

**MARTEN TRANSPORT ANNOUNCES FOURTH QUARTER
AND YEAR END RESULTS
NET INCOME OF 27 CENTS PER DILUTED SHARE**

MONDOVI, Wis., Jan. 27, 2009 (Globe Newswire) – Marten Transport, Ltd. (Nasdaq/GS:MRTN) announced today its financial and operating results for the quarter and year ended Dec. 31, 2008.

For the fourth quarter, net income increased 96.4% to \$5.8 million, or 27 cents per diluted share, compared with \$3.0 million, or 14 cents per diluted share, for the same quarter of 2007. For 2008, net income increased 20.7% to \$18.1 million, or 82 cents per diluted share, compared with \$15.0 million, or 68 cents per diluted share, for 2007.

Operating revenue, consisting of revenue from truckload and logistics operations, decreased 3.1% to \$140.4 million in the fourth quarter of 2008 from \$144.8 million in the 2007 quarter. For 2008, operating revenue increased 8.4% to \$607.1 million from \$560.0 million in 2007. Truckload revenue decreased 5.9% to \$115.9 million in the fourth quarter of 2008 from \$123.2 million in the 2007 quarter. For 2008, truckload revenue increased 3.6% to \$508.2 million from \$490.5 million in 2007. Logistics revenue, which consists of revenue from brokerage and intermodal operations, increased 12.9% to \$24.4 million in the fourth quarter of 2008 from \$21.6 million in the 2007 quarter. For 2008, logistics revenue increased 42.4% to \$98.9 million from \$69.5 million in 2007.

Operating revenue included fuel surcharges of \$23.2 million and \$132.6 million for the fourth quarter and yearly periods of 2008, compared with \$26.0 million and \$87.1 million for the fourth quarter and yearly periods of 2007. Operating revenue, net of fuel surcharges, decreased 1.4% to \$117.1 million in the 2008 quarter from \$118.8 million in the 2007 quarter and increased by 0.3% to \$474.5 million for 2008 from \$472.9 million in 2007.

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Randolph L. Marten said, “Our ability to produce favorable results within an unfavorable freight environment was clearly demonstrated in the fourth quarter. We continued our disciplined focus on superior customer service, profitable freight selection and aggressive cost controls. In the fourth quarter of 2008, our total operating expenses declined 6.5% quarter-over-quarter, while operating revenue declined by only 3.1%. Our fuel expense decreased in this year’s fourth quarter due to fuel prices declining significantly throughout the quarter combined with fuel cost control measures we implemented in 2008.

“We continued to increase the density in our regional markets, allowing for a shorter length of haul and overall reduced expenses. While our rates per mile in our regional operations tend to be higher, the overall transportation cost to our customers is lower as a result of their trending toward regional distribution.

“Our logistics business continued its solid growth in the fourth quarter of 2008 as well. Logistics revenue, net of intermodal fuel surcharges, grew to \$22.6 million in the fourth quarter, an increase of 10.4% over the 2007 quarter. For the year, logistics revenue, net of intermodal fuel surcharges, grew 36.3% to \$90.2 million, compared to \$66.2 million in 2007. Logistics revenue consists of revenue from our internal brokerage and intermodal operations and revenue associated with our 45% interest in MW Logistics, LLC, a third-party provider of logistics services.

“In the fourth quarter we also saw an exodus of capacity as independent contractors left the market and some of the smaller carriers failed, which impacted the mix of company and

independent contractor miles. The number of miles driven by independent contractors decreased 44.8% while the number of company miles stayed basically flat. Average truckload revenue, net of fuel surcharges, per total mile increased by 3.6% to \$1.543 over the 2007 quarter. In furtherance of our focus on the most profitable freight, we continued to reduce our length of haul. Average miles per trip decreased by 7.5% quarter-over-quarter, which contributed to a 4.6% decrease in average miles per tractor. Our average truckload revenue, net of fuel surcharges, per tractor per week decreased by 1.2% due to the decrease in utilization, partially offset by the increase in rates.

“Purchased transportation expense decreased in the 2008 quarter compared with the 2007 quarter. The decrease in purchased transportation expense was primarily the result of fewer miles driven by independent contractors, partially offset by continuing growth in our logistics business.

“The improvement in fuel and fuel taxes expense was primarily attributable to a decrease in the average cost of fuel compared with the fourth quarter of 2007 and to fuel cost control measures we implemented throughout 2008. Over the past year, we have worked diligently to control fuel costs and usage by improving our volume purchasing arrangements and optimizing our drivers’ fuel purchases with national fuel centers, focusing on shorter lengths of haul, installing and tightly managing the use of auxiliary power units in 96% of our tractors to minimize engine idling, and improving fuel usage in our trailers’ refrigeration units.

“Insurance and claims expense increased approximately \$1.9 million from the fourth quarter of 2007, primarily due to an increase in the cost of self-insured auto liability and workers’ compensation accident claims.

“Our operating ratio (operating expenses as a percentage of operating revenue) improved to 92.7% for the fourth quarter of 2008 from 96.1% for the fourth quarter of 2007. Our operating ratio was 94.6% for 2008 compared with 95.0% for 2007.”

Mr. Marten also offered the following comments: “Marten’s already strong balance sheet grew even stronger throughout 2008. We continue to be well-positioned for an economic recovery. Our disciplined approach to controlling our operating expenses has allowed us to increase free cash flow to pay down debt. Over the last year we’ve paid down \$41.8 million in debt in order to ensure that we retain the liquidity needed to weather the current economic downturn. At Dec. 31, 2008, our balance sheet reflected approximately \$255.7 million in stockholders’ equity and \$2.9 million in debt, for a debt-to-capitalization ratio of approximately 1.1%, with the lowest level of debt since before our initial public offering in 1986.

“We anticipate net capital expenditures of \$40 million to \$60 million in 2009, which we will adjust throughout the year as we size our fleet to existing customer demand.

“Lastly, I gratefully acknowledge the people of Marten Transport who remain one of Marten’s key strategic strengths and who executed our multi-faceted business model very well within the difficult operating conditions of 2008.”

Marten Transport, with headquarters in Mondovi, Wis., is one of the leading temperature-sensitive truckload carriers in the United States. Marten specializes in transporting food and other consumer packaged goods that require a temperature-sensitive or insulated environment. Marten offers nationwide service, concentrating on expedited movements for high-volume customers. Marten’s common stock is traded on the NASDAQ Global Select Market under the symbol MRTN.

This press release contains certain statements that may be considered forward-looking statements within the meaning of Section 27A of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, and Section 21E of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended. Such statements may be identified by their use of terms or phrases such as “expects,” “estimates,” “projects,” “believes,” “anticipates,” “plans,” “intends,” and similar terms and phrases. Forward-looking statements are based upon the current beliefs and expectations of the Company’s management and are inherently subject to significant risks and uncertainties, some of which cannot be predicted or quantified, which could cause future events and actual results to differ materially from those set forth in, contemplated by, or underlying the forward-looking statements. In this release, forward-looking statements involve, among other things, our expectations concerning our position in the industry and net capital expenditures. The following factors, among others, could cause actual results to differ materially from those in the forward-looking statements: the risk that our perception of the cyclical nature of the markets we primarily serve is incorrect or there are recessionary economic cycles and downturns in customers’ business cycles; increases in the prices paid for new revenue equipment and changes in the resale value of our used equipment causing our gain on disposition to fluctuate; excess tractor or trailer capacity in the trucking industry; decreased demand for our services or loss of one or more of our major customers; our ability to maintain profitability in or continue to grow our logistics business; our ability to maintain density in the regional markets; surplus inventories; decreased availability of financing from our traditional sources; decreased cash flows; strikes, work slow downs, or work stoppages at the company, customers, ports, or other shipping related facilities; increases or rapid fluctuations in fuel prices as well as fluctuations in surcharge collection, including, but not limited to, changes in customer fuel surcharge policies and increases in fuel surcharge bases by customers; the volume and terms of diesel purchase commitments; interest rates, fuel taxes, tolls, and license and registration fees; increased indebtedness, and associated interest expense, arising from upgrading our fleet of equipment; shortages in supply of new equipment from manufacturers; changes in management’s estimates of the need for new tractors and trailers; increases in compensation for and difficulty in attracting and retaining qualified drivers and independent contractors; elevated experience in the frequency and severity of claims relating to accident, cargo, workers’ compensation, health, and other claims; changes in management’s estimates of liability based upon such experience and development factors; increases in insurance premiums and deductible amounts; seasonal factors such as harsh weather conditions that increase operating costs; decreases in productivity that may offset or eliminate potential savings from the installation of auxiliary power units, unexpected maintenance or other costs associated with such units, or our inability to continue to maintain idle time at the recent level; competition from trucking, rail, and intermodal competitors; and regulatory requirements that increase costs or decrease efficiency, including new emissions standards for engines and revised hours-of-service requirements for drivers, or changes in tax treatment with respect to our per diem program. Readers should review and consider these factors along with the various disclosures by the Company in its press releases, stockholder reports and filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission. The Company does not assume, and specifically disclaims, any obligation to update or revise any forward-looking statements to reflect actual results or changes in the factors affecting the forward-looking information.

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MARTEN TRANSPORT, LTD.
CONSOLIDATED CONDENSED BALANCE SHEETS

| (In thousands, except share information) | December 31, 2008 | December 31, 2007 |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|
| | <u>(Unaudited)</u> | |
| ASSETS | | |
| Current assets: | | |
| Cash | \$ 2,395 | \$ 3,618 |
| Marketable securities | 2,604 | 350 |
| Receivables: | | |
| Trade, net | 50,143 | 51,539 |
| Other | 7,385 | 6,175 |
| Prepaid expenses and other | 13,705 | 13,823 |
| Deferred income taxes | <u>6,140</u> | <u>4,653</u> |
| Total current assets | <u>82,372</u> | <u>80,158</u> |
| Property and equipment: | | |
| Revenue equipment, buildings and land, office equipment and other | 451,172 | 447,430 |
| Accumulated depreciation | <u>(136,871)</u> | <u>(122,246)</u> |
| Net property and equipment | 314,301 | 325,184 |
| Other assets | <u>770</u> | <u>2,048</u> |
| TOTAL ASSETS | <u>\$ 397,443</u> | <u>\$ 407,390</u> |
| LIABILITIES AND STOCKHOLDERS' EQUITY | | |
| Current liabilities: | | |
| Checks issued in excess of cash balances | \$ 1,807 | \$ - |
| Accounts payable and accrued liabilities | 32,894 | 32,384 |
| Insurance and claims accruals | 21,386 | 17,431 |
| Current maturities of long-term debt | <u>1,428</u> | <u>5,000</u> |
| Total current liabilities | 57,515 | 54,815 |
| Long-term debt, less current maturities | 1,429 | 39,643 |
| Deferred income taxes | <u>81,048</u> | <u>74,719</u> |
| Total liabilities | <u>139,992</u> | <u>169,177</u> |
| Minority interest | <u>1,715</u> | <u>1,283</u> |
| Stockholders' equity: | | |
| Preferred stock, \$.01 par value per share; 2,000,000 shares authorized; no shares issued and outstanding | - | - |
| Common stock, \$.01 par value per share; 48,000,000 shares authorized; 21,830,071 shares at December 31, 2008, and 21,811,837 shares at December 31, 2007, issued and outstanding | 218 | 218 |
| Additional paid-in capital | 75,305 | 74,570 |
| Retained earnings | <u>180,213</u> | <u>162,142</u> |
| Total stockholders' equity | <u>255,736</u> | <u>236,930</u> |
| TOTAL LIABILITIES AND STOCKHOLDERS' EQUITY | <u>\$ 397,443</u> | <u>\$ 407,390</u> |

MARTEN TRANSPORT, LTD.
CONSOLIDATED CONDENSED STATEMENTS OF OPERATIONS

| (In thousands, except per share information) | Three Months | | Year | |
|--|--------------------|-------------|--------------------|------------|
| | Ended December 31, | | Ended December 31, | |
| | 2008 | 2007 | 2008 | 2007 |
| | (Unaudited) | (Unaudited) | (Unaudited) | |
| OPERATING REVENUE | \$ 140,354 | \$ 144,811 | \$ 607,099 | \$ 560,017 |
| OPERATING EXPENSES (INCOME): | | | | |
| Salaries, wages and benefits | 38,294 | 37,988 | 152,616 | 153,774 |
| Purchased transportation | 24,761 | 29,386 | 113,175 | 103,776 |
| Fuel and fuel taxes | 30,963 | 39,497 | 175,892 | 149,021 |
| Supplies and maintenance | 10,080 | 10,257 | 38,378 | 38,621 |
| Depreciation | 13,001 | 11,692 | 49,705 | 47,009 |
| Operating taxes and licenses | 1,667 | 1,662 | 6,729 | 6,823 |
| Insurance and claims | 7,421 | 5,561 | 25,409 | 22,353 |
| Communications and utilities | 1,033 | 1,021 | 3,740 | 3,869 |
| Gain on disposition of revenue equipment | (225) | (503) | (2,664) | (3,386) |
| Other | 3,092 | 2,576 | 11,414 | 10,356 |
| | 130,087 | 139,137 | 574,394 | 532,216 |
| Total operating expenses | | | | |
| OPERATING INCOME | 10,267 | 5,674 | 32,705 | 27,801 |
| OTHER EXPENSES (INCOME): | | | | |
| Interest expense | 110 | 759 | 1,142 | 3,823 |
| Interest income and other | (32) | (162) | (184) | (693) |
| Minority interest | 198 | 272 | 1,120 | 802 |
| | 276 | 869 | 2,078 | 3,932 |
| INCOME BEFORE INCOME TAXES | 9,991 | 4,805 | 30,627 | 23,869 |
| PROVISION FOR INCOME TAXES | 4,169 | 1,840 | 12,556 | 8,901 |
| NET INCOME | \$ 5,822 | \$ 2,965 | \$ 18,071 | \$ 14,968 |
| BASIC EARNINGS PER COMMON SHARE | \$ 0.27 | \$ 0.14 | \$ 0.83 | \$ 0.69 |
| DILUTED EARNINGS PER COMMON SHARE | \$ 0.27 | \$ 0.14 | \$ 0.82 | \$ 0.68 |

MARTEN TRANSPORT, LTD.
SEGMENT INFORMATION
(Unaudited)

| (Dollars in thousands) | Three Months Ended December 31, | | Dollar Change Three Months Ended December 31, 2008 vs. 2007 | Percentage Change Three Months Ended December 31, 2008 vs. 2007 |
|---|---------------------------------------|------------------|--|--|
| | 2008 | 2007 | | |
| Operating revenue: | | | | |
| Truckload revenue, net of fuel surcharge revenue | \$ 94,527 | \$ 98,292 | \$ (3,765) | (3.8) % |
| Truckload fuel surcharge revenue | 21,414 | 24,893 | (3,479) | (14.0) |
| Total Truckload revenue | <u>115,941</u> | <u>123,185</u> | <u>(7,244)</u> | <u>(5.9)</u> |
| Logistics revenue, net of intermodal fuel surcharge revenue | 22,611 | 20,483 | 2,128 | 10.4 |
| Intermodal fuel surcharge revenue | 1,802 | 1,143 | 659 | 57.7 |
| Total Logistics revenue | <u>24,413</u> | <u>21,626</u> | <u>2,787</u> | <u>12.9</u> |
| Total operating revenue | <u>\$140,354</u> | <u>\$144,811</u> | <u>\$ (4,457)</u> | <u>(3.1) %</u> |
| Operating income: | | | | |
| Truckload | \$ 9,075 | \$ 4,169 | \$ 4,906 | 117.7 % |
| Logistics | 1,192 | 1,505 | (313) | (20.8) |
| Total operating income | <u>\$ 10,267</u> | <u>\$ 5,674</u> | <u>\$ 4,593</u> | <u>80.9 %</u> |
| Operating ratio: | | | | |
| Truckload | 92.2 % | 96.6 % | | 4.6 % |
| Logistics | 95.1 | 93.0 | | (2.3) |
| Consolidated operating ratio | <u>92.7 %</u> | <u>96.1 %</u> | | <u>3.5 %</u> |

**MARTEN TRANSPORT, LTD.
SEGMENT INFORMATION**

| (Dollars in thousands) | Year Ended December 31, | | Dollar Change Year Ended December 31, 2008 vs. 2007 | Percentage Change Year Ended December 31, 2008 vs. 2007 |
|---|-------------------------------|------------|--|--|
| | 2008 | 2007 | | |
| | (Unaudited) | | | |
| Operating revenue: | | | | |
| Truckload revenue, net of fuel surcharge revenue | \$ 384,264 | \$ 406,754 | \$ (22,490) | (5.5) % |
| Truckload fuel surcharge revenue | 123,922 | 83,786 | 40,136 | 47.9 |
| Total Truckload revenue | 508,186 | 490,540 | 17,646 | 3.6 |
| Logistics revenue, net of intermodal fuel surcharge revenue | 90,194 | 66,163 | 24,031 | 36.3 |
| Intermodal fuel surcharge revenue | 8,719 | 3,314 | 5,405 | 163.1 |
| Total Logistics revenue | 98,913 | 69,477 | 29,436 | 42.4 |
| Total operating revenue | \$ 607,099 | \$ 560,017 | \$ 47,082 | 8.4 % |
| Operating income: | | | | |
| Truckload | \$ 26,055 | \$ 22,689 | \$ 3,366 | 14.8 % |
| Logistics | 6,650 | 5,112 | 1,538 | 30.1 |
| Total operating income | \$ 32,705 | \$ 27,801 | \$ 4,904 | 17.6 % |
| Operating ratio: | | | | |
| Truckload | 94.9 % | 95.4 % | | 0.5 % |
| Logistics | 93.3 | 92.6 | | (0.8) |
| Consolidated operating ratio | 94.6 % | 95.0 % | | 0.4 % |

MARTEN TRANSPORT, LTD.
OPERATING STATISTICS
(Unaudited)

| | Three Months | | Year | |
|--|--------------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|
| | Ended December 31, | | Ended December 31, | |
| | 2008 | 2007 | 2008 | 2007 |
| Truckload Segment: | | | | |
| Average truckload revenue, net of fuel surcharges, per total mile | \$ 1,543 | \$ 1,490 | \$ 1,512 | \$ 1,480 |
| Average miles per tractor ⁽¹⁾ | 26,049 | 27,303 | 108,026 | 109,269 |
| Average truckload revenue, net of fuel surcharges, per tractor per week ⁽¹⁾ | \$ 3,058 | \$ 3,095 | \$ 3,124 | \$ 3,101 |
| Average tractors ⁽¹⁾ | 2,352 | 2,416 | 2,352 | 2,516 |
| Average miles per trip | 824 | 891 | 853 | 911 |
| Non-revenue miles percentage ⁽²⁾ | 8.6 % | 7.7 % | 8.1 % | 7.6 % |
| Total miles – company-employed drivers (in thousands) | 55,249 | 55,059 | 222,043 | 228,776 |
| Total miles – independent contractors (in thousands) | 6,023 | 10,908 | 32,081 | 46,096 |
| Logistics Segment: | | | | |
| Brokerage: | | | | |
| Revenue (in thousands) | \$ 14,702 | \$ 15,328 | \$ 62,315 | \$ 48,640 |
| Loads | 7,334 | 7,588 | 30,410 | 25,246 |
| Intermodal: | | | | |
| Revenue (in thousands) | \$ 9,711 | \$ 6,298 | \$ 36,598 | \$ 20,837 |
| Loads | 3,350 | 2,031 | 11,513 | 6,793 |
| Average tractors | 62 | 39 | 53 | 31 |
| At December 31, 2008, and December 31, 2007: | | | | |
| Total tractors ⁽¹⁾ | 2,376 | 2,416 | | |
| Average age of company tractors (in years) | 2.2 | 2.0 | | |
| Total trailers | 4,218 | 3,989 | | |
| Average age of company trailers (in years) | 3.1 | 2.7 | | |
| Ratio of trailers to tractors ⁽¹⁾ | 1.8 | 1.7 | | |
| Ratio of tractors to non-driver personnel ⁽¹⁾ | 4.5 | 5.2 | | |
| | | | | |
| (In thousands) | Three Months | | Year | |
| | Ended December 31, | | Ended December 31, | |
| | 2008 | 2007 | 2008 | 2007 |
| Net cash provided by operating activities | \$ 26,625 | \$ 17,406 | \$ 76,356 | \$ 61,807 |
| Net cash used for investing activities | 22,694 | 4,591 | 37,602 | 46,826 |
| Weighted average shares outstanding: | | | | |
| Basic | 21,830 | 21,812 | 21,787 | 21,795 |
| Diluted | 21,954 | 21,951 | 21,931 | 21,961 |

(1) Includes tractors driven by both company-employed drivers and independent contractors. Independent contractors provided 188 and 339 tractors as of December 31, 2008, and 2007, respectively.

(2) Represents the percentage of miles for which the company is not compensated.