



Rail intermodal volume continues to rise

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WASHINGTON—United States weekly intermodal railroad volume for the week ending August 26 set a new record for the second time in the last four weeks, according to the Association of American Railroads (AAR).

Last week's volume of 253,981 trailers or containers represented a 7.1 percent increase from the same week in 2005. Weekly container volume was up 10.6 percent, and trailer volume was down 3.5 percent. And the total for the week ending August 26 eclipsed the previous of record of 250,966 trailers or containers, which was set for the week ending July 31. The July 31 figure broke a record that was set more than eight months earlier for the week ending October 22, 2005, which accounted for 250,115 trailers and containers.

AAR director of editorial services Tom White told *Logistics Management* that the combination of a strong economy and large international trade volumes are the leading drivers for the continued surge in intermodal trade volumes. And although diesel fuel prices has come down somewhat in recent weeks, he added they remain fairly high (according

to the Energy Information Association, the average price per gallon of diesel gasoline was \$3.027 as of August 28), and that is continuing to drive growth on the rails, because railroad fuel is more environmentally efficient.

"The underlying causes of [intermodal] growth are still there," said White. "The last few years intermodal has been phenomenally strong, and the 10 busiest intermodal weeks in history have occurred in the last two years, going back to the beginning of January 2005. It has been on this continuous growth pattern, and we don't see any change in that right now."

Total volume for the week ending August 26 was estimated at 34.3 billion miles by the AAR, with coal loadings up 6.0 percent from last year, and metals and metallic ores up 14.4 percent and 11.5 percent, respectively.

According to AAR data, cumulative intermodal volume for the first 34 weeks of 2006 totaled 11,437,619 carloads, which is up 1.5 percent from 2005. Trailers and containers are up 6.4 percent at 7,962,404, and the ton-miles

total of 1.3 trillion is up 2.7 percent from last year.