

Bulk Freight Rates Ease 3.6% in June as the End of the Iran War Reshapes the Diesel Outlook

BulkLoads' June Bulk Freight Market Update shows per-mile rates cooling off record spring highs even as major commodity groups firm.

SPRINGFIELD, MO, UNITED STATES, June 15, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Median bulk freight rates eased 3.6% in the first half of June to \$5.02 per mile, according to the latest Bulk Freight Market Update from [BulkLoads](#), the bulk freight marketplace and data platform. The figure, drawn from 16,125 verified loads across 47 origin states through June 13, remains 22.1% higher than June 2025, underscoring how far the market's floor has climbed over the past year.

The month-over-month dip is largely a mix story rather than a sign of weakening demand. While the blended median cooled, the network's major commodity groups firmed underneath it: grain rates rose roughly 9% on the month, and aggregates and industrial rates gained about 8%. Corn, the highest-volume product on the platform with 1,358 verified loads, climbed 8.3% month-over-month and 30% year-over-year. The softer blended average reflects a tilt toward shorter-haul, lower-rate lanes early in the month, compounded by a 5.2% month-over-month decline in total volume that tracks the normal seasonal lull between spring planting and fall harvest.

"The number on the screen says rates cooled, but that's the wrong thing to watch," said John F. Calloway, Growth Architect, Enterprise at BulkLoads. "Underneath the blended average, the freight that actually moves this network is firming. The real story for the next two quarters isn't grain or aggregates. It's diesel, and diesel is now a geopolitics story."



Diesel remains the second-largest variable cost for bulk carriers, and its trajectory has become the central question for the back half of 2026. The U.S. average eased 7.6% in June to \$5.21 per gallon, yet still sits 39.8% above year-ago levels. That 12-month spike was driven almost entirely by the Iran war and the disruption of the Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly a fifth of the world's oil and gasoline normally moves. The conflict reset the entire diesel curve higher and, with it, the floor under freight rates.

Over the weekend, an agreement to end the war and reopen the strait was announced. BulkLoads cautions that the relief will be gradual rather than immediate. Crude-laden ships have been stranded in the Persian Gulf for more than three months, and energy analysts expect it to take months, not days, before shipping and refining return to a normal cadence. The company's outlook calls for diesel to stay elevated and choppy through midsummer, then grind lower through the third and fourth quarters if the agreement holds. A breakdown in the deal would reverse that quickly, pushing fuel back above prior highs.

"Fuel cuts both ways now," Calloway added. "Barrels coming back to market pressure diesel lower and ease rate pressure into Q3. A breakdown tightens supply and snaps it back. Either way, carriers and shippers who price the fuel move before it fully shows up will win the next two quarters."

Regional trends reinforced the divergence. Midwest origins rose 11.5% on the month and 20.4% over six months, while South Central origins (Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico) climbed 15.7% and 30.8% over the same windows. Northeast origins firmed 3.9%, and West origins softened 6.4%. Short-haul intrastate moves continued to dominate, with the three busiest corridors accounting for 19% of all flow.

The monthly update is a snapshot of BulkLoads' broader data platform, Bulk Freight [Insights](#), which extends the report into live rate-quoting tools, lane analysis, and fuel-adjusted estimates across every commodity in the network. The platform is built on verified, transaction-backed data rather than scraped or self-reported rates.

BulkLoads will also host the Bulk Freight Conference, with tickets now available at bulkfreightconference.com.

About BulkLoads

BulkLoads operates a bulk freight marketplace and data platform connecting carriers, brokers, and shippers across the agricultural and bulk commodity sectors. Through BulkLoads.com and Bulk Freight Insights, the company delivers verified market data, rate intelligence, and freight-matching tools built specifically for bulk haulers.

Media Contact

John F. Calloway, Growth Architect, Enterprise

BulkLoads · John.c@bulkloads.com · (417) 501-3934 · bulkloads.com

John F. Calloway

BulkLoads

+1 4175226740

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