



→ North America Freight Market Insights

As freight markets continue to evolve, small- to medium-sized businesses must stay informed on the key trends shaping transportation across North America. Below are four critical insights from [C.H. Robinson's August 2026 Edge Report](#), along with recommended actions to help businesses navigate what's ahead.

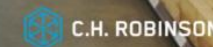
- 1) **Truckload: Tight capacity leaves less room for surprises.** The truckload market remains tight, leaving less room to absorb disruptions from weather, regional events, or unexpected shifts. As hurricane season ramps up, even localized disruptions can tighten capacity, increase rates, and create ripple effects across transportation networks.
 - **Action:** Review shipments moving through the Southeast or Gulf Coast and identify where schedules, inventory, or routing options can be adjusted in advance. Having a backup plan in place before a disruption occurs can help reduce delays and transportation costs.
- 2) **Diesel: Fuel costs may be easing, but volatility isn't.** Diesel prices were slightly lower in July compared to June, but significant swings throughout the month highlight how quickly fuel markets can change. Ongoing geopolitical tensions and global supply concerns continue to influence fuel costs, and higher diesel prices are already impacting transportation rates and fuel surcharges. Fuel is expected to remain an important cost factor as businesses begin planning for 2027.
 - **Action:** As you plan shipments and budgets for the remainder of the year, account for potential fuel cost fluctuations. Understanding how fuel surcharges affect your shipping costs can help you better anticipate future expenses if fuel prices rise.
- 3) **LTL: Shipping costs are rising rapidly.** LTL pricing increased sharply in the second quarter as rising fuel costs and tightening freight capacity drove up both shipping rates and fuel surcharges. While service remains stable, carriers are becoming more focused on network efficiency, meaning shipping costs can vary more depending on how well freight fits a carrier's network.
 - **Action:** Look for opportunities to consolidate shipments, improve pallet utilization, and provide accurate shipment details upfront. Small improvements in freight efficiency can help reduce unnecessary charges and offset rising transportation costs. See how AI, automation, and deep logistics expertise are helping shippers simplify LTL complexity, improve reliability, and keep freight moving with greater confidence. Explore the insights in our latest blog: [Addressing LTL Complexity at Scale | C.H. Robinson](#).
- 4) **Intermodal: Rail's cost advantage continues to grow.** Intermodal demand remains strong as more shippers shift freight from truckload to rail to help manage rising transportation costs. Service remains reliable, but capacity is tightening in some markets as volumes continue to grow.
 - **Action:** Review longer-distance shipments with flexible delivery timelines, particularly in the 550- to 1,500-mile range. Planning these shipments in advance can help take advantage of intermodal savings while securing available capacity.

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C.H. ROBINSON