

March 27, 2023

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William Brennan, PhD
Chief Economist & Director
Office of Economics
Surface Transportation Bureau
395 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20423

ENTERED
Office of Proceedings
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Dear Dr. Brennan,

Please consider this request to obtain access to the unmasked Carload Waybill Sample (CWS) for years 2008 – 2020 for corn, soybean, and soybean meal shipments (STCCs 01132, 01144, and 20923). This request is made in support of completing the work set forth in a cooperative agreement (#21-TMTSD-GA-0009) with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's – Agricultural Marketing Service (USDA-AMS). I (Assistant Professor at the University of Georgia) am the Principal Investigator working with Jungkeon Jo (graduate research assistant at the University of Georgia) and collaborators at USDA-AMS (Peter Caffarelli, Jesse Gastelle, and Adam Sparger). In support of this project, I ask that access be granted to Jungkeon Jo, the USDA collaborators, and me. I request that this access be granted through March 31, 2024 to facilitate the completion of this project and publish findings from this research in an academic journal.

The cooperative research assesses grain flows into the southeastern portion of the United States (the Southeast) principally used to feed livestock. This includes measuring modal shares and the drivers of flows into the Southeast. This study is unique in its focus on movements of agricultural products for a major domestic end use. This study informs policymakers of the magnitude of grain flow into the Southeast, the importance of each transportation mode in meeting the Southeast's grain and oilseed demand, and significant factors that affect these agricultural product flows.

The major transportation method to move agricultural products used as components for livestock feed to the Southeast is rail. Therefore, using rail data is essential. In order to adequately assess the significant factors affecting these movements, shipment-level rate data is necessary as rail rates have been shown to be a significant variable when estimating rail demand. To the requestor's knowledge, these shipment-level rate data are not available from other sources. As a result, unmasked CWS data is necessary to estimate this rail demand.

The enclosure to this letter lists the desired variables from the unmasked CWS. I request access to all shipments with the STCC codes mentioned in the first paragraph (STCC 01132, 01144, and 20923). This is required to assess if the factors impacting rail demand for shipment to the Southeast is different compared to that out of more export-focused areas, such as the Pacific Northwest. However, to avoid any special programming on STB's part, it is worth noting we have experience working with the complete waybill file.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'William G. Secor', with a stylized, cursive script.

William G. Secor
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