

October 9, 2023

Francis O'Connor
Acting Director of the Office of Economics
Office of Economics
Surface Transportation Bureau
395 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20423

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Office of Proceedings
October 18, 2023
Part of
Public Record

Dear Dr. Brennan,

Please consider this request to obtain access to the unmasked Carload Waybill Sample from 2000 – 2021. This request is made in support of completing work on behalf of the United States Department of Agriculture to evaluate the determinants of agricultural freight rates. I am an Assistant Research Professor at Washington State University and am the Co-Principal Investigator on this project. In support of this project, I ask that access be granted to myself, and Eric Jessup (Co-Principal Investigator, Research Professor, Washington State University) through September 1, 2024, to facilitate the completion of this project.

This work will estimate the determinants of agricultural freight rates by mode to inform shippers and improve policy. Hypothesized determinants of agricultural freight rates include distance, fuel costs, agricultural production, regional socio-economic conditions, market conditions, and rates and service levels of competing modes (barge, truck, air). Rail data from the unmasked Carload Waybill Sample is critical for this project to identify the determinants of rail rates and to identify the impacts of rail rates and levels of rail service on rates of competing modes.

We fully understand and will abide by the confidentiality requirements specified in 49 CFR § 1244.9. We will also submit any research products created using this data for review by the Director of Economics for any confidentiality concerns. Please let me know if you have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding this request.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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