision drawn up in collaboration with Infrabel contains a number of measures that will help to achieve that. Bundling the traffic of single railcars (Single Wagon Load) in the port area is one of them. Bundling means that Railport organises a “group purchase” for transportation within the port, which is referred to as the first/last mile. In return for the established price, participating firms can then have railcars picked up and taken to a marshalling yard, or delivered to them from a marshalling yard.

### **Beneficial effects**

After ten months of bundling, participating freight payers are now benefiting from an improved quality of rail transportation in the port area. For many of them, the price for this their first/last mile

is also lower than what they were paying before.

For the terminals, bundling greatly simplifies matters – they now have a single point of contact for all rail transport between the terminal and the marshalling yard.

### **Next steps**

Transparency is the next big step. For both customers and rail companies alike, it is important to have a better overview of “their” railcars, both in the marshalling yard and while being transported within the port area. Hard work is being done making this digitisation project a reality.

To achieve that actually requires the cooperation of every link in the chain. If freight payers share their freight data with Railport, the system knows where their railcars are and where they need to go. That way, the transportation can be coordinated with the unloading and/or loading facilities.

In addition, this information is also needed in order to optimise and ensure the safety of rail traffic in the port.

As Nils van Vliet, the CEO of Railport explained: "Bundling the first/last mile is already having beneficial effects. We are therefore also calling upon all parties involved to make digitisation a success so that we can provide all of the firms involved with accurate real-time information about their transports."

### **Rail investment**

A number of major investments in the rail infrastructure in the port area are planned over the next few years – the doubling and electrification of line 11, the Oorderen bundle, rail works in connection with the second tidal dock on the Left Bank, etc. The more transports are bundled, the easier it will be to maintain efficiency, including while the works are under way.

### **Long haul**

Finally, it should be pointed out that the price advantage of participating in bundling is relatively limited, given the short distances inside the port area. Transportation outside the port area involves much longer distances, and making effective comparisons could potentially deliver much greater benefits for freight payers.