



U.S. MARKET:	
Gross Domestic Product	The U.S. GDP increased at an annual rate of 4.3% in the fourth quarter of 2020, according to the advance estimate released by the Bureau of Economic Analysis in late January. This increase reflects both the continued economic recovery from the sharp declines earlier in the year and the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, including new restrictions and closures that took effect in some areas of the United States. In the third quarter, real GDP increased 33.4 percent. (Source: US BEA) As of March 24, the GDPNow model estimate for real GDP growth (seasonally adjusted annual rate) in the first quarter of 2021 is 5.4 percent , down from 5.7 percent on March 17 (Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta) (The GDPNow forecast aggregates statistical model forecasts of 13 subcomponents that comprise GDP.)
U.S. Trade Deficit	The U.S. goods and services trade deficit increased 1.9% in January 2021 to \$68.2 billion . Exports and imports in December 2020 reflect both the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the continued economic recovery from the sharp declines in 2020. The full economic effects of the pandemic cannot be quantified in the trade statistics because the impacts are generally embedded in source data and cannot be separately identified. The Census Bureau and the Bureau of Economic Analysis continue to monitor data quality and have determined estimates in this release meet publication standards. (Source: US DOC & Census Bureau)
Import Volumes	In January 2021, the U.S. imported \$260.2 billion of cargo, increasing 1.2% from the previous month. January imports in the categories of goods, food & beverage, capital goods, consumer goods, and non-petroleum imports were the highest on record . (Source: US Census)
Export Volumes	In January 2021, the U.S. exported \$191.9 billion of cargo, increasing 1.0% from the previous month. January exports to Taiwan (\$3.1 billion) were the highest on record . (Source: US Census)
Import & Export Price Index	Prices for U.S. imports increased 1.3 percent in February following a 1.4-percent advance in January. Export prices rose 1.6 percent in February, after increasing 2.5 percent the previous month. Over the past year, import prices advanced 3.0 percent and export prices rose 5.2 percent. (Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics)
Unemployment Rate	The unemployment rate in America was 6.2% in February 2021, down from 6.3% the previous month. In February 2021, U.S. employers added 379,000 jobs and the number of unemployed was little changed. The unemployment rate in Georgia was 5.1% in January 2021, a decrease from 5.6% the previous month. (Source: AAR, US DOL, GDOL)
Labor Force Participation Rate	The labor force participation rate was 61.4% in February 2021, unchanged from the previous month. The labor force participation rate for those of prime working age (25-54) was 81.1% in February, unchanged from the previous month. (Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, AAR, FRED) <i>(The Workforce Participation Rate measures the share of Americans at least 16 years old who are either employed or actively looking for work)</i>
Leading Economic Index	The Leading Economic Index for the U.S. increased 0.2% in February 2021, to a reading of 110.5 . According to The Conference Board, "The U.S. LEI continued rising in February, suggesting economic growth should continue well into this year. The acceleration of the vaccination campaign and a new round of large fiscal supports are not yet fully reflected in the LEI. With those developments, The Conference Board now expects the pace of growth to improve even further this year, with the U.S. economy expanding by 5.5 percent in 2021. Despite widespread improvements among the leading indicators, some measures—including weekly hours in manufacturing, permits for residential housing, and consumers' outlook for business and economic conditions—showed signs of weakness. Bad weather and assorted supply-chain disruptions may have impacted these particular leading indicators in February, and the effects may prove transitory." (Source: Conference Board Note: The LEI was recently revised the seasonally adjusted index to 2016 = 100) <i>(The LEI is a composite of 10 economic indicators that together create an analytic system designed to signal peaks and troughs in the business cycle. The LEI reveals patterns in economic data in a clearer and more convincing manner than any individual component alone.)</i>
Pending Home Sales	Existing home sales were 6.22 million in February 2021, down 6.6% from the previous month, and up 9.1% year-over-year. The index of pending home sales (sales that haven't closed yet but contracts have been signed) was 122.8 in January 2021, down 2.8% from the previous month but 13.0% higher year-over-year. According to the National Association of Realtors, "Despite the drop in home sales for February – which I would attribute to historically-low inventory – the market is still outperforming pre-pandemic levels," (Source: AAR, National Association of Realtors)
Housing Starts	Housing starts for February 2021 in the US decreased 10.3 % from the previous month and down 9.3% from February 2020. Single-family housing starts in February were at a rate of 1,040,000; this is 8.5 percent (±9.3 percent)* below the revised January figure of 1,136,000. The February rate for units in buildings with five units or more was 372,000. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau)
Light Vehicle Sales	New light vehicle sales were an annualized and seasonally adjusted 15.7 million units in February 2021, down 6.6% from February 2020. Sales of light trucks (SUVs, minivans, and pickups) accounted for 78.3% of total sales in February – a new record high. (Source: Seeking Alpha/AAR) <i>(Light vehicle sales record the number of domestically produced units of cars, SUVs, mini-vans, and light trucks that are sold. Because motor vehicle sales are a large part of consumer spending in the United States, the motor vehicle sales data can provide important information on consumer-spending trends and on the overall direction of the economy.)</i>



Personal Income	<p>In February 2021, personal income decreased \$1,516.6 billion, or 7.1% from the previous month. Disposable personal income (DPI) decreased \$1,532.3 billion (8.0 percent) and personal consumption expenditures (PCE) decreased \$149.0 billion (1.0 percent). (Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis) <i>(Personal income is the income received by a person from all sources. It includes income from domestic sources as well as the rest of the world. It does not include realized or unrealized capital gains or losses).</i></p>
Retail Sales	<p>Advanced estimates of retail and food service sales in February 2021 were \$561.7 billion, a decrease of 3.0% from the previous month, and 6.3% above February 2020. Non-store retail sales were up 25.9% from February 2020. (Source: US Census) <i>(Non-store retail sales are measured on a monthly basis and include internet-only sales outlets as well as other direct-to-customer channels)</i></p>
E-Commerce	<p>The estimate of U.S. retail e-commerce sales for the fourth quarter of 2020, adjusted for seasonal variation, was \$206.7 billion, a decrease of 1.2% from the previous quarter and 32.1% higher than the fourth quarter of 2019. E-commerce sales in the fourth quarter of 2020 accounted for 14.0% of total sales. (Source: US Census) <i>(E-Commerce sales are measured on a quarterly basis and include the sales of goods and services where the buyer places an order, or the price and terms of the sale are negotiated over an Internet, mobile device (M-commerce), extranet, Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) network, electronic mail, or other comparable online system. Payment may or may not be made online.)</i></p>
Consumer Confidence	<p>The Consumer Confidence Index increased to 91.3 in February 2021, up from 88.9 in January. The Present Situation Index—based on consumers’ assessment of current business and labor market conditions—climbed from 85.5 to 92.0. However, the Expectations Index—based on consumers’ short-term outlook for income, business, and labor market conditions—fell marginally, from 91.2 last month to 90.8 in February. (Source: The Conference Board) <i>(The consumer confidence index is based on a monthly survey of 5,000 U.S. household. It is designed to gauge the financial health, spending power, and confidence of the average U.S. consumer. Base year 1985=100)</i></p>
Consumer & Producer Price Index	<p>The Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers was 263.014 in February 2021, up 0.4% from the previous month. The gasoline index continued to increase, rising 6.4 percent in February and accounting for most of the seasonally adjusted increase in the all items index. The Producer Price Index for final demand was 121.9 in February 2021, up 0.6% from the previous month. (Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics) <i>(The CPI measures the change in prices paid by consumer for goods and services. Base year 1999=100) (The PPI measures the average price changes by producers for domestically produced goods, services, and construction. Base year 2009=100)</i></p>
Small Business Optimism Index	<p>The Small Business Optimism Index rose to 95.8 in February 2021, up 0.8 from the previous month. According to the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), “Small business owners worked hard in February to overcome unexpected weather conditions along with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Capital spending has been strong, but not on Main Street. The economic recovery remains uneven for small businesses, especially those still managing state and local regulations and restrictions.” (Source: National Federation of Independent Business) <i>(This Index collects data from small businesses on economic topics ranging from current job openings to expected credit conditions. Base year 1986=100)</i></p>
Industrial Production and Capacity Utilization	<p>The Industrial Production Index was 104.7 in February 2021, a decrease of 2.2% from the previous month and 4.2% lower year-over-year. Capacity Utilization for the industrial sector was 73.8% in February 2021, down 0.1% year-over-year. (Source: Federal Reserve) <i>(The industrial production and capacity utilization rates cover manufacturing, mining, and electric and gas utilities. The industrial detail provided by these measures helps illuminate structural developments in the economy)</i></p>
Manufacturing & Trade Sales	<p>Total combined sales and manufacturing shipments totaled over \$1,568.5 billion in January 2021, up 4.7% from the previous month and up 7.1% from January 2020. (Source: US Census)</p>
Manufacturing & Trade Inventory	<p>Total value of inventory on-hand is estimated at \$1.98 trillion in January 2021, up 0.3% from the previous month and down 1.8% from January of the previous year. (Source: US Census)</p>
Purchasing Managers Index	<p>The Manufacturing PMI was 60.8% in February 2021, an increase of 2.1% from the previous month. This figure indicates expansion in the overall economy for the ninth consecutive month. New Orders increased 3.7% to 64.8%, and Production increased 2.5% to 63.2%. According to the Institute for Supply Management (ISM), “The manufacturing economy continued its recovery in February. Survey Committee members reported that their companies and suppliers continue to operate in reconfigured factories. Issues with absenteeism, short-term shutdowns to sanitize facilities, and difficulties in hiring workers remain challenges and continue to cause strains that limit manufacturing-growth potential.” (Source: Institute for Supply Management) <i>(The PMI combines data on new orders, inventory, production, supplier deliveries, and employment. A reading above 50 indicates that the manufacturing economy is generally expanding.)</i></p>
Purchasing Managers Index in the Southeast	<p>In February 2021, the Southeast PMI increased 4.9% month-over-month to 70.4%. New Orders in the Southeast increased to 76.9% and Production increased 75.0%. In the month of January, the Southeast’s PMI was 9.6% higher than the national PMI. (Source: Kennesaw State University) <i>(The Southeast region includes the states of Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Tennessee, Louisiana, and Mississippi. The PMI combines data on new orders, inventory, production, supplier deliveries, and employment. A reading above 50 indicates that the manufacturing economy is generally expanding.)</i></p>
Logistics Manager’s Index	<p>The Logistics Manager’s Index was 71.4% in February 2021, an increase of 4.2% from the previous month, this is well above average. Much of the increase in this month’s LMI are driven by increases in the rate of growth for price and cost metrics across the board. Inventory Costs, Warehousing Prices, and Transportation Prices all reached their highest levels in over two years. The high prices are likely due to the long ongoing runs of warehousing and transportation capacity contraction (contracting for six and nine consecutive months respectively). The combination of tight capacity and high prices are the primary drivers behind the increasing rate of growth detected in this month’s LMI. (Source: the-lmi.com) <i>(The LMI score is a combination eight unique components that make up the logistics industry, including: inventory levels and costs, warehousing capacity, utilization, and prices,</i></p>



and transportation capacity, utilization, and prices. The LMI is calculated using a diffusion index, in which any reading above 50 percent indicates that logistics is expanding; a reading below 50 percent is indicative of a shrinking logistics industry.)

U.S. Market News

The U.S. economy is “much improved,” Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said on Monday, crediting Congress and the central bank both for providing “unprecedented” support, but at the same time warning that the recovery is still “far from complete.” “The recovery has progressed more quickly than generally expected and looks to be strengthening,” Powell said in remarks prepared for delivery to a congressional hearing on Tuesday morning. Household spending has risen, he said, and the housing sector has more than fully recovered. “However, the sectors of the economy most adversely affected by the resurgence of the virus, and by greater social distancing, remain weak, and the unemployment rate — still elevated at 6.2% — underestimates the shortfall, particularly as labor market participation remains notably below pre-pandemic levels,” he said. “The recovery is far from complete, so, at the Fed, we will continue to provide the economy the support that it needs for as long as it takes.” (Source: cnbc.com, 3.22.2021)

MULTIMODAL:

Dow Jones Transportation Index

Dow Jones Transportation Index **increased 1.63%** in February 2021, ending at a reading of 13,331.27. (A price-weighted average of 20 U.S. companies in the transportation industry. The index includes railroads, airlines, trucking, marine transportation, delivery services, and logistics companies.)

NASDAQ Transportation Index

NASDAQ Transportation Index **increased 1.75%** in February 2021, ending at a reading of **6,329.04**. (Averaged share weights of NASDAQ-listed companies classified as transportation companies)

DOT Freight Transportation Service Index

The USDOT's freight transportation services index was **136.2** in January 2021, **down 3.6%** from the previous month due to declines in pipeline, trucking, and air freight, despite increases in water, rail intermodal and rail carload. The January decrease took place against the background of mixed results in other indicators. (Source: US BTS)

Cass Freight Index

The Cass Freight Shipments Index was 1.130 in February 2021, a **decrease of 1.8%** from the previous month, and an **increase to 4.1%** year-over-year. The Cass Freight Expenditures Index was 3.132 in February 2021, an **increase of 2.0%** seasonally adjusted from the previous month and an **increase of 16.9%** year-over-year. (Source: Cass Information Systems | Cassinfo.com) (Based upon transportation dollars and shipments of Cass clients comprised of over 400 shipping companies)

Shippers Conditions Index

The FTR Shippers Conditions Index (SCI) for January 2021 rose to a **negative reading of -9.8**. According to FTR, Overall shipping conditions improved very slightly in January with near-term conditions tough due to rising fuel costs and rates. (Source: FTR Transportation Intelligence | ftrintel.com) (Figures below zero indicate a less-than-ideal environment for shippers)

North American Transborder Freight

Total transborder freight between the U.S., Canada, and Mexico totaled **\$94.3 billion** in January 2021, **down 2.6% than the previous month and 2.9% lower year-over-year**. Trucks carried \$61.1 billion of transborder freight and continued to be the most heavily utilized mode for moving goods between the U.S. and other North American countries (Canada and Mexico). (Source: US BTS)

Multimodal News Clips:

Pointing to intermodal share gains versus other modes and inventories in need of significant replenishment, Wells Fargo equity research analyst Allison Poliniak-Cusic has raised her price targets on intermodal providers Hub Group (NASDAQ: and J.B. Hunt. “Our findings suggest that intermodal continues to grow as a share of the U.S. freight market (approaching ~20% of U.S. Rail freight revenue), while inventory levels within the U.S. still remain notably below levels seen before COVID-19,” Poliniak-Cusic stated in a report to clients Friday. “We believe such a backdrop should lead to continued volume growth, along with a scarcity of assets, which will also help pricing power continue to improve throughout 2021 and into 2022.” (Source: <https://www.freightwaves.com/news/intermodal-poised-for-run-according-to-wells-fargo>)

RAIL:

U.S. Freight Rail Traffic

Total originated carloads on U.S. railroads were **480,483** in February 2021, **up 0.3% compared to February 2020**. Total combined U.S. traffic for the first six weeks of 2021 was **3,079,821 carloads and intermodal units, an increase of 4 percent compared to last year**. (Source: AAR.org) (Report includes rail car-loadings by 20 different major commodity categories)

U.S. Intermodal Rail Traffic

Seasonally-adjusted rail freight intermodal traffic was **1,269,280** for January 2021. **A 2.83% increase** from the previous month. (Source: Bureau of Transportation Statistics and AAR.org) (Report includes rail car-loadings by 19 different major commodity categories as well as intermodal units)

Railroad Fuel Price Index

The index of average railroad fuel prices in February 2021 was **357.3, up 11.8%** from the previous month and **7.5% lower** year-over-year. (Source: AAR.org) (Average monthly price for gallons purchased by freight railroads; Includes federal excise taxes, transportation, and handling expenses)

Class 1 Railroad Employment

Railroad employment in February 2021 was **114,068 an increase of 0.53%** from the previous month. (Source: U.S. STB, AAR)



Railroad News Clips: Canadian Pacific's proposed acquisition of Kansas City Southern will result in new service lanes across North America, the heads of both companies asserted in a Sunday afternoon call to investors explaining the proposed transaction. They currently share a rail yard in Kansas City, Missouri, and they are working together to ship Canadian crude oil to the Gulf Coast. The merger would connect customers with six of the seven largest metropolitan regions in North America, potentially reduce transit times and provide new product offerings, such as a possible new intermodal service between Dallas and Chicago, executives said. The merger would also enable north-south customers to avoid congestion-prone Chicago via CP's network in Iowa. The proposed merger comes against the backdrop of two macroeconomic factors: the passage of the trade-related United States-Mexico-Canada-Agreement (USMCA) and manufacturers' growing appetite for nearshoring in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The North American supply chain is continuing to be an attractive source of investment, and Mexico has the ability to attract foreign investment in manufacturing and industrial activity, railroad executives said. (Source: Freightwaves.com)

TRUCKING:

Truck Tonnage Index The ATA's seasonally adjusted For-Hire Truck Tonnage Index was **110** in February 2021, a **decrease of 4.5% from the previous month and a decrease of 5.9% from February 2020**. According to ATA Chief Economist Bob Costello, "February's drop was exacerbated, perhaps completely caused, by the severe winter weather that impacted much of the country during the month. Many other economic indicators were also soft in February due to the bad storms, but I continue to expect a nice climb up for the economy and truck freight as economic stimulus checks are spent and more people are vaccinated." (Source: American Trucking Associations | Trucking.org. Note: ATA recently revised the seasonally adjusted index to 2015 = 100)

Truckload Freight The spot market for truckload-freight available for pick-up in February 2021 **increased 43.8%** compared to the previous month and was **161.9% higher** year-over-year. Truck capacity **decreased 10.1%** for the month and **decreased 24.5%** year-over-year. (Source: DAT Trendlines | www.dat.com)

Refrigerated Trucking In February 2021, the national load-to-truck ratio for refrigerated loads was **15.91 loads per truck**, up from 8.15 the previous month. **Georgia's reefer load-to-truck ratio ranges 12+**. In February, the national spot market reefer rate was **\$2.65 per mile, up** from \$2.61 the previous month. (Source: DAT Trendlines | www.dat.com)

Market Demand Index The overall Market Demand Index (MDI) **rose by 1 to a 13.9 points to 201.4** as load availability increased 3.6% and truck availability declined 3.6%. Compared to last year the MDI is up 143.0 points, or 245.3%. Last week, market rates rose 1.1% to \$2.71. Compared to last year, rates are up 30.4%. National fuel prices edged up \$0.06 cents to \$3.09 from \$3.03 per gallon in the previous week. (Source: Truckstop.com Spot Market Insights)

Trucking Conditions Index FTR's Trucking Conditions Index (TCI) rebounded in January 2021 to a **10.37 reading**, The December TCI was +8.51. Stronger freight rates and volume more than offset higher fuel costs in January. Rising fuel costs will have a more negative impact on the February TCI, but the index will remain very strong because freight market dynamics are solidly in carriers' favor. (Source: FTR Transportation Intelligence | ftrintel.com) *(Figures below zero indicate a less-than-ideal environment for trucking)*

Diesel Prices As of March 22, 2021 the U.S. average diesel price was **\$3.194 per gallon**. The U.S. average diesel price was **\$0.535 higher** than the same week last year. The average price of diesel in the Lower Atlantic states was **\$3.064 per gallon, \$0.491 higher** than the same week last year. (Source: U.S. DOE) *(Reflects the costs and profits of the entire production and distribution chain.)*

Trucking Employment The trucking industry workforce **decreased 0.27% to 1,475,700 employees total** in February 2021. (Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)

Trucking Earnings and Hours The average earnings of truck transportation employees were \$26.88/hour in January 2021, **down 0.07%** from the previous month. The average weekly hours totaled 41.0 in January, **down 0.7 %** from the previous month. (Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)

U.S. Truck & Trailer Orders (Class 8) Preliminary North American Class 8 net orders remained impressive in February 2021 for the fifth consecutive month coming in at **44,000 units, up 3%** from the previous month, and **up 209% year-over-year**. Emphasizing the strength of the orders, February 2021 was the second-highest total ever for the month of February. Orders for the previous twelve months now total 338,000 units. Preliminary U.S. net trailer orders continued to moderate in February, falling 23% from the previous month to a total of **23,100 units**, but up 64% over February 2020. (Source: FTR Transportation Intelligence | ftrintel.com)



Trucking News Clip

- As home to one of the busiest container ports in the country, Savannah, GA, has benefited strongly from the pandemic-mandated boom in ecommerce, which grew 44% in 2020 over 2019. Trucking, says Brad Ball, President, Roadmaster Drivers School, could be a logical alternative for many of the displaced hotel and restaurant employees, both young people launching their careers and older workers seeking stability, better wages, and new opportunity. Like much of the hospitality industry, trucking companies do not require a bachelor's degree; counting high school graduates, people with some college but no degree, and holders of associate degrees, over 55% of Georgians meet trucking's educational requirements. The industry, notes Ball, is also increasingly diverse, both in terms of ethnicity and gender. (Source: Savannah CEO)
- The reintroduction of the DRIVE-Safe Act coincides with the transport industry gaining increased visibility during the pandemic, as it hauls essential goods, and fleets seeking drivers for critical loads. "The industry is vital to our everyday life, but driver shortages threaten its future," Sen. Angus King, and Independent from Maine who cosponsored the bill, said in a press release. Allowing CDL holders under 21 to make trips over state lines is seen by some, including ATA, as a way to address the driver shortage. OOIDA, on the other hand, has voiced concerns that corporations would use such a law to take advantage of cheap, inexperienced labor. Safety is also a concern. In a letter opposing the DRIVE-Safe Act when it was introduced in 2019, OOIDA said the minimum training standards included in the bill were "woefully inadequate." (Source: TransportDive.com, March 8, 2021)

AIR FREIGHT:

Air Cargo Traffic

Air cargo volumes rose sharply for another month and reached levels last seen before the pandemic started. Industry-wide cargo tonne-kilometres (CTKs) were higher by 1.1% vs. the pre-crisis levels (Jan 2019). In month-on-month terms, volumes picked up by ~3% – a similar growth rate as in the previous month. (Source: IATA.org.) *(Global air freight covers international and domestic scheduled air traffic.)*

Jet Fuel Prices

As of March 19, 2021, the global average jet fuel price was \$67.22 per barrel; **down 1.5%** from the previous month, and **123.6% lower** year-over-year. (Source: IATA.org, platts.com) *(The weekly index and price data shows the global average price paid at the refinery for aviation jet fuel)*

Air Freight News Clips:

A robust global air cargo market has virtually completed its recovery to post-Covid volume levels inside 10 months, according to airline performance data for February 2021 from industry analysts CLIVE Data Services and TAC Index. For the four weeks of last month, chargeable weight stood at just -1% compared to February 2019 and was 2% ahead of the same month of 2020. Niall van de Wouw, Managing Director of CLIVE Data Services, says airline passenger departments will be 'dreaming of such a recovery in passenger demand.' To give a meaningful perspective of the industry's performance, CLIVE Data Services' first-to-market data will focus on comparing the current state of the industry in the context of 2019 volume, capacity and load factor developments until at least Q3 of this year. This will be produced alongside the 2020 comparison. (Source: AJOT.com)

OCEAN FREIGHT:

Import Volumes by Ocean

In January 2021, the latest month for which after-the-fact numbers are available, U.S. container ports handled 2.06 million TEUs, a **2.3% decrease** from the previous month, **13% higher** year-over-year. (Source: NRF/Hackett Associates)

Shanghai Containerized Freight Index

The March 26, 2021 SCFI comprehensive reading was **\$2,570.68 per FEU**, **down 13.19%** from last week. The spot rate for shipments to the U.S. East Coast was \$2,763.48 per FEU, on March 26. (Source: Shanghai Shipping Exchange | www1.chineseshipping.com.cn/en) *(The Shanghai Containerized Freight Index reflects the spot rates of the Shanghai container transport market. It is a weekly reported average spot rate of 15 major container trade routes exported from Shanghai to regions around the globe.)*

Georgia Ports Authority

The Georgia Ports Authority reached **390,804** twenty-foot equivalent container units for all terminals in February 2021, **up 7.2 percent** compared to the same month last year. (Source: GPA)



Ocean Freight Business News:

- The Seaboard Marine vessel AS Savanna became the first dedicated container ship to call on the Port of Savannah's Ocean Terminal Wednesday, March 3. "We're happy to welcome Seaboard Marine to inaugurate Ocean Terminal's expanded container offerings," said Georgia Ports Executive Director Griff Lynch. "This service plays an important role in the movement of chilled produce into the U.S. Southeast via Savannah, greatly improving the speed and efficiency of perishable cargo handling." With a carrying capacity of 1,713 twenty-foot equivalent container units, the AS Savanna handled a total of 550 TEUs of import and export cargo while calling on Ocean Terminal. "Since 2019, we've offered fast, reliable service via direct links between Savannah, Latin America, and the Caribbean," said Seaboard Marine President Edward Gonzalez. "With Savannah in our service network, we've provided cargo owners convenient transportation options to key countries in the Western Hemisphere." The Georgia Ports Authority has added 210,000 TEUs of annual capacity through the expanded container operation at Ocean Terminal. (Source: Savannah CEO)
- Online quoting and booking for ocean freight has helped in a pinch as customers deal with unexpected demand to ship personal protective equipment and other goods during the COVID-19 pandemic. But the tradeoff for that convenience is more exposure to swings in ocean freight rates, speakers told JOC's virtual TPM21 conference Thursday. In the two years since Maersk started offering digital booking, about half of its customers are now using the service rather than picking up the phone for rates and availability for one-off freight shipments, Liezel du Toit, Maersk's senior director and head of spot products, said during the panel on the state of online ocean freight quoting. Currently, eight of the top 10 container carriers now offer customers a way to get quotes and secure a space for their freight, up from the two or three that offered the service in 2018. She added that the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has hastened interest in online quotes because "our customers need to do business from the comfort of their home." Online ocean freight booking has also been a lifeline for freight forwarders during 2020 because of difficulties in securing long-term capacity commitments from carriers, said managing director of freight-rate software provider Catapult Laura Finbow. The volatility of container shipping rates and the many canceled sailings during COVID-19 made online quoting and booking the only way forwarders could keep up with the market, she added. (Source: JOC.com)

WAREHOUSING & DISTRIBUTION:

Industrial Vacancy	The U.S. industrial vacancy rate in the fourth quarter of 2020 increased 30-basis points YOY to 5.2% . That vacancy rate is still 60 basis point (bps) below the five-year historical average of 6.6% for all product types. Despite vacancy increasing slightly over last quarter, alleviating some—but certainly not all—of the pressure on the supply constrained markets. The industrial vacancy rate in Atlanta, GA was 5.8% in Q4 of 2020. (Source: Cushman & Wakefield)
Warehouse Rent Rates	The continued tight market conditions and solid demand brought on another quarter of YOY rent growth at Q4 2020, increasing 4.6% from the fourth quarter 2019 at \$6.76 per square foot (psf). Warehouse/distribution rents rose 5.6% during the same period to \$6.22 psf. The average asking rent in Atlanta was \$4.42/SF in Q4 2020. (Source: Cushman & Wakefield)
Industrial Absorption	The market finished the fourth quarter at a strong pace, absorbing 89.8 million square feet (msf), the strongest single quarter ever recorded. This brought the year-to-date (YTD) total to 268.4 msf of absorption, surpassing the 240.9 msf reported a year-end 2019 by 11.4%. Warehouse/distribution space proved to be the strongest secondary type, carrying the U.S. industrial market through the year, absorbing 267.4 msf. The overall total was brought down slightly due to manufacturing and high-tech space ending the year with negative absorption. (Source: Cushman & Wakefield) <i>(Absorption is the net change in occupied space between two points in time. Positive absorption means that previously unoccupied space is being occupied.)</i>
Warehouse Employment	The nationwide warehousing industry workforce decreased 0.077% to 1,416,200 employees preliminary total in February 2021. (Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)
Warehouse Earnings and Hours	The average earnings of warehousing & storage employees across the U.S. were \$21.91/hour in January 2021, down \$.08 from the previous month. The average weekly hours totaled 40.2 in January, 1 hour from the previous month. (Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)



- To better serve multi-national customers, East Coast Warehouse & Distribution, a leading temperature-controlled logistics provider to the food and beverage industry today announced an agreement to lease 500,000 square feet of new warehouse space on the Port of Savannah. This is the latest step in the company's expansion down the East Coast, with strategic locations on the Ports of New York/New Jersey, Philadelphia, Baltimore and now Savannah. "The Port of Savannah continues to grow and attract commerce with a high level of support from the Port, and local and state government," said East Coast Warehouse CEO Jamie Overley. "Our expansion into the Port of Savannah allows us to continue to execute our vision and commitment to our customers of providing an end-to-end national temperature-controlled third-party logistics solution with regional expertise." On the Port of Savannah, East Coast Warehouse will leverage its port-based expertise to offer temperature-controlled warehousing, container drayage, local and regional trucking and national freight brokerage services. The company will hire nearly 100 people within its first year of operation and expects to open its doors in the market on August 1, 2021. "Our investment in a top-notch facility located in close proximity to the Port represents our long-term commitment to the Port of Savannah and our customers and will enable us to provide seamless distribution throughout the Southeast region," adds Overley. (Source: AJOT.com)
- Coming off of the strongest quarter ever for leasing of warehouse space, the US industrial real estate sector projects that strong demand for distribution facilities at seaports, inland rail hubs, and near airports will continue through 2021 and beyond. According to industrial real estate professionals who addressed the JOC's virtual TPM21 conference last week, that demand will be driven by e-commerce fulfillment, a pressing need by retailers to keep more inventory on-hand because of supply chain uncertainties, and growing volumes from third-party logistics providers (3PLs). Smaller shippers that cannot compete for space with the large e-commerce retailers are turning more of their business over to 3PLs, the real estate experts told TPM21. All regions of the country are experiencing increased demand for industrial space. According to the CBRE report, the top three locations last year for net absorption were Southern California's Inland Empire, Dallas-Fort Worth, and Atlanta. The top three growth markets in terms of net absorption as a percentage of existing inventory were Savannah, Charleston, and California's Central Valley. The top three markets for industrial properties under construction were Chicago, Atlanta, and Dallas-Fort Worth. (Source: JOC.com)

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