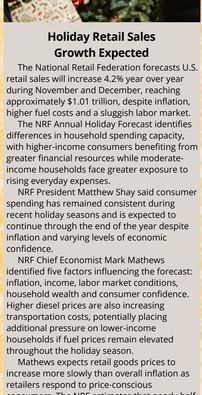
EFS E-Brief

ISSUE #82 - November, 2026

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NEWSLETTER DESIGNED, CREATED, AND EDITED BY BRIAN MISEVETH, 586-703-0787, BRIAN.MISEVETH@GMAIL.COM



Holiday Retail Sales Growth Expected

The National Retail Federation forecasts U.S. retail sales will increase 4.2% year over year during November and December, reaching approximately $1.01 trillion, despite inflation, higher fuel costs and a sluggish labor market.

The NRF Annual Holiday Forecast identifies differences in household spending capacity, with higher-income consumers benefiting from greater financial resources while moderate-income households face greater exposure to rising everyday expenses.

NRF President Matthew Shay said consumer spending has remained consistent during recent holiday seasons and is expected to continue through the end of the year despite inflation and varying levels of economic confidence.

NRF Chief Economist Mark Mathews identified five factors influencing the forecast: inflation, income, labor market conditions, household wealth and consumer confidence. Higher diesel prices are also increasing transportation costs, potentially placing additional pressure on lower-income households if fuel prices remain elevated throughout the holiday season.

Mathews expects retail goods prices to increase more slowly than overall inflation as retailers respond to price-conscious consumers. The NRF estimates that nearly half of the forecasted 4.2% holiday sales growth will come from increases in actual consumer spending rather than price increases.

Consumer spending patterns are expected to vary by income level. Higher-income households continue to benefit from increased financial wealth, while moderate-income households are more affected by higher gasoline and food prices. Automobiles, travel and hospitality are experiencing greater effects from these economic pressures, although retail categories are also expected to benefit from holiday spending.

Retailers are expected to maintain competitive pricing while managing higher transportation and operating costs. Mathews noted that retailers may absorb some of these expenses rather than pass the full increases along to consumers.

FMCSA: HOS Flexibility, SMS Updates, Motus Registration Push

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration is preparing additional changes to hours-of-service (HOS) regulations and updates to its Safety Measurement System (SMS), while continuing work on its Motus online registration system, according to FMCSA Chief Safety Officer Steve Dowling.

Speaking at the 2026 WEX OTR Summit on Oct. 28, Dowling outlined the agency's upcoming priorities, which include identifying ways to reduce crashes, injuries and fatalities involving commercial trucks and buses.

FMCSA revised four HOS provisions in June: the short-haul exception, adverse driving conditions exception, 30-minute break requirement and sleeper berth provision. The agency also launched two pilot programs in spring 2026 examining flexible sleeper berth arrangements and split-duty periods.

Earlier in October, FMCSA expanded a temporary waiver for drivers transporting gasoline and diesel to include ethanol products and heating oil. The waiver is scheduled to expire Dec. 16.

Dowling said the agency is continuing to examine additional HOS flexibility, including whether existing requirements can be adjusted to better accommodate industry operations while maintaining measures to address driver fatigue and safety.

FMCSA is also developing updates to its SMS, which is used to identify safety risks among motor carriers. Dowling said the agency intends to present proposed changes for industry review and public comment. The effort is focused on improving the identification of safety risks across the commercial transportation industry.

Meanwhile, FMCSA continues to address registration issues associated with Motus. Approximately 95% of carrier registrations have been completed, while the remaining 5% have presented challenges. Dowling acknowledged that the outstanding registrations have prevented thousands of applicants from entering the industry.

The agency is working on system updates and providing assistance to carriers experiencing registration difficulties. Dowling said FMCSA representatives are available to help affected carriers navigate the system and address technical issues.

USDOT: $200 Million To Boost Truck Parking

The Department of Transportation announced Oct. 14 that it will invest $200 million in truck parking projects across 12 states, including Iowa, Wisconsin and Georgia.

Truck parking ranked No. 4 in the American Transportation Research Institute's most recent annual survey of trucking industry issues. Drivers spend an average of 56 minutes per day searching for safe parking, costing an estimated $5,600 annually.

The funding comes from the Nationally Significant Multimodal Freight and Highway Projects program, a competitive grant initiative supporting freight and highway projects of regional or national significance.

Major awards include $24.5 million for the Iowa Department of Transportation to modernize and expand six public rest areas along Interstate 80, $15 million for Wisconsin to add 106 parking spaces at two rest areas along Interstate 41, and $11.95 million for Georgia's Port of Savannah Commercial Motor Vehicle Parking Area, which plans to provide nearly 300 spaces. Additional funding will support two projects in Texas and one in North Carolina, along with projects in Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Illinois, Minnesota, Nebraska and Tennessee.

American Trucking Associations supported the investment, noting that truck parking affects driver safety, supply chain efficiency and highway safety. Henry Hanscom, ATA's chief advocacy and public affairs officer, said the projects will help drivers find available rest areas, improve freight movement and address ongoing parking shortages.

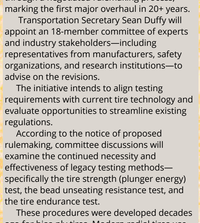
Congress may consider additional truck parking measures following the midterm elections. In June, the House Appropriations Committee advanced a fiscal 2027 transportation funding bill that would provide another $200 million for truck parking expansion nationwide.

Separately, a bipartisan House caucus released a report outlining approaches to increase parking capacity without requiring additional federal spending. The recommendations include giving states greater flexibility to fund parking expansion in areas experiencing significant shortages.

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Emergency Trailer Repair Keeps Your Fleet Moving When Towing Issues Strike



NHTSA: Tire Safety Standards Under Review

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) announced it will modernize federal tire safety standards through a negotiated rulemaking process, marking the first major overhaul in 20+ years.

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy will appoint an 18-member committee of experts and industry stakeholders—including representatives from manufacturers, safety organizations, and research institutions—to advise on the revisions.

The initiative intends to align testing requirements with current tire technology and evaluate opportunities to streamline existing regulations.

According to the notice of proposed rulemaking, committee discussions will examine the continued necessity and effectiveness of legacy testing methods—specifically the tire strength (plunger energy) test, the bead unseating resistance test, and the tire endurance test.

These procedures were developed decades ago for bias-ply tires. Modern radial tires use steel-belted construction that may render certain legacy testing methods obsolete.

The committee will also evaluate safety requirements for emerging technologies, such as puncture-resistant and non-pneumatic tires, alongside updates to tire marking requirements.

The specific effects of the revised standards on commercial trucking will depend on the committee's recommendations.

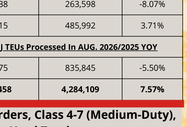
Industry leaders note that potential updates to the plunger energy and bead unseating tests are highly relevant to commercial fleets.

The negotiated rulemaking process may take several years, and committee members will serve a single term of up to two years.

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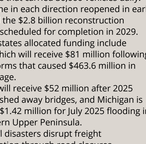
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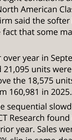


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2026 Port Activity: September*

PORT VOLUMES	TEUs Processed SEPT. 2026	TEUs Processed SEPT. 2025	% ↑ ↓Year-Over-Year
Port of Los Angeles	1,042,652	883,053	18.07%
Port of Long Beach	997,177	797,537	25.03%
NW Seaport Alliance (Seattle/Tacoma)	265,692	289,120	-8.10%
Port Houston	376,419	337,659	11.48%
SC Port Authority (Charleston)	201,773	212,363	-4.99%
Port of Oakland	188,517	178,942	5.35%
Port of Virginia	242,338	263,598	-8.07%
Georgia Ports Authority	504,015	485,992	3.71%
	PANYNJ TEUs Processed In AUG. 2026/2025 YOY		
*Port Authority of NY & NJ reports its volume one month behind other ports	789,875	835,845	-5.50%
TOTAL PORT VOLUMES	**4,608,458**	**4,284,109**	**7.57%**

September, 2026: Tonnage, Trailer Orders, Class 4-7 (Medium-Duty), Class 8 Orders/Sales, Used Trucks

TONNAGE: The freight market gained some momentum in September, as shrinking capacity helped offset flat demand and pressure from fuel costs. American Trucking Associations' For-Hire Truck Tonnage Index increased 0.8% from the previous month to 114 from 113.1 but was unchanged from a year earlier. Regulatory and market factors continued to reduce capacity. Freight tonnage was up 0.9% during the first nine months of 2026, reflecting robust growth earlier in the year.

TRAILER ORDERS: U.S. trailer orders were boosted to triple-digit percentage growth amid seasonal factors and a delayed order cycle in September. ACT Research preliminary data showed orders surged 311% from the previous year to 42,700 units. The report also stressed that the rise is against a low volume last year. September's level, too, marked a 75% improvement over August. The results were still strong, with the seasonally adjusted number at 36,700 units being the third best in the past 55 months.

CLASSES 4-7 (MEDIUM DUTY): U.S. medium-duty truck sales slowed in September despite a significant jump in the Class 6 market. Omdia Automotive data shows Classes 4-7 retail truck sales decreased 3.4% to 16,343 units from 16,916 reported during the prior-year period, and were down 2.4% sequentially from 16,743 in August. Class 6 was the only medium-duty category to post a year-over-year gain for the month.

CLASS 8 ORDERS: Class 8 demand is gaining momentum despite a cautious start to order season in September, citing fleets' replacement needs, improving freight conditions and the gradual opening of 2027 order boards. ACT Research reported preliminary North American Class 8 orders totaled 18,700 units in September, down 9.5% from a year earlier. The firm said the softer intake likely reflected uncertainty around future emissions regulations and the fact that some manufacturers had yet to fully open 2027 order boards.

CLASS 8 SALES: U.S. Class 8 retail sales jumped 30% year over year in September, while year-to-date sales remain down 5%. Omdia Automotive data reported 21,095 units were sold, up from 16,228 during the prior-year period. The results also came in 13.6% above the 18,575 units reported in August. Sales for the year, however, have decreased 5% to 152,960 from 160,981 in 2025.

USED TRUCKS: Used Class 8 truck sales showed a notable sequential slowdown in the same-dealer used retail market in September despite overall gains. ACT Research found that overall Class 8 used truck sales grew 10.2% to 24,900 units from 22,600 the prior year. Sales were also up 4.6% sequentially from 23,800 units. But the report highlighted that the 5.7% slip in same-dealer used retail truck sales followed a notable decline in August. Same-dealer sales still managed to come in ahead of the prior year.



$1.6 Billion Made Available For Disaster Repair Aid

The Department of Transportation announced that $1.6 billion in Federal Highway Administration emergency relief funding will be distributed among 34 states and several territories to repair infrastructure damaged by natural disasters.

North Carolina will receive $873 million for repairs following 2024's Hurricane Helene, which caused 9,000 damage sites and 1,400 road closures. The state previously received $1.15 billion in 2025, bringing total federal emergency relief for Helene repairs in North Carolina to $2 billion.

Helene also severely damaged Interstate 40 through Pigeon River Gorge, a critical freight corridor between North Carolina and Tennessee that carried 30,000 vehicles daily.

One lane in each direction reopened in early 2025, and the $2.8 billion reconstruction project is scheduled for completion in 2029.

Other states allocated funding include Hawaii, which will receive $81 million following March storms that caused $463.6 million in total damage.

Texas will receive $52 million after 2025 floods washed away bridges, and Michigan is allocated $1.42 million for July 2025 flooding in the Western Upper Peninsula.

Natural disasters disrupt freight transportation through road closures, congestion, and detours, which increases costs for trucking companies and delays vital supplies like food, water, medicine, and construction materials. Highlighting this vulnerability, the 2023 Texas Freight Plan identified highway, rail, air, and maritime infrastructure as essential for disaster response and recovery.

These infrastructure impacts come as billion-dollar weather and climate disasters become more frequent.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration data shows the U.S. averaged five such disasters annually from 1980 through 2010, compared with 16 annually from 2011 through 2023, and a record 28 in 2023 alone.

U.S. Economy Grew In Q3, Boosted By Q2 Growth

The U.S. economy grew at an annualized rate of 3.4% in the third quarter of 2026, accelerating from 2.2% growth in the second quarter, according to the Commerce Department's Oct. 29 report. Growth was supported by consumer spending and increased business investment, particularly in artificial intelligence (AI).

Consumer spending increased at an annualized rate of 3.8% from July through September. Business investment, excluding housing, rose 12.7%, including a 37.4% increase in information processing equipment, a 9.6% increase in software investment and a 7.5% increase in research and development.

Housing investment declined 3.3%, marking its sixth quarterly decrease in the past seven quarters, amid elevated mortgage rates.

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