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Greg Knowler, Senior Europe Editor | Jan 20, 2022 10:42AM EST



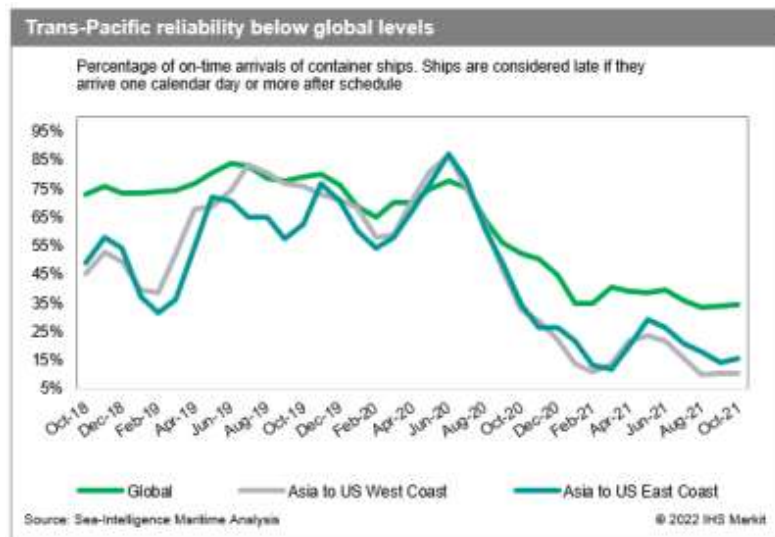
Heavily congested terminals in the US are likely to see bottlenecks continue through the first half as import demand continues to replenish low inventory levels. Photo credit: Shutterstock.com.

Cumulative container delays at the world's main ports are currently at 11.6 million TEU "waiting days," with 80 percent of global port congestion occurring in North America, according to a new performance indicator unveiled Thursday by Kuehne + Nagel.

For context, a "normal" level of congestion at the 13 ports measured by the key performance indicator would be less than 1 million TEU waiting days, Kuehne + Nagel said in a statement.

"The trendline information provided by the indicator enhances the ability of our customers to predict and plan for likely future impacts on their supply chain and identify the best course of action," said Otto Schacht, the board member responsible for sea logistics at Kuehne + Nagel.

The indicator — called the Seaexplorer Disruption Indicator — is designed to measure port efficiency and offer greater visibility of port bottlenecks for cargo owners and their service providers. It draws on data from K+N's Seaexplorer visibility platform, which shows 612 container vessels currently at anchor or drifting outside the ports of Prince Rupert, Vancouver, Seattle, Oakland, Los Angeles, Long Beach, New York, Savannah, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Ningbo, Rotterdam, and Antwerp.



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Factoring in the TEU capacity of the vessels waiting and the days each vessel is delayed, the indicator produces a “TEU waiting days” figure that is updated daily.

For example, a vessel with 10,000 TEU capacity waiting 12 days to enter a port will amount to 120,000 TEU waiting days. If another vessel of 5,000 TEU is waiting 10 days to enter the same port, that equals 50,000 TEU waiting days, with a combined TEU waiting time for both vessels totaling 170,000 TEU waiting days.

Kuehne + Nagel's estimate that 80 percent of the global disruption is associated with North American ports is not surprising, considering record import volume from Asia has overwhelmed container terminals there. The record 18.97 million TEU of Asian imports into the US last year surpassed the then-record 16.6 million TEU record set in 2020, according to PIERS, a JOC.com sister product within IHS Markit.

Delays destroy vessel schedules

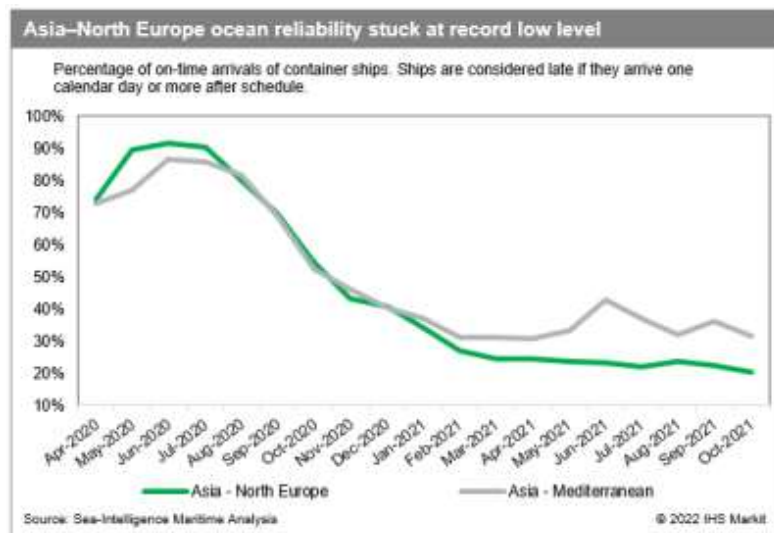
Matt Cox, chairman and CEO of Matson, said in the carrier's fourth-quarter earnings statement that supply chain congestion remains the current issue on the trans-Pacific trade lane because of ongoing elevated consumption trends, US domestic supply chain constraints, and inventory restocking.

“For 2022, we expect these conditions to remain largely in place through at least the October peak season and expect elevated demand for our China service for most of the year,” Cox said.

The strong demand and delays at both origin and destination ports are destroying vessel schedules. On-time performance on the Asia-US West Coast was at 10.4 percent in November, down 18 percentage points compared with the same month last year, while Asia-North Europe schedule reliability of 24.5 percent in November was almost 19 percentage points down year over year, according to Sea-Intelligence Maritime Analysis.

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Alphaliner reported in late 2021 that the average arrival delay for 17 ships tracked on the Asia-North



Europe trade lane was 17 days, and that congestion would persist into the new year. Likewise on the trans-Pacific, the port congestion and landside transportation bottlenecks that plagued retailers and other importers for much of 2021 are likely to continue at least until mid-2022, according to Alan Murphy, CEO of Sea-Intelligence Maritime Analysis.

Container visibility provider Container xChange also expects a continuation of the severe congestion in many destination ports that drove container dwell times at depots reach near-record levels in 2021. A late December study by Container xChange and Germany-based research company Fraunhofer-CML found the worst performing countries in terms of the average median time containers spent in depots in 2021 were the US and the UK, which suffered respective average dwell times of 50 and 51 days.

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