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**Transport documents in rail, road, air and sea transport – a literature review**

**Abstract:** The purpose of this article is to present the various types of transport documents used in rail, road, air, sea, and inland waterway transport. Their functions, legal significance, and differences in documentation requirements for each type of transport are presented. The article provides an overview of key transport documents used in different modes of transportation, emphasizing their roles in facilitating international and domestic freight movement. It discusses specific documents such as waybills, bills of lading, air waybills, and rail consignment notes, analyzing their legal implications and operational functions. The review underscores the importance of accurate and complete documentation for efficient logistics management and legal protection, while also pointing out the unique features and challenges associated with each transport mode.

**Keywords:** International railway CIM consignment note; The international CMR consignment note; Air transport documents; International shipping consignment note waterways bill; Shipping documents in maritime transport

**Introduction**

Combined transport - it is the carriage of goods where a truck, trailer, semi-trailer, semi-trailer with or without a drawing unit, swap body or a 20-foot or more container uses the road in the initial and final part of the journey, and in other sections longer than 100 km in a straight line – the rail, inland waterway or maritime transport services, and in the initial and final section it is performed by road transport.

Classification of combined transport:

- traditional transport (multiple operators),
- intermodal transport (single operator),
- multimodal transport (single operator),
- bimodal transport (single operator) [1].

**Transport documents in rail transport**

International railway CIM consignment note – it is a document confirming the conclusion of a transport contract with the railway company. The contract is deemed to be concluded at the moment of acceptance by the railway of the shipment and placing the date stamp of the forwarding station on the consignment note. The right and duties of the parties to the contract result from the international convention on the carriage of goods by rail. This consignment note is valid in most European countries that have joined the COTIF convention.

International railway SMGS consignment note is currently used in rail communication with the former USSR, Mongolia and the Far East socialist countries.

A complete note consists of:

- original copy – for the recipient of the shipment,
- schedule – for the destination station,
- duplicate consignment note – for the sender,

- confirmation of receipt – integrated with the shipment, remains at the customs office of the destination country (RP),
- notification of the arrival of the shipment – issued to the recipient together with cargo,
- additional schedule – for the forwarding railway and transit railway [4].

### **Transport documents in road transport**

The international CMR consignment note is the basic document on the basis of which cargo is transported (a document confirming the conclusion of a transport contract).

Basic information contained in the CMR consignment note relates to: the sender, carrier, recipient, goods, date and place of shipment, intended place of delivery, transport costs, instructions necessary to complete customs [formalities](#) and a list of documents handed over to the driver. All parties may make changes to the consignment note, while the sender is responsible for damages and costs resulting from providing wrong or unclear data. CMR is completed in the language of the country of origin, it is a registered, non-transferable document. The CMR Convention indicates elements which should be included in the consignment note. And so, according to this legal provision, the consignment note should contain:

- place and date of issue,
- name and address of the sender,
- name and address of the carrier,
- place and date of acceptance of the goods for transport and the place of their release,
- name and address of the recipient,
- a common description to determine the type of goods and the method of packing, and, in the case of dangerous goods, their generally recognized description,
- number of pieces, their features and numbers,
- gross weight or quantity expressed otherwise,
- transportation costs,
- instructions necessary to complete customs formalities and other documents,
- a declaration that the carriage, regardless of any clause to the contrary, is subject to the provisions of the CMR Convention [5].

### **International shipping consignment note waterways bill**

International shipping consignment note or Inland waterways bill of lading consisting of an original copy, a duplicate consignment note and 5 copies. The original copy and 2 copies are intended for the shipping company, a duplicate consignment note – for the person who pays the costs of carriage, one copy for the sender and one for the recipient of shipment. In case of the international shipping consignment note, there are no regulations under the international convention. Each carrier defines their own conditions. The consignment note is non-transferable; most often it is issued for a named contract. The loading paper is the basic shipping form used by Polish shipowners in internal transport within the European Union. This type of transport is referred to as cabotage. The loading paper is issued by name – of the Polish shipowner by their agent in the country. The loading papers prepared by the shipper (sender) should contain a certificate or declaration stating that the cargo of hazardous materials, entrusted for maritime transport, is properly packed, marked, labelled with warning stickers (prints) and is in a condition suitable for maritime transport [3].

### **Air transport documents**

The first document to be issued when transporting goods by plane is the AWB (Air WayBill) consignment note. It constitutes a confirmation of the conclusion of the transport contract and obliges the carrier to deliver the shipment to the place indicated by the client. It is a non-transferable shipping document. It covers cargo transportation from airport to airport. The AWB consignment note must be prepared by the sender (or carrier) on a form compliant with the requirements of the International Air Transport Association (IATA). It is issued in three original copies – for the sender in blue, for the carrier in green and for the recipient in pink, and six copies for the airports. The AWB consignment note is issued in English and with the carrier number.

The AWB consignment note contains information about:

- sender,
- recipient,
- customs clearance,
- shipment,
- type of service and additional services,
- payments.

When sending shipments from different customers to the same destination, the forwarding agent prepares a MAWB. There, they indicate themselves as the shipper while the recipient is their forwarding partner at the destination port. The MAWB is handed over to the carrier – the airline. House Air Waybill air freight forwarding consignment note – contains a list of individual consolidated shipments for transport, which determines the price for carriage at the rate offered to the customer by the forwarder. HAWB is a consignment note on which the sender is the shipper of the goods, and the addressee is the recipient of the goods [2].

### **Shipping documents in maritime transport**

A consignment note for maritime transport. Bill of Lading (B/L) – it is the most important document for maritime transport. The bill of lading is a confirmation that the goods have been accepted on the ship for transport and, at the same time, an obligation to hand them over to the authorized recipient at the port of destination. It defines the legal relationship between the carrier and the recipient of the goods. It is also a proof of the conclusion of the transport contract.

The first page of the bill of lading contains the terms of the:

- shipowner's / Master B/L,
- forwarding agent's / House B/L,

while on the second page of the bill of lading there are:

- data of the shipper,
- recipient,
- company or person to be notified of the arrival of the container,
- container number, quantity, name and weight of the goods. Additionally, other relevant information can be included.

Types:

- master Bill of Lading – the bill of lading is issued by the shipowner / sea carrier,
- house Bill of Lading – the so-called forwarding bill of ladings,

The following types of bills of lading can be distinguished in the maritime trade:

- shipped, On board and Received for shipment,
- clean bill of lading and foul,
- claused bill of lading,
- liner bill of lading and Bill of lading to be used with charter-part,
- electronic bill of lading,

- standard bill of lading and Transshipment bill of lading.

There are a few functions of the bill of lading:

- it is a proof of acceptance of the cargo specified therein for transport and the carrier's obligation to deliver this cargo to the authorized holder of the bill of lading at the port of destination,
- it is a commodity paper because it represents the goods for which it was issued and authorizes to dispose of the goods,
- it is a security / the transfer of ownership rights to the cargo covered by the bill of lading, requires the transfer/issuance of the document itself at the same time,
- it is not a contract for the carriage of goods; this is a very important feature of the bill of lading,
- cargo list (CL) – the list of cargoes to be loaded onto the ship.

It contains data compliant with the freight booking – gives a detailed description of the cargo. It is prepared by the forwarding agent and communicated to the interested parties before the ship enters the port for loading. The so-called stowage plan, a detailed plan for the distribution of cargo on the ship, is prepared based on the cargo list. Cargo manifest (*freight manifest*) is a summary containing the list of goods carried on board by bill of lading lots. It is prepared on the basis of bills of lading received from forwarding agents, and then handed over to the customs office, ship's captain, port authority, forwarding agent, port master's office and other authorized bodies. Mate's receipt confirms the receipt and loading of the goods on board. It is signed by the officer supervising the loading process and then handed over to the shipper. It contains data on the type and quantity of goods loaded, the name of the ship, the port of loading and the port of destination as well as the date of completion of the loading process. It may contain reservations regarding the condition of the goods or packaging, which are then indicated in the bill of lading issued in exchange for the mate's receipt. The mate's receipt with reservations is called "dirty" and the one without any reservations – "clean". The mate's receipt is a proof for the sender of the cargo that the goods have been loaded onto the ship and from that moment on, the carrier is responsible for the goods. Freight booking is a written confirmation issued to the shipper by the shipowner (or their representative) stating that the goods specified in this document will be accepted on a specified ship, at a given port of destination and at a determined freight rate. Freight booking is used in scheduled shipping. Notice of readiness is a document stating the arrival of the tramp vessel at the port of loading or unloading and its readiness to proceed with transshipment activities. The notice is submitted to the charterer or their representative by the ship's captain. Charter is a written contract under which cargo is carried on a non-scheduled shipping. Each time, charter is subject to negotiations and specifies all conditions of carriage agreed between a charterer and a maritime carrier.

The objectively essential elements of the transport contract are:

- carriage route,
- carrier remuneration,

subject of transport (people and goods) [1, 3].

## Summary

The article provides an overview of key transport documents used in different modes of transportation, emphasizing their roles in facilitating international and domestic freight movement. It discusses specific documents such as waybills, bills of lading, air waybills, and rail consignment notes, analyzing their legal implications and operational functions. The review underscores the importance of accurate and complete documentation for efficient logistics management and legal protection, while also pointing out the unique features and challenges associated with each transport mode.

**Source materials**

- [1] <https://berkmanforwarding.com/transport-documents>
- [2] <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/a/airway-bill.asp>
- [3] <https://www.maersk.com/logistics-explained/shippingdocumentation/2023/10/02/what-is-bill-of-lading>
- [4] <https://www.logistiikanmaailma.fi/en/trade-customs/foreign-trade-documents/cim/>
- [5] <https://incodocs.com/blog/create-cmr-consignment-note-international/>