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HEARTLAND EXPRESS INC  
Form 8-K  
October 20, 2004

UNITED STATES  
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION  
Washington, D.C. 20549

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FORM 8-K

CURRENT REPORT

Pursuant to Section 13 or 15(d) of  
the Securities Exchange Act of 1934

Date of Report (Date of earliest event reported):  
October 18, 2004

HEARTLAND EXPRESS, INC.  
(Exact name of registrant as specified in its charter)

Commission File Number - 0-15087

NEVADA  
(State of other Jurisdiction  
of Incorporation)

93-0926999  
(IRS Employer ID No.)

2777 HEARTLAND DRIVE, CORALVILLE, IOWA  
(Address of Principal Executive Offices)

52241  
(Zip Code)

Registrant's Telephone Number (including area code): 319-545-2728

Item 9.01. Financial Statements and Exhibits

Exhibit 99.1 - Heartland Express, Inc. press release dated October 18, 2004 with respect to the Company's financial results for the quarter ended September 30, 2004.

Item 2.02. Results of Operations and Financial Condition.

On October 18, 2004, Heartland Express, Inc. announced its financial results for the quarter ended September 30, 2004. The press release is attached as Exhibit 99.1 to this Form 8-K and is incorporated herein by reference.

SIGNATURE

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Pursuant to the requirements of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, the registrant has duly caused this report to be signed on behalf by the undersigned thereunto duly authorized.

HEARTLAND EXPRESS, INC.

Date: October 18, 2004

BY: /s/ John P. Cosaert

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JOHN P. COSAERT  
Vice-President  
Finance and Treasurer

Exhibit No. 99.1

Monday, October 18, 2004, For Immediate Release

Press Release

Heartland Express, Inc. Reports Revenues and Earnings for the Third Quarter of 2004.

CORALVILLE, IOWA - October 18, 2004 - Heartland Express, Inc. (Nasdaq: HTLD) announced today financial results for the third quarter ended September 30, 2004. Gross revenues for the quarter increased 12.3% to \$117.3 million from \$104.5 million in the third quarter of 2003. Net income increased 17.8% to \$17.1 million from \$14.5 million in the 2003 period. Basic earnings per share were \$0.23 compared to \$0.19 for the third quarter of 2003.

For the nine months, revenue increased 11.8% to \$337.6 from \$302.1 during the same period in 2003. Net income increased 20.2% to \$45.9 million from \$38.2 million in the 2003 period. Basic earnings per share were \$0.61 compared with \$0.51 for the 2003 period.

For the quarter, Heartland Express, Inc. posted an operating ratio (operating expenses as a percentage of gross revenues) of 78.1% and a 14.6% net margin. The Company ended the nine months ended September 30, 2004 with an operating ratio of 79.6% and a 13.6% net margin. These results are all improvements over the prior year. They were achieved in a period of record high fuel prices and a continued shortage of qualified drivers.

The Company ended the third quarter with cash, cash equivalents, and investments of \$239.5 million, a \$37.1 million increase from the \$202.4 million reported on December 31, 2003. The Company's balance sheet continues to be debt-free.

Earlier this year the Company announced the replacement of its tractor fleet. The Company has taken delivery of 650 new International 9400i model tractors. The delivery of new tractors and the trade-in of the current fleet is scheduled to be completed by December 31, 2006. The Company also upgraded its trailer fleet with the purchase of 700 new Wabash trailers during the second and third quarter of this year.

During the quarter, Heartland Express declared a 3-for-2 stock split, payable as 50% stock dividend. The stock dividend increased the Company's issued and

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outstanding common stock from 50.0 million to 75.0 million shares. The stock dividend was paid on August 20, 2004. All of the above earnings per share data has been adjusted to reflect the effect of this stock dividend.

The Company's regular quarterly dividend was declared September 9, 2004. The quarterly dividend of \$1.5 million at the rate of \$0.02 per share was paid on October 1, 2004 to shareholders of record at the close of business on September 20, 2004. This was the fifth consecutive quarterly cash dividend paid. Our recent stock split increases our total annual dividend by \$2.0 million to a total of \$6.0 million annually. It is a pleasure to share the continued success of the Company with our stockholders. It is important to note that the recent stock split increased quarterly dividend payout by 50%.

During the quarter, Heartland Express strengthened its industry-leading driver compensation package by introducing their "GREEN MILE\$" program. Company drivers and owner operators will be paid an additional 7 cents per mile for all HHG miles driven in what will be known as the "Green Zone". The "Green Zone" is an area north of the southern border of Maryland and east of Interstate 81 running through Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New York. The defined area includes all or a portion of the upper Northeastern United States. This program became effective October 2nd, 2004. The Company is strongly committed to attracting and retaining the safest experienced drivers in the industry.

This press release may contain statements that might be considered as forward-looking statements or predictions of future operations. Such statements are based on management's belief or interpretation of information currently available. These statements and assumptions involve certain risks and uncertainties. Actual events may differ from these expectations as specified from time to time in filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

For further information contact  
John P. Cosaert, EVP; CFO  
Heartland Express, Inc.  
319-545-2728

### HEARTLAND EXPRESS, INC. AND SUBSIDIARIES

#### CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF INCOME (UNAUDITED)

	Three months ended September 30,		Nine month September
	2004	2003	2004
OPERATING REVENUE .....	\$ 117,299,278	\$ 104,460,615	\$ 337,647,731
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OPERATING EXPENSES:			
Salaries, wages, benefits .....	\$ 40,305,667	\$ 34,949,275	\$ 119,163,588
Rent and purchased transportation .....	8,578,807	12,090,171	28,620,347
Operations and maintenance .....	25,297,575	19,094,695	68,954,053
Taxes and licenses .....	2,143,218	2,265,221	6,638,458

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Insurance and claims .....	2,562,377	3,384,300	10,454,595
Communications and utilities .....	886,416	946,331	2,828,948
Depreciation .....	7,842,781	7,139,016	21,214,242
Other operating expenses .....	4,020,431	3,080,052	10,935,875
(Gain) loss on disposal of fixed assets ...	2,085	23,802	(99,804)
	-----	-----	-----
	\$ 91,639,357	\$ 82,972,863	\$ 268,710,302
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Operating income .....	\$ 25,659,921	\$ 21,487,752	\$ 68,937,429
Interest income .....	805,135	470,972	2,024,522
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Income before income taxes .....	\$ 26,465,056	\$ 21,958,724	\$ 70,961,951
Federal and state income taxes .....	9,395,071	7,465,967	25,070,700
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Net income .....	\$ 17,069,985	\$ 14,492,757	\$ 45,891,251
	=====	=====	=====
Earnings per common share:			
Basic earnings per share .....	\$ 0.23	\$ 0.19	\$ 0.61
	=====	=====	=====
Basic weighted average shares outstanding .....	75,000,000	75,000,000	75,000,000
	=====	=====	=====

HEARTLAND EXPRESS, INC.  
AND SUBSIDIARIES

CONDENSED CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEETS

ASSETS

	September 30, 2004	December 31, 2003
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	(unaudited)	
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and short term investments .....	\$ 239,497,693	\$ 202,431,155
Trade receivables .....	39,552,428	36,836,728
Prepaid tires .....	2,927,590	2,529,580
Deferred income taxes .....	24,894,000	21,308,000
Other current assets .....	1,685,726	673,101
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Total current assets .....	\$ 308,557,437	\$ 263,778,564
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PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT .....	\$ 251,291,695	\$ 232,650,992
Less accumulated depreciation .....	63,802,426	56,951,186
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	\$ 187,489,269	\$ 175,699,806
	-----	-----
OTHER ASSETS .....	\$ 9,016,455	\$ 8,928,186
	-----	-----
	\$ 505,063,161	\$ 448,406,556
	=====	=====
LIABILITIES AND STOCKHOLDERS' EQUITY		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable & accrued liabilities ..	\$ 16,762,333	\$ 15,684,826
Accrued expenses .....	62,967,658	53,724,940
Income taxes payable .....	5,747,683	7,720,875
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Total current liabilities .....	\$ 85,477,674	\$ 77,130,641
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DEFERRED INCOME TAXES .....	\$ 45,393,000	\$ 39,760,000
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COMMITMENTS AND CONTINGENCIES		
STOCKHOLDERS' EQUITY		
Capital stock: Common, \$.01 par value; authorized 395,000,000 shares; issued and outstanding 75,000,000 in 2004 and 50,000,000 in 2003 .....	\$ 750,000	\$ 500,000
Additional paid-in capital .....	8,510,305	8,510,305
Retained earnings .....	365,851,547	323,710,296
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	\$ 375,111,852	\$ 332,720,601
Less unearned compensation .....	(919,365)	(1,204,686)
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	\$ 374,192,487	\$ 331,515,915
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	\$ 505,063,161	\$ 448,406,556
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END OF REPORT