

THE INTERCHANGE WEEKLY

Fast Freight Facts at Your Fingertips

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THE MAIN LINE

More Freight, Different Margins

Last week we asked whether Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern would confirm the shift from highway to rail on their earnings calls. They did. Union Pacific's third-quarter intermodal volume rose 11% and its total carloads 6%, and CSX's intermodal rose 7%. Norfolk Southern CEO Mark George said a tighter trucking market "highlighted rail's competitive advantages." Week 41 held the pattern: intermodal grew 12.6% against 3.5% for carloads and supplied 5,763 of the week's 5,879-unit gain.

OUR TAKE · OPINION

In our view, fuel explains most of the difference in margins. A fuel surcharge adds about the same amount to revenue and to expense, so even when it fully covers the fuel bill it pushes the operating ratio toward 100. Surcharges supplied eight points of Norfolk Southern's 14% revenue growth; applied to last year's 64.6% operating ratio, our estimate of that arithmetic alone is about 67.2%, close to the 67.4% NS reported. By the same estimate, Union Pacific's surcharges added about nine points, enough to push its 59.2% to roughly 62.6%, yet it reported 59.1%. With volume up 6% and intermodal up 11%, UP covered the fuel drag; with volume up 3%, NS did not. CSX widened its operating margin 880 basis points to 39.1%, helped in part by a weak prior-year quarter. (UP; NS; CSX)

Estimates are Rail-Industrial Partners' calculations from the companies' published figures and assume added fuel cost roughly equals added surcharge revenue; the railroads do not report that split.

What to watch: CPKC on October 28 and CN on October 30, which will show whether the shift reaches cross-border and Canadian traffic, and whether carloads move off this week's flat reading when AAR publishes Week 42 on October 28.

THIS WEEK IN BRIEF

No holiday distorts this week's year-over-year figures. AAR Week 41 of 2026 ran October 11–17 and is compared with October 12–18, 2025. Columbus Day fell inside both weeks (October 12, 2026 and October 13, 2025), so the effect cancels and the year-over-year and week-over-week figures can be taken as published.

- **AAR Week 41, ended October 17, 2026:** U.S. rail traffic totaled 540,135 carloads and intermodal units, up 8.5% year over year: 232,120 carloads (+3.5%) and 308,015 containers and trailers (+12.6%). Year to date, combined traffic is 21,062,681 units, up 3.7%. (AAR; Railway Age; Progressive Railroading)

- **Intermodal carried the week.** Carloads rose 116 from Week 40. Intermodal added 5,763 units, nearly all of the 5,879-unit combined gain. (AAR)
- **Metallic ores and metals led again,** up 2,946 cars (+14.5%) to 23,306. Nine of ten groups rose; nonmetallic minerals (–1,089 cars) was the only decline. (AAR)
- **Third-quarter earnings:** Union Pacific earned \$2.08 billion on \$7.2 billion of revenue at a 59.1% operating ratio. CSX widened its operating margin 880 basis points to 39.1%. Norfolk Southern reported record revenue of \$3.5 billion, but its operating ratio rose to 67.4% from 64.6%. (UP; CSX; NS; Railway Age on UP and NS; Progressive Railroadng)
- **Mills ran harder.** AISI put raw steel output at 1,870,000 net tons at 80.9% utilization, up 4.1% on the week and 8.6% on the year. Cleveland-Cliffs pushed back the Burns Harbor C furnace reline to April 2028. (AISI; SMU)
- **FRA awarded \$2.3 billion in CRISI grants** across 105 projects in 45 states, including \$204.8 million to rebuild the Coos Bay Rail Line for 286,000-pound double-stack cars. (Progressive Railroadng)
- **Pinsly agreed to buy the Kankakee, Beaverville & Southern,** 159.7 route miles in Illinois and Indiana with five Class I and regional interchanges. It will be Pinsly's tenth short line. (Railway Age)

THE NUMBERS

U.S. HEADLINE

AAR U.S. RAIL TRAFFIC, WEEK 41, ENDED OCTOBER 17, 2026

MEASURE	WEEK 41 (OCT 17)	WEEK 40 (OCT 10)	WOW	WOW %	YOY AS PUBLISHED	YTD, 41 WEEKS	YTD YOY
Carloads	232,120	232,004	+116	+0.05%	+3.5%	9,374,717	+2.7%
Intermodal units	308,015	302,252	+5,763	+1.9%	+12.6%	11,687,964	+4.6%
Total traffic	540,135	534,256	+5,879	+1.1%	+8.5%	21,062,681	+3.7%

Week-over-week columns are calculated from the two published AAR weekly releases. Year-over-year and year-to-date percentages are as published, and this week's year-to-date totals equal last week's plus Week 41. AAR's U.S. figures exclude the U.S. operations of CPKC, CN and GMXT.

NORTH AMERICA

AAR, NINE REPORTING RAILROADS, WEEK ENDED OCTOBER 17, 2026

REGION	CARLOADS	YOY	INTERMODAL	YOY	COMBINED	YTD COMBINED	YTD YOY
United States	232,120	+3.5%	308,015	+12.6%	540,135	21,062,681	+3.7%
Canada	95,392	+3.3%	70,389	–0.7%	165,781	6,750,758	+1.3%
Mexico	11,522	–1.6%	14,277	+43.6%	25,799	1,015,254	+4.8%
North America	339,034	+3.2%	392,681	+10.8%	731,715	28,828,693	+3.2%

The three countries sum exactly to the published North American totals, and each country's year-to-date total equals last week's plus Week 41. Country combined figures are the sum of the published carload and intermodal counts. Mexico's 43.6% intermodal gain is on a small base and swings widely from week to week.

COMMODITY GROUPS, RANKED BY YEAR-OVER-YEAR CHANGE

AAR U.S. CARLOADS BY COMMODITY GROUP, WEEK 41

COMMODITY GROUP	WEEK 41 CARS	WEEK 40 CARS	CARS VS PY	YOY	SHARE
Metallic ores and metals	23,306	22,048	+2,946	+14.5%	10.0%
Grain	22,486	23,584	+1,470	+7.0%	9.7%
Farm products excluding grain, and food	18,776	16,863	+1,103	+6.2%	8.1%
Coal	58,242	57,526	+638	+1.1%	25.1%
Nonmetallic minerals	32,428	32,537	-1,089	-3.2%	14.0%
Chemicals, forest products, motor vehicles and parts, petroleum, and other (combined)	76,882	79,446	—	Up	33.1%
Total carloads	232,120	232,004	—	+3.5%	100.0%

AAR's public summary named four groups this week, and five are shown individually here. Coal is from EIA's weekly coal report, which carries AAR's coal carload count (its prior -week figure, 57,526, matches AAR's Week 40 coal exactly). The remaining five groups are shown as one line: AAR said nine of ten groups rose, so all five gained, by amounts it did not publish. FreightWaves put motor vehicles and parts up 5.6%. (AAR; IndexBox, citing EIA; FreightWaves)

BY RAILROAD

STB PART 1250 TOTAL WEEKLY VOLUME BY CARRIER, REPORT DATE OCTOBER 17, 2026

CARRIER	BNSF	UP	NS	CSX	CN (U.S.)	CPKC (U.S.)
Part 1250 cars, including containers and trailers	209,992	179,579	144,241	133,689	45,945	30,489
Prior week (October 10)	205,910	180,060	143,741	135,932	43,978	30,668
Change	+4,082	-481	+500	-2,243	+1,967	-179

Basis note. Part 1250 "carloads" include containers and trailers, so they cannot be compared with a carrier's own carload count, and the carriers are not summed because interchange traffic would be counted twice. CN and CPKC report only U.S. operations to the STB. Source: USDA AgTransport, STB Part 1250 data, via IndexBox; prior week from Issue 07.

FREIGHT RAIL COMMODITIES BY RAILROAD

STB PART 1250 ORIGINATED CARS, REPORT DATE OCTOBER 17, 2026

COMMODITY (ORIGINATED)	BNSF	UP	NS	CSX	CN (U.S.)	CPKC (U.S.)
Containers	109,362	72,144	65,109	52,241	3,757	3,496
Coal	23,426	12,838	10,698	10,566	1,142	n/p
Chemicals	6,763	17,738	2,794	4,626	2,750	1,996
Grain	11,584	6,440	2,534	1,928	1,925	4,661
Crushed stone, sand and gravel	3,588	8,665	3,185	4,802	2,343	2,535
Motor vehicles	2,747	2,381	6,221	4,639	1,785	n/p
Grain mill products	4,092	3,974	1,852	1,218	1,218	n/p
Petroleum products	5,675	3,829	n/p	1,349	n/p	1,214
Trailers	4,223	1,706	1,892	1,338	n/p	n/p
Stone, clay and glass	2,317	2,740	1,561	1,888	n/p	n/p
Metallic ores	2,551	n/p	n/p	881	9,533	n/p
Food and kindred products	2,784	2,689	n/p	n/p	n/p	n/p

Originated cars only; do not sum. "n/p" means not published, not zero. CN and CPKC figures are U.S. operations only.

CARRIER - PUBLISHED CARLOADS BY COMMODITY

UNION PACIFIC AND BNSF WEEKLY CARLOAD REPORTS, WEEK 41, ENDED OCTOBER 17, 2026

COMMODITY	UNION PACIFIC	BNSF	TWO-ROAD TOTAL
Coal	12,979	23,446	36,425
Chemicals	20,864	8,495	29,359
Grain	8,130	11,617	19,747
Petroleum products	5,821	7,659	13,480
Motor vehicles and equipment	7,656	5,743	13,399
Crushed stone, gravel and sand	8,964	4,323	13,287
Grain mill products	4,375	5,087	9,462
Food and kindred products	4,656	3,288	7,944
Stone, clay and glass products	3,359	2,763	6,122
Metals and products	2,989	1,850	4,839
Lumber and wood products	1,864	1,355	3,219
Metallic ores	189	2,572	2,761
Pulp, paper and allied products	1,605	1,095	2,700
Iron and steel scrap	1,176	1,306	2,482
Waste and nonferrous scrap	833	617	1,450
Nonmetallic minerals	976	424	1,400
Coke	725	423	1,148
Farm products, except grain	344	571	915
Primary forest products	284	34	318
All other	3,086	1,921	5,007
Total carloads	90,875	84,589	175,464
Intermodal units	86,124	123,857	209,981

Each carrier's commodity lines sum exactly to its published carload total. These are the carriers' own counts, on the same basis as AAR's release, so they can be read against the AAR tables above but not against Part 1250. Together UP and BNSF moved 75.6% of U.S. carloads and 68.2% of U.S. intermodal units this week. Line names are shown in UP's wording where the two reports differ. Sources: Union Pacific; BNSF.

SERVICE METRICS

CLASS I TERMINAL DWELL AND TRAIN SPEED

CARRIER	TERMINAL DWELL (HRS) OCT 16	PRIOR WEEK	TRAIN SPEED (MPH) WK ENDED OCT 21	PRIOR WEEK	INTERMODAL SPEED (MPH)
Norfolk Southern	25.3	24.8	19.9	20.2	24.8
BNSF	22.5	22.9	25.0	25.3	29.9
CSX	20.76	20.03	24.13	24.45	30.02
Union Pacific	19.9	19.9	24.5	24.6	30.6
CPKC	19.80	21.41	22.4	22.9	29.2
CN (U.S.)	16.31	n/p	23.25	23.75	26.32

Dwell and train speed cover different weeks; read each against its own date. Train speed fell at all six carriers. The longest terminal dwells in the data were NS Roanoke (48.5 hours), NS Decatur (42.9), CPKC Shreveport (39.74), NS Bellevue (38.8), NS Conway (34.9), CSX Selkirk (33.43) and BNSF Barstow (32.8). Union Pacific's own metrics for the week ending October 16 match: 19.9 hours dwell, 24.5 mph and car velocity of 231 miles a day. Sources: IndexBox, USDA AgTransport; IndexBox, STB service metrics; Union Pacific.

OUR TAKE

Carloads flat. +116 cars w/w on a 232,000 base is noise; the 8.5% headline is intermodal (+12.6%, second straight double-digit week). Carloads sit 1.5% above the 41-week average of 228,652, about where they have been for a month. The y/y gain is real and the calendar is clean.

The West carries the volume. UP and BNSF moved three of every four U.S. carloads this week. Metals +14.5% and grain +7.0% lead; nonmetallic minerals (frac and industrial sand) is the only decline, which fits a rig count stuck at 603.

Service is softening as volume rises. Train speed fell at all six Class I's. NS has the longest dwell (25.3 hours), the slowest trains (19.9 mph) and four of the seven worst terminals. FreightWaves says the container surge is now straining drayage, with J.B. Hunt short of drivers (FreightWaves). Drivers, chassis and gates are shared with bulk terminals in the same markets.

COMMODITY WATCH

GRAIN AND AGRICULTURE

USDA's Crop Progress report for the week ended October 18 put the corn harvest at 44% complete, up 11 points on the week and eight behind the 52% five-year average. Soybeans gained 18 points to 64% against a 65% average, so the soybean harvest has nearly caught up. Corn was rated 56% good to excellent, unchanged. Winter wheat was 63% planted against a 69% average. (DTN, October 19)

Gulf-to-Japan ocean grain freight was \$76.25 a metric ton against \$37.50 from the Pacific Northwest. In the third quarter the Gulf rate averaged \$72.76, up 34% from a year ago, and PNW-to-Asia \$36.67, up 26%. Gulf vessel loadings were 7% below last year. (RFD-TV, citing USDA) Mike Steenhoek of the Soy Transportation Coalition said diesel's rise from about \$3.50 to about \$6.30 a gallon is enough to erase a distant buyer's premium: a 15-cent premium at a processor 50 miles away disappears against an elevator 10 miles out once the truck haul and empty return are counted. (RFD-TV)

Export Exchange 2026 drew about 500 buyers from more than 50 countries to Seattle on October 15-17. (RFD-TV) There, UAE-based BioPower Energy signed a memorandum of understanding with the U.S. Grains & BioProducts Council for at least 1 million metric tons of U.S. corn a year, about 39 million bushels, for a planned biorefinery; no start date was given. (RFD-TV) USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service estimates three Brazilian rail projects could cut Brazil's grain transport costs by about 40%. (RFD-TV)

BY CARRIER

AAR grain carloads rose 1,470 to 22,486 (+7.0%). In their own reports, BNSF out-originated UP in grain, 11,617 cars to 8,130, and in grain mill products, 5,087 to 4,375. Part 1250 originated grain was BNSF 11,584, UP 6,440, CPKC 4,661, NS 2,534, CSX 1,928 and CN 1,925; CPKC's figure covers U.S. operations only.

OUR TAKE

Corn at 44% vs. a 52% average leaves the heaviest part of the corn harvest ahead. The Gulf-PNW ocean spread is \$38.75/mt, which favors PNW routing, and PNW is shuttle-train origination; the Gulf is mostly barge. With BNSF and CPKC holding most unfilled grain car orders in Issue 07's data, shuttle demand looks set to hold into Q4. Steenhoek's point cuts the other way locally: \$6 diesel shortens the truck draw to every rail-served elevator.

METALS, STEEL AND SCRAP

AISI reported U.S. raw steel production of 1,870,000 net tons at 80.9% capability utilization for the week ended October 17, up 4.1% from 1,796,000 tons at 77.8% the prior week and up 8.6% from 1,722,000 tons a year earlier. Year to date, 75,632,000 tons at 79.1%, up 5.3%. (AISI; SteelOrbis)

Cleveland-Cliffs returned to profit with third-quarter net income of \$165 million on revenue of \$5.6 billion, up 18.5%. Adjusted EBITDA was \$612 million against its \$575 million guidance. Shipments rose 3.0% to 4.15 million net tons at an average \$1,177 a ton, against \$1,032 a year ago. Cliffs will idle the galvanizing lines at Stelco indefinitely, saying the Canadian galvanized market is oversupplied, and says it will hold Stelco's total tonnage. (SteelOrbis) It also moved the reline of Burns Harbor's C blast furnace, about 2.2 million tons a year, from mid-2027 to April 2028 to keep it running while prices hold. (SMU)

Steel Dynamics earned \$5.26 a share on net sales of \$6.5 billion with record shipments of 3.78 million tons, a little below its \$5.34–\$5.38 guidance. Metals recycling operating income fell \$15 million from the second quarter to \$33 million on lower ferrous scrap prices and narrower spreads, and fabrication backlog is 50% above a year ago, running into the second quarter of 2027. (Steel Dynamics) Nucor raised its hot-rolled spot price \$15 to \$1,255 a short ton, with lead times of three to five weeks. (SMU) October scrap settled up \$20–30 a gross ton and participants expect November to rise again. (SMU) Nucor will spend \$60 million to expand its towers and structures plant at Trinity, Alabama, next to its Decatur mill. (SMU)

BY CARRIER

BNSF originated 2,572 cars of metallic ores to UP's 189, reflecting its Minnesota iron range access, while UP led in metals and products, 2,989 to 1,850. Iron and steel scrap was BNSF 1,306 and UP 1,176. In Part 1250 originations, metallic ores came mainly from CN at 9,533 cars (U.S. operations only), with BNSF at 2,551 and CSX at 881.

OUR TAKE

Mills, rail and price agree: 80.9% utilization, metals the largest carload gainer (+14.5%), HRC +\$15 to \$1,255, scrap +\$20–30 with November expected higher. The Burns Harbor deferral keeps a 2.2 Mt furnace running about three quarters longer than planned, which means continued inbound ore, coke and coal into northwest Indiana. SDI's miss and its narrower recycling margin show not every link is capturing the price. Nucor reports October 26.

CHEMICALS AND LIQUID BULK

Dow's third-quarter net sales rose 13% to \$11.27 billion, and operating EBIT was \$887 million against \$180 million a year earlier. Industrial Intermediates & Infrastructure, the chlor-alkali, glycols and polyurethanes segment, posted sales of \$3.06 billion, up 8%, on price up 16% and volume down 7%. Packaging & Specialty Plastics sales rose 18% to \$5.78 billion on price up 17% and volume up 1%. Performance Materials & Coatings rose 8%, on price up 5% and volume up 3%. (Dow) LyondellBasell reports October 30.

BY CARRIER

Chemicals is Union Pacific's largest carload line at 20,864 cars, more than twice BNSF's 8,495. Part 1250 originated chemicals were UP 17,738, BNSF 6,763, CSX 4,626, NS 2,794, CN 2,750 and CPKC 1,996. Received chemicals on the same basis were NS 4,979, CSX 4,559, CN 3,426, BNSF 1,732 and CPKC 1,179, so the eastern roads are net receivers. Originated and received are never added.

OUR TAKE

Dow's chlor-alkali and glycols business grew revenue on price (+16%) while volume fell 7%; plastics did the same (price +17%, volume +1%). Chemicals carloads follow tons, not dollars. Watch whether LyondellBasell shows the same split on October 30.

FUELS AND FUEL ADDITIVES

For the week ended October 16, commercial crude inventories fell 3.1 million barrels to 412.5 million, about 3% below the five-year average. Gasoline stocks were 205.3 million barrels, 5% below average, and distillate stocks 104.3 million, 9% below, narrower than the 12% shortfall a week earlier. Refinery utilization was 93.4% and crude runs 16.6 million barrels a day. (Rigzone; Oil & Gas 360; BOE Report/Reuters)

Ethanol production rose 29,000 barrels a day to 1.094 million, down 1.6% from a year ago. Stocks rose 616,000 barrels to 24.558 million, up 12% year over year, with Gulf Coast stocks of 5.209 million up 32.3% and Midwest stocks of 9.652 million up 9.5%. Blender input fell to 891,000 barrels a day, down 2.2%. (DTN, citing EIA)

The Department of Energy set up a process for biofuel producers to submit production, feedstock and emissions data so DOE can calculate an emissions value, which a producer can use to seek a provisional rate from Treasury under the 45Z clean fuel production credit. (RFD-TV) Under an October 5 executive order, red-dyed diesel may be used on highways and the federal 24-cent diesel excise tax is deferred to year-end; the IRS confirmed no federal penalty for on-highway dyed diesel from October 1 through December 31. (IRU)

BY CARRIER

BNSF moved more petroleum products than UP in their own reports, 7,659 cars to 5,821. Part 1250 originated petroleum products were BNSF 5,675, UP 3,829, CSX 1,349 and CPKC 1,214. Tank cars online fell at UP (down 1,105 to 82,541) and BNSF (down 635 to about 62,190), and rose at NS (up 1,378 to 40,307) and CSX (up 294 to 42,688). (IndexBox)

OUR TAKE

Gulf Coast ethanol stocks +32.3% y/y with blender input -2.2% is product building faster than it is used. PADD 2 and 3 are BNSF and UP origin territory, so the build is arriving by rail even as demand eases. It usually clears through exports or slower loadings; the data doesn't yet say which. Distillate's gap to the five-year average narrowed to 9% from 12%.

LUMBER, FOREST AND PAPER

Madison's said freight, not price, drove the mid-October lumber market. Trucks and railcars were pulled from lumber sellers for seasonal freight, and Eastern SPF shippers saw loads dropped in favor of seasonal goods, which lengthened delivery times and raised costs at a time of very high fuel prices. Heavy rain in Southern Yellow Pine regions slowed sawmills, and some U.S. South mills were reported selling at or below breakeven. (Madison's)

In Commerce's seventh administrative review, the antidumping rate for most Canadian softwood producers fell to 10.64% from 20.53% and the countervailing rate to 14.11% from 14.63%, for the 24.75% combined rate reported in Issue 07; with the 10% Section 232 tariff, the total is 34.75%. Canfor's antidumping rate fell to 17% from 35.47%, Resolute's is 13.13% and West Fraser's 4.71%. CBP will be told to assess the new duties no earlier than 41 days after publication, and the eighth review is under way. (ScrapMonster)

September housing starts were at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 1,221,000, down 5.2% from August and 7.4% from a year ago. Single-family starts were 859,000, up 2.6% from a year ago, and permits 1,400,000. Completions fell 14.0% from a year ago to 1,192,000, the only change in the release that was statistically significant. (Census/HUD)

Packaging Corporation of America reported third-quarter sales of \$2.60 billion and net income of \$262.3 million, or \$2.93 a share, against \$2.51 a year ago. Containerboard production was 1,489,000 tons, and corrugated shipments rose 10.6% per day. PCA guided to \$2.81 a share in the fourth quarter, with maintenance outages at three mills and higher costs for freight, fiber, chemicals and energy. (PCA)

Fastmarkets RISI showed North American containerboard prices flat in October after September's increases of \$70 a ton for linerboard and \$100 for medium. Truist expects another \$50 a ton in April 2027. (Packaging Dive)

BY CARRIER

UP led BNSF in lumber and wood products, 1,864 cars to 1,355, and in pulp, paper and allied products, 1,605 to 1,095. The duty changes bear most directly on cross-border lumber on CN and CPKC. PCA's three fourth-quarter mill outages will reduce inbound fiber and outbound board at mills it did not name.

OUR TAKE

Two forces pull against each other. Lower duties (24.75% for most, 4.71% AD for West Fraser) cut the landed cost of Canadian lumber and argue for more cross-border volume. Completions -14% y/y argue demand is softening. Near term, the constraint is equipment: when trucks and cars go to seasonal freight, lumber moves on what's left.

CEMENT, AGGREGATES AND INDUSTRIAL MINERALS

Holcim raised full-year guidance to 10-12% organic growth in recurring EBIT after a third quarter in which recurring EBIT rose 16.8% to CHF 976 million on sales of CHF 4.66 billion; it gave no North American volume figures. (International Cement Review) Vulcan Materials reports October 29 and Martin Marietta November 4. (Martin Marietta) Compass Minerals reports fiscal 2026 results November 23, its first full-year read on salt heading into the 2026-27 deicing season. (Compass Minerals)

BY CARRIER

Stone, clay and glass products, which carries most cement, ran UP 3,359 and BNSF 2,763. In Part 1250 originations of crushed stone, sand and gravel, UP led at 8,665 cars, followed by CSX at 4,802, BNSF at 3,588, NS at 3,185, CPKC at 2,535 and CN at 2,343. CSX ahead of BNSF points to aggregates rather than frac sand.

FRAC SAND, COAL AND FERTILIZER

Frac sand and proppant. The Baker Hughes count held at 603 U.S. rigs for the week ended October 16, 55 more than a year ago. The Uinta (+4) and Gulf of Mexico (+1) offset the Permian (-2), Haynesville (-2) and Niobrara (-1). (RBN Energy) AAR nonmetallic minerals, which carries frac and industrial sand, fell 3.2% to 32,428 cars, the only group down.

Coal, petcoke and coke. U.S. coal production for the week ended October 17 was 10.138 million short tons, up 1.3% on the week and 0.9% from a year ago; year to date, 412.9 million tons, down 1.9%. Wyoming produced 4.102 million tons. Coal carloads were 58,242, up from 57,526 a week earlier and 57,604 a year ago, and are down 1.8% year to date. (IndexBox, citing EIA) In seaborne markets, European thermal coal topped \$149 a ton, a three-year high, while Australian hard coking coal fell below \$269 as Chinese buyers turned to domestic and Mongolian supply. (The Coal Hub)

Fertilizer. MIAx's physically settled NOLA futures for urea, MAP, DAP and potash began trading October 19, in 25-short-ton lots. (Fertilizer Daily) An S&P Global report found that about 29% of global urea trade normally moves through the Strait of Hormuz, with nearly half of seaborne sulfur and about 21% of merchant ammonia. (Fertilizer Daily) A UN official warned on October 14 that without a shipping corridor deal "we will miss the planting season." (Fertilizer Daily) StoneX expects nitrogen to stay firm on Hormuz risk, phosphates to see little relief because supply is the constraint, and potash to be the most stable. (Fertilizer Daily)

BY CARRIER

BNSF moved 23,446 coal cars to UP's 12,979 in their own reports. Part 1250 originated coal was BNSF 23,426, UP 12,838, NS 10,698, CSX 10,566 and CN 1,142. CSX tested drones over the empty-car yard at its Curtis Bay export coal terminal in Baltimore to spot coal left in cars after unloading, covering the yard in about 30 minutes. (Progressive Railroading) Fertilizer moves inside chemicals; the NOLA delivery point for the new futures is reached by all six Class I's.

OUR TAKE

Coal's week is up and its year is down: carloads -1.8% YTD track production's -1.9% almost exactly. Nitrogen is where the risk sits. With close to a third of global urea trade exposed to Hormuz and spring application ahead, imported nitrogen into the Gulf and the rail moves inland from NOLA are the ones to watch; the new futures will put a public price on it.

MARKET MOVES

TERMINALS AND FACILITIES

R.J. Corman named Kyle Khadivi to a new role as vice president of transload. He previously led Transflo Terminal Services, CSX's transload subsidiary, and has managed 46 North American terminals. President and COO Matt Igoe said the hire comes "as we strengthen our transload capabilities." (Railway Age) The \$837 million PhilaPort expansion reported in Issue 07 is funded by \$371.5 million in state capital, \$266 million in federal grants and \$200 million in private money, and includes a new 2,000-foot deepwater berth at Southport and \$109.4 million for the 152-acre Mustin Yard. (Railway News)

Canada committed up to C\$254 million to the Saint John trade corridor, including continuous welded rail on 103 km of New Brunswick Southern Railway track and higher mainline speeds between Port Saint John and its Class I connections, plus work at the Bayshore Rail Terminal, the port's only rail access. The target is 850,000 to 1 million TEU a year. (Railway Age) Columbia Terminal Railroad received a \$16.2 million FRA grant for upgrades to its roughly 21-mile line in Columbia, Missouri, which will also fund self-driving freight railcars from Intramotev. (KBIA)

RAILROADS AND SHORT LINES

Pinsly Railroad agreed to acquire the Kankakee, Beaverville & Southern from the Stroo family. The KBSR covers about 159.7 route miles, moves more than 10,000 carloads a year, mostly agricultural, and interchanges with NS at Lafayette, CN at Kankakee, CSX at Newell, UP at St. Anne and the Toledo, Peoria & Western at Sheldon and Webster. Macquarie Infrastructure Partners V will also gain control. The price was not disclosed. (Railway Age; Progressive Railroading)

ASLRRRA won a \$5.6 million CRISI grant to expand its Short Line Training Center, a \$7.5 million project with the match. (Progressive Railroading) Reading & Northern is placing about 10 signaled miles in service between Reading and Pittston, Pennsylvania, part of a self-funded effort to signal its full 114-mile main line. (Progressive Railroading)

EQUIPMENT, LABOR AND RATES

Equipment. PHMSA denied Trinity Industries' application to restencil DOT 105J600W tank cars as 105H600W for toxic-inhalation-hazard service; comments are due November 18. (Federal Register) FreightCar America bought Trinity Equipment Co., a Michigan railcar components supplier, its third aftermarket deal in about a year. (Progressive Railroading) Wabtec's third-quarter sales rose 8.1% to \$3.12 billion and adjusted EPS 22% to \$2.83; it raised full-year guidance to \$10.85-\$11.05 and cited lower locomotive deliveries and lower North American railcar builds. (Progressive Railroading)

Rates. FreightWaves reported that railroads generally target rate increases one to two points above rail inflation and that fuel surcharges trail sustained fuel spikes by one to two quarters; Stephens said there is "nothing to suggest" pricing above cost inflation will change. (FreightWaves) The STB's third-quarter complaint report lists 12 formal proceedings and 37 informal complaints, 22 of them on service; Union Pacific was named in nine. (STB)

POLICY AND FUNDING

CRISI. FRA awarded \$2.3 billion to 105 projects in 45 states, chosen from a record 368 applications, with more than \$1.9 billion in non-federal match. The largest awards were about \$249 million to the Alaska Railroad for a 32-mile line from Port MacKenzie to its main line, \$218.2 million for Wisconsin's Hiawatha service, \$204.8 million to the Port of Coos Bay and \$130 million for Springfield, Massachusetts rail work. (Progressive Railroading; Railway Age)

Virginia. The Commonwealth Transportation Board raised the Rail Industrial Access award ceiling to \$1 million from \$750,000. The DRPT program funds new spurs and rehabilitation connecting businesses to the state's freight network, and applications are taken on a rolling basis. (Progressive Railroading; Railway Age)

UP-NS merger, STB Finance Docket No. FD 36873. The Board issued no decision during the week; comments, protests, requests for conditions and responsive applications are due November 18. (STB; Federal Register) Railway Age ran a commentary by former STB chief economist William Brennan arguing that a single-line transcontinental system would be procompetitive; Railway Age disclosed that Norfolk Southern has retained him for the application. (Railway Age) In its earnings release, Union Pacific said it looks forward to the next steps of the review. (UP)

DATES TO WATCH

DATE	EVENT	WHY IT MATTERS
Oct 26, 2026	Nucor Q3 and Greenbrier fiscal Q4 results	Steel pricing; railcar orders and backlog
Oct 28, 2026	AAR Week 42; CPKC Q3 results	Whether carloads move off a flat week; cross-border volume
Oct 29, 2026	GATX, Trinity and Vulcan Materials Q3; Wilkes-Barre Terminal Railway may close	Lease rates and fleet utilization; aggregates demand; a new Class III carrier
Oct 30, 2026	CN and LyondellBasell Q3 results	Record grain quarter; resin volume against Dow's price-led quarter
Oct 31, 2026	Bearlodge Forest Products closes, Hulett, Wyoming	A Black Hills sawmill closes after nearly 50 years
Nov 2-3, 2026	Atlas Energy Solutions Q3	The largest in-basin Permian sand producer
Nov 3-4, 2026	Mosaic and Martin Marietta Q3	Phosphate and potash; aggregates
Nov 13, 2026	STB FD 36873: responsive environmental information due	Groundwork for responsive applications
Nov 18, 2026	STB FD 36873: comments and responsive applications due; PHMSA special permit comments due	The last practical point to shape merger conditions
Nov 23-24, 2026	Compass Minerals fiscal 2026 results	Salt into the 2026-27 deicing season
Dec 3, 2026	STB FD 36873: preliminary DOJ and USDOT comments due	First federal agency views on the merger
Dec 8, 2026	Mosaic South Fort Meade idle begins	Central Florida phosphate output
Dec 31, 2026	On-highway dyed diesel relief and excise deferral end	Truck fuel costs and rail-served fuel distribution
Feb 16, 2027	STB FD 36873: responses due	Second round of the merger record
May 28, 2027	STB FD 36873: final briefs due	Final round of briefs

CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS

NORTH AMERICAN FREIGHT RAIL EVENTS, NOVEMBER 2026 TO MAY 2027

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	WHY IT MATTERS
Nov 11-13, 2026	NARS Annual Meeting	Washington, D.C.	Shippers and Class I executives, in Washington for the first time, as the merger record builds
Nov 19-20, 2026	RailTrends	New York	Class I and STB leadership on one stage
Jan 6-9, 2027	NRC Conference and REMSA Exhibition	Phoenix	Track construction and maintenance outlook for 2027
Jan 12-14, 2027	MARS Winter Meeting	Schaumburg, Ill.	The largest regional shipper meeting; carriers' first outlooks for the year
Feb 2-4, 2027	MVTTC Annual Conference	New Orleans	Rail, barge and intermodal on the Mississippi Valley corridor
Feb 28-Mar 3, 2027	Rail Equipment Finance Conference	La Quinta, Calif.	Railcar lease rates, fleet supply and equipment financing
Feb 28-Mar 3, 2027	TPM27	Long Beach, Calif.	Trans-Pacific contract season; the import volumes behind intermodal
Mar 9, 2027	Next-Gen Freight Rail	Chicago	Executive conference on freight rail leadership and regulation
Mar 9-10, 2027	SWARS Spring Meeting	Galveston, Texas	Southwest shippers: chemicals, plastics and Gulf Coast service
Mar 14-16, 2027	ASLRRA Annual Conference and Exhibition	New Orleans	The short line industry's main event
Mar 24-25, 2027	SEARS Spring Meeting	Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla.	Southeast shippers and the eastern carriers
Apr 5-7, 2027	PNWARS Spring Meeting	Portland, Ore.	Pacific Northwest shippers: grain, forest products and ports
May 12-14, 2027	NEARS Spring Meeting	Burlington, Vt.	Northeast shippers and cross-border traffic
May 19, 2027	Railroad Day on Capitol Hill	Washington, D.C.	Industry meetings with Congress
May 25-27, 2027	Railway Interchange	Indianapolis	North America's largest rail supply exhibition

Dates as posted by the organizers. Sources: NARS regional meeting calendar; AJOT; ASLRRA; RailMarket; S&P Global.

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