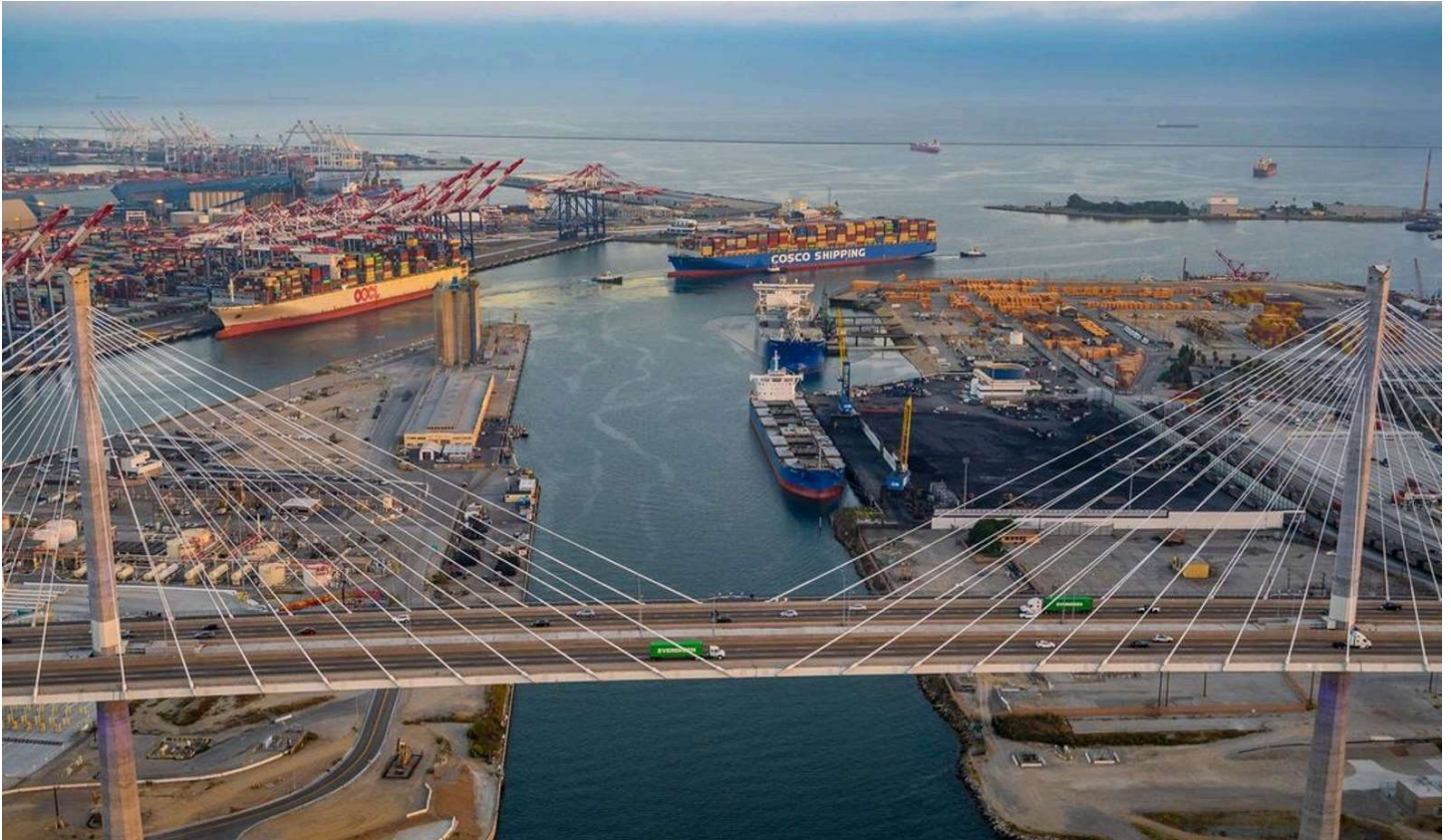


Ocean carriers bring in more trans-Pacific container services amid rate surge



Ocean carriers are in different positions regarding trans-Pacific capacity as some have moved ships to other markets while other liners kept vessels in the trade lane. Photo credit: Port of Long Beach.

Michael Angell, Senior Editor | May 27, 2025, 3:57 PM EDT

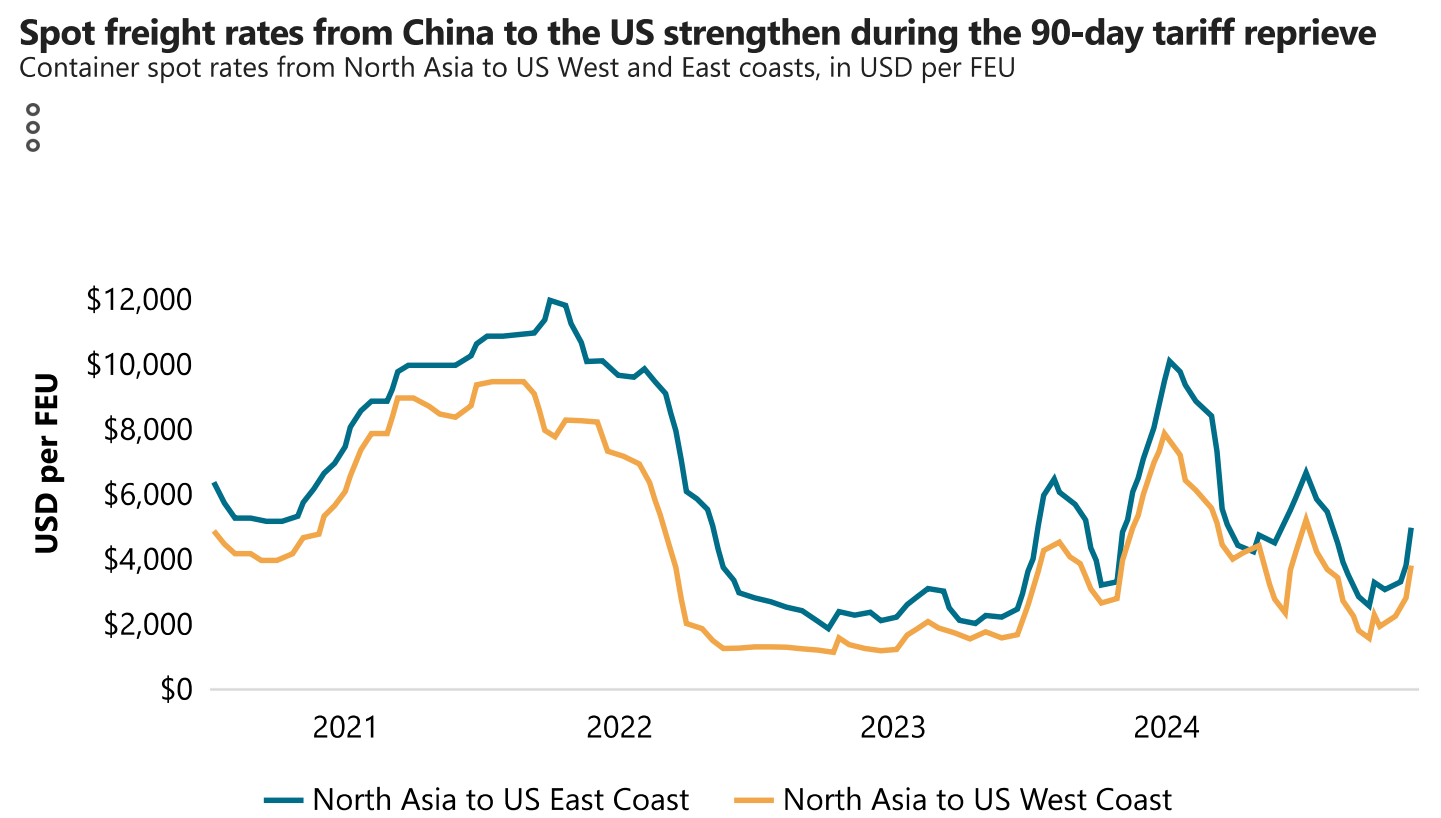
Maersk and Hapag-Lloyd are adding a new trans-Pacific express service to the US West Coast, while Mediterranean Shipping Co. looks to restart a suspended East Coast service. The moves signal new confidence about trans-Pacific demand as rates continue to strengthen going into June.

Maersk and Hapag-Lloyd said in statements Monday that the Gemini Cooperation vessel-sharing agreement between them would offer a new express service connecting China and South Korea to the West Coast, branded respectively as the TP9/WC6.

The first voyage from Xiamen, China, will take place June 24 on the 4,622-TEU *Rhone Maersk*, with subsequent calls at Busan and Long Beach. The Gemini partners said the service would offer an 18-day transit from Xiamen to Long Beach.

The new Gemini service launches after a two-month turnaround in trans-Pacific shipping demand that saw ocean carriers quickly remove ships after President Donald Trump’s tariffs on China halted container bookings, then rapidly restore capacity amid the 90-day tariff reprieve that expires in mid-August.

The demand whipsaw over that time has almost doubled spot freight rates from China to the West Coast. Platts, a sister company of the *Journal of Commerce* within S&P Global, assessed North Asia to US West Coast container freight rates at \$3,840 per FEU as of May 23, up from \$1,960 per FEU on April 11.



Source: Platts, S&P Global

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3M

6M

2Y

YTD

MAX

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June is expected to see the most container ship capacity in the trans-Pacific since last November, according to data from ocean visibility provider eeSea. It expects 1.268 million TEUs of vessel capacity between Asia and the US West Coast next month, up 34,000 TEUs from May. The amount of “blanked” capacity removed from the market will be 113,234 TEUs, the lowest since June 2024.

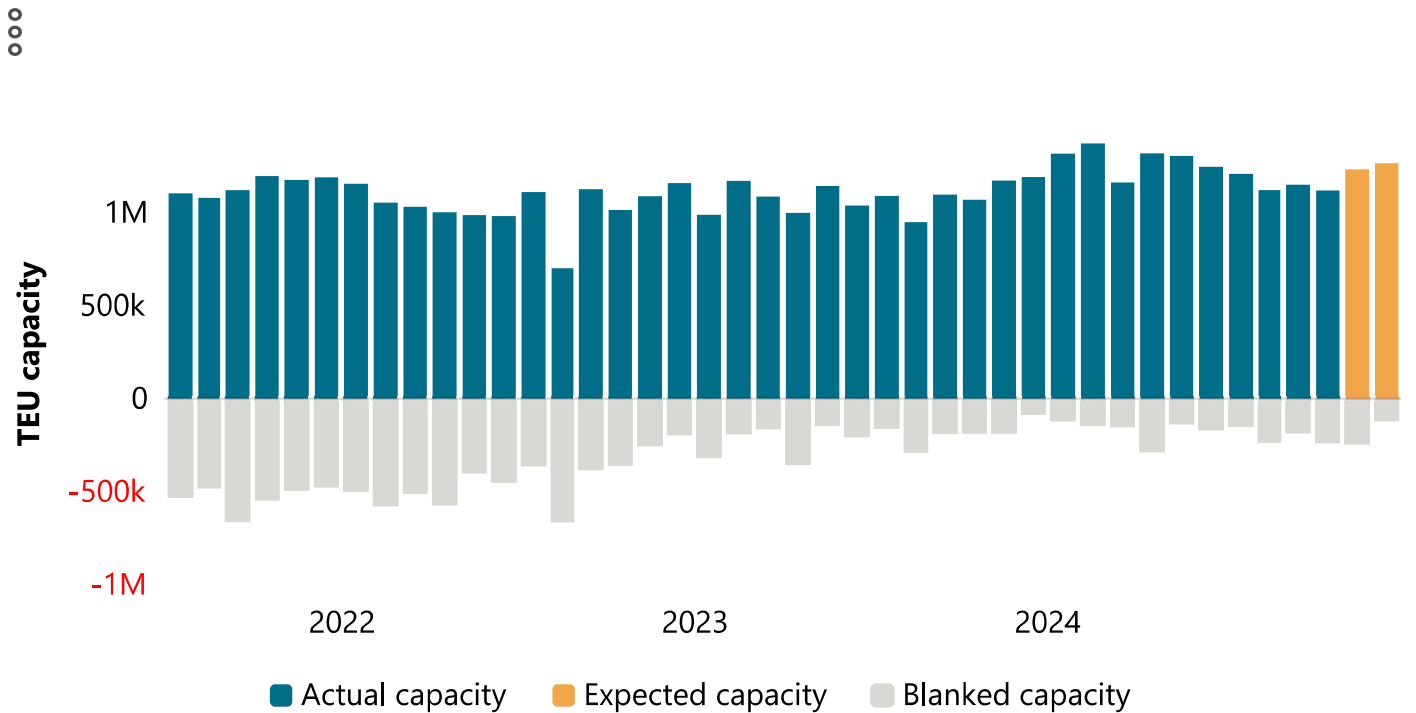
‘Sufficient space available’

Whether the expected capacity injection for June will be enough to stem further rate increases remains unclear. A US-based executive for a Taiwanese ocean carrier told the *Journal of Commerce* that because some ships have been repositioned to serve other trade lanes, it will be early July before he expects meaningful capacity additions to affect the trans-Pacific market.

However, Alphaliner analyst Tan Hua Joo told the *Journal of Commerce* some carriers, such as Maersk and Hapag-Lloyd, are in a better position to respond to resurgent demand because they did not remove ships during the recent turmoil. Other carriers may also be better able to add capacity quickly to the trans-Pacific market.

Trans-Pacific capacity to hit seven-month high in June

Container ship capacity deployed from Asia to US West Coast, including expected blank sailings



Notes: as of May 08, 2025

Source: eeSea

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6M	2Y	YTD	MAX
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“I expect there will be sufficient space available in the market as trans-Pacific capacity will return very quickly and all carriers are adding ships over the next three weeks, apart from the Gemini carriers who have not withdrawn any ships from the trans-Pacific during the turmoil of the last five weeks,” Hua Joo said.

Along with the trans-Pacific West Coast, the US East Coast should also see more ships in service by June. MSC appears ready for a mid-June restart of its Empire service from north China to the East Coast after announcing a suspension of the service in early May amid the demand downturn.

According to MSC’s vessel schedule, the Empire service will offer direct voyages from Shanghai to the Port of New York and New Jersey starting with the June 18 departure of the 6,730-TEU *MSC Barbara*. There are six other ships nominated for weekly departures on the service through the end of July.

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