

MARTEN TRANSPORT LTD
Form 10-K
March 13, 2009
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UNITED STATES SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

Washington, D.C. 20549

FORM 10-K

ANNUAL REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d)
OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934

For the fiscal year ended December 31, 2008

Commission file number 0-15010

MARTEN TRANSPORT, LTD.

(Exact name of registrant as specified in its charter)

DELAWARE
(State of incorporation)

39-1140809
(I.R.S. Employer Identification no.)

129 MARTEN STREET
MONDOVI, WISCONSIN
(Address of principal executive offices)

54755
(Zip Code)

(715) 926-4216
(Registrant's telephone number)

Securities registered pursuant to Section 12(b) of the Act:

Title of each class:

Name of each exchange on which registered:

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COMMON STOCK, PAR VALUE \$.01 PER SHARE

THE NASDAQ STOCK MARKET LLC
(NASDAQ GLOBAL SELECT MARKET)

Securities registered pursuant to Section 12(g) of the Act:

NONE

Indicate by check mark if the Registrant is a well-known seasoned issuer, as defined in Rule 405 of the Securities Act. YES NO

Indicate by check mark if the Registrant is not required to file reports pursuant to Section 13 or 15(d) of the Exchange Act. YES NO

Indicate by check mark whether the Registrant (1) has filed all reports required to be filed by Section 13 or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 during the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the Registrant was required to file such reports), and (2) has been subject to such filing requirements for the past 90 days. YES NO

Indicate by check mark if disclosure of delinquent filers pursuant to Item 405 of Regulation S-K is not contained herein, and will not be contained, to the best of Registrant's knowledge, in definitive proxy or information statements incorporated by reference in Part III of this Form 10-K or any amendment to this Form 10-K.

Indicate by check mark whether the Registrant is a large accelerated filer, an accelerated filer, a non-accelerated filer, or a smaller reporting company. See the definitions of large accelerated filer, accelerated filer, and smaller reporting company in Rule 12b-2 of the Exchange Act. Large accelerated filer Accelerated filer Non-accelerated filer (do not check if a smaller reporting company) Smaller reporting company

Indicate by check mark whether the Registrant is a shell company (as defined in Exchange Act Rule 12b-2). YES NO

As of June 30, 2008 (the last business day of the Registrant's most recently completed second fiscal quarter), the aggregate market value of the Common Stock of the Registrant (based upon the closing price of the Common Stock at that date as reported by the NASDAQ Global Select Market), excluding outstanding shares beneficially owned by directors and executive officers, was \$265,403,000.

As of February 27, 2009, 21,836,571 shares of Common Stock of the Registrant were outstanding.

Part III of this Annual Report on Form 10-K incorporates by reference information (to the extent specific sections are referred to in this Report) from the Registrant's Proxy Statement for the annual meeting to be held May 5, 2009, or 2009 Proxy Statement.

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FORWARD-LOOKING INFORMATION

This Annual Report on Form 10-K contains certain forward-looking statements. Such statements are made pursuant to the safe harbor provisions of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. Any statements not of historical fact may be considered forward-looking statements. Written words such as may, expect, believe, anticipate, plan, goal, or estimate, or other variations of these or similar words, identify such statements. These statements by their nature involve substantial risks and uncertainties, and actual results may differ materially from those expressed in such forward-looking statements. Important factors known to us that could cause such material differences are identified in this Annual Report on Form 10-K under the heading Risk Factors beginning on page 6. We undertake no obligation to correct or update any forward-looking statements, whether as a result of new information, future events, or otherwise. You are advised, however, to consult any future disclosures we make on related subjects in future filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

References in this Annual Report to we, us, our, or the Company or similar terms refer to Marten Transport, Ltd. and its consolidated subsidiaries unless the context otherwise requires.

PART I

ITEM 1. BUSINESS

Overview

We are one of the leading temperature-sensitive truckload carriers in the United States. We specialize in transporting and distributing food and other consumer packaged goods that require a temperature-controlled or insulated environment. In 2008, we generated \$607.1 million in operating revenue, which consists of revenue from both truckload and logistics operations. Approximately 85% of our truckload revenue resulted from hauling temperature-sensitive products and 15% from hauling dry freight. We operate throughout the United States and in parts of Canada and Mexico, with substantially all of our revenue generated from within the United States. Our primary long-haul traffic lanes are between the Midwest and the West Coast, Southwest, Southeast, and the East Coast, as well as from California to the Pacific Northwest. We provide regional truckload carrier services in the Southeast, West Coast, Midwest and South Central regions. In 2008, our average length of haul was 853 miles.

Our growth strategy is to expand our business internally by offering shippers a high level of service and significant freight capacity. We market primarily to large shippers that offer consistent volumes of freight in the lanes we prefer and are willing to compensate us for a high level of service. With our fleet of 2,376 company and independent contractor tractors, we are able to offer service levels that include up to 99% on-time performance and delivery within the narrow time windows often required when shipping perishable commodities.

We have two reportable segments Truckload and Logistics. Financial information regarding these segments can be found in the Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements under Item 8 of this Form 10-K. The primary source of our operating revenue is truckload revenue, which we generate by transporting long-haul and regional freight for our customers and report within our Truckload segment. Generally, we are paid

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by the mile for our services. We also derive truckload revenue from fuel surcharges, loading and unloading activities, equipment detention and other ancillary services. Our operating revenue also includes revenue reported within our Logistics segment, which consists of revenue from our internal brokerage and intermodal operations, both launched in 2005, and through our 45% interest in MW Logistics, LLC, or MWL, a third-party provider of logistics services to the transportation industry. Brokerage services involve arranging for another company to transport freight for our customers while we retain the billing, collection and customer management responsibilities. Intermodal services involve the transport of our trailers on railroad flatcars for a portion of a trip, with the balance of the trip using our tractors or, to a lesser extent, contracted carriers.

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Organized under Wisconsin law in 1970, we are a successor to a sole proprietorship Roger R. Marten founded in 1946. In 1988, we reincorporated under Delaware law. Our executive offices are located at 129 Marten Street, Mondovi, Wisconsin 54755. Our telephone number is (715) 926-4216.

We maintain a website at www.marten.com. We are not including the information contained on our website as a part of, nor incorporating it by reference into, this Annual Report on Form 10-K. We post on our website, free of charge, documents that we file with or furnish to the Securities and Exchange Commission, including our Annual Reports on Form 10-K, Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q, Current Reports on Form 8-K and proxy statements, as soon as reasonably practicable after we electronically file such material with, or furnish such material to, the Securities and Exchange Commission. We also provide a link on our website to Forms 3, 4 and 5 that our officers, directors and 10% stockholders file with the Securities and Exchange Commission pursuant to Section 16(a) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934.

Marketing and Operations

We approach our business as an integrated effort of marketing and operations. Our emphasis in marketing is directed to the temperature-sensitive truckload market, which is generally service-sensitive, as opposed to being solely price competitive. We target large food and consumer packaged goods companies whose products require temperature-sensitive services and who ship multiple truckloads per week. By emphasizing high-quality service, we seek to become a core carrier for our customers. In 2008, our two largest customers were General Mills and Kraft.

Our marketing efforts are conducted by a staff of approximately 125 sales, customer service and support personnel under the supervision of our senior management team. Marketing personnel travel within their regions to solicit new truckload and logistics customers and maintain contact with existing customers. Customer service managers regularly contact customers to solicit additional business on a load-by-load basis.

Our operations and sales personnel strive to improve our asset productivity by seeking freight that allows for rapid turnaround times, minimizes non-revenue miles between loads, and carries a favorable rate structure. Once we have established a customer relationship, customer service managers work closely with our fleet managers to match customer needs with our capacity and the location of revenue equipment. Fleet managers use our optimization system to assign loads to satisfy customer and operational requirements, as well as to meet the routing needs of our drivers. We attempt to route most of our trucks over selected operating lanes, which we believe assists us in meeting customer requirements, balancing traffic, reducing non-revenue miles, and improving the reliability of delivery schedules.

We employ technology in our operations when we believe that it will allow us to operate more efficiently and the investment is cost-justified. Examples of the technologies we employ include:

- Satellite-based tracking and messaging that allows us to communicate with our drivers, obtain load position updates, provide our customers with freight visibility, and download engine operating information such as fuel mileage and idling time.

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- Freight optimization software that assists us in selecting loads that match our overall criteria, including profitability, repositioning, identifying capacity for expedited loads, driver availability and home time, and other factors.
- Electronic data interchange and internet communication with customers concerning freight tendering, invoices, shipment status, and other information.
- Fuel-routing software that optimizes the fuel stops for each trip to take advantage of volume discounts available in our fuel network.

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- Auxiliary power units installed on approximately 96% of our company-owned tractors as of December 31, 2008 that allow us to decrease fuel costs associated with idling our tractors.

We believe this integrated approach to our marketing and operations, coupled with our use of technology, has allowed us to provide our customers with a high level of service and support our revenue growth in an efficient manner. For example, we had a non-revenue mile percentage of 8.1% during 2008, and a tractor to non-driver employee ratio of 4.5-to-1 as of December 31, 2008. Both of these statistics point to the efficiency of our operations and we believe compare favorably to other temperature-sensitive and dry van trucking companies.

Major Customers

An important part of our growth strategy is to increase our business with large customers. Accordingly, a significant amount of our business is concentrated with a relatively small number of customers. In 2008, our top 30 customers accounted for approximately 77% of our revenue, and our top ten customers accounted for 55% of our revenue. Nine of our top ten customers have been significant customers of ours for over ten years. We believe we are the largest or second largest temperature-sensitive carrier for eight of our top ten customers. General Mills accounted for 19% and Kraft accounted for 10% of our revenue in 2008. We believe our relationships with these key customers are sound, but we are dependent upon them and the loss of some or all of their business could have a materially adverse effect on our results.

Drivers and Other Personnel

We believe that maintaining a safe and productive professional driver group is essential to providing excellent customer service and achieving profitability. Approximately 256 of our drivers as of December 31, 2008 have driven more than one million miles for us without a preventable accident, while approximately 90 of our drivers have driven more than two million miles and three have driven more than three million miles for us without a preventable accident.

We select drivers, including independent contractors, using our specific guidelines for safety records, driving experience, and personal evaluations. We maintain stringent screening, training, and testing procedures for our drivers to reduce the potential for accidents and the corresponding costs of insurance and claims. We train new drivers at our Wisconsin, California, Georgia, Oregon, Indiana and Texas terminals in all phases of our policies and operations, as well as in safety techniques and fuel-efficient operation of the equipment. All new drivers also must pass DOT required tests prior to assignment to a vehicle.

We primarily pay company-employed drivers a fixed rate per mile. The rate increases based on length of service. Drivers also are eligible for bonuses based upon safe, efficient driving. We pay independent contractors on a fixed rate per mile. Independent contractors pay for their own fuel, insurance, maintenance, and repairs.

Competition in the trucking industry for qualified drivers is normally intense. Our operations have been impacted, and from time-to-time we have experienced under-utilization and increased expense, as a result of a shortage of qualified drivers. We place a high priority on the recruitment and retention of an adequate supply of qualified drivers.

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As of December 31, 2008, we had approximately 2,775 employees. This total consists of approximately 2,248 drivers, 171 mechanics and maintenance personnel, and 356 support personnel, which includes management and administration. As of that date, we also contracted with 188 independent contractors. None of our employees are represented by a collective bargaining unit. We consider relations with our employees to be good.

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Revenue Equipment

Our revenue equipment programs are an important part of our overall goal of profitable growth. We evaluate our equipment decisions based on factors such as initial cost, useful life, warranty terms, expected maintenance costs, fuel economy, driver comfort, customer needs, manufacturer support, and resale value. We generally operate newer, well-maintained equipment with uniform specifications to minimize our spare parts inventory, streamline our maintenance program, and simplify driver training.

As of December 31, 2008, we operated a fleet of 2,376 tractors, including 2,188 company-owned tractors and 188 tractors supplied by independent contractors. The average age of our company-owned tractor fleet at December 31, 2008 was approximately 2.2 years. In 2008, we replaced most of our company-owned tractors within approximately 3.5 years after purchase.

Freightliner and Peterbilt manufacture most of our company-owned tractors. Maintaining a relatively new and standardized fleet allows us to operate most miles while the tractors are under warranty to minimize repair and maintenance costs. It also enhances our ability to attract drivers, increases fuel economy, and improves customer acceptance by minimizing service interruptions caused by breakdowns. We adhere to a comprehensive maintenance program during the life of our equipment. We perform most routine servicing and repairs at our terminal facilities to reduce costly on-road repairs and out-of-route trips. We do not have any agreements with tractor manufacturers pursuant to which they agree to repurchase the tractors or guarantee a residual value, and we therefore could incur losses upon disposition if resale values of used tractors decline.

We historically have contracted with independent contractors to provide and operate a portion of our tractor fleet. Independent contractors own their own tractors and are responsible for all associated expenses, including financing costs, fuel, maintenance, insurance, and taxes. We believe that a combined fleet complements our recruiting efforts. The percentage of our fleet provided by independent contractors was 8% as of December 31, 2008.

As of December 31, 2008, we operated a fleet of 4,218 trailers. Most of our trailers are equipped with Thermo-King refrigeration units, air ride suspensions, and anti-lock brakes. Most of our single van trailers are refrigerated, 53 feet long, and 102 inches wide. The average age of our trailer fleet at December 31, 2008 was approximately 3.1 years. In 2008, we replaced most of our company-owned trailers within approximately 5.5 years after purchase.

Insurance and Claims

We self-insure for a portion of our claims exposure resulting from workers' compensation, auto liability, general liability, cargo and property damage claims, as well as employees' health insurance. We are responsible for our proportionate share of the legal expenses relating to such claims as well. We reserve currently for anticipated losses and expenses. We periodically evaluate and adjust our insurance and claims reserves to reflect our experience. We are responsible for the first \$1.0 million on each auto liability claim and also responsible for up to \$1.0 million in the aggregate for 33% of all auto liability claim amounts in excess of \$1.0 million. We are also responsible for the first \$750,000 on each workers' compensation claim. We have \$6.8 million in standby letters of credit to guarantee settlement of claims under agreements with our insurance carriers and regulatory authorities. We maintain insurance coverage for per-incident and total losses in excess of the amounts for which we self-insure up to specified policy limits with licensed insurance carriers. Insurance carriers have raised premiums for many businesses,

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including trucking companies. As a result, our insurance and claims expense could increase, or we could raise our self-insured retention when our policies are renewed. We believe that our policy of self-insuring up to set limits, together with our safety and loss prevention programs, are effective means of managing insurance costs.

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Fuel

Our operations are heavily dependent upon the use of diesel fuel. The price and availability of diesel fuel can vary and are subject to political, economic, and market factors that are beyond our control. Fuel prices fluctuated dramatically and quickly at various times during the last three years and they remain high based on historical standards. We actively manage our fuel costs by purchasing fuel in bulk in Mondovi and at our other maintenance facilities throughout the country and have volume purchasing arrangements with national fuel centers that allow our drivers to purchase fuel at a discount while in transit. During 2008, over 99% of our fuel purchases were made at these designated locations. To help further reduce fuel consumption, we began installing auxiliary power units in our tractors during 2007. These units reduce fuel consumption by providing quiet climate control and electrical power for our drivers without idling the tractor engine. These units were installed in approximately 96% of our company-owned fleet as of December 31, 2008.

We further manage our exposure to changes in fuel prices through fuel surcharge programs with our customers and other measures that we have implemented. We have historically been able to pass through most long-term increases in fuel prices and related taxes to customers in the form of fuel surcharges. These fuel surcharges, which adjust with the cost of fuel, enable us to recover a substantial portion of the higher cost of fuel as prices increase, except for non-revenue miles, out-of-route miles or fuel used while the tractor is idling. As of December 31, 2008, we had no derivative financial instruments to reduce our exposure to fuel price fluctuations.

Competition

We operate primarily in the temperature-sensitive segment of the truckload market. This market is highly competitive and fragmented. We compete with many other truckload carriers that provide temperature-sensitive service of varying sizes and, to a lesser extent, with less-than-truckload carriers, railroads, and other transportation companies, many of which have more equipment, a wider range of services, and greater capital resources than we do or have other competitive advantages. In particular, several of the largest truckload carriers that offer primarily dry-van service also offer temperature-sensitive service, and these carriers could attempt to increase their business in the temperature-sensitive market. We also compete with other motor carriers for the services of drivers, independent contractors, and management employees. We believe that the principal competitive factors in our business are service, freight rates, capacity, and financial stability. As one of the largest and best-capitalized carriers focused on the temperature-sensitive segment, we believe we are well positioned to compete in that segment.

Regulation

The United States Department of Transportation, or DOT, and various state and local agencies exercise broad powers over our business, generally governing such activities as authorization to engage in motor carrier operations, safety and insurance requirements. Our company drivers and independent contractors also must comply with the safety and fitness regulations promulgated by the DOT, including those relating to drug and alcohol testing and hours-of-service. Revised rules that limit driver hours-of-service were adopted effective January 4, 2004, and then modified effective October 1, 2005. On July 24, 2007, a federal appeals court vacated portions of the October 2005 Rules; however, interim rules issued in December 2007 retained the vacated portions in effect. On November 19, 2008, final rules effective January 19, 2009 were issued which left the interim rules unchanged.

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We believe that we are well equipped to minimize the economic impact of the current hours-of-service rules on our business. We have negotiated delay time charges with the majority of our customers. Prior to the effectiveness of the current rules, we also initiated discussions with many of our customers regarding steps that they can take to assist us in managing our drivers' non-driving activities, such as loading, unloading, or waiting, and we plan to continue to actively communicate with our customers regarding these matters in the future. In situations where shippers are unable or unwilling to take these steps, we assess detention and other

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charges to offset losses in productivity resulting from the current hours-of-service regulations. The regulations did not have a significant impact on our operations or financial results in 2006 through 2008.

We are also subject to various environmental laws and regulations dealing with the handling of hazardous materials, fuel storage tanks, air emissions from our vehicles and facilities, engine idling, and discharge and retention of storm water. These regulations did not have a significant impact on our operations or financial results in 2006 through 2008.

ITEM 1A. RISK FACTORS

The following factors are important and should be considered carefully in connection with any evaluation of our business, financial condition, results of operations, prospects, or an investment in our common stock. The risks and uncertainties described below are those that we currently believe may materially affect our company or our financial results. Additional risks and uncertainties not presently known to us or that we currently deem immaterial may also impair our business operations or affect our financial results.

Our business is subject to general economic and business factors that are largely out of our control, any of which could have a materially adverse effect on our operating results. Our business is dependent on a number of general economic and business factors that may have a materially adverse effect on our results of operations, many of which are beyond our control. These factors include excess capacity in the trucking industry, strikes or other work stoppages, and significant increases or fluctuations in interest rates, fuel taxes, and license and registration fees. We are affected by recessionary economic cycles and downturns in customers' business cycles, particularly in market segments and industries where we have a significant concentration of customers. Economic conditions may adversely affect our customers and their ability to pay for our services.

It is not possible to predict the effects of actual or threatened armed conflicts or terrorist attacks, efforts to combat terrorism, military action against any foreign state, heightened security requirements, or other related events and the subsequent effects on the economy or on consumer confidence in the United States, or the impact, if any, on our future results of operations.

The recent instability of the credit markets and the resulting effects on the economy could have a material adverse effect on our operating results. Recently, there has been widespread concern over the instability of the credit markets and the current credit market effects on the economy. If the economy and credit markets continue to weaken, our business, financial result