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Transportation Management Systems

The 2026 Buyer's Guide & Vendor Landscape

A practitioner's guide to evaluating, costing, and selecting a transportation management system: what a TMS does, how the market and vendors stack up in 2026, what it costs, how to run the selection, and how to de-risk the implementation.

Prepared by **Supply Chain Research** · June 2026 · Vendor-neutral: we take no payment from the vendors covered.

Contents

1. Executive summary

A transportation management system (TMS) is the software that plans, executes, and settles the movement of freight: it rates and routes shipments, selects modes and carriers, consolidates loads, tenders and books capacity, tracks shipments in transit, and audits and pays the freight bill. For shippers, third-party logistics providers (3PLs), and manufacturers, transportation is one of the largest and most volatile cost categories in the supply chain, and the TMS is the system that brings it under control. As Gartner frames it, a TMS helps supply chain leaders manage disruption and optimize cost as networks grow more complex.

This guide is written for supply chain, logistics, and procurement leaders and the IT teams who must integrate and run the platform. It is deliberately vendor-neutral: we accept no payment from the vendors covered, and we name no single best TMS, because the right system depends on your freight profile, modes, network, and operating model rather than a leaderboard. The pages that follow define the category, size the market honestly, profile the vendor landscape in detail (including a fast-consolidating field), lay out an evaluation framework, and explain how to keep the implementation on track.

5-15%	4 Leaders	~14%
typical freight-cost savings from a well-run TMS (Descartes, Infios, and others)	Oracle, Blue Yonder, SAP, and Manhattan in Gartner's 2025 Magic Quadrant for TMS	mid-range market CAGR; published estimates span roughly 4% to 18%

What the evidence says

The enterprise leaders are stable. Gartner's 2025 Magic Quadrant for TMS names four Leaders: Oracle (its 18th time, positioned highest and furthest), Blue Yonder (14 consecutive years), SAP (11 years), and Manhattan (7 years), across a 19-vendor field.

Market sizing is unreliable and definition-dependent. Published 2026 estimates range from about $2.25B to $53.5B depending on how the category is drawn, though the mid-range of the field clusters at a low-to-mid-teens CAGR.

The field is consolidating fast. In 2025 WiseTech acquired e2open and Descartes acquired 3Gtms, following Infios's 2024 acquisition of MercuryGate and Uber Freight's earlier purchase of Transplace. Ownership and roadmap stability now belong in the evaluation.

Visibility is a separate, adjacent category. Real-time transportation visibility platforms (project44, FourKites, Shippeo) are distinct from execution-focused TMS, though the two are converging. Do not conflate them in a selection.

ROI is real but scope-sensitive. Freight savings of 5 to 15 percent are well supported, but value also leaks through freight-audit recovery, detention, and manual effort. Build the business case on your own baseline, and stage the rollout from your highest-cost friction points.

2. What a TMS is and what it does

A TMS manages the full lifecycle of freight across every mode the business uses: truckload (TL), less-than-truckload (LTL), parcel, intermodal, rail, ocean, and air. It sits between the systems that create demand for shipments (the ERP, OMS, or WMS) and the carriers and networks that move them, and its job is to move goods at the lowest landed cost while meeting service commitments. A useful test: the ERP or order system says what needs to ship, the TMS decides how to ship it most efficiently, and carriers execute the move.

The freight lifecycle a TMS manages

- **Planning and optimization:** rating shipments, selecting mode and carrier, optimizing routes, and building and consolidating loads (including multi-stop and continuous moves) to minimize cost.
- **Procurement:** running carrier RFPs, managing contracts and rate tables, and balancing contracted capacity against the spot market.
- **Execution:** tendering loads to carriers, booking capacity, generating documentation, and tracking shipments in transit.
- **Settlement:** auditing freight invoices against contracted rates, resolving discrepancies, and paying carriers, a step that routinely recovers overcharges.
- **Analytics and compliance:** measuring freight cost per unit, on-time performance, and carrier scorecards, and increasingly capturing shipment-level carbon emissions for regulatory reporting.

Core capabilities

- **Rating and route optimization** across modes, with cost-, time-, and service-based scenarios.
- **Mode and carrier selection, load consolidation, and load building,** including pooling strategies that materially cut LTL cost.
- **Tendering, booking, and appointment scheduling,** automating the handoff to carriers and dock or yard slots.
- **Track-and-trace and exception management,** native or via integration with a visibility platform.
- **Freight audit and payment, multimodal support, and analytics,** plus emerging carbon-accounting and reporting modules.

How a TMS differs from adjacent systems

Transportation technology is a crowded space, and category confusion drives buying mistakes. The TMS plans and executes freight movement; the surrounding systems do related but distinct jobs.

System	What it owns	Relationship to the TMS
ERP	Finance, procurement, the back-office system of record	Feeds orders and shipment demand to the TMS; receives freight cost back for settlement
WMS	Work inside the warehouse: receiving, picking, packing, dispatch	Hands finished shipments to the TMS; some vendors unify WMS and TMS on one platform
OMS	Order orchestration and sourcing across channels	Decides where an order is fulfilled, then relies on the TMS to move it
Visibility (RTTVP)	Real-time, predictive shipment tracking across carriers	A distinct, adjacent category (project44, FourKites); often integrated with, not part of, the TMS

System	What it owns	Relationship to the TMS
Freight audit & pay	Invoice audit, payment, and freight-spend analytics	A TMS module for some vendors, a specialist service for others
Fleet / telematics	Private-fleet vehicles, drivers, ELD compliance	Manages owned assets; a TMS focuses on planning and buying transportation
YMS	Trailers and moves within the yard	Coordinates with the TMS at the dock and gate

Licensed, network, and managed models

TMS comes in three commercial models, and the distinction matters as much as the feature set. A **licensed or SaaS TMS** is software your team operates (Oracle, SAP, Blue Yonder, Manhattan, 3Gtms). A **network or multi-tenant platform** connects shippers and carriers on shared infrastructure, creating network effects in capacity and data (e2open, Uber Freight, project44). **Managed transportation** bundles the software with an operating team that runs transportation on your behalf (C.H. Robinson, Uber Freight, and the managed arms of several 3PLs), a path that suits organizations without the staff to run a TMS internally. Many buyers end up with a blend: licensed software for control, plus managed services or a network for surge capacity.

3. The TMS market in 2026

The TMS market is large, growing quickly, and consolidating, but sizing it precisely is difficult because research firms define the category differently. Narrow TMS software, broader platform definitions, and figures that fold in managed transportation produce very different numbers. Treat the values below as directional and anchor on the mid-range growth rate rather than any single figure.

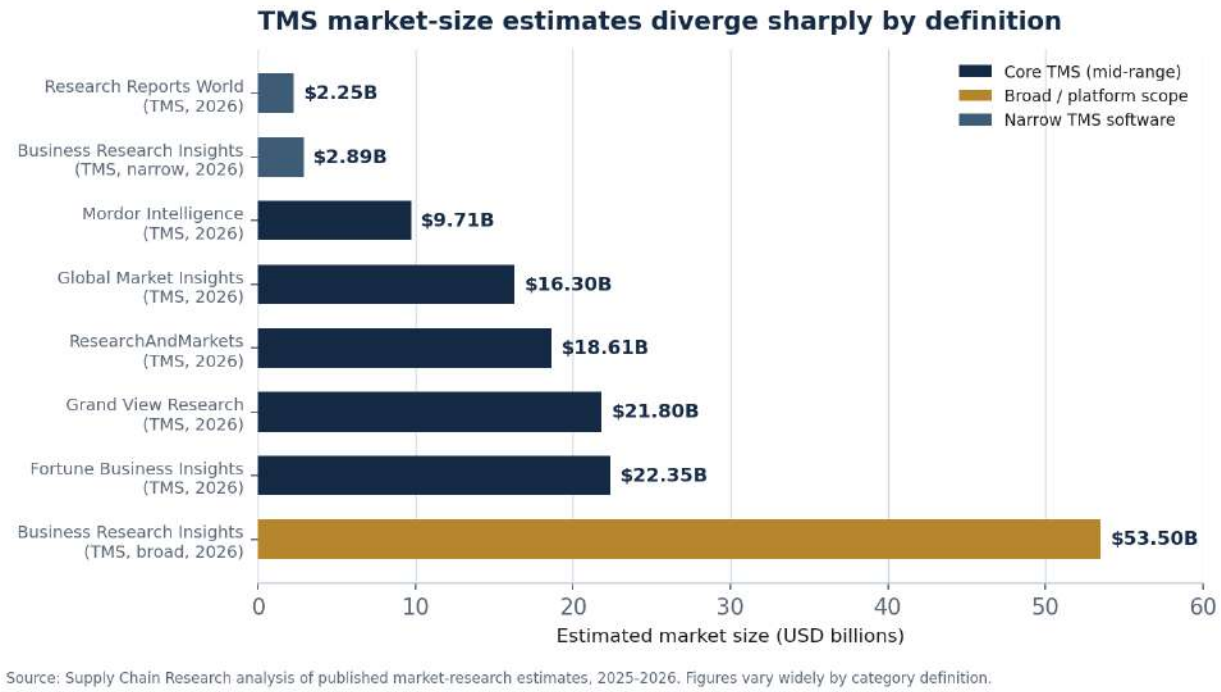

Figure 1. Published TMS market-size estimates for 2026. The spread reflects differing category definitions, not measurement error.

Research firm	2026 size	Later forecast	CAGR
Business Research Insights (broad)	$53.5B	$103.2B / 2035	7.6%
Fortune Business Insights	$22.35B	$82.4B / 2034	17.7%
Grand View Research	$21.8B	$68.4B / 2033	17.8%
ResearchAndMarkets	$18.6B	$45.3B / 2032	15.8%
MarketsandMarkets	$18.5B (2025)	$37.0B / 2030	14.9%
Global Market Insights	$16.3B	$40.3B / 2035	10.6%
Mordor Intelligence	$9.71B	$14.9B / 2031	8.9%
Business Research Insights (narrow)	$2.89B	$8.03B / 2035	11.9%

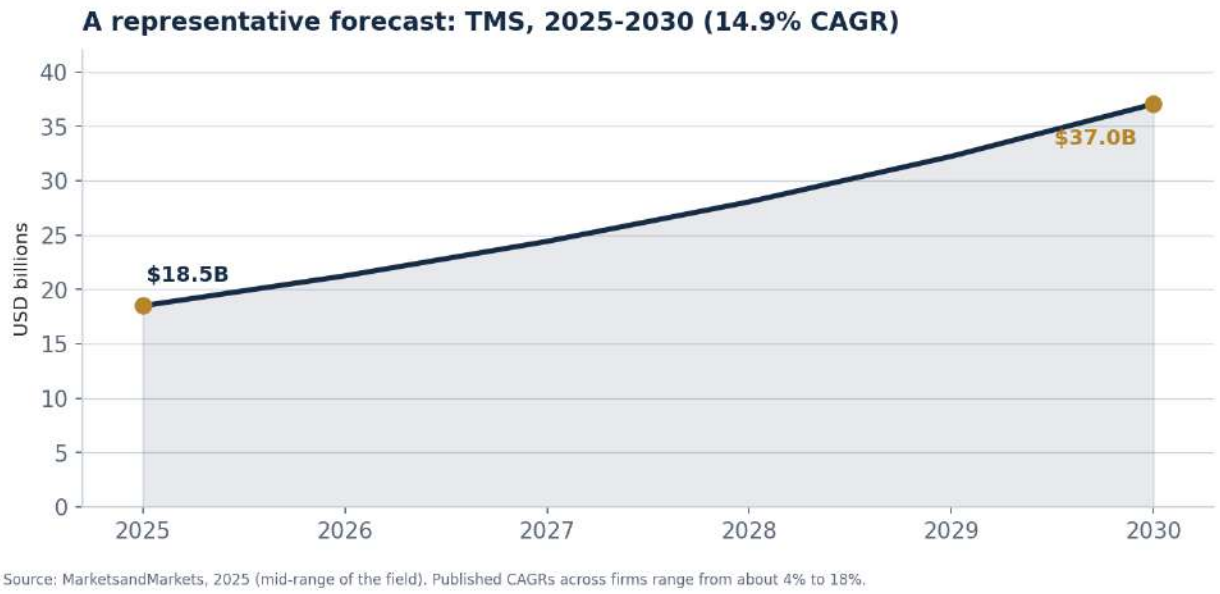

Figure 2. A representative growth trajectory at the mid-range 14.9% CAGR. Published rates span roughly 4% to 18%.

Why the estimates diverge

The gap between a $3B and a $53B market is a definition problem. The narrowest figures count only standalone TMS software licenses. The mid-range estimates, where most credible analysis sits, capture the planning, execution, and settlement software that defines a modern TMS. The largest figures fold in managed transportation services and freight-platform revenue. For planning, treat the core TMS software market as mid-teens of billions of dollars, compounding in the low-to-mid teens.

Regions, deployment, and verticals

North America leads consistently, at roughly 36 to 39 percent of the market, with the United States alone around $5.2B in 2025 (Global Market Insights). Cloud and SaaS dominate new deployments, but the picture is more nuanced than in some software categories: large manufacturers and distributors retain substantial on-premise estates for control and customization, which is why one major estimate still puts on-premise above 60 percent of 2025 revenue. Freight and order management is the largest solution segment (about 26 percent), and healthcare and pharmaceuticals is among the fastest-growing verticals, driven by cold-chain and serialization requirements.

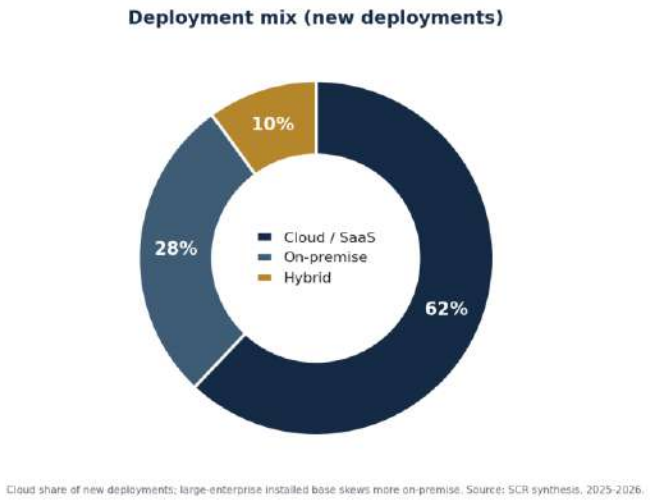

Figure 3. Deployment mix for new deployments. The large-enterprise installed base skews more on-premise.

The 2025 consolidation wave

The TMS field is consolidating quickly, and ownership changes are now a live factor in any selection. In 2025, WiseTech Global (the CargoWise company) acquired e2open, and Descartes acquired 3Gtms, extending two logistics platforms into the mid-market and network TMS space. These followed Infios's October 2024 acquisition of MercuryGate (Infios is itself the former Korber supply chain software business) and Uber Freight's earlier purchase of Transplace for roughly $2.25 billion, which combined a digital freight network with managed transportation. The practical implication for buyers is to weigh roadmap continuity, integration commitments, and support stability, especially when a recently acquired product is on the shortlist.

Drivers and restraints

- **Drivers:** e-commerce and faster delivery expectations, global and multimodal supply-chain complexity, freight-cost volatility, real-time visibility demand, carbon-reporting mandates, and the spread of affordable cloud TMS to smaller shippers.
- **Restraints:** high initial implementation cost (a barrier for cost-sensitive SMEs), integration burden across carriers and EDI, rate- and master-data quality, and legacy on-premise entanglement.

4. The vendor landscape

The TMS field spans global enterprise suites, multi-enterprise networks, managed-transportation providers, focused mid-market specialists, and a distinct layer of real-time visibility platforms. This section profiles the vendors that matter in 2026, grouped by the role they play. Each profile is vendor-neutral and notes both strengths and limitations.

What the analysts say

Two Gartner evaluations anchor the landscape, and it is important to keep them separate.

- **Gartner Magic Quadrant for TMS (March 2025):** evaluated 19 vendors and named four Leaders, Oracle, Blue Yonder, SAP, and Manhattan, with Oracle positioned highest on Ability to Execute and furthest on Completeness of Vision. The field also includes Alpega, Aptean, BlueRock TMS, C.H. Robinson, e2open, Infios (MercuryGate), Pando, Shipsy, Shipwell, Tesisquare, TMSfirst, Uber Freight, and others.
- **Gartner Magic Quadrant for Real-Time Transportation Visibility Platforms (February 2025):** a separate report in which project44 was named a Leader for the fifth consecutive year, placed highest and furthest on both axes for the third year running, with FourKites and Shippeo among the recognized specialists. Visibility is adjacent to, not the same as, execution-focused TMS.

Figure 4. TMS vendor positioning, structured after the Gartner Magic Quadrant for TMS (March 2025). Placements are SCR's directional interpretation; pure visibility vendors are covered separately.

Enterprise suites and Leaders

Oracle Transportation Management (OTM / Fusion Cloud Transportation Management)

The most-decorated TMS in the market, named a Gartner Leader for the 18th time in 2025 and positioned highest for Ability to Execute and furthest for Completeness of Vision. OTM is a deep, global platform

spanning planning, execution, freight payment, and fleet, strong in complex multimodal and international logistics. It is a natural shortlist candidate for large global shippers and 3PLs, and for organizations already standardized on Oracle. The trade-offs are the cost and effort that come with enterprise breadth.

Blue Yonder TMS

A Gartner Leader for 14 consecutive years, Blue Yonder pairs transportation planning and execution with AI and machine learning drawn from its broader supply-chain platform, including demand-driven optimization and increasingly autonomous workflows. It suits large retailers, manufacturers, and logistics providers that value a unified planning-to-execution platform.

SAP Transportation Management

A Gartner Leader for 11 consecutive years, SAP TM (delivered within S/4HANA and as SAP Business Network for Logistics) is strongest for organizations already running SAP, where native integration with order, inventory, and finance data outweighs the appeal of a best-of-breed alternative. SAP positions it around resilient, sustainable supply chains with integrated carbon reporting.

Manhattan Active Transportation Management

A Gartner Leader for the seventh consecutive year, Manhattan's TMS is cloud-native, microservices-based, and versionless, and uniquely unifies transportation with warehouse management on a single platform (Manhattan Active Supply Chain). That unification is a genuine differentiator for retailers and grocers that want orchestration across the warehouse and the road, with real-time visibility and predictive analytics built in.

Networks and managed transportation

e2open (now part of WiseTech Global)

A large multi-enterprise network connecting shippers, carriers, and trading partners, with transportation management as one node in a broad supply-chain platform. WiseTech Global, the CargoWise company, acquired e2open in 2025, pairing e2open's network with CargoWise's strength in global freight forwarding and customs. The combination is significant for international and forwarder-centric operations; buyers should track post-acquisition roadmap integration.

C.H. Robinson Navisphere

Rooted in one of the world's largest freight brokerages and managed-transportation practices (the former TMC division), Navisphere combines technology with a global operating team and an enormous carrier network. It is a strong fit for shippers that want managed transportation, surge capacity, and global reach rather than software they must staff and run themselves.

Uber Freight

A logistics platform and partner that combines a large digital freight network with the managed-transportation capability it acquired with Transplace (approximately $2.25 billion). Uber Freight positions itself as a freight operating system spanning shipper technology, brokerage, and managed services, suited to organizations that value network capacity and a platform-plus-services model.

Descartes

Descartes operates the Global Logistics Network and a broad logistics portfolio spanning routing, visibility (MacroPoint), customs, and, since its 2025 acquisition of 3Gtms, a cloud TMS aimed at mid-market shippers

and 3PLs. Descartes cites typical transportation savings of 5 to 10 percent and is a credible choice for multimodal, cross-border, and compliance-heavy operations.

Specialists and mid-market

Infios (formerly MercuryGate)

Infios, the former Korber supply chain software business, acquired MercuryGate in October 2024, adding a well-regarded multimodal TMS strong in LTL and pooling optimization to a portfolio that also includes warehouse management. Infios cites LTL cost reductions of around 5 percent from optimized pooling for its TMS users.

Other active specialists and regional players include **Alpega** (a large European TMS), **Aptean** (industry-specific ERP and TMS), **3Gtms** (mid-market, now Descartes), **Shipwell** and **Turvo** (modern collaborative TMS), and **Mastery, TMSfirst, Pando, Shipsy, and Kuebix** (now part of FreightWise). Several of these are strong fits for specific modes, regions, or company sizes, and belong on shortlists where they match the freight profile.

The visibility layer (a separate category)

Real-time transportation visibility platforms track shipments across carriers and predict arrival times. They are frequently evaluated alongside a TMS but are a distinct category, and many organizations run a TMS and a visibility platform together.

project44

Named a Gartner Leader in real-time visibility for the fifth consecutive year and placed highest and furthest on both axes for the third year running, with a top ranking across all five use cases in the companion Critical Capabilities report. Its Movement platform is built on one of the largest carrier networks, with heavy R&D investment. Reported revenue is around $300M.

FourKites

A visibility leader that tracks more than 3.2 million shipments per day and serves over half of the Fortune 500 and more than 1,600 brands. In 2025 FourKites shifted from Gartner evaluations to an AI-first strategy that links visibility with inventory, orders, assets, and a digital-workforce platform, emphasizing digital twins and workflow automation. **Shippeo** is a leading European visibility specialist, and IntelliTrans, Overhaul, and Trucker Tools serve specific niches.

Vendor summary

The table is an orientation aid, not a scorecard. Use it to frame a shortlist, then evaluate candidates against the framework that follows.

Vendor	Role	Best fit	Notes
Oracle OTM	Enterprise suite	Global, multimodal, complex	18x Gartner Leader; highest and furthest 2025
Blue Yonder	Enterprise suite	AI-led planning + execution	14x Gartner Leader
SAP TM	Enterprise suite	Existing SAP estates	11x Gartner Leader; S/4HANA-native
Manhattan	Enterprise suite	Unified WMS + TMS	7x Gartner Leader; cloud-native
e2open (WiseTech)	Network	Multi-enterprise, global trade	Acquired by WiseTech, 2025

Vendor	Role	Best fit	Notes
C.H. Robinson	Managed + network	Managed transportation	Brokerage-scale carrier network
Uber Freight	Network + managed	Capacity + platform	Acquired Transplace (~$2.25B)
Descartes	Network + TMS	Multimodal, cross-border	Acquired 3Gtms, 2025; 5-10% savings cited
Infios (MercuryGate)	Specialist	LTL, pooling, multimodal	MercuryGate acquired 2024
project44 / FourKites	Visibility (adjacent)	Real-time tracking	Separate category; integrate with a TMS

5. How to evaluate a TMS

Because the leading platforms are broadly capable, the most common selection mistake is choosing on demo polish or brand. Score every shortlisted vendor against the same defined dimensions, weighted for your freight profile. A cost-driven LTL shipper and a global multimodal manufacturer evaluating the same vendors should reach different answers.

The five evaluation dimensions

1. **Mode and network fit.** Does the platform natively handle your mode mix (TL, LTL, parcel, intermodal, ocean, air) and your geographies, and does it bring carrier connectivity or a network where you need capacity?
2. **Optimization depth.** The economic engine of a TMS is its optimization: rating, least-cost routing, multi-stop and continuous-move building, load consolidation, and pooling. Probe how it performs on your actual freight, not a sample.
3. **Integration and data.** Assess pre-built connectors to your ERP, WMS, and order systems, the breadth of carrier API and EDI connectivity, rate and contract management, and how visibility data flows in. Integration is where TMS programs most often stall.
4. **Total cost and commercial model.** Look past the subscription to the multi-year total, and understand how the model scales: per-user, per-shipment, percentage of freight, transaction, or enterprise license. A percentage-of-freight model can punish growth.
5. **Viability, proof, and operating model.** Weigh financial stability and roadmap (especially given recent acquisitions), demand references in your segment with quantified results, and decide whether you want licensed software, a network, or managed transportation.

Buy, build, or have it managed

Building a TMS from scratch is rare and rarely justified given mature SaaS options. The more consequential choice for many organizations is between running a licensed TMS in-house and engaging a managed-transportation provider that supplies both software and an operating team. Companies with thin logistics staff, volatile volumes, or a need for instant carrier capacity often start with managed services and bring operations in-house later.

A selection process that works

6. **Define your freight profile and requirements** (modes, lanes, volumes, seasonality, carrier base, service commitments, and integration points).
7. **Shortlist three to five candidates** by role and fit, mixing enterprise, network, and specialist options if appropriate.
8. **Score against the five dimensions** with a weighted scorecard so every vendor is compared on the same basis.
9. **Run scripted demonstrations and a proof of concept** using your own lanes and rates, focused on optimization results.
10. **Check references and model five-year total cost,** then decide and plan the implementation before signing.

6. Cost and pricing

TMS pricing models include SaaS subscription (per user or tiered), per-shipment, percentage of freight spend, transaction-based, enterprise license, and managed-services fees (often a percentage of managed spend). The most important budgeting truth is the same as in most enterprise software: implementation and integration services frequently rival or exceed first-year license cost, so plan a services-to-license ratio of at least one to one.

Cost element	Indicative figure	Notes
SaaS subscription	~$50-$500 / user / month	Varies with modules, users, and volume
Per-shipment pricing	~$1-$5 / shipment	Can spike with seasonal volume swings
On-premise license	$10K-$500K up front	Plus 15-20% annual maintenance
First-year all-in (mid-market)	~$36K-$150K	Software, implementation, training
Five-year TCO	~$300K-$1M+	Scales with complexity and integrations
AI-enabled premium	+25-40% up front	Often offset by 15-30% operational savings

What drives cost, and the five-year view

Four variables move the total more than the headline rate: the number and complexity of carrier and system integrations, the degree of customization versus configuration, the quality of rate and master data, and shipment volume for usage-based models. Model the full five-year picture, subscription or license, implementation and integration, data migration, training and change management, support, and renewal escalators, before comparing vendors. A percentage-of-freight or per-shipment model deserves particular scrutiny, because cost rises with the very growth the TMS is meant to enable.

Most enterprise vendors gate pricing; confirm via direct quotes, and watch for carrier-connection, EDI, and premium-support surcharges that do not appear in the headline number.

7. Implementation: where programs succeed or fail

Selection is the consequential decision; implementation is where the savings are realized or lost. Cloud TMS for a focused shipper can go live in weeks to a few months; enterprise, multimodal, multi-region programs run 6 to 18 months. The timeline matters less than the discipline, because the failure modes are about how programs are run, not software quality.

Why programs fail

- **Carrier and system integration is underestimated,** the most common source of overruns, spanning ERP, WMS, carrier APIs, and EDI.
- **Rate and master data is poor,** surfacing during migration when it is most expensive to fix.
- **Scope drifts and the first wave is over-built,** instead of sequencing from the highest-cost friction points.
- **Testing and change management are underfunded,** leaving dispatchers and carriers unprepared at go-live.

TMS-specific failure data is scarce, so the figures below are enterprise-software and ERP analogs. They likely overstate TMS-specific risk, but the directional lesson holds.

~70%	~50%	weeks-18mo
of ERP implementations will fail to meet objectives over the next three years (Gartner)	of ERP projects fail on the first attempt (RubinBrown / Deloitte analysis)	go-live, depending on modes, regions, and integrations

Three principles that separate success from failure

Treat integration as the program, not a task. Inventory every carrier and system connection early, and track integration and data-migration accuracy as primary metrics.

Control scope and sequence value. Favor configuration over custom code, and roll out from your highest-cost lanes and modes first.

Resource change management. Dispatchers, planners, and carriers all change how they work; budget for training and adoption, not just software.

Managed transportation as a path

For organizations without the staff to run a TMS, managed transportation offers software plus an operating team, compressing time-to-value and shifting execution risk to a provider. The trade-off is less direct control and a dependency on the provider, which is why many companies use managed services to start, then evaluate bringing operations in-house as volumes and capability grow.

A phased rollout

The lowest-risk pattern sequences value rather than attempting a single cutover. Stand up core rating, routing, and tendering on your highest-spend lanes first, prove the savings, then extend to additional modes, regions, freight audit and payment, and visibility integration in subsequent waves.

8. Trends shaping 2026

AI, machine learning, and agentic procurement

AI has moved into the core of the TMS: predictive ETAs, dynamic and continuous routing, rate forecasting against the spot market, and the early stages of agentic procurement, where systems propose or execute carrier decisions within guardrails. Vendors are embedding these capabilities across planning and execution, and AI-enabled platforms carry a cost premium that is typically offset by operational savings.

Real-time visibility, converging with execution

Real-time visibility has become a must-have, and the line between visibility platforms and TMS is blurring as each adds the other's capabilities. The practical approach for most buyers is to choose a strong TMS and integrate a leading visibility platform, rather than assume one product does both well.

Emissions and carbon reporting

Regulation is now a direct driver of TMS capability. Since January 2024 the EU Emissions Trading System has required verified carbon reporting for larger cargo and passenger vessels, the Fit for 55 package and the United States electronic logging device framework add further telemetry and reporting demands, and corporate sustainability reporting rules are pushing shipment-level carbon accounting into the TMS. Carbon-aware planning that consolidates loads and minimizes emissions is moving from differentiator to expectation.

Multimodal, global trade, and control towers

Global and cross-border complexity is pushing demand for multimodal optimization, customs and trade integration, and control-tower visibility across the end-to-end network. Network and platform models, where shippers and carriers share infrastructure, are gaining share because they create capacity and data advantages that standalone software cannot match.

Consolidation

As covered earlier, the vendor field is consolidating through both strategic acquisition (WiseTech and e2open, Descartes and 3Gtms, Infios and MercuryGate) and platform expansion. Buyers should treat ownership and roadmap stability as part of the viability dimension, particularly for recently acquired products.

9. Segment-specific guidance

The right TMS depends on who is buying it. The table summarizes what tends to dominate the decision by profile; the notes that follow add detail.

Operating profile	What matters most	Vendors that fit
SMB shipper	Low cost, fast setup, core dispatch and rating	Cloud SaaS / free-tier TMS, Shipwell, Kuebix
Mid-market shipper	Multimodal optimization, integration, value	3Gtms (Descartes), Infios, Turvo, Alpega
Enterprise shipper	Global scale, deep optimization, multimodal	Oracle, Blue Yonder, SAP, Manhattan
3PL / broker	Multi-client, capacity, network, settlement	e2open, Uber Freight, C.H. Robinson, MercuryGate
Manufacturer	Inbound + outbound, ERP integration, cost	Oracle, SAP, Blue Yonder, Descartes
Retailer / omnichannel	WMS + TMS unification, store and DC flows	Manhattan, Blue Yonder, Oracle

Smaller shippers should prioritize fast setup and low cost over depth, and many begin with a cloud or free-tier TMS. **Mid-market shippers** get the most from multimodal optimization and clean integration at a sensible price, where specialists shine. **Enterprise shippers and manufacturers** need global scale and deep optimization, which is the home turf of the four Gartner Leaders. **3PLs and brokers** need multi-client management, capacity, and settlement, favoring networks and managed platforms. And **retailers** increasingly value the unification of warehouse and transportation on one platform.

10. ROI and the business case

Transportation is a high-spend category with many manual steps, which is why the ROI case for a TMS is usually strong. Vendor-sourced figures should be validated against your own baseline, but the direction is consistent and payback is typically within 12 to 24 months.

5-15% freight-cost reduction (Descartes 5-10%; others to 15%)	**10-15%** fuel reduction and 20-30% fewer failed deliveries with dynamic routing (Locus)	**~5%** LTL cost cut from optimized pooling (Infios)

The value levers

A credible business case usually rests on several levers that compound. Freight-rate and mode optimization secures the best capacity at the best price by checking contracted rates against the spot market. Load consolidation and pooling cut cost per shipment, especially in LTL. Freight audit and payment recovers overcharges that would otherwise leak, and tighter management of detention and accessorials removes hidden cost. Automation reduces manual dispatch and reconciliation effort, and better on-time performance protects revenue and customer retention. Cost-reduction estimates of 5 to 15 percent are well supported, but the most reliable business case is built on your own freight spend and friction points, with vendor figures used only to size the opportunity.

Use a simple frame: ROI equals annual savings minus annual TMS cost, divided by annual TMS cost. Above 20 percent signals strong short-term payback; 10 to 20 percent can still justify the investment when visibility and service gains are included; below 10 percent usually means the scope is wrong and should be narrowed to the highest-cost lanes.

11. Frequently asked questions

What is a TMS?
Software that plans, executes, and settles the movement of freight: rating and routing shipments, selecting modes and carriers, consolidating loads, tendering and booking, tracking shipments, and auditing and paying freight bills, across all modes.

What is the difference between a TMS and a WMS?
The WMS manages work inside the warehouse (receiving, picking, packing, dispatch); the TMS manages how goods move between locations. Some vendors, notably Manhattan, unify both on one platform.

What is the difference between a TMS and an OMS?
An OMS decides where and how an order is sourced and fulfilled across channels; the TMS plans and executes the freight that moves it. They are complementary layers.

Is a visibility platform the same as a TMS?
No. Real-time transportation visibility platforms (project44, FourKites, Shippeo) track shipments and predict arrivals; a TMS plans and executes them. The categories are converging, but most organizations run both and integrate them.

What does a TMS cost?
SaaS runs roughly $50 to $500 per user per month or $1 to $5 per shipment; on-premise licenses run $10K to $500K up front plus 15 to 20 percent annual maintenance; five-year total cost of ownership commonly lands between $300K and $1M or more. Budget services at one to one or more against license.

How long does a TMS take to implement?
From a few weeks for a focused cloud deployment to 6 to 18 months for enterprise, multimodal, multi-region programs. Integration and data quality drive the timeline more than the software.

Do I need a TMS, and at what volume?
If transportation is a meaningful, growing cost and you are managing it with spreadsheets and email, a TMS will usually pay for itself. Smaller shippers can start with low-cost cloud tools; complexity and volume justify deeper platforms.

Should I buy, build, or use managed transportation?
Building is rarely justified. Choose a licensed or SaaS TMS if you have the staff to run it; choose managed transportation if you want software plus an operating team and faster time-to-value.

Cloud or on-premise?
Cloud and SaaS dominate new deployments and suit most buyers; large enterprises with heavy customization or control requirements still retain on-premise estates.

How much can a TMS actually save?
Freight-cost reductions of 5 to 15 percent are well supported, with additional value from freight-audit recovery, reduced detention and accessorials, and labor savings. Validate against your own baseline before committing.

12. Recommendations

11. **Shortlist by role and freight profile, not brand.** Global, multimodal enterprises should evaluate Oracle, Blue Yonder, SAP, and Manhattan. Mid-market shippers should look at 3Gtms (Descartes), Infios, Turvo, and Alpega. 3PLs and brokers should weigh e2open, Uber Freight, C.H. Robinson, and MercuryGate. Smaller shippers should start with cloud or free-tier tools.
12. **Decide your operating model early.** Choose deliberately among licensed software, a network platform, and managed transportation, because that choice shapes both cost and the staffing you need.
13. **Run a proof of concept on your own lanes.** Optimization is the economic engine of a TMS; test it on your actual rates and freight, not a vendor sample, and weight it heavily in the scorecard.
14. **Treat integration and data as the program.** Inventory every carrier and system connection, clean rate and master data before migration, and budget services at one to one or more against license.
15. **Weigh ownership stability.** With WiseTech, Descartes, Infios, and Uber Freight having absorbed major products, confirm roadmap continuity and support commitments for any recently acquired platform on your shortlist.

13. Methodology and caveats

- **Market sizing diverges widely** (about $2.25B to $53.5B for 2026 depending on category definition); all figures are directional, and several estimates come from firms whose methodologies are not public.
- **Savings and cost figures are often vendor-sourced** (Descartes, Infios, Locus, and others) and should be validated against your own freight baseline before use in a business case.
- **Implementation-risk statistics are ERP and enterprise-software analogs** (Gartner, RubinBrown/Deloitte), not TMS-specific, and likely overstate TMS-specific risk.
- **Analyst placements come from Gartner** (Magic Quadrant for TMS, March 2025, and for Real-Time Transportation Visibility Platforms, February 2025). The quadrant in Figure 4 is SCR's directional interpretation, not a reproduction of any Gartner chart, and Gartner does not endorse any vendor.
- **Acquisition and product details are accurate as reported** at the time of writing; post-acquisition roadmaps evolve, and most vendor pricing is gated, so confirm via direct quotes.

14. Sources

[1] Grand View Research (2025). Transportation Management Systems Market Report. $21.8B (2026) to $68.4B by 2033, 17.8% CAGR.

[2] MarketsandMarkets (2025). Transportation Management System Market. $18.5B (2025) to $37.0B by 2030, 14.9% CAGR.

[3] Mordor Intelligence (2026). Transportation Management System Market.

[4] Global Market Insights (2025). Transportation Management System Market. Oracle led with over 19% share in 2025; US $5.2B.

[5] Fortune Business Insights (2026). Transportation Management System Market.

[6] Oracle (Apr 2025). Named a Leader in the 2025 Gartner Magic Quadrant for TMS (18th time).

[7] Blue Yonder (2025). Named a Leader in the 2025 Gartner Magic Quadrant for TMS (14th year).

[8] SAP (Apr 2025). A Leader in the 2025 Gartner Magic Quadrant for TMS (11th year).

[9] Manhattan Associates (Apr 2025). Named a 7x Leader in the 2025 Gartner Magic Quadrant for TMS.

[10] project44 (Feb 2025). Named a Leader in the 2025 Gartner Magic Quadrant for Real-Time Transportation Visibility Platforms.

[11] Infios (2024). Infios adds MercuryGate to its portfolio.

[12] Uber Freight (2021). Completes acquisition of Transplace (~$2.25B).

[13] Descartes. Potential savings when implementing a TMS (5-10%).

[14] Locus (2026). Transport Management System Cost: enterprise pricing and ROI.

Additional figures drawn from: Business Research Insights and ResearchAndMarkets (market sizing); Gartner Magic Quadrant for Transportation Management Systems (24-25 March 2025) and for Real-Time Transportation Visibility Platforms (24 February 2025); Berg Insight (European TMS, consolidation); and Infios (LTL pooling savings). Vendor capability and customer claims are vendor-stated unless otherwise noted. Gartner does not endorse any vendor, product, or service depicted in its research.

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