



## Agricultural Transportation Examined by TRB

January 14, 2010

The Agricultural Transportation Committee of the Transportation Research Board (TRB) met earlier this week on Monday, January 11th during the 2010 TRB Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C.

The Committee membership consists of various professionals focused on the business of agricultural transportation including the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), university researchers and private agricultural economists, agricultural commodity producer and processor organizations, along with AFTC representation.

The discussion among committee members summarized current issues in the agricultural transportation industry.

First, representatives of the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) of USDA indicated that an agricultural transportation study is due to be completed soon, awaiting final clearance by Administration officials. The study, commissioned by Congress, is examining the availability, service and pricing for agricultural transportation. It was included in the farm bill at the urging of farm groups and other users of transportation, mainly focused on their dissatisfaction with rail service but was broadened to include all forms of agricultural transportation; rail, truck, and barge. Following release of the study, USDA plans to conduct informal dialogue with stakeholders to discuss the conclusions and implications. AFTC will remain engaged in this process to ensure that it portrays an accurate view of the trucking industry.

Other issues discussed include the following:

- trade barriers to shipping agricultural products in international trade such as availability of containers;
- antitrust immunity for rail industry - update on legislative efforts to eliminate it;
- food safety legislation – effect on transportation;
- efforts in Europe to label food products according to carbon content as a result of distance transported;
- cellulosic ethanol production – study of transport systems for feedstocks and locations for production plants
- fuel factoring - university research for state agency to ensure that their factoring is in line with the industry norm and that they are adequately recovering fuel costs; and
- potato shipping - efficiency of export systems from ports in Pacific Northwest and potential benefit of weight limit reform.

TRB is part of the National Research Council within the National Academy of Sciences, chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1863, to provide the services of the nation's leading scientists to the federal government. Its mission is to provide leadership in transportation

innovation and progress through research and information exchange. The Agricultural Transportation Committee is one of more than 40 standing technical committees.