



FIVE PILLARS BUSINESS CONSULTING

MARKET INTELLIGENCE PACKAGE

Week of October 19, 2026

PREPARED OCTOBER 21, 2026

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Executive Summary

WEEK OF OCTOBER 19, 2026 · MARKET SNAPSHOT

Fuel turned around and rail took the quarter. Those are the two facts that reorder every number in this package. EIA's survey for the week ending **10/19** printed **\$6.276/gallon, up 9.7¢** — the first increase in five weeks, and **every one of the eleven regions rose**. The four-week, 35¢ windfall is over; diesel now sits only **25.3¢** below the 9/21 record and the illustrative truckload surcharge is back to **50.4¢/mile, 3.9¢** under its September peak. That matters immediately because DAT's all-in rates for the week ending **10/17** *fell* — van -3¢ to \$3.09, reefer -2¢ to \$3.66, flatbed -4¢ to \$3.64 — and DAT says lower diesel caused nearly all of it, cutting the average fuel surcharge 3–4¢. That decline is already stale: the fuel line reverses next print while **linehaul did not move** (van \$2.26 flat, reefer **+1¢ to \$2.76**, flatbed \$2.65 flat). Base rates are holding a third above last year — van **+34.5%**, reefer **+32.7%**, flatbed **+29.3%** — on truck posts Dean Croke puts **21–27% below** a year ago against load posts **12–23% above**. Rejections confirm it: the national index is **13.9%** and **reefer is 21.44%** — **better than one load in five refused**. The new news is modal. AAR week 41 put U.S. intermodal at **308,015 units, up 12.6% y/y**, the strongest week in the trailing thirteen and the fourth straight acceleration, on the back of a record San Pedro Bay September (**2.04 million TEU**; LA **1,042,652**, Long Beach **997,177 up 25%**). Meanwhile intermodal spot pricing is up only **6.6% y/y** against truckload spot **+46.8%** — a **40-point** gap. That spread, not a rate table, is the biggest cost lever on this desk. Three moves for the next thirty days. Stop budgeting fuel relief and index the surcharge weekly. Sign truckload base before November, because the premium is capacity-driven and will not unwind on volume. And convert the lanes that can tolerate rail transit now, while the 40-point spread is still open — NRF has November imports at **2.00 million TEU, down 1% y/y**, so the window narrows as the import wave passes.

MARKET AT A GLANCE

Mode	All-In Rate	Linehaul	WoW (Linehaul)	YoY	Load:Truck	Signal
Reefer	\$3.66/mi	\$2.76/mi	+\$0.01	+32.7%	15.77	Rejections 21.4% — 1 in 5 loads refused
Dry Van	\$3.09/mi	\$2.26/mi	flat	+34.5%	9.70	Ratio fell on load posts -6%; base unmoved
Flatbed	\$3.64/mi	\$2.65/mi	flat	+29.3%	36.53	Only ratio to rise; forecast eases to \$2.59
LTL	4.8–5.4% GRI	154.8 Cass TL LH	+0.6% m/m	+20.4% Cass exp.	—	Cass guides October expenditures +23% y/y
Drayage	\$285–\$420 MODELED	+22% FSC	+4% trend	+19% imports	—	Record LA/LB September; Sec. 301 fee pause ends
Intermodal	—	+6.6% y/y InTek	+1.0%	+12.6% units	—	308,015 units wk 41; 40-pt discount to truckload

Sources: DAT Freight & Analytics weekly spot data, week ending 10/17/2026 (DAT Dry Van, Reefer and Flatbed Reports; all-equipment summary via TheTrucker, 10/20/2026). U.S. EIA Weekly Retail On-Highway Diesel Prices, survey week ending 10/19/2026. Cass Freight Index, September 2026 (via CCJ, 10/20/2026). FreightWaves SONAR tender-rejection commentary, 10/20/2026. Association of American Railroads weekly rail traffic, week 41 ending 10/17/2026. Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach September 2026 cargo releases. NRF/Hackett Global Port Tracker, 10/9/2026. InTek Logistics Intermodal Index, week ending 10/5/2026. Drayage band is a DrayLocator-published indicative range, not a reported transaction index.

WHY WORK WITH FIVE PILLARS BUSINESS CONSULTING — NOW

Six modes, six different directions, and the headline number lies in four of them. All-in truckload rates fell on fuel while base rates held. Load-to-truck ratios fell while rejections stayed near 14%. Intermodal volume is setting records while intermodal *pricing* barely moves. A procurement team reading any single index this week will reach the wrong conclusion. **Five Pillars Business Consulting** provides market-advisory and rate-benchmarking support so teams enter carrier, drayage and 3PL negotiations with defensible lane-level targets split cleanly between base and fuel; contract-negotiation support that stress-tests proposed fuel tables, GRI asks and per-diem/chassis schedules against the DAT, EIA, Cass and AAR series in this package; mode-conversion analysis that prices the truckload-to-intermodal spread by lane; and ongoing monitoring so budget assumptions get corrected before they go stale. This is independent advisory work — Five Pillars does not broker loads or hold carrier capacity, so the analysis has no incentive to point you toward any particular carrier relationship.

THE FUEL DECLINE IN THIS WEEK'S RATES IS ALREADY REVERSED

DAT's all-in rates fell 2–4¢ and DAT attributes nearly all of it to diesel — but that reflects pump prices through **10/17**. EIA's **10/19** survey rose **9.7¢**, with **all eleven regions up** and Rocky Mountain +12.0¢, W. Coast ex-CA +15.6¢. The modeled surcharge went from 48.9¢ to **50.4¢**. Any shipper reading a lower all-in

rate as market softening is reading a fuel artifact that unwinds next week.
Five Pillars Business Consulting | Market Intelligence | Prepared by Mike Cafarelli | Principal, Five Pillars Business Consulting | October 21, 2026

REEFER AT 21.4% REJECTIONS IS A CAPACITY EVENT, NOT PRODUCE

Reefer tender rejections are **21.44%** — more than one load in five — against a national index of **13.9%**. Reefer load posts *fell* 3.1% and the ratio eased to 15.77, yet linehaul still rose a cent and DAT forecasts **\$2.78**. Tightness is concentrated in the Pacific Northwest and Midwest on tree fruit and pre-Thanksgiving protein, and freeze-protection demand carries it into Q1. Lock reefer capacity commitments before November.

A 40-POINT RATE GAP IS THE YEAR'S LARGEST COST LEVER

Intermodal spot is up **6.6% y/y**; truckload spot is up **46.8% y/y**. Volume proves the capacity is real — **308,015** units in AAR week 41, **+12.6%**, the best week in thirteen. The constraint is rail infrastructure, not price, so the discount closes as conversion demand builds. NRF has November at **2.00M TEU (-1% y/y)**; the import wave that created the slack is cresting. Convert tolerant lanes this quarter.



Reefer Market Intelligence

DAT PRINT WEEK ENDING 10/17/2026 · TEMPERATURE-CONTROLLED TRUCKLOAD

ALL-IN SPOT RATE

\$3.66/mi

▼ -\$0.02 w/w (fuel)

LINEHAUL RATE

\$2.76/mi

▲ +\$0.01 w/w · +32.7% y/y

LOAD-TO-TRUCK RATIO

15.77

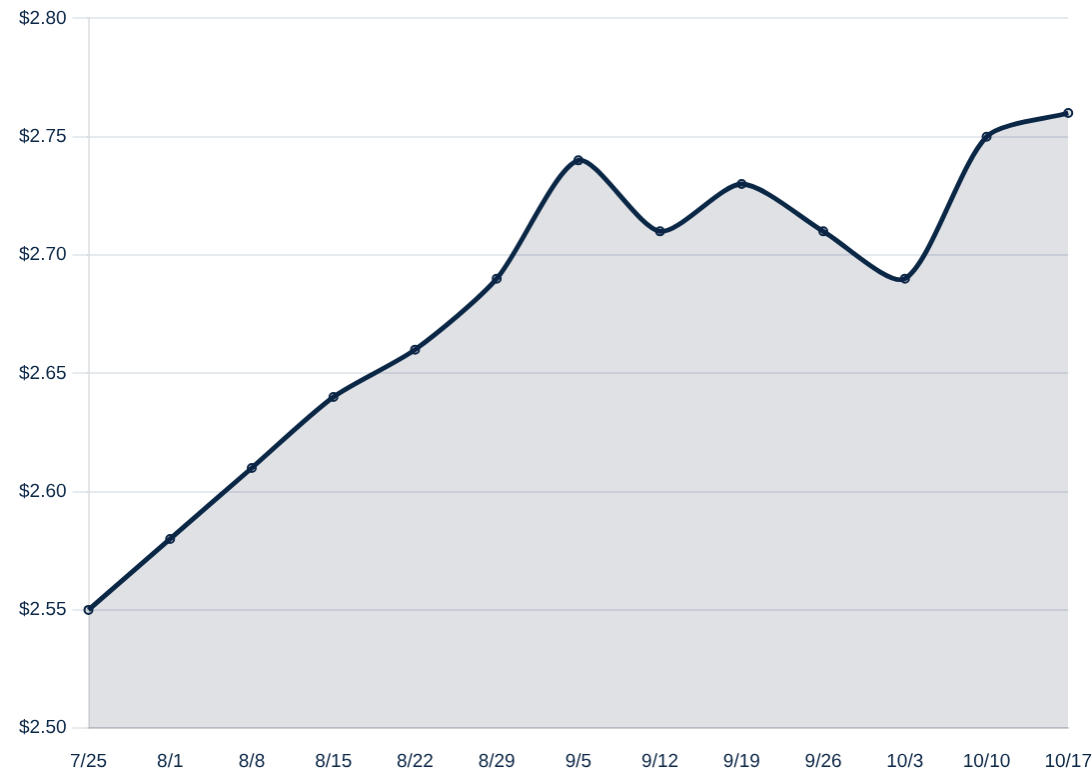
▼ from 16.20 prior wk

TENDER REJECTIONS

21.44%

▲ 1 in 5 loads refused

REEFER LINEHAUL RATE — TRAILING 13 WEEKS



REEFER SNAPSHOT — WEEK ENDING 10/17/2026

Metric	Value	Chg
All-in rate	\$3.66/mi	-\$0.02
Linehaul rate	\$2.76/mi	+\$0.01
Implied fuel component	\$0.90/mi	-\$0.03
Load-to-truck ratio	15.77	-0.43
Truck posts	-0.5%	w/w
Load posts	-3.1%	w/w
Ratio vs. year ago (11.05)		+42.6%
vs. 9-yr seasonal avg (\$2.14)		+28.8%
35-day DAT forecast	\$2.78 (band \$2.69-\$2.87)	

Source: DAT Freight & Analytics weekly reefer data, week ending 10/17/2026. Implied fuel component is all-in less linehaul. DAT revised the 10/10 load-to-truck ratio to 16.20 from the 16.8 originally published; the comparison above carries the revised basis. Chart weeks before 9/5 are reconstructed from DAT's published weekly changes. **EST**

THE RATE FELL AND THE MARKET GOT TIGHTER

Reefer's all-in rate dropped **2¢ to \$3.66** — and every cent of that was fuel. Linehaul, the number carriers actually keep, rose **1¢ to \$2.76**, a thirteen-week high and **32.7% above** last year. Load posts fell **3.1%** and truck posts fell **0.5%**, so the ratio eased to 15.77, still **42.6% above** the 11.05 of a year ago. DAT's 35-day forecast is **\$2.78** — reefer remains the only mode it has rising.

ONE LOAD IN FIVE IS BEING REFUSED

SONAR puts reefer tender rejections at **21.44%** as of 10/20, against a national truckload index of 13.9%. It peaked at 22.13% on 9/17 and has not been below 20.9% since. Tightness is concentrated in the **Pacific Northwest** (apples, potatoes, onions) and the **Midwest** on pre-Thanksgiving protein; Southern California is below the national average but tightening, which historically leads peak. Reefer runs **28.8% above** its nine-year seasonal average of \$2.14 — the widest premium of any mode. Price renewals off the seasonal gap, not the ratio.



LTL Market Intelligence

CASS DATA THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2026 · LESS-THAN-TRUCKLOAD

2026 GRI RANGE (6 CARRIERS)

4.8–5.4%

▲ all live; 2027 cycle pending

CASS SHIPMENTS, SEP Y/Y

+1.9%

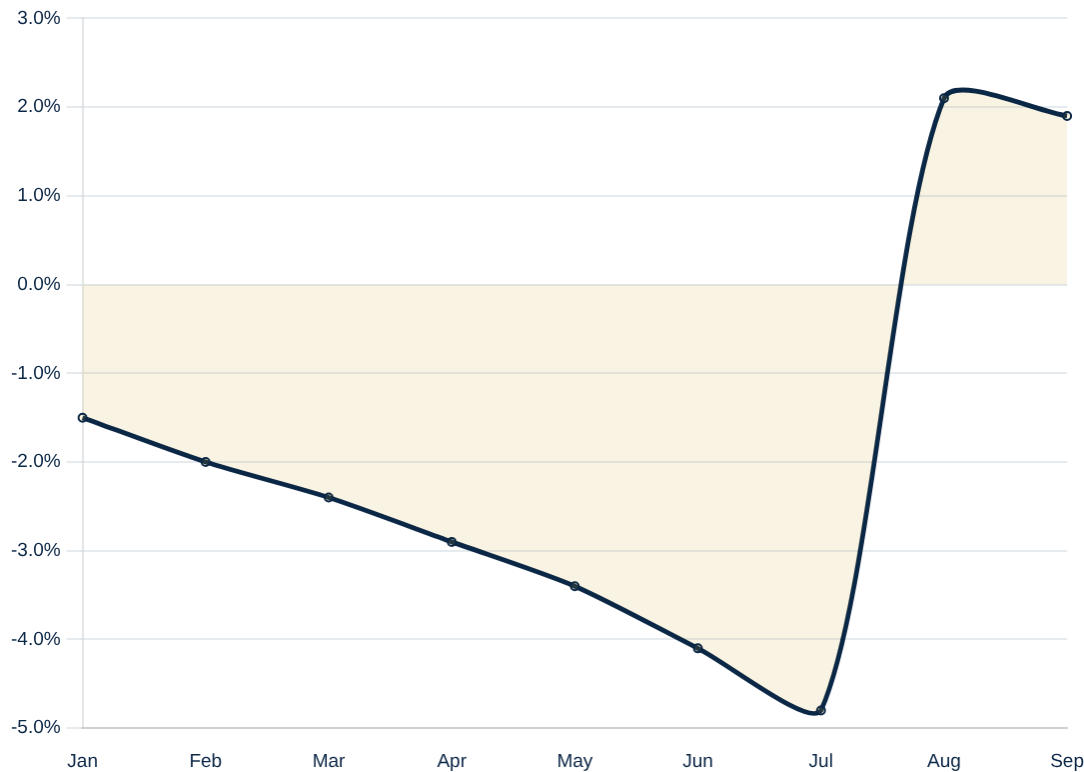
▲ +2.3% m/m · 2nd annual gain

CASS EXPENDITURES, SEP Y/Y

+20.4%

▲ from +19.0% in August

CASS FREIGHT INDEX — SHIPMENTS, YEAR-OVER-YEAR % BY MONTH (2026)



LTL & COST-INDEX SNAPSHOT

Item	Value
Cass shipments, Sep y/y	+1.9%
Cass shipments, Sep m/m	+2.3%
Cass expenditures, Sep y/y	+20.4%
Implied rate + fuel, Sep y/y	≈+18% EST
Cass TL Linehaul Index	154.8
TL Linehaul, m/m · y/y	+0.6% · +10.1%
Cass October guidance, shipments	≈+4% y/y
Cass October guidance, expenditures	≈+23% y/y
Old Dominion / ABF / XPO GRI	4.9% / 5.0% / 5.1%
Saia / FedEx Frt. / Estes GRI	5.2% / 5.4% / 4.8%

Sources: Cass Freight Index, September 2026, via CCJ Digital (published 10/18/2026, updated 10/20/2026). 2026 LTL general rate increases per published carrier tariffs. Implied rate figure is a Five Pillars Business Consulting working estimate derived by dividing expenditure growth by shipment growth, not a Cass-published series. EST

VOLUME IS FLAT AND THE BILL IS UP A FIFTH

Shipments rose **1.9% y/y** and **2.3% m/m** — a second straight annual gain after a three-and-a-half-year downturn — while expenditures rose **20.4% y/y**, accelerating from 19.0% in August. Roughly **18 points** of that is rate and fuel, not freight. Cass guides October to **+4% shipments on +23% expenditures**, so the wedge widens again next month. A transportation budget built on volume forecasts will miss by the full spread.

THE LINEHAUL INDEX IS THE NUMBER TO CARRY INTO 2027 TALKS

Cass's Truckload Linehaul Index — rate net of fuel — reached **154.8**, up **0.6% m/m** and **10.1% y/y**. That is the clean read on contract pricing, and it is rising steadily rather than spiking. Against it, 2026's LTL GRIs landed in a tight **4.8–5.4%** band, all effective in January. With the 2027 cycle not yet announced and carriers now taking mid-year increases, assume the 2027 ask opens at or above 5.5% and negotiate accessorials and dimensional rules, not the headline percentage.



Dry Van Market Intelligence

DAT PRINT WEEK ENDING 10/17/2026 · REGIONAL LINEHAUL DETAIL

ALL-IN SPOT RATE

\$3.09/mi

▼ -\$0.03 w/w (fuel)

LINEHAUL RATE

\$2.26/mi

▲ flat w/w · +34.5% y/y

LOAD-TO-TRUCK RATIO

9.70

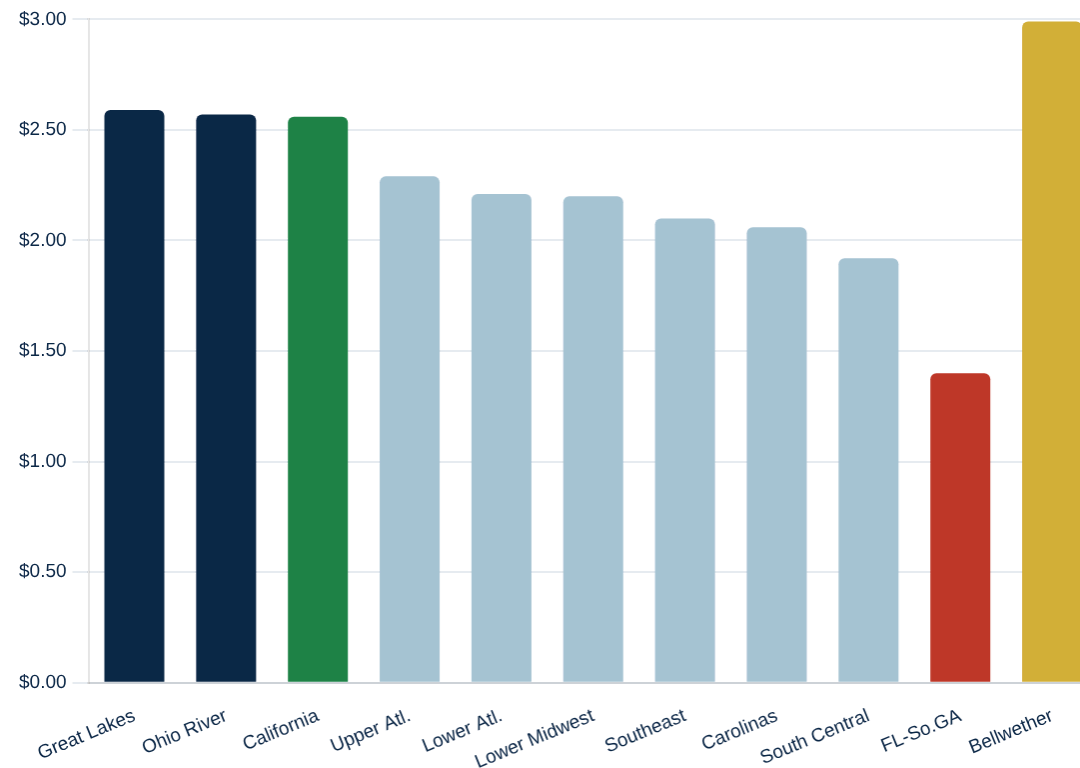
▼ from 10.27 prior wk

BELLWETHER STATES

\$2.99/mi

▲ +38.9% y/y (-3¢ w/w)

DRY VAN LINEHAUL BY ORIGIN REGION — WEEK ENDING 10/17/2026 (\$/MI)



REGIONAL DETAIL — RATE, WOW, YOY

Origin Region	\$/mi	WoW	YoY
Great Lakes	2.59	-3¢	+67¢
Ohio River	2.57	-4¢	+65¢
California	2.56	+4¢	+68¢
Upper Atlantic	2.29	-2¢	+59¢
Lower Atlantic	2.21	-2¢	+54¢
Lower Midwest	2.20	0¢	+43¢
Southeast	2.10	-2¢	+48¢
Carolinas	2.06	-6¢	+43¢
South Central	1.92	-1¢	+33¢
Florida – S. Georgia	1.40	-2¢	+26¢
Bellwether states	2.99	-3¢	+84¢

Source: DAT Freight & Analytics Dry Van Report, week ending 10/17/2026. Rates are linehaul only, excluding fuel surcharge. DAT revised the 10/10 load-to-truck ratio to 10.27 from the 10.5 originally published.

CALIFORNIA IS THE ONLY REGION UP — AND THAT IS THE IMPORT SIGNAL

Nine of ten origin regions lost ground on linehaul this week. **California gained 4¢ to \$2.56**, the only riser, and it is **68¢ (+36%)** above last year. That is the record San Pedro Bay September landing on the highway: **1.06 million** loaded import TEU through LA and Long Beach pulling capacity west, then eastbound replenishment pulling it back out. SONAR shows Los Angeles van rejections up 1.87 points week over week. Expect the Southwest premium to lead the national number into November.

THE RATIO FELL BECAUSE LOADS LEFT, NOT BECAUSE TRUCKS ARRIVED

Van load-to-truck dropped from 10.27 to **9.70** — but load posts fell **6.0%** while truck posts fell **0.5%**. Capacity did not return. Load posts are still **23.4% above** last year and truck posts **21–27% below**. The ratio is 9.70 against **5.75** a year ago, and linehaul held flat at \$2.26 through the softest posting week of the quarter. A board that will not give up a cent on a 6% volume drop is a board with no slack in it.



Flatbed Market Intelligence

DAT PRINT WEEK ENDING 10/17/2026 · OPEN-DECK TRUCKLOAD

ALL-IN SPOT RATE

\$3.64/mi

▼ -\$0.04 w/w (fuel)

LINEHAUL RATE

\$2.65/mi

▲ flat w/w · +29.3% y/y

LOAD-TO-TRUCK RATIO

36.53

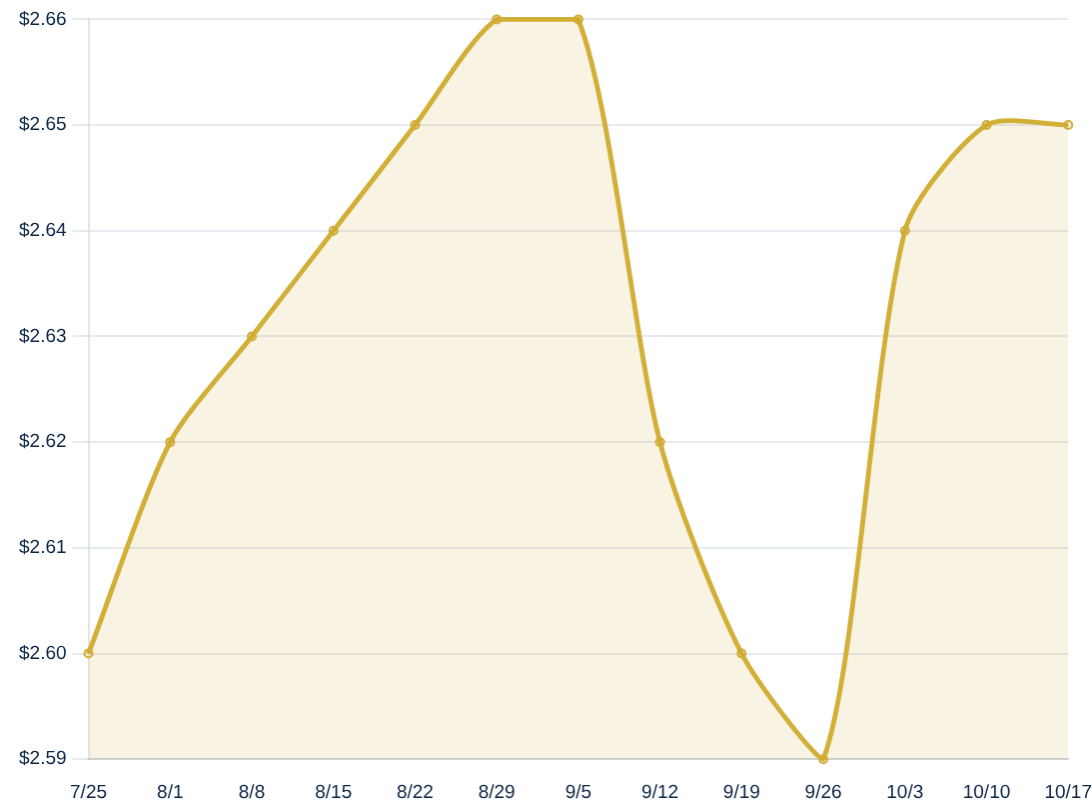
▲ from 35.69 — only ratio up

35-DAY FORECAST

\$2.59/mi

▼ band \$2.52–\$2.65

FLATBED LINEHAUL RATE — TRAILING 13 WEEKS



FLATBED SNAPSHOT — WEEK ENDING 10/17/2026

Metric	Value	Chg
All-in rate	\$3.64/mi	-\$0.04
Linehaul rate	\$2.65/mi	-0.1%
Implied fuel component	\$0.99/mi	-\$0.04
Load-to-truck ratio	36.53	+0.84
Truck posts	-1.6%	w/w
Load posts	+0.7%	w/w
Year-over-year (linehaul)	+29.3% (+\$0.60)	
13-week average	\$2.63/mi	
35-day DAT forecast	\$2.59 (band \$2.52–\$2.65)	

Source: DAT Freight & Analytics Flatbed Report, week ending 10/17/2026. Rates are linehaul only, excluding fuel surcharge. DAT revised the 10/10 load-to-truck ratio to 35.69 from the 36.6 originally published; the chart and comparison carry the revised basis. Chart weeks before 9/5 are reconstructed from DAT's published weekly changes. **EST**

THE ONLY BOARD THAT TIGHTENED THIS WEEK

Flatbed was the one mode whose load-to-truck ratio rose — **35.69 to 36.53** — on load posts **+0.7%** and truck posts **-1.6%**. At 36.5 it remains far and away the tightest board in the market, roughly four times van and more than double reefer. Linehaul held at **\$2.65**, **29.3%** above last year. Open-deck capacity is not being rebuilt: the trucks that left in the 2024–25 downturn have not come back, and a ratio in the mid-30s on flat volume says so.

DAT STILL FORECASTS A 6¢ FADE — TREAT IT AS THE FLOOR, NOT THE CALL

The 35-day forecast is **\$2.59**, a 6¢ decline, with a band of \$2.52–\$2.65. DAT has carried a similar fade for several weeks and the print has not followed: flatbed has held \$2.59–\$2.66 for thirteen straight weeks, averaging **\$2.63**. Seasonal construction slowdown is the mechanism, but the ratio is moving the other way and fuel is now rising again. For budgeting, use **\$2.59 as the downside** and price contracts off the 13-week average instead.



Drayage Market Intelligence

SEPTEMBER 2026 PORT VOLUMES · IMPORT OUTLOOK THROUGH FEBRUARY 2027

SAN PEDRO BAY, SEP TOTAL

2.04M TEU

▲ all-time monthly record

LA LOADED IMPORTS, SEP

545,696

▲ +19% y/y

LONG BEACH TOTAL, SEP

997,177

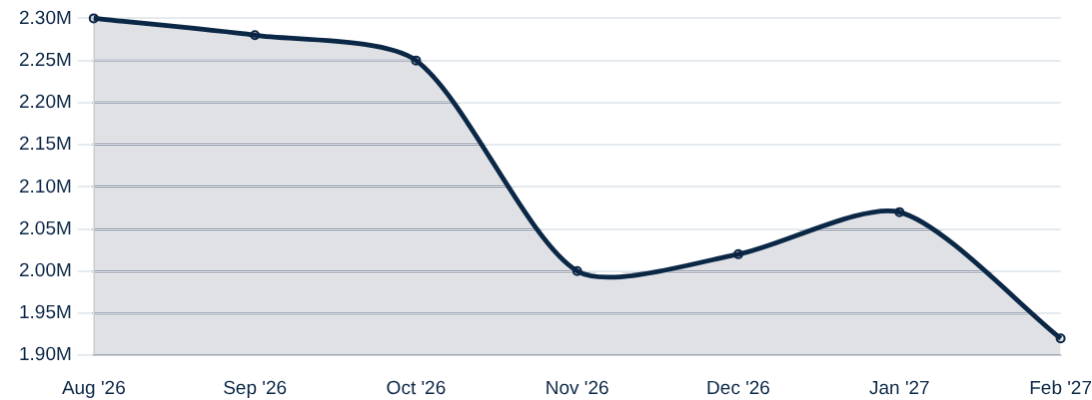
▲ +25% y/y · imports +31.3%

NAT'L IMPORTS, NOV FORECAST

2.00M TEU

▼ -1% y/y — wave crests

U.S. CONTAINERIZED IMPORTS — MONTHLY TEU, ACTUAL AND FORECAST (MILLIONS)



FORWARD SIGNALS

Signal	Reading
Aug 2026 (actual)	2.30M · -0.7%
Sep 2026 (f)	2.28M · +8.2%
Oct 2026 (f)	2.25M · +8.5%
Nov 2026 (f)	2.00M · -1.0%
Dec 2026 (f)	2.02M · +0.6%
Jan 2027 (f)	2.07M · -1.9%
Feb 2027 (f)	1.92M · +1.0%
LA YTD (9 mo.)	≈8.1M · +3%
LB YTD (9 mo.)	7.68M · +3.9%

NRF / Hackett Associates Global Port Tracker, released 10/9/2026.

MAJOR PORT DETAIL — SEPTEMBER VOLUME AND INDICATIVE DRAYAGE BANDS MODELED BANDS

Port / Gateway	Sep Loaded Imports	y/y	Base Band, 40' ≤25 mi	Fuel Surcharge	Chassis Split	Trend
Los Angeles	545,696	+19.0%	\$285 – \$420	22%	\$35 – \$55	+4%
Long Beach	509,390	+31.3%	\$285 – \$420	22%	\$35 – \$55	+4%
New York / New Jersey	not published	—	\$310 – \$480	21%	\$40 – \$65	+2%
Savannah	not published	—	\$220 – \$340	20%	\$30 – \$45	+6%
Houston	not published	—	\$195 – \$295	23%	\$25 – \$40	+1%
Seattle / Tacoma	not published	—	\$240 – \$370	22%	\$30 – \$50	+3%
Charleston / Norfolk	not published	—	\$210 – \$345	20–21%	\$30 – \$48	+2–5%
Chicago rail ramps	inland	—	\$175 – \$270	22%	\$25 – \$40	+2%

Volumes: Port of Los Angeles and Port of Long Beach September 2026 cargo releases. Drayage has no single authoritative weekly spot index the way truckload has. The bands above are DrayLocator's published indicative ranges for a one-way local move (40' dry, port to warehouse within 25 miles, excluding fuel surcharge, chassis and port fees); that page carries a "last updated July 2026" stamp on its rate table, so treat the bands as a modeled benchmark, not a reported print, and confirm against carrier quotes. Volumes for NY/NJ, Savannah, Houston and Seattle-Tacoma were not published in time for this edition. The Port Optimizer Control Tower forward signal is a client-side dashboard and was not machine-readable this run; the forward view above uses the NRF/Hackett tracker instead. MODELED

RECORD IMPORTS, AND THE CONSTRAINT MOVED INLAND

San Pedro Bay handled **2.04 million TEU** in September — records at both ports, and LA's busiest quarter ever at nearly 3 million TEU. Long Beach imports rose **31.3%**. But Southern California now has **railcar shortages extending import dwell** at LA/LB, Omaha is short 20' triaxle chassis, and Minneapolis–St. Paul is leaning on public pools. The bottleneck is no longer the berth, it is equipment and the rail connection behind it. Build **5–7 day dwell** and chassis-flip risk into landed-cost models, and secure appointment capacity rather than negotiating the per-move rate.

THE SECTION 301 VESSEL FEE PAUSE IS THE LIVE RISK — STATUS UNRESOLVED

The U.S.–China Busan arrangement was reported on **9/23** to extend the port-fee truce from **11/10/2026 to 1/10/2027**, but that deferral remains "subject to formal implementation measures yet to be announced," and separate reporting holds that USTR's Section 301 vessel fees still expire **11/9/2026** absent a published Federal Register action. If they resume, Annex I runs **\$80/net ton** and Annex II the greater of **\$18/net ton or \$120/container**, with industry estimates of **10–30%** per-container cost. Get the annex classification of your carriers' vessels in writing now and put a fee-passthrough cap in Q1 contracts. **Verify the Federal Register before acting.**



Intermodal Market Intelligence

AAR WEEK 41, ENDING 10/17/2026 · RAIL INTERMODAL AND MODE CONVERSION

U.S. INTERMODAL UNITS, WK 41

308,015

▲ +12.6% y/y — 13-wk high

U.S. CARLOADS, WK 41

232,120

▲ +3.5% y/y

YTD INTERMODAL, 41 WEEKS

11.69M

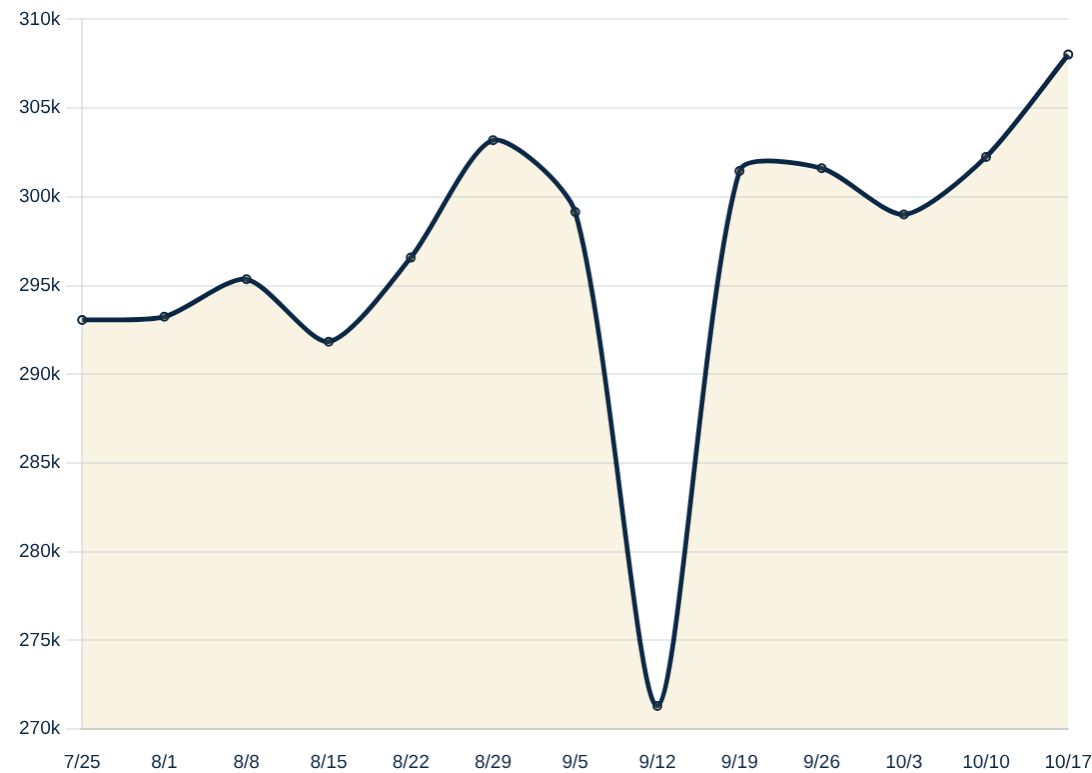
▲ +4.6% y/y

INTERMODAL SPOT VS. TRUCKLOAD

40 pts

▼ +6.6% vs. +46.8% y/y

U.S. WEEKLY INTERMODAL UNITS — TRAILING 13 WEEKS (AAR)



INTERMODAL SNAPSHOT — WEEK 41

Metric	Value	y/y
U.S. intermodal units	308,015	+12.6%
U.S. carloads	232,120	+3.5%
U.S. combined total	540,135	+8.5%
YTD intermodal (41 wks)	11,687,964	+4.6%
YTD carloads (41 wks)	9,374,717	+2.7%
Canada intermodal	70,389	-0.7%
Mexico intermodal	14,277	+43.6%
13-week average, U.S.	296,619	wk 41 +3.8% vs. avg
InTek intermodal spot, wk 10/5	+1.0% w/w	+6.6%
DAT truckload spot, same basis	+0.3% w/w	+46.8%

Sources: Association of American Railroads weekly rail traffic, week 41 ending 10/17/2026 (published 10/21/2026). All thirteen chart weeks are actual AAR prints, including the 9/12 Labor Day week. Pricing: InTek Logistics Intermodal Index, week ending 10/5/2026 — InTek updates Thursdays, so on a Wednesday run the newest entry is two weeks behind the AAR week and is labeled with its own date, not the AAR week. InTek publishes the index as percentage changes, not a dollar-per-mile level.

FOUR STRAIGHT WEEKS OF ACCELERATION — AND REAL CAPACITY BEHIND IT

Intermodal y/y growth ran +6.9%, +6.3%, +7.4%, +10.4%, +12.6% across weeks 37–41. Week 41's **308,015 units** is the highest of the trailing thirteen and **3.8% above** the 296,619 average. The 9/12 dip to 271,305 (–4.1%) is a Labor Day calendar artifact, not a demand break — the holiday fell inside the 9/12 week in 2026 and the 9/6 week in 2025. IANA's October index estimate is **105.1**, +5.5% y/y, and ACT projects **19.3 million** loads for 2026, beating the 2018 record.

CONVERT THE TOLERANT LANES WHILE THE DISCOUNT IS STILL 40 POINTS

Intermodal spot pricing is up **6.6% y/y**; truckload spot on the same ex-fuel basis is up **46.8%**. A **40-point** divergence with record rail volume means rail is absorbing freight without repricing it — and that cannot hold, because rail capacity is fixed infrastructure. SONAR's read is that a meaningful share of September's truckload tender decline simply went to rail. Qualify lanes over roughly 700 miles with 2+ days of transit tolerance now; the spread is a 2026 artifact of the import wave, and NRF has November imports turning **negative y/y**.

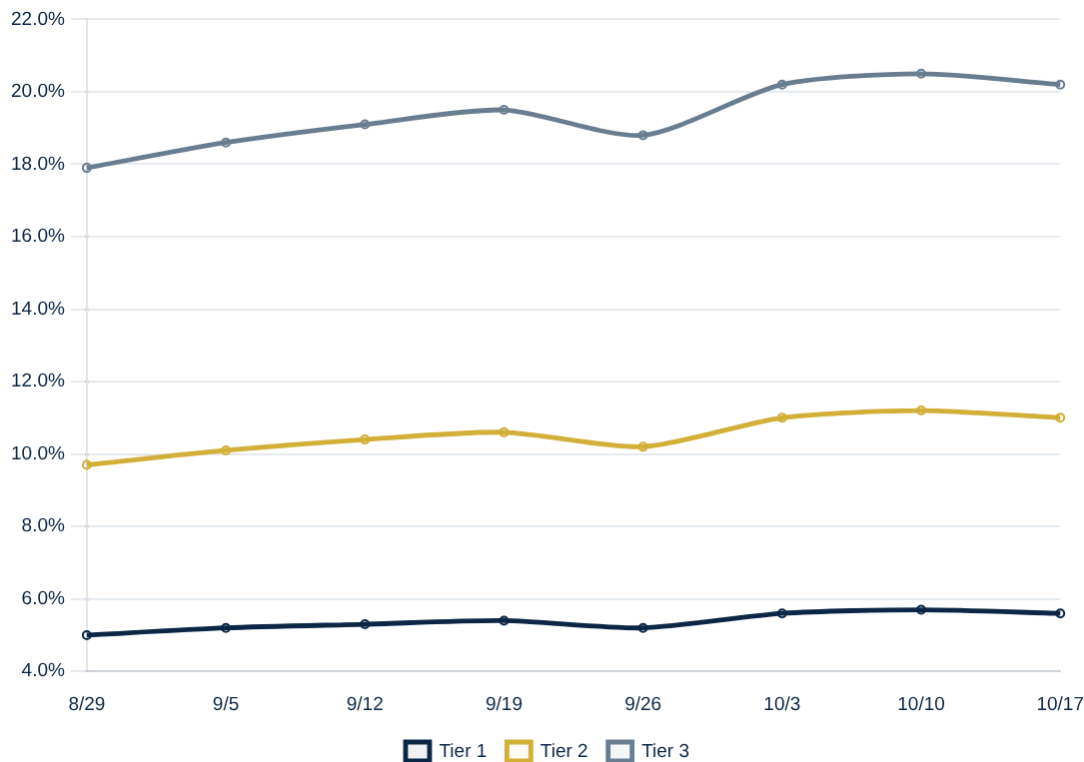


EDI Tender Decline Report

CARRIER TIER DECLINE BEHAVIOR · ILLUSTRATIVE BENCHMARK MODEL ILLUSTRATIVE / BENCHMARK DATA

This page is a **benchmark model, not a live client TMS or EDI feed**. Tier decline curves are calibrated to the published national tender-rejection level — **13.9%** as of 10/20/2026 — and to the typical dispersion between primary, secondary and tertiary routing-guide positions. Use it to frame routing-guide depth and award concentration questions, and to size the EDI error categories worth auditing. Client-specific figures require a TMS data extract.

TENDER DECLINE RATE BY CARRIER TIER — TRAILING 8 WEEKS ILLUSTRATIVE



TIER DETAIL — WEEK ENDING 10/17/2026 ILLUSTRATIVE

Tier	Decline %	WoW	Award Share
Tier 1 — primary	5.6%	-0.1	62%
Tier 2 — secondary	11.0%	-0.2	24%
Tier 3 — tertiary	20.2%	-0.3	9%
Spot fallout	—	—	5%
Blended decline	8.4%	-0.2	100%
National index, reported	13.9%	from 14.17%	—
Reefer index, reported	21.44%	1 in 5 loads	—

EDI ERROR CATEGORIES TO AUDIT

Error	Share of Declines	Fix
990 timeout / no response	31%	Shorten response SLA
Appointment conflict (214)	24%	Pre-clear dock windows
Equipment mismatch (204)	18%	Correct equipment codes
Rate / accessorial mismatch	15%	Sync tariff to TMS
Lane not in routing guide	12%	Re-bid orphan lanes

Five Pillars Business Consulting illustrative benchmark model. Tier curves are anchored to the FreightWaves SONAR national truckload rejection index (13.9%, 10/20/2026) and reefer index (21.44%). Error-category shares are a Five Pillars working estimate reflecting typical shipper EDI audit findings, not client data. **EST**

DECLINES EASED A FRACTION — DO NOT READ IT AS RELIEF

The national index slipped from **14.17% to 13.9%** and the modeled tier curves eased with it, but the index has held a **13–14%** band since August. A quarter-point move inside a three-month plateau is noise. What is *not* noise: reefer at **21.44%**. If your routing guide carries temperature-controlled lanes, your real blended decline rate is far above the all-mode figure, and the tertiary tier is where the cost is landing.

NEARLY A THIRD OF DECLINES ARE PROCESS, NOT PRICE

In typical audits, **31%** of declines trace to 990 timeouts and **24%** to appointment conflicts — **55% before anyone argues about rate**. In a 13–14% rejection market those are the cheapest points to recover: tightening the 990 response SLA and pre-clearing dock windows costs nothing in linehaul. Pull the actual 204/990/214 extract and measure it before the 2027 bid; a routing guide that fails on process looks like a routing guide that is underpriced.



Fuel Surcharge Report — All Modes

EIA SURVEY WEEK ENDING 10/19/2026 · ILLUSTRATIVE SURCHARGE MODEL MODELED

U.S. ON-HIGHWAY DIESEL

\$6.276

▲ +9.7¢ w/w — first rise in 5 wks

YEAR-OVER-YEAR

+\$2.656

▲ +73.4% vs. \$3.620

MODELED TL SURCHARGE

\$0.504/mi

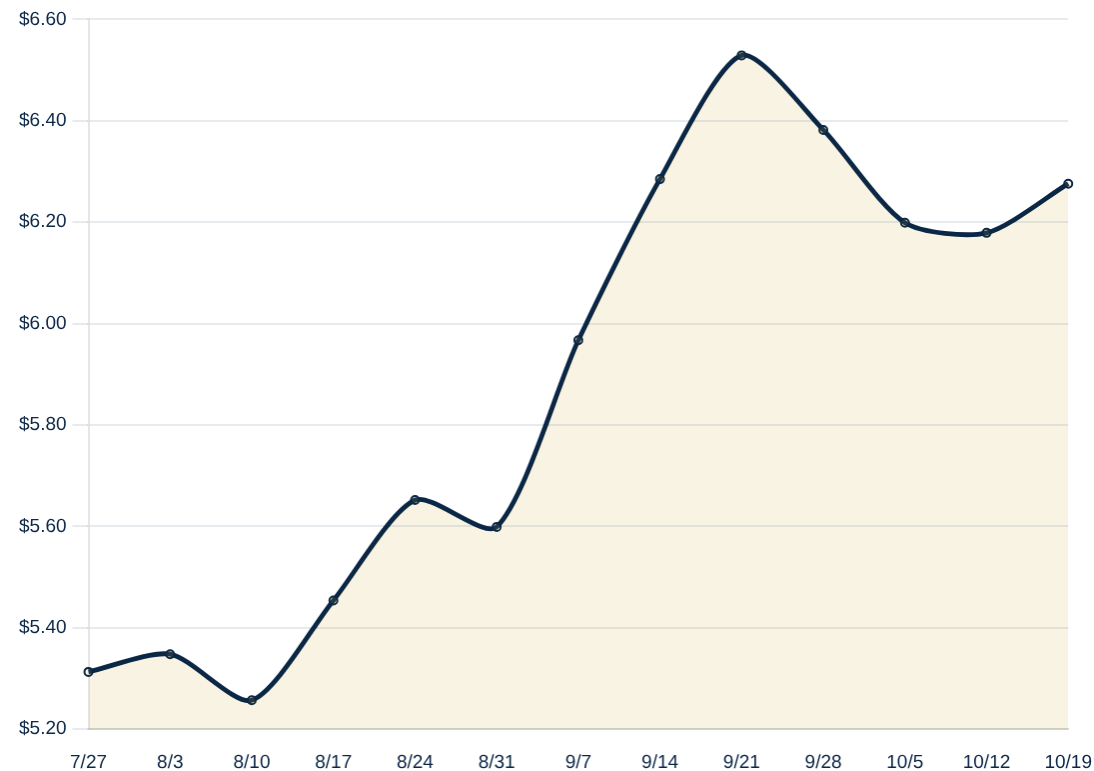
▲ +1.5¢ w/w

BELOW 9/21 RECORD

25.3¢

▲ was 35.0¢ last week

U.S. AVERAGE ON-HIGHWAY DIESEL — TRAILING 13 WEEKS (\$/GAL)



ILLUSTRATIVE SURCHARGE BY MODE MODELED

Mode	MPG	FSC \$/mi	WoW
Truckload — dry van	6.5	\$0.504	+\$0.015
Truckload — reefer (unit load)	5.9	\$0.555	+\$0.016
Flatbed / open deck	6.2	\$0.528	+\$0.016
Drayage (short-haul, idle-heavy)	5.0	\$0.655	+\$0.019
Intermodal dray leg	5.5	\$0.596	+\$0.018
LTL (per-cwt equivalent)	6.0	\$0.546	+\$0.016
Baseline assumption		\$3.00/gal peg, linear \$/mi	
13-week average diesel		\$5.880/gal	
Peak surcharge (9/21)		\$0.543/mi — now 3.9¢ under	

Model: FSC \$/mi = (EIA U.S. average price - \$3.00 baseline) ÷ MPG. Source price: U.S. EIA Weekly Retail On-Highway Diesel Prices, survey week ending 10/19/2026 (\$6.276), verified against the EIA by-area weekly series page, which agrees. All thirteen chart points are actual weekly EIA prints, including the 8/10 dip. **This is a Five Pillars Business Consulting illustrative model, not a carrier tariff.** Actual surcharges follow each carrier's published table, peg and MPG assumption. MODELED

THE FOUR-WEEK WINDFALL CLOSED IN A SINGLE PRINT

Diesel fell 14.7¢, 18.3¢, 2.0¢ and then reversed **+9.7¢** to **\$6.276** — the first increase in five weeks, and **every one of the eleven EIA regions rose**. The gap to the 9/21 record narrowed from 35.0¢ to **25.3¢**, and the modeled truckload surcharge is back to **50.4¢/mile**, only **3.9¢** under the September peak. The audit argument worth 5¢ two weeks ago is down to roughly 4¢ and shrinking. Stop budgeting further relief.

INDEX WEEKLY, AND WATCH THE REEFER AND DRAY LEGS

A monthly-reset fuel table set from the 10/12 print under-recovers carriers by **1.5¢/mile** immediately and more if diesel keeps climbing — which invites mid-term rate requests. The exposure is worst where MPG is lowest: a **drayage move at 5.0 MPG carries 65.5¢/mile** against 50.4¢ for dry van, and reefer at 55.5¢. Any contract that applies one dry-van fuel table across dray, reefer and LTL is mispricing by **5–15¢/mile** on the short legs. Index weekly to the EIA Monday survey and set mode-specific MPG pegs.



Diesel Fuel Cost by PADD — Regional Detail

EIA SURVEY WEEK ENDING 10/19/2026 · ALL ELEVEN REGIONS ROSE

HIGHEST — CALIFORNIA

\$8.242

▲ +15.1¢ w/w · +68.3% y/y

LOWEST — LOWER ATLANTIC

\$5.740

▲ +9.5¢ w/w · +60.4% y/y

WIDEST SPREAD

\$2.502

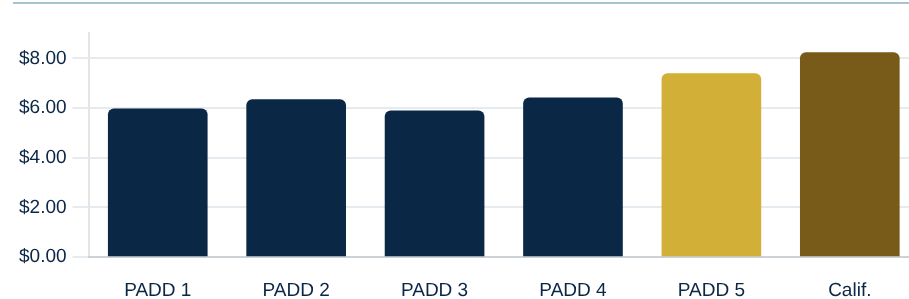
▲ CA over Lower Atlantic

STEEPEST Y/Y — GULF COAST

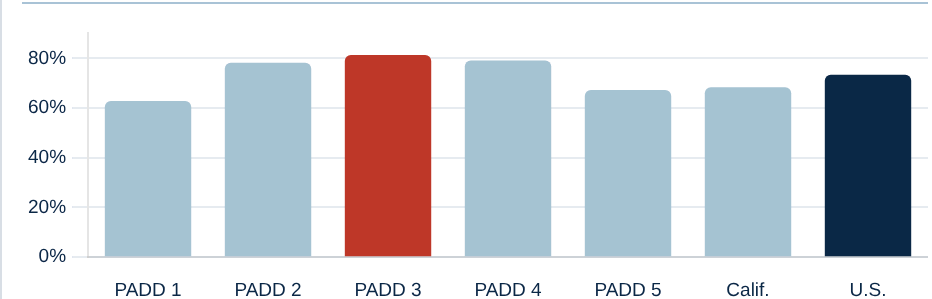
+81.3%

▲ +\$2.647 on a \$3.256 base

DIESEL PRICE BY REGION (\$/GAL)



YEAR-OVER-YEAR CHANGE BY REGION (%)



REGIONAL DETAIL — PRICE, WEEKLY CHANGE, YEAR-AGO BASIS AND MODELED SURCHARGE

Region	PADD	Price \$/gal	WoW	Year Ago	YoY \$	YoY %	FSC \$/mi	MODELED
U.S. average	—	6.276	+0.097	3.620	+2.656	73.4%		\$0.504
East Coast	PADD 1	5.984	+0.076	3.675	+2.309	62.8%		\$0.459
New England	PADD 1A	6.470	+0.029	3.943	+2.527	64.1%		\$0.534
Central Atlantic	PADD 1B	6.508	+0.037	3.878	+2.630	67.8%		\$0.540
Lower Atlantic	PADD 1C	5.740	+0.095	3.578	+2.162	60.4%		\$0.422
Midwest	PADD 2	6.352	+0.093	3.564	+2.788	78.2%		\$0.516
Gulf Coast	PADD 3	5.903	+0.094	3.256	+2.647	81.3%		\$0.447
Rocky Mountain	PADD 4	6.422	+0.120	3.585	+2.837	79.1%		\$0.526
West Coast	PADD 5	7.394	+0.154	4.421	+2.973	67.2%		\$0.676
W. Coast less California	PADD 5	6.659	+0.156	4.008	+2.651	66.1%		\$0.563
California	PADD 5	8.242	+0.151	4.898	+3.344	68.3%		\$0.806

Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, Weekly Retail On-Highway Diesel Prices, survey week ending **Monday 10/19/2026** (released 10/20/2026); cross-checked against the EIA by-area weekly series page, which agrees on every region. Note the EIA survey week differs from the DAT spot week ending 10/17. EIA publishes the year-ago column as a change, not a price; the Year Ago column above is the current price less that change, and YoY % is the change divided by that year-ago price. FSC \$/mi = (price - \$3.00) ÷ 6.5 MPG — a Five Pillars Business Consulting illustrative model, not a carrier tariff. **MODELED**

A CLEAN SWEEP — EVERY REGION UP, LED BY THE WEST

All eleven regions rose. The West led: **W. Coast ex-CA +15.6¢**, **West Coast +15.4¢**, **California +15.1¢**, **Rocky Mountain +12.0¢**. New England (+2.9¢) and Central Atlantic (+3.7¢) barely moved. Last week four regions rose against a falling national average; this week the reversal is universal, which is what distinguishes a refinery-maintenance blip from a crude-driven move. West Coast lanes carry a **67.6¢/mile** modeled surcharge against 45.9¢ on the East Coast.

THE LOW-BASE REGIONS CARRY THE WORST Y/Y SHOCK

Gulf Coast (+81.3%), Rocky Mountain (+79.1%) and Midwest (+78.2%) show the steepest annual increases — not because they are expensive, but because their year-ago base was low (\$3.256, \$3.585, \$3.564). California's +68.3% sits on a \$4.898 base. For budget variance, that means **Houston, Denver and Chicago origins are where a 2025-anchored fuel assumption breaks hardest**, even though the absolute price is highest in the West. Re-peg regional fuel tables off the current year-ago column, not a national factor.

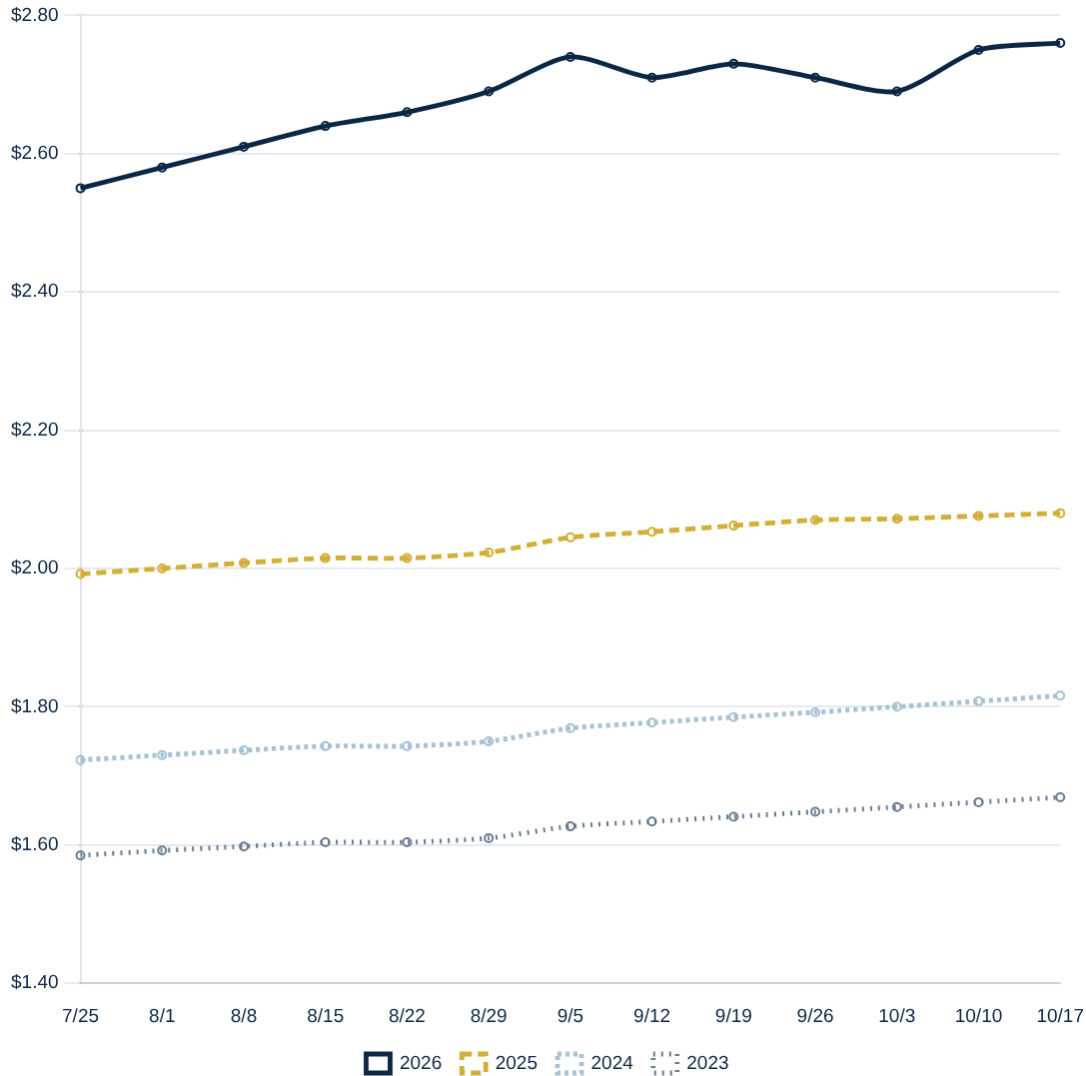


Reefer Rate — 13-Week Comparison

2026 VS. 2025 / 2024 / 2023 · LINEHAUL \$/MI, WEEKS ENDING 7/25 – 10/17

Reefer linehaul closed the window at **\$2.76**, a thirteen-week high and the fourth distinct leg up since late July. The 2026 line averages **\$2.678** against **\$2.043** in 2025 — a **\$0.635**, or **31.1%**, premium that has held within a point for three straight weeks. Against 2024 the gap is **\$0.908** and against 2023 **\$1.060**. The shape matters as much as the level: 2025, 2024 and 2023 all drift upward in a narrow seasonal channel, while 2026 steps.

REEFER LINEHAUL — FOUR-YEAR OVERLAY, TRAILING 13 WEEKS



13-WEEK AVERAGES AND SPREAD

Year	13-Wk Avg	Final Week	2026 Premium
2026	\$2.678	\$2.760	—
2025	\$2.043	\$2.080	+\$0.635 (+31.1%)
2024	\$1.770	\$1.816	+\$0.908 (+51.3%)
2023	\$1.618	\$1.669	+\$1.060 (+65.5%)
2026 window low			\$2.550 (wk ending 7/25)
2026 window high			\$2.760 (wk ending 10/17)
2026 window range			21¢ — 8.2% of the low
Reported y/y, 10/17			+32.7% (+\$0.68)
9-yr seasonal avg			\$2.14 — 2026 is +28.8%

2026 series: DAT Freight & Analytics weekly reefer linehaul prints, weeks ending 7/25–10/17/2026; weeks before 9/5 are reconstructed from DAT's published weekly percentage changes. Prior-year series are Five Pillars Business Consulting reconstructions built from DAT's published year-over-year comparisons and anchored to the reported 10/17 y/y figure (+\$0.68 places the 2025 week at \$2.08); treat them as a working estimate of the prior-year path, not a reported weekly series. **EST**

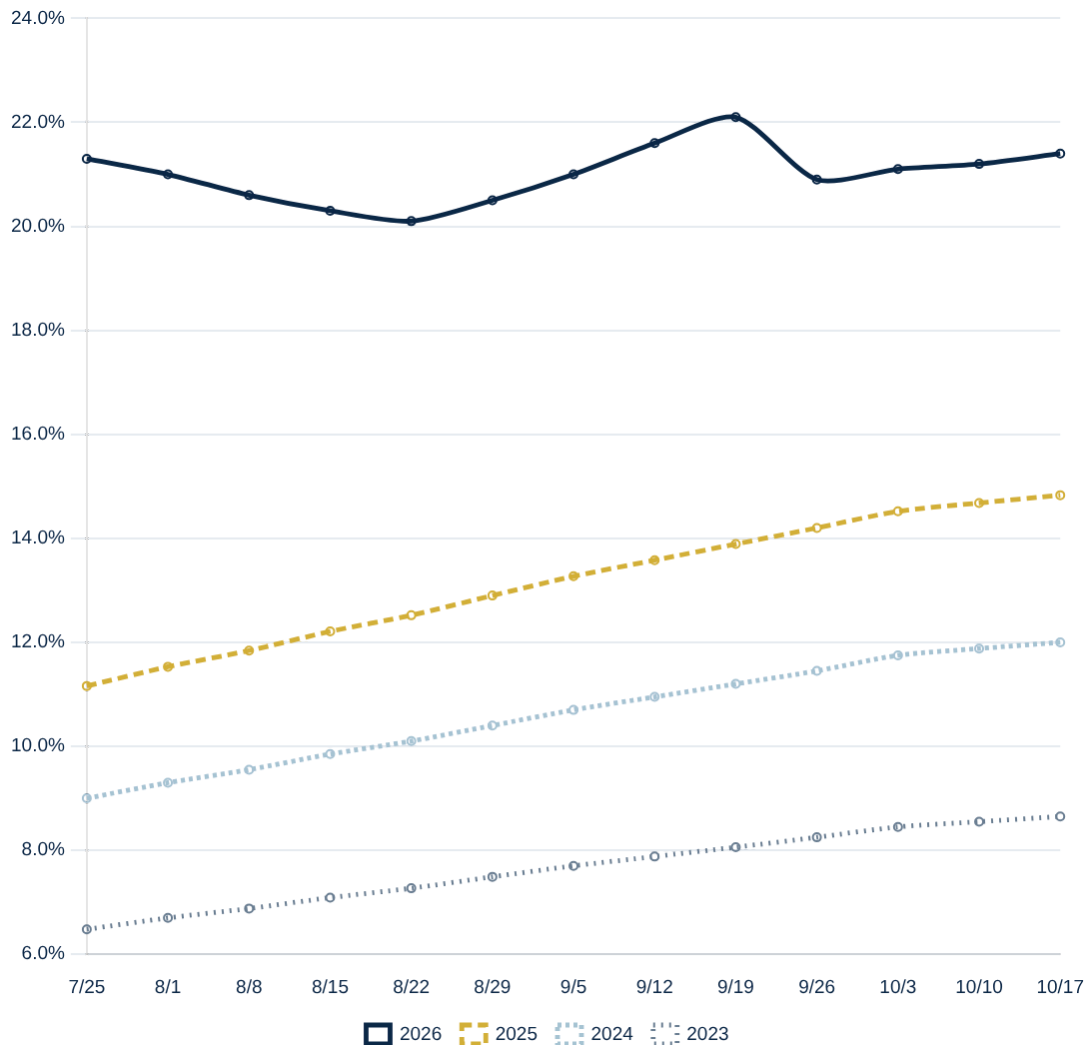


Reefer ROTRI — 13-Week Comparison

REEFER TENDER REJECTION % · 2026 VS. 2025 / 2024 / 2023 **SERIES REBASED**

This series has been rebased this week. FreightWaves published reefer tender-rejection prints of **22.13% on 9/17**, **20.89% on 9/24** and **21.44% on 10/20** — materially above the path carried in last week's edition, which ran 16.7–18.4% through the same span. The 2026 line below is re-anchored to those three reported prints; the intervening weeks are a Five Pillars reconstruction between them. The correction matters directionally: reefer rejections have been sitting **above 20% for more than a month**, not climbing toward it.

REEFER TENDER REJECTION % — FOUR-YEAR OVERLAY, TRAILING 13 WEEKS



13-WEEK AVERAGES AND SPREAD

Year	13-Wk Avg	Final Week	2026 Gap
2026	21.0%	21.4%	—
2025	13.0%	14.8%	+6.6 pts
2024	10.5%	12.0%	+9.4 pts
2023	7.6%	8.7%	+12.7 pts
Reported peak, 9/17			22.13%
Reported trough, 9/24			20.89%
Current print, 10/20			21.44% — 1 load in 5
National all-mode index			13.9% — reefer is +7.5 pts
Concentration			Pacific NW, Upper Midwest

2026 anchors: FreightWaves SONAR reefer tender-rejection prints reported 10/20/2026 — 22.13% (9/17), 20.89% (9/24), 21.44% (10/20); the 10/20 print is plotted at the 10/17 week position and is labeled with its own date in the commentary. Intervening and earlier 2026 weeks, and all prior-year series, are Five Pillars Business Consulting reconstructions and are a working estimate of the path, not reported weekly data. **This rebases the series published in the 10/14 edition, which carried the 2026 line 3–5 points too low.**

EST