

**JOINT STB-USDA GRAIN LOGISTICS TASK FORCE ISSUES FOURTH REPORT ON GRAIN TRANSPORTATION
PROSPECTS**

Surface Transportation Board (Board) Chairman Linda Morgan reported the issuance by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) of the fourth in a series of Grain Transportation Prospects Reports prepared by a joint grain logistics task force composed of personnel from the Board and the USDA. The report projects increased demand for export shipments of corn and wheat, with a preferred movement from gulf coast ports because of lower ocean freight rates from gulf coast origins. In April, grain deliveries to ports were up 24 percent over last year. Domestic demand for grain remains strong, which, together with exports, is expected to keep the demand for rail transportation well above 1998 levels.

The inter-agency task force that prepared this fourth report was initiated pursuant to a memorandum of understanding signed by Chairman Morgan and Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman, and continues to produce informative and timely reports designed to address shipper and railroad needs related to recurring seasonal problems that affect the transportation of grain and grain products.

As with past reports, Chairman Morgan applauded the USDA staff for their considerable commitment to this effort, and pledged the Board's continued commitment as well. She noted that the task force effort is yet another example of a cooperative effort for the benefit of the public.

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