

BUYER'S GUIDE

How to Choose a Real-Time Transportation Visibility Platform (RTTVP)

What to Ask When Evaluating Vendors to Streamline Your Supply Chain

The supply chain industry is ever-changing and expanding. Customer, shipper, and carrier expectations have drastically increased. More and more, supply chain leaders are looking toward true end-to-end visibility in an effort to optimize their supply chains, add agility, make themselves disruption-proof, attain consistent on-time in-full (OTIF or DIFOT) results, and improve customer experience.

Gartner recently released their predictions for the future of supply chain technology, and their research is clear — by 2022, 80% of shippers will invest in RTTVP. And with any large investment solution, you want to ensure as its champion that you make the right choice, that implementation and adoption go smoothly, and that your company quickly recognizes the value. So how do you know what to look for? How do you know if you need a visibility solution and which one is right for you?

We're here to help.

This guide is designed to help you develop in-depth, exhaustive RFPs for vendors that answer these questions and more:

- Why do I need a real-time visibility solution, and who will use it?
- How do I vet real-time visibility providers?
- Who am I going into business with?
- Does it check all my boxes and must-haves?
- What does it take to get set up?
- How do I integrate it with my existing systems?
- What does success look like at the start and in the future?

Note: Yes, we offer a solution of our own at FourKites, but we believe it's important to know how to objectively determine your needs and evaluate all your options to keep all of us providers accountable. We also just happen to be confident that we'll stand out when you do so. This guide was created based on input and RFPs from our own prospects and customers as well as our conversations with Gartner in defining this new category.



Table of Contents

Why do I need a RTTVP solution?	4
What is RTTVP?.....	4
How does an RTTVP impact my business?.....	4
How do I determine what I need and how I'll use it?.....	5
How do I vet RTTVP providers?	6
Research.....	6
RFPs (what to ask providers).....	6
▶ Who am I going into business with?	6
About the Company	6
» Numbers & Network.....	6
<i>"By the Numbers" Proof</i>	6
<i>Network Power</i>	7
» Product Vision & Strategy	8
» International Presence.....	9
▶ How does the platform actually work? What benefits will it provide me?.....	9
Features & Functionality.....	9
» Tracking.....	9
» Predictive Data & Algorithms	10
» Analytics, Dashboards & Reporting	12
» Collaboration	13
» Alerts, Notifications & Mobile	13
» Carrier Considerations.....	14
» Sustainability.....	15
» Appointment Management.....	16
» Yard Management.....	16
» Ocean Freight Management.....	16
▶ What are the technical, integration and security considerations of the platform?.....	17
» Integrations	17
» Data Requirements.....	17
» Security	18
» Uptime.....	18
» Permissions	18
» Custom Branding	19
▶ Will I receive the support I need to get started and ensure long-term success?.....	19
Implementation & Support	19
▶ How does the vendor charge?	20
How do I move forward, and how can I maximize my investment in RTTVP?.....	21
How do I justify the investment?	21
How do I measure success?.....	21
▶ Establishing KPIs.....	21
▶ Benefits Projections	22
In Closing	23

Why do I need a RTTVP solution?

WHAT IS RTTVP?

At the most basic level, Real-Time Transportation Visibility (RTTVP) is the ability to have up-to-the-minute information on the location of shipments and an updated estimated time of arrival (ETA) on when the shipments will arrive at each milestone and their final destination.

Transportation visibility isn't something new, but increasing supply chain complexity requiring multiple carriers across multiple lanes has companies scrambling to find answers. Without a single source of truth for your tracking data, your teams will be left making a lot of calls, sending emails back and forth and racing around to track down information that will quickly be outdated. The continued expansion of global trade and the Amazon effect (which has everyone expecting visibility on their phones and next-day delivery) has only increased the need. Moreover, buyer inventory planners, stores and other stakeholders in the supply chain have a vested interest in better understanding associated orders.

In this age of digitization, real-time transportation visibility platforms (RTTVPs) and other technological solutions that can unlock valuable information are no longer nice-to-haves; they're mission-critical to global competitiveness.

HOW DOES AN RTTVP IMPACT MY BUSINESS?

Having in-transit details and accurate milestone and final destination ETAs helps minimize transportation costs like detention, demurrage and expedites. But this information can also provide significant value to various other parts of your organization. Transportation teams are generally the source of this information, and they incur significant staffing costs trying to piece this data together from multiple sources. Even with their best efforts, the information seldom meets expectations, resulting in different parts of the organization adding cushion to account for uncertainty.

Example inefficiency costs without RTTVP:

- Warehouse operations **overstaffing** because they are unsure when deliveries will arrive
- Sales or customer support providing **"worst case" commitments** to customers due to transit uncertainty
- Inventory planners **adding safety stock** or even **double ordering** because of uncertainty

In the best case scenario, basic RTTVP is coupled with advanced search and filter capabilities, proactive exception management, and configurable alerting to improve productivity. Packaging RTTVP information for specific organizations allows the transportation group to move out of the "gatekeeper" role, and eliminates the inefficiency and inaccuracy that can come with manually chasing information down. Information transparency provided by a good RTTVP improves efficiency and eliminates uncertainty.

In addition to the immediate benefits of real-time details and ETA projections, organizations can leverage trend information to drive much larger changes, adjusting business processes and planning parameters to improve performance.

Example business process changes with RTTVP:

- **Warehouse operations** making staffing adjustments and changing delivery appointment patterns to improve operational efficiency while ensuring the smooth flow of material into and out of a facility
- **Transportation procurement** leveraging performance data to make lane and carrier changes to improve delivery consistency and increase leverage when negotiating carrier contracts
- **Planning teams** using accurate transit time and increased on-time delivery information to make adjustments to safety stock requirements, lowering inventory levels without impacting availability
- **Customer support organizations** leveraging improved On-time in Full (OTIF) statistics to reduce customer penalties and negotiate expanded market share based on performance

Whether you're looking to improve information flow between stakeholders, or if you have larger strategic goals to leverage supply chain information as a competitive advantage, investments in RTTVP capabilities will have a positive impact and significant return on investment.

HOW DO I DETERMINE WHAT I NEED AND HOW I'LL USE IT?

The best starting point is to document your transportation footprint and goals by asking yourself some key questions.

Key Questions:

1. Which performance metrics do you hope to address?
2. What other key initiatives do you have in place? (e.g. sustainability, digitization)
3. What's your transportation spending breakdown by geography and mode?
4. Should inbound and outbound both be in scope?
5. Do you need visibility into shipments managed by your suppliers?

Once you know the problems you're trying to solve and the performance metrics that will be impacted, you can identify which parts of the organization will interact with the platform. Not every provider supports the breadth of data- and role-based user access requirements to support controlled internal and external access. Here are a few ways to think about how various members of your team might use and benefit from a visibility solution.

How different teams might use RTTVP:

- Will customer service want to provide customers direct access to track their own inbound shipments?
- Will purchasing need to link PO and SKU details to simplify inventory availability decisions?
- Will production and supply planning be able to optimize inventory and production scheduling or reduce safety stock?
- Will procurement be able to improve carrier scorecarding and SLAs?

How do I vet RTTVP providers?

Once you've evaluated your pain points across departments and determined that visibility will improve your supply chain efficiency, you're ready to start researching vendors. Whether your goal is to improve inventory management and OTIF, save time for your track-and-trace teams, optimize processes to reduce transit time, lower costs in detention and safety stock, or all of the above, this breakdown will help you do your homework and ask all the right questions to find the best provider for your business.

RESEARCH

As mentioned above, RTTVP is a relatively new industry. Fortunately, there's already a lot of information available. Gartner has created their own [toolkit for vendor selection](#) as well as an [exhaustive market guide](#). They invested significant time analyzing the market with their [Magic Quadrant](#) to provide guidance on how companies can evolve, stay competitive and incorporate more advanced technology into their supply chains.

RFPS (WHAT TO ASK PROVIDERS)

Once you've made the decision that your organization needs a RTTVP, you need to decide which will provide the most value for your teams. Your Request for Proposal (RFP) not only details your organization's needs, it also asks objective questions that will help you gauge each vendor's stature within the RTTVP space, strengths and weaknesses, and its ability to meet your needs and help you scale in the future.

Below you'll find an exhaustive list of the questions to include in your RFP, along with tips on what to look for in vendors' answers and how you can get the maximum value from your RTTVP.

Who am I going into business with?

ABOUT THE COMPANY

Before you dig into the platform itself, you'll want to know more about the company to ensure you have faith in what they've done, what they can do, who they work with and their methodology. A track record of innovation and ensuring customer success and collaboration lets you know you're working with the right partner.

Numbers & Network

"By the Numbers" Proof

Everyone has experienced or heard stories of bold claims and broken promises from bad salespeople. Your favorite phrases should be "prove it" and "show me the numbers." Here are the key proof points to ask about and what to look for in a RTTVP.

WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
What's your revenue and year-over-year growth? How much of it comes from RTTVP vs. other offerings?	It might seem obvious, but you want to know that the company is doing well and trending in the right direction. And since many vendors offer a broad portfolio of solutions, understanding their focus on RTTVP and performance specific to that category can be very telling.

WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
What's your employee count and year-over-year growth? How does that break down by department (Product, Success, Support, Engineering)?	Every company will claim to be customer-centric and hyper-focused on innovation. But do the numbers back it up? Look at the percentage breakdown across departments to identify if a company is truly committed to their customers' success and blazing the trail toward evolving and improving real-time visibility.
How many loads/shipments were tracked in your platform last year? What's your year-over-year growth?	This is similar to asking about revenue, but tells you more about the scale of the platform. From this, you can get a sense of how the platform can accommodate your growing business, as well as how much data it has to inform its predictive algorithms (more on that in the Predictive Data & Algorithms section under Features & Functionality).
Are there any recent or planned mergers and acquisitions?	Strategic growth can show you a company's commitment to expanding its capabilities. Additionally, if these moves cover new areas outside of transportation visibility, you'll get a sense of other ways the company can provide value as you continue to optimize various parts of your supply chain.
What's your customer retention/renewal rate?	Acquiring new customers doesn't mean much if they don't stick around. Look for a vendor's track record of providing continued value over time.

Network Power

What is a visibility network? Simply put, it's the aggregation of a provider's shippers, carriers, brokers, 3PLs, 4PLs, facilities and their collective trillions of data points that inform each and every prediction and algorithm that the platform spits out. If a provider defines their network simply by the number of carriers therein, continue to push for the answers you need to better understand the scope of their users. More companies in the platform tracking more loads, and more in-depth integrations means more data to inform predictive technologies, better benchmarking of the metrics most important to you, and faster and smoother overall setup and day-to-day operations. Here's what to look for.

WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
How many shippers are actively using your RTTVP solution (paying customers, not pilots or proofs of concept)? How does that break down by industry? By company size?	Not only does a larger number of customers imply a greater level of trust in their tools, it also means there's more data to inform predictive analytics. Look specifically for customers that are similar to you to ensure that the company offers a solution that caters to your needs.
How many carriers are actively using and sending data to the platform?	An expansive, and active, carrier network means that a high percentage of your carriers might already be tracking in the platform. This will drastically accelerate onboarding, implementation and time to value.
How many 3PLs and LSPs are actively using the platform?	A RTTVP's coverage with the largest global third-party logistics and logistics service providers speaks volumes to their trust and level of service. Look for them having some of the most well-known names in their network, including BDP, Ryder Logistics, Penske Logistics, GlobalTranz, DHL, UPS, APL Logistics and others.
What partnerships and integrations do you offer with TMS, ERP, WMS providers?	Flexibility and expansive coverage in how a vendor can receive shipping data is crucial. Look for a provider that integrates with as many of these systems as possible, especially leaders like SAP, Oracle, Blue Yonder and Manhattan Associates. Carrier TMS integrations are important, as well.

WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
<p>Can you offer current customers as references?</p>	<p>The more customers a provider can offer as references, the better. Look for a company that seeks to connect their customers with each other and help position them as leaders in the supply chain space. Take the time to speak with as many customer references as possible to ensure a good fit, asking questions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long have you been using their platform? • How are you using it? • What benefits have you seen from it? • What challenges have you had with it post-implementation? • How is your relationship with the provider? How responsive have they been to your needs? • How have you been able to influence their product roadmap?
<p>Do you have a user community for sharing best practices and new product ideas?</p>	<p>Again, customer-centricity can't just be lip service. Look at how a company connects its customers with each other, and also gives them channels to provide real-time feedback and suggestions. Do they have active community groups or portals? Do they host user conferences and regular feedback sessions? Do they solicit customer feedback for product development?</p>
<p>What other value-add network services do you provide (e.g., inter- and intra-company collaboration tools, sustainability tools, benchmarking analysis)?</p>	<p>The most innovative RTTVPs are thinking outside the box and bringing visibility to areas of the supply chain that have been previously untouched by technology. These might include new approaches to yard management, appointment scheduling, visibility into vendor-managed freight and more.</p>

Product Vision & Strategy

Innovation is another thing every company likes to tout, so it's important to probe here and push for details about why they do what they do, how they've done it and where they think it can go. Make them speak to their long-term vision for visibility, and how it can expand into other areas of the supply chain.

WHAT TO ASK
<p>How often are both major and minor updates released?</p>
<p>What have you released in the past 6 months?</p>
<p>What's coming in the next 6 months to a year?</p>
<p>How do you solicit customer input and allow for customer-led product innovation?*</p>
<p>What's your long-term vision for both your product and company? How will it benefit a business like mine?</p>
<p>Do you have any patents or patent applications?</p>

**Look for a company that can point to a defined, proven method for soliciting and encouraging customer ideas that have actually been added to their roadmap.*

International Presence

WHAT TO ASK
<p>How many shipments, shippers, carriers and countries do you handle by region? What modes of transportation do you support in each region?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U.S. • Canada • Mexico • Central America • South America • Europe - France and Benelux • Europe - DACHS region • Eastern Europe & Russia • Middle East and Africa (MEA)
<p>How have your shipment and customer numbers outside of North America grown year over year?</p>
<p>How do you deal with travel bans and country-specific hours of service rules in Europe?</p>
<p>Where do you have offices and staff?</p>
<p>What languages do you support?</p>

How does the platform actually work? What benefits will it provide me?

FEATURES & FUNCTIONALITY

You know your company best. You know your track-and-trace and carrier communication processes. You know where your team spends the most time. The following list of considerations is meant to be exhaustive. While perhaps not all of it will be what’s most important to your organization, these are all things worth thinking about to help you improve visibility across your supply chain.

Tracking

WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR	
<p>What modes of transportation does your platform support? And how many customers, carriers, and shipments in each?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full Truck Load • Less than Full Truck Load • Drayage • Refrigerated Transportation • Flatbed • Rail • Intermodal • Ocean 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air Parcel • Air International • Air Domestic • Parcel • Last Mile Delivery - Final Mile to Customer • Private and Dedicated Fleet • Courier
<p>How frequently do you get shipping/tracking updates? Is it customizable?</p>		

WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
What information do you receive in your tracking updates?	Look for information beyond just location: coordinates, altitude, temperature, driver hours of service, driver status updates (driving, off-duty, arrive, delivered), etc.
Can your platform differentiate between truck types?	Look for the ability to control data inputs specific to truck type — things like truck/tractor, number of trailers, hazardous materials, total weight, weight per axle, vehicle height/width/length and tunnel restrictions. This information can be incorporated into predictive ETAs to provide the most accurate routing.
How often are temperature updates received for refrigerated transport?	
Do you offer SKU/order-level tracking?	This enables you to not only use the platform as a predictive visibility tool, but also as an in-transit inventory management tool. Look for the ability to display SKU-level details at the stop level for full search capabilities.
What is your modal coverage by geography?	
Do you support port-to-port tracking globally, or are there limitations?	
Do you support airport-to-airport tracking globally, or are there limitations?	
In which countries do you support OTR and rail tracking for domestic movements and inland legs of end-to-end international movements?	
Do you offer tracking visibility across my broader inbound and outbound network?	As we mentioned in the Network Power section earlier, increased visibility into earlier and later legs of the supply chain — beyond just the freight that you directly manage — has huge benefits for efficiency.
Do you allow for both manual and auto-load imports?	Some companies prefer a "lightweight" integration as a starting point to get the benefit of visibility quickly without taxing their IT teams. Look for a vendor that supports both manual/automated flat file uploads. And if you're ready for a more systematic integration, look for API-based, XML-based or standards-based integrations.

Predictive Data & Algorithms

Everyone touts machine learning these days. Look for a provider that can speak to both the quantity and quality of data informing their machine learning, and how that drives their algorithms and other innovations.

WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
Do you offer predictive ETAs based on machine learning? Even for loads I'm not actively tracking?	Look for a vendor that can effectively forecast the speed, rest and routing patterns a shipment will encounter during the course of its journey. This will help get smart ETAs even when you aren't tracking.

WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
How do you handle older assets that may not have an ELD device?	Can the provider use synthetic tracking or other means to track assets despite the lack of tracking pings.
How do you calculate your ETAs?	The more data a platform has across historical loads, load types and geographic locations, the better. Look for companies that use machine learning algorithms that can learn from its customers' operations to predict best-in-class ETAs, taking into account different routes and modes, as well as both real-time and historical factors. Make sure their ETAs are updated based on things such as truck-specific routing and speed limits, traffic and weather delays, loading/unloading times at each stop, business hours of operation, driver rest periods, etc. Without accounting for these factors, in addition to historical context, a provider's ETAs will be no more accurate than your standard GPS service averaging 35 mph.
Can you predict dwell time per stop?	Look for predictive algorithms that can learn your history and forecast the dwell time a truck will encounter at a stop.
How accurate is your ETA?	A vendor should be able to provide their accuracy percentage for how often loads arrive within 2 hours of their ETA prediction. Be careful to compare vendors for this metric across similar load bases.
Do you offer timing and route recommendations, and predictive risk assessment?	Look for providers that can proactively and prescriptively recommend actions to improve on-time delivery and prevent exceptions. This should include suggestions like the time trucks should depart pickup; recommendations to route changes to account for weather or traffic' or guidance on the sequence of stops to avoid congestion and delays at any one stop based on factors like weather, natural disaster, port/carrier/labor strikes, traffic, etc.
Does your platform allow for the labeling and tracking of late reason codes?	
Data Depth: How many customers, carriers, shipments, load types and other various data points inform how your product uses data?	Look for experience and volume. Any predictive data solutions a provider offers (e.g., ETA, suggested routes, etc.) are only as good as the amount of data their algorithms ingest. In short, more loads, more users, more data, more accuracy.
Data Breadth: Do you provide a full picture of our shipments beyond their location?	Look for solutions that expand the breadth of their tracking to include not just the current leg of a trip, but also previous legs, along with factors like weather, dwell time and appointment rescheduling. those other factors. You can't rely on an ETA that doesn't account for previous delays.
Data Quality: How do you monitor each of your data integrations and ensure uptime?	Having a wide breadth of data is a moot point if data quality isn't maintained. Think of it this way: With visibility providers relying upon thousands of data integrations, even a tiny fraction of failed integrations results in a significant loss in shipment data.
Data Quality: How do you monitor the quality of specific data points?	As an example, when a geolocation is submitted, what if the latitude/longitude coordinates somehow become switched? A traditional visibility provider might incorrectly display your load's location in Argentina. It's crucial that a provider can speak to how their data quality solution can monitor and recognize such anomalies to automatically address them.

WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
Do you offer custom zones and geofencing?	Look for a vendor that allows for truly customized geofences anywhere on the map. They should allow you to receive alerts when a load enters, exits or stops in those areas. Custom zones can help you with a wide range of use cases, including trucks carrying hazardous and restricted materials; entering restricted areas; trucks driving into high-crime areas; protecting altitude-sensitive materials, and more.
What other machine learning and artificial intelligence features do you offer?	Does the provider support descriptive analytics (what happened?), predictive (what is going to happen?) or prescriptive (tell me what to do).

Analytics, Dashboards & Reporting

Visibility is one thing. But being able to identify trends across your tracked loads is how you optimize processes and drive meaningful ROI.

WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
What dashboards, metrics or KPIs do you offer?	Look for a range of dashboards and reports that can be tailored to specific roles or use cases, and try to gauge intuitiveness and useability of those dashboards. Some examples of reports might include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tracking Consistency • Carrier Metrics • Sustainability • On-Time Performance • Mode-Specific Reports • Dwell, Detention & Demurrage Costs • Benchmarking • Late Reasons
How are metrics configurable/customizable?	Look for the ability to filter reports on a wide range of data points that matter to you. Then, make sure you can drill down into specifics for additional information to make it actionable. Lastly, look for a provider that allows you to save those configured reports so you can access them again more easily.
What are the data export and sharing options?	Again, you want to look for variety and flexibility here. Whether it's image, CSV, PDF or Excel, make sure the vendor makes it easy for you to get the data you need and share it across your team via export or scheduled email delivery.

Collaboration

Logistics and supply chain visibility impact so many people within the organization and even outside of it, so a tool’s ability to connect people to share information and solve issues as a team is crucial.

WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
Is there an option to share visibility of a shipment or group of shipments with both users and non-users of the platform?	Look for options when it comes to data that can be shared, the channels where it can be shared, and what customization they allow for (such as company-specific language or logos).
What in-platform collaboration tools do you offer?	Look for the ability to quickly and seamlessly communicate with teammates and even carriers themselves in real time. Things like chat solutions and alerts for offline users can go a long way toward speeding up resolution of issues.
What privacy controls and permission levels do you offer?	See more on this in the “What are the technical, integration and security considerations?” on page 17.

Alerts, Notifications & Mobile

Similar to analytics, proactive alerting and getting information when and where you need it differentiates simple visibility from actionable intelligence.

WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
What types of events can trigger alerts?	You’ll want to look for alerting and notification capabilities that allow for the updates that matter most to you. Consider triggers like ETA updates (on-time, ahead of schedule, late), stop events (arrived, departed), appointment reschedules, time to pickup/delivery, dwell time threshold exceeded, equipment assignment, temperature threshold exceeded and more.
What do you offer for scheduled delivery of reports?	Look for a vendor that lets you turn custom alerts into something even more consistent and actionable, like receiving a report via email twice a day with loads that are running late.
What channels can alerts be sent to (email, text, mobile)?	The more variety, customization and configurability means the solution can be tailored to your needs.
What filtering and suppression rules do you offer?	Make sure you have flexibility and control in how you can set up your alerts. Consider things like customers, carriers, users, tags, statuses, stops, pickups and more.
Who can you send alerts to?	Look for expansive control over your audience, and make sure you can set rules to alert specific carriers, shippers, consignees, customers and pre-set groups of users. This way, you can ensure that you get the right information to the right people — and only those people.
What mobile offerings do you provide?	You’ll want to ensure the provider offers mobile-friendly solutions for a variety of roles and use cases to ensure nothing gets missed, and that people can access and send information when it’s most convenient to them. Look for the mobile services they offer for carriers, shippers and others, how many downloads they’ve had, and how many individuals are actively using those apps.

Carrier Considerations

There are many things to account for when getting your carriers to adopt a new system, especially one that creates more accountability. Communicating how that platform provides value to both shipper and carrier is key.

WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
Which carrier TMS integrations do you have?	
What percentage of new customers' carriers are already using your platform?	More carriers already active on the platform means less time spent onboarding and driving adoption, which means you start seeing value in the platform more quickly. It's worth pushing on bold claims here to ensure that the carriers on the platform are actively pushing shipment data to it.
How many GPS/ELD integrations do you have?	
What information do you receive from carriers and how often?	Look for a high frequency of data sharing, but also a high level of customization to control updates so you're always getting the data that's most useful to you. Important data points to keep in mind are latitude and longitude coordinates, altitude, vehicle speed, driver hours of service, driver status updates (e.g., Driving, Off-Duty, Arrived, Delivered) and temperature (if the carrier telematics solution supports it).
Can you track empty trucks?	If you find a provider that starts tracking as soon as the equipment is assigned to the load, you're then able to reliably track the driver's arrival and provide an accurate ETA well in advance.
How do you onboard new carriers? Do you own that process or is the customer responsible?	<p>While it's nice to have control, it's nicer to not have to do the heavy lifting yourself so you can stay focused on your day-to-day operations. Look for how the vendor covers a few key things:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounting for types of carriers, broker/carrier mix, mode, geography, long haul/ short haul, round trips and other criteria specific to the shipper or 3PL. • Planning: How required information (SCAC, volume, mode, contact info, etc.) is received from both new carriers and those already in the vendor's database. • Integration: Guiding the carriers through successful integration between their internal systems and the vendor's platform (GPS data-sharing agreement and credentialing, TMS data mapping, etc.). • Quality Assurance: After the technical integration, this process ensures tracking is consistent to ensure you don't experience any disruptions. • Training: How extensive a vendor's training is will point to how successful your rollout and continued adoption will be.
How do you ensure carrier data quality?	Carrier data quality is a critical piece during implementation. Look for an established method for measuring the frequency and accuracy of location pings that sets benchmarks for carriers to achieve before moving from a Quality Assurance to a Live status. In addition, you'll want to find a vendor that retrieves all valid asset IDs and present that data to carriers via API to assign the correct truck number (especially important for smaller carriers).

WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
How do you define a carrier as “onboarded/live”? How long does that process take on average? What formal guarantees, if any, do you offer for the timing and completion of carrier onboarding?	A trusted provider should be able to prove quick and efficient onboarding of your carriers, and they should be able to formally commit to the speed and completeness of that process.
Do you charge for carrier onboarding? If so, what and how do you charge?	
What ongoing carrier training do you offer beyond initial onboarding?	
How do you support communication and updates from smaller, local carriers that might not be GPS/ELD-enabled vs. highly sophisticated ones?	Most larger national and regional carriers have devices installed with which most vendors can integrate. For those that don’t, look at what the vendor’s solution offers, what information they can still track, and how easy they make it on the carrier.
What is your average carrier compliance, and how do you define compliance?	Look for how frequently the vendor gets location updates, as well as the comprehensiveness of the updates received. Is there an entry and exit ping for every geofence? How often do you receive location pings? How does it vary by brokered freight vs. for-hire carriers? By industry, mode, region, etc.?
What do you offer for alerting and collaborating with carriers and drivers?	Look for vendors that allow you to easily share updates and collaborate with them directly from the platform. Consider things like the dispatcher’s ability to add notes and comments about loads, and drivers’ ability to read and respond quickly.
What dedicated team resources do you have for carriers?	Look for vendors who have a team dedicated to connecting, validating and supporting their carrier network.

Sustainability

The world’s largest companies are adopting initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in their supply chains, and many now view these initiatives as drivers of competitive advantage. Here’s what you should ask vendors to understand their capabilities when it comes to helping you meet your sustainability initiatives.

WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
What products or features do you offer to support sustainability and green initiative efforts?	<p>There are a couple key ways a vendor might do this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering visibility into partner data lets you collaborate to identify optimal shipments and even shared lane usage to maximize otherwise empty trucks. Of course, the more partners in a vendor’s network, the more opportunity for this type of collaboration. • Sustainability dashboards that help you understand your emissions across your supply chains and across specific modes and lanes.

Appointment Management

While not a specific component of transportation visibility, a provider’s solution for streamlined appointment scheduling can tie into that visibility and its ETA offerings to vastly improve facility operations.

WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
What does your solution offer for connecting visibility to smart appointment scheduling?	Strong integrations or even built-in products that dynamically schedule appointments based on real-time ETA updates can drastically improve dock door utilization and lead to significant savings, avoiding wait times and double booking. Look for a vendor that can expand to other parts of your supply chain to reduce manual tracking and drive efficiency across multiple teams.

Yard Management

Leveraging a RTTVP in tandem with a yard management system opens a whole new world of possibilities for supply chain auditing and optimization. Better visibility into where your freight is in the yard, its recorded vs. actual check-in times, and tying it all to your RTTVP’s ETAs gives you the ability to leverage assets and staff accordingly. Better connecting that data paints a clearer picture into where your product is at all times, allowing for more flexibility to reroute in-transit freight to the most optimal location.

WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
What does your solution offer for connecting visibility to yard management?	Enhanced tracking metrics at the yard level will help shine a light on last mile tracking, which has historically been a blind spot in the supply chain. A YMS should, at minimum, provide metrics on actual arrival/departure time (in comparison to expected), dwell time on site (trailer and driver), detention and demurrage fees accrued, as well as many other core metrics. RTTVPs that can connect a YMS with real-time in-transit visibility will provide even greater insight into these metrics and generate opportunities for optimization in the yard.

Ocean Freight Management

The complexity of ocean transportation requires much more than container tracking to provide a truly valuable solution. Knowing where your ship is is just the tip of the iceberg; and RTTVPs should be able to speak to their end-to-end management for international ocean shipments.

WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
What document management solutions do you offer?	Did you know that cumbersome documentation workflows can account for upwards of 70% of detention and demurrage? Or that most international shipments involve 12-17 documents crucial at very specific parts of the journey? With most companies still handling much of their paperwork manually and in disparate places, look for a provider that offers a single repository to upload, update, digitize and process all of your documentation in order to accelerate workflows.
What sorts of task management and collaboration tools do you offer?	Email and phone tag waste lots of time, and if an RTTVP can remove it from your track-and-trace efforts, they should be able to expand and improve other areas of the process as well. Look for tagging, real-time messaging and alerting tools to keep everyone in the know and on-task through automated and triggered workflows.

WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
Do you offer booking support?	Complex rate structures, manual spot rates and bookings and more plague the process. Auto-creation of bookings with built-in rate optimization tools can drastically reduce transportation costs, delays in payment (and thus in service), and inefficient use of your teams' time responding to issues.

What are the technical, integration and security considerations of the platform?

Integrations

Asking for a full list of integrations is outlined under the Network Power section on page 7. This section will enable you to better evaluate the technical considerations of those integrations.

WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
How do you integrate with a shipper's systems and allow for data transfers (ERP, TMS, etc.)?	<p>Look for multiple ways in which they can integrate with your systems. Depending on your requirements, the integration should be able to be either a 1-way or 2-way integration. Data transfer methods/formats might vary from vendor to vendor if using a pre-built partner integration (e.g., OTM, BluJay, Manhattan). You should be able to send data in various ways: as JSON (via API), XML (via FTP/SFTP), CSV (via FTP/SFTP) or EDI.</p> <p>Carrier integrations should also include various options: API, CSV, XLS, XLSX, TSV or EDI. But the provider should also be flexible to ingest other file formats and through other means as needed. Outbound data should typically leverage APIs/Callback URLs or FTP mechanisms to transmit shipment tracking information (e.g., arrivals, departures, ETAs).</p>

Data Requirements

WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
How do you ensure clean data?	<p>Any platform that's processing your critical tracking data and at higher volumes in terms of GB, files, check calls and callbacks should be able to speak to their investments in the people, technology and processes to ensure clean data.</p> <p>Look for dedicated teams and investment in technology to handle data ingestion, data storage, data analytics, data engineering, data privacy and data science.</p> <p>Ask whether the data cleansing process is manual, uses static rule based techniques or more advanced data science and anomaly detection to catch issues.</p>

WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
<p>Please speak to your platform’s data handling in the following areas: importing, exporting, identification, merging and deduplication.</p>	<p>You want a platform that accepts almost all forms and formats of data: via push/pull APIs, FTP/SFTP, etc., and formats such as CSV, XML,JSON, etc.</p> <p>Exporting should be supported with variety as well, via Excel, using webhooks leveraging callback URLs and REST APIs for ingestion of shipment status and tracking information, etc.</p> <p>Deduplication is also a critical component to speak to when the whole idea of transportation visibility is dependent upon receiving data about the same load at various stages of its journey (reliably, without subsequent data updates flagging it as a “new” load).</p>
<p>What data is required vs. optional for tracking?</p>	<p>Look for a vendor’s ability to balance minimal data requirements to ensure safe, reliable tracking that’s still reasonable and plausible to achieve with carriers. Things like unique shipment ID, stop addresses, stop appointment dates and times, as well as carrier SCAC from the client’s TMS should be non-negotiables. Additional optional details such customer name, business hours of operation, load reference numbers (e.g., PO, PRO, tracking, MBOL), product types/load group identifiers, # of pallets, # skids, part number, part quantity, etc. will only add to tracking quality.</p>

Security

WHAT TO ASK
<p>Are you SOC2 Type2 compliant?</p>
<p>Please outline any history of data breaches you’ve experienced and what was done to remediate the issue(s).</p>
<p>Please outline your GDPR compliance program.</p>
<p>Does your platform support single sign-on? (e.g. SAML2.0, OpenID, Oauth)</p>

Uptime

WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
<p>What is your platform’s uptime?</p>	<p>It’s crucial that your visibility platform is consistently available and working when you need it to. The reliability of a provider’s solution is measurable, and they should easily be able to share this information.</p>

Permissions

WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
<p>What permission and access levels do you offer?</p>	<p>Providers should offer extensive configurability in terms of who can access various parts of the platform.</p>

Custom Branding

WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
Do you offer customizable, branding options within the product (white labeling)?	Especially important to 3PLs, customization options for personal branding allows you to provide a more consistent customer experience when sharing tracking information.

Will I receive the support I need to get started and ensure long-term success?

IMPLEMENTATION & SUPPORT

Having sufficient resources to help you get up and running, resources available both during and after setup, support resolution times, etc., will all play a crucial role in ensuring your ongoing success using the platform. Here’s what to look for.

WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
What’s your average implementation/ rollout time? What factors speed that up or slow it down?	
What are the staff resources during setup? Do we get dedicated resources?	Look for a wide range of support options across mediums and time frames. Certain dedicated roles and contacts on the provider side might be available to help you in different ways such as: project/timeline management for your implementation, carrier onboarding, integration setup, data validation and product use case education.
Is their onboarding one-size-fits-all or tailored to your specific business objectives? How is customized onboarding accomplished?	
What are the ongoing staff resources post-setup? Do we get dedicated resources?	Look for a wide range of support options across mediums and timeframes.
What resource content do you make available so customers can educate themselves without being dependent on reaching a person?	Providers should ideally offer robust, extensive "how-to" tutorials, deep-dive trainings, and rich video content to help you understand key platform features. Quantity of help articles, frequency of updating them, and your ability to provide feedback on them are key considerations.
How do you ensure smooth initial setup with your customers’ carriers?	Please see the dedicated Carrier Considerations section on page 14.
What are the average support ticket response and resolution times?	Providers should be able to easily outline and share their SLAs (service-level agreements).
What languages and time zones do you have staff to support implementation?	Look for a provider’s ability to manage projects across the globe in various regions and in multiple languages. Custom staffing of implementation might be based on things like your specific business objectives, location, time zone and language of customer resources.

WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
What strategic guidance does your team offer to help change management and adoption across my organization?	The best providers will have clearly laid-out frameworks and methods for helping you drive adoption among your internal teams. Look for someone who can not only speak to this, but offer a joint plan of action.
What help does your team provide to establish custom KPIs and measure ROI?	Look for a vendor who works with you to regularly revisit how your organization is benefitting from their tools in the areas that matter most to you.
What customer reviews can you share regarding the support they've received and their satisfaction with the product and team?	A trusted provider will be able to point to a high quantity of high-quality, unbiased reviews that speak to their customer commitment.

How does the vendor charge?

WHAT TO ASK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
What are your pricing package and a la carte pricing breakdowns (features, # loads/modes/geos included, volume price breaks, etc.)?	You'll want to look for some flexibility based on volume vs. fixed fees. Ideally, you don't wind up paying for extraneous features you don't intend to use.
What are the implementation fees? What is included in those fees?	Look for a provider who is going to align the approach and associated cost with your business goals and the value you're looking to achieve. They should be experienced enough to balance out the nice-to-haves in an implementation scope (and price) vs. the must-haves.
What are the carrier onboarding fees? What is included in those fees?	You'll want to look for some fee flexibility that allows you to get to the level of carrier data that helps meet your business goals most effectively.
What other fees might we need to be aware of?	

How do I move forward, and how can I maximize my investment in RTTVP?

There are different ways to build a business case. Hiring consultants isn't always the most cost-effective, so ideally the providers you're vetting offer some level of support (see the *"Will I get the help I need to get started and ensure long-term success?"* section above). Some sort of value assessment program should be part of the consultative sales process, correlating solution capabilities, performance metrics and value opportunity. Once you've started using the solution, these value assessments should be regularly revisited to ensure you're realizing maximum ROI.

HOW DO I JUSTIFY THE INVESTMENT?

It starts with generating a hypothesis for value recognition alongside the provider for what areas their tools can help you improve upon (in a measurable way).

Hypothesis Examples:

- Systematic exception identification, alerting and recommended resolutions to shipment problems will **increase productivity** in the transportation department and **reduce detention and demurrage costs**.
- Detailed tracking of outbound customer shipments combined with systematic exception alerting and direct customer access to shipment details will **improve OTD** and **increase customer satisfaction**.

HOW DO I MEASURE SUCCESS?

Once you know what areas you think RTTVP can improve in your supply chain operations, it comes down to creating accountability by setting some target metrics and outlining a plan for attaining them. Again, your provider should be not only willing but enthusiastic to assist in this process.

Establishing KPIs

Examples:

- Transportation track and trace **personnel productivity** will increase 20%-50% in the first year after deployment.
- **Unanticipated shipment delays and late arrivals** will be reduced 70%-90% within the first year.
- **Overall shipment delays and late shipment arrivals** will be reduced by 25%-40% in the first year and an additional 10%-30% in each of the following two years.
- **Unplanned expedites** will be reduced 5%-20%.
- **Late deliveries** will decrease 10%-30%.
- Customer late delivery **penalties** will be reduced 10%-30%.
- **CSAT score** will increase 10%-15%.

Benefits Projections

Going beyond metrics, it's time to get into the specific savings. If you are fined every time you're late and can now address that, what is the total savings to your organization? If you're 90% on time with a customer, thanks to RTTVP, can you charge a premium or save in some other way? Can you shift headcount around on the team or avoid adding new roles to save budget that way? There are many options to consider as you learn what RTTVP can do for you.

Examples:

- Productivity improvements will allow the transportation department to accommodate the planned 12% annual growth plan with no additional headcount. Shipment delay reductions will decrease detention and demurrage costs by \$225K-\$400K annually. Unplanned expedite reductions will decrease annual transportation costs \$150K-\$700K annually.
- Late customer delivery penalties will be reduced \$50K-\$150K annually. Improved customer satisfaction scores will have a 0.3%-1.1% impact on market share with a potential revenue uplift of \$3.7M-\$8.3M annually.

Leveraging this approach to build your business case not only correlates RTTVP capabilities with tangible value and impact, but also sets expectations for both the process and organizational changes required to realize the benefits.



In Closing

One final note and key variable to keep in mind in all this is time. Business tools that can create the impact RTTVP can require time and due diligence to select and roll out. As outlined within this guide, it's critical to understand the full scope of the solution, each RTTVP's deployment methodology, hear success stories directly from their customers, and establish a clear timeline to value. But your own organization's process for prioritizing projects and expenditure approval is equally as significant. Make sure providers can best align with your standards.

We hope this guide is helpful as you put together your RFPs and move forward in deploying RTTVP within your supply chain. If you have any questions as you embark on your real-time transportation visibility journey or wish to start being connected with current RTTVP customers, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at (888) 466-6958 or www.fourkites.com/contact/.