Transportation EDI Document Flow

One-page reference for logistics and operations teams

Four documents carry a truckload shipment from tender to payment. Each one answers the one before it, so a gap anywhere breaks the chain downstream.

204 Load Tender → **990** Accept / Decline → **214** Status Updates → **210** Freight Invoice

Document	Direction	What It Is	What Triggers It	How It Connects
204	Shipper → Carrier	Motor Carrier Load Tender	Shipper has a load ready and offers it to a specific carrier.	Opens the shipment. Contains stops, weight, equipment, pickup/delivery windows, and reference numbers.
990	Carrier → Shipper	Response to Load Tender	Carrier reviews the 204 and decides to accept or decline.	Answers the 204. Acceptance locks the load in; a decline sends the shipper back to tender elsewhere.
214	Carrier → Shipper	Transportation Carrier Shipment Status	Every milestone event: dispatched, arrived, loaded, in transit, delivered, exception.	Runs the length of the shipment. Multiple 214s per load — this is the visibility layer between accept and invoice.
210	Carrier → Shipper	Motor Carrier Freight Details & Invoice	Delivery is complete and the carrier bills for the move.	Closes the shipment. Charges must reconcile against the 204 rates and the delivery 214.

How the Chain Holds Together

- **No 990, no load.** A 204 without a matching 990 is an unanswered tender. Shippers treat silence as a decline and re-tender.
- **The 214 is the audit trail.** Detention claims, OTIF scoring, and invoice disputes are all settled with status timestamps.
- **The 210 must reconcile.** Charges are matched against the tendered rate on the 204 and the delivery event on the 214. Mismatches sit in payment exception queues.
- **997s run underneath everything.** The Functional Acknowledgment confirms each document was received at the syntax level. It does not confirm the business data was accepted.

Where Teams Get Tripped Up

- **Treating a 997 as an acceptance.** A 997 on a 204 means the file parsed, not that the carrier took the load. Only the 990 does that.
- **Sparse 214s.** Sending only a delivery status leaves the shipper blind mid-transit and removes the evidence needed to defend accessorial charges.
- **Status codes that do not match the partner guide.** Every shipper defines its own required event codes and timing windows. Generic mapping fails compliance even when the file is valid.
- **Reference number drift.** Shipment ID, BOL, PO, and pro number must carry consistently across all four documents or nothing auto-matches on the shipper side.