



→ North America Freight Market Insights

Freight Market Update: C.H. Robinson Edge Report – September 2026

As freight markets continue to shift, small to medium-sized businesses should be aware of key trends shaping transportation in North America. Below are four critical freight insights from [C.H. Robinson's September Edge Report](#), along with recommended action steps to help businesses navigate these challenges.

- 1) Truckload rates are expected to keep rising into 2027:** Truckload rates are cooling from the summer peak, but the broader market continues to point toward a firmer pricing environment. Capacity is contracting as carriers face higher insurance costs, stricter driver requirements and other operating pressures. Looking ahead, dry van rates are forecast to increase approximately 10% in 2027 compared to 2026, with refrigerated and flatbed rates expected to rise approximately 11% and 10%, respectively.
 - Action:** Start planning for 2027 now. Review your highest-volume and most rate-sensitive lanes and consider securing capacity and pricing on predictable freight before the market tightens further.
- 2) Less excess capacity means greater exposure to disruptions:** While truckload conditions have improved since the July peak, there is less excess capacity available to absorb sudden changes in demand. Weather, holidays, enforcement activity and seasonal shipping patterns could create more volatility than shippers have experienced in recent years.
 - Action:** Strengthen your backup plans. Identify critical lanes that need secondary capacity and make sure you have options in place before a disruption occurs - not after your primary carrier declines a shipment.
- 3) Intermodal is becoming a stronger alternative to long-haul truckload:** As truckload costs rise, intermodal demand continues to grow, particularly on 550- to 1,500-mile lanes. For freight that can accommodate longer transit times, intermodal can provide an opportunity to lower transportation costs while also diversifying capacity.
 - Action:** Look for lanes where mode conversion makes sense. Evaluate your longer-haul truckload shipments based on total landed cost, transit requirements and service expectations, not just the truckload linehaul rate.
- 4) Transportation strategies need to become more lane- and region-specific:** Market conditions are increasingly varying by lane, region, equipment type and season. Refrigerated capacity, for example, is tightening across northern markets as harvest activity increases, while southern markets are experiencing more available capacity. LTL is also showing early signs of greater service variability as networks become busier.
 - Action:** Move beyond a one-size-fits-all transportation strategy. Segment your freight by lane, mode and season to identify where you need committed capacity, where you can remain flexible, and where alternative modes or carriers can provide additional options.

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