



# BACK IT UP

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Monthly Review on All Things Market,  
Economy and Transportation.







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## IN THIS NEWSLETTER:

- **NONCOMPETE BAN**
- **TEXAS CDL TRAINING FUNDS**
- **BALTIMORE BRIDGE CLEAN UP EFFORTS**
- **OHIO TURNPIKE**
- **TONNAGE DECLINE**
- **COMMERCIAL PORTS GRANT**







## APRIL 2024

April was a month of notable developments aimed at fostering industry resilience and adaptation as warm weather approaches. Nationally, the FTC's ban on noncompete agreements aimed to boost competition and innovation, potentially leading to the creation of over 8,500 new businesses annually and increased patent filings. In Texas, Governor Greg Abbott allocated funds to train around 660 new heavy truck drivers, with institutions like Lee College and Houston Community College benefitting from the investment. Efforts to restore operations at the Port of Baltimore, closed since March 26, were underway with crews utilizing a large crane to clear debris from the collapsed Francis Scott Key Bridge.

In Ohio, the completion of the turnpike's major construction project introduced a new tolling system with open-road lanes spanning its 241-mile stretch. However, the industry faced challenges as the American Trucking Association reported a 0.5% decrease in truck tonnage for March. On a positive note, the US Department of Transportation announced grants for environmentally sustainable initiatives, with approximately \$75 million allocated to 16 projects aimed at reducing truck emissions in ports and supply chain corridors.





## **GTC ANNOUNCES RULE BANNING NONCOMPETES**

The FTC has banned noncompete agreements nationwide to promote competition, protect workers' job mobility, and stimulate innovation, expecting to create over 8,500 new businesses annually and increase patents significantly. Under the rule, existing noncompetes for most workers will become unenforceable, except for senior executives, and employees must inform workers about the change.

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## **TWO TEXAS COLLEGES WIN GRANTS TO TRAIN 660 CDL STUDENTS**

Texas Governor Greg Abbot recently allocated \$617,490 to two colleges to train approximately 660 students as heavy truck drivers out of a \$2.1 million workforce development initiative. These grants, distributed by the Texas Workforce Commission, aim to equip Gulf Coast area students with skills for high-demand industries. Lee College and Houston Community College received funds to enhance their training programs with advanced equipment and simulators, preparing students for diverse road conditions and industry standards.

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## **TONNAGE NUMBERS HIT 13TH MONTH OF DECLINES**

American Trucking Association reported a 1% decrease in truck tonnage for March, marking 13 consecutive months of year-over-year declines, with the index now at 113.4. Bob Costello, ATA's Chief Economist, noted this signals a continued truck freight recession in the first quarter of 2024, with a 0.8% decline from the previous quarter and 2.4% drop from a year ago. Dale Rogers from Arizona State University observed steady growth in transportation utilization and prices, while the Cass Freight Index reported a 3.6% year-over-year decline in freight shipments.

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## **CREWS RACE TO REMOVE CHUNKS OF FALLEN BALTIMORE BRIDGE**

In Sparrows Point, Maryland, crews are using the Eastern Seaboard's largest crane to remove wreckage from the collapsed Francis Scott Key Bridge, which occurred nearly three weeks ago due to a cargo ship impact. The salvage operation aims to clear the debris of the bridge and reopen the Port of Baltimore, largely closed since the collapse on March 26. Salvage crews work to recover remaining bodies and reopen the port's main channel by the end of May.

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## **OHIO TURNPIKE COMPLETES OPEN-ROAD TOLLING PROJECT**

The Ohio Turnpike has completed its largest construction project to date, unveiling a new tolling system that includes open-road tolling lanes across its 241-mile stretch. Executive Director Ferzan Ahmed expressed gratitude for the project's completion, which took five years and nearly \$250 million, funded entirely by toll revenue. The new system, featuring open-road rolling lanes for E-ZPass users and gated exits for cash and credit card payers, aims to enhance both driving and tolling experiences while stimulating economic growth along the turnpike.

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## **DOT GRANT PROGRAM FOCUSES ON COMMERCIAL PORTS**

The U.S. Department of Transportation announced grants for ports and supply chain corridors, part of the White House's strategy for zero-emission freight, with nearly \$150 million allocated to 16 port-centric projects aimed at reducing truck emissions. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg emphasized the importance of these investments in improving air quality and saving time and money for drivers, while funding was also announced for charging infrastructure for zero-emission trucks.

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