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THE Alliance rolls out megaships in 2023 network update



There are about 60 ships larger than 17,000 TEU currently on order that will be delivered starting in 2023. Photo credit: Martin Lueke / Shutterstock.com.

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Greg Knowler, Senior Editor Europe | Dec 20, 2022, 9:35 AM EST



Larger ships will be deployed on the Asia-Europe and trans-Atlantic trades as part of a reconfigured THE Alliance network that members Hapag-Lloyd, Ocean Network Express, HMM, and Yang Ming will roll out in April 2023.

A series of new fuel-efficient ships of 23,500 TEU — part of a 12-ship order by Hapag-Lloyd — will begin to replace smaller vessels on the Asia-North Europe trade lane as the ships are delivered from April and will be integrated with megaships from ONE and HMM, THE Alliance announced Tuesday.

Vessels of 14,000 to 15,000 TEU will be deployed on the Asia-Mediterranean trade and from Asia to the US East Coast on services via the Suez and Panama canals.

“This is part of THE Alliance’s ongoing commitment to offer more sustainable services by minimizing the carbon footprint of its service network,” the group said in a statement.

But it is also part of a concerted move toward deploying bigger ships that make fewer port calls while cutting down on transshipment, as outlined by Hapag-Lloyd CEO Rolf Habben Jansen in a media briefing last week.

“We have done a lot to simplify our network and will do more as we move forward, and that means less services with bigger ships,” he told reporters.

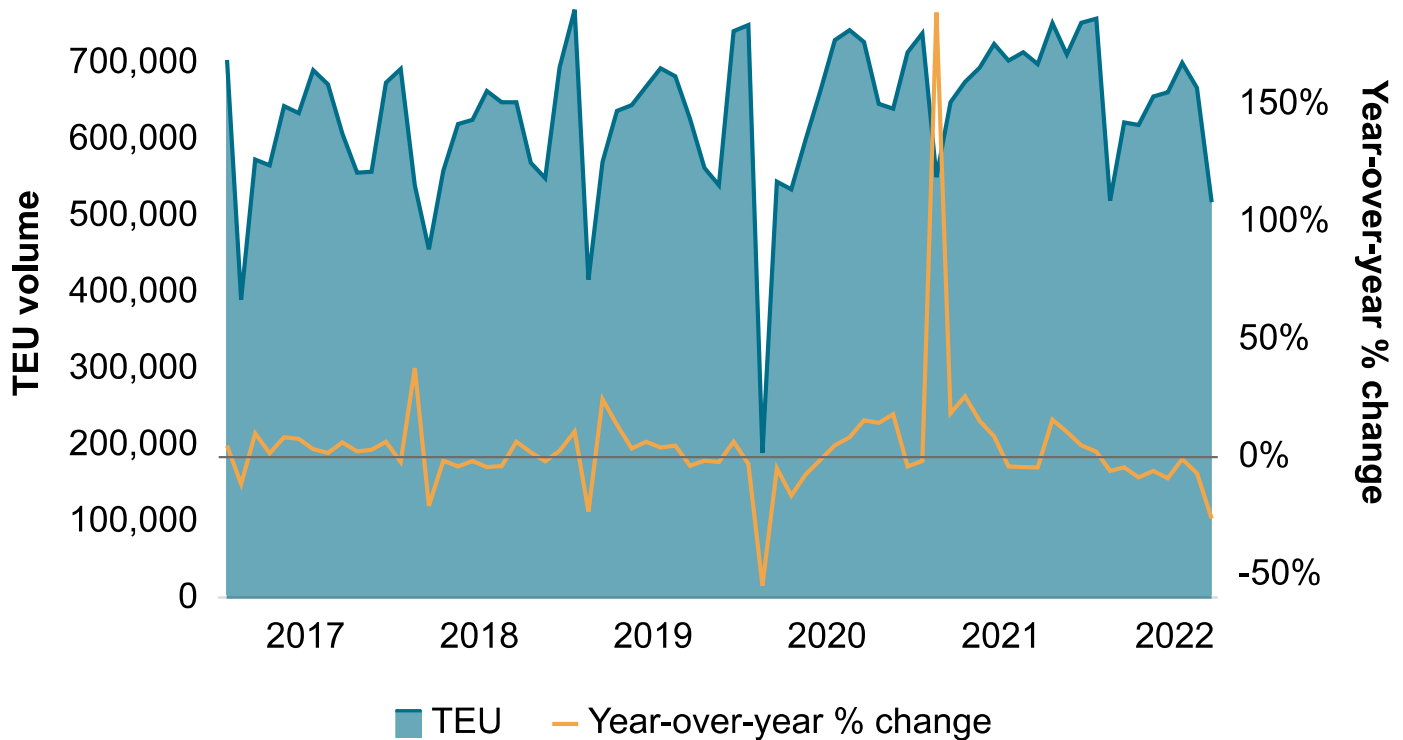
“It is also important to simplify transshipment,” Habben Jansen added. “We used to do transshipment in quite a few locations, but we want to consolidate that to 10 to 12 hubs around the world because we believe it makes our network more resilient.”

THE Alliance has an abundance of megaships coming online in 2023. Hapag-Lloyd's 12-ship order of 23,500 TEU vessels will be delivered between April 2023 and December 2024, while ONE has six ships of 24,000 TEU that are also scheduled for delivery after the first quarter of 2023.

Flood of new ships in the pipeline

The global orderbook currently stands at 6.6 million TEU, or almost 30 percent of the total fleet in service, according to data from S&P Global, parent company of the *Journal of Commerce*. Of that total, about 60 ships are greater than 17,000 TEU totaling 1.4 million TEU, which will need to be deployed on the Asia-Europe trade at a time of strengthening economic headwinds and falling demand.

CTS Greater China to North Europe volumes (Monthly)



Source: Container Trades Statistics

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3M	6M	YTD	1Y	MAX
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Asia to Europe volume in September, the latest data available, declined 23 percent year over year to 855,334 TEU, the sharpest one-month decline this year, according to Container Trades Statistics (CTS). North European import volume from Asia for the first nine months of 2022 was down 7.5 percent at 9.2 million TEU.

Carriers blanked 30 percent more capacity from September through November than during the same months last year, canceling 1.18 million TEU, new data from Sea-Intelligence Maritime Analysis shows.

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