



BACK IT UP

Monthly Review on All Things Market,
Economy and Transportation.



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APRIL 2025

April 2025 paints a picture of a transportation sector facing significant headwinds and shifts. International trade tensions — particularly between the U.S. and China — are having a tangible impact, leading to a noticeable decline in import volumes through major ports like Los Angeles. This drop in freight is troubling truckers who rely on these volumes, potentially increasing competition and lowering rates. Adding to the complexity, new regulations, including the mandated English proficiency for truckers, are expected to further strain capacity by reducing the eligible driver pool, even as overall freight demand from imports decreases.

Domestically, the potential for mass layoffs in the trucking and retail sectors looms large, according to forecasts tied to the ongoing tariff situation. While the auto industry has seen some tariff relief, the broader economic uncertainty and the impact of tariffs on trade continue to cast a shadow. Interestingly, short-haul freight is emerging as a key indicator of economic health, reflecting local manufacturing and consumer activity, and its trends will be closely watched amidst the broader market volatility. The sector is navigating a complex interplay of trade disruptions, regulatory changes, and potential economic slowdown.



TRUCKING NEWS: APRIL 15TH, 2025 - TRUCK. RAIL. IMPORT. EXPORT.

This mid-April update highlights a proposed "Combating Organized Retail Crime Act" focusing on tackling rising cargo theft through a new coordination center within Homeland Security. Commerce Express emphasizes its commitment to cargo visibility and security for shippers and partners. The report also touches on complicated tariff situations and a slight decrease in the average diesel price.

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TRUMP ADMINISTRATION ADJUSTS METALS TARIFFS TO SUPPORT US MANUFACTURERS

The Trump administration has issued an executive order providing tariff relief on certain steel and aluminum imports specifically for automotive manufacturers. This move aims to ease pressure and allow domestic car production to ramp up. While this offers significant relief to the auto industry, broader trade tensions and tariffs on China are expected to remain.

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PLUNGING LA PORT VOLUMES SPELL TROUBLE FOR TRUCKERS

The Port of Los Angeles is facing a significant downturn in container volumes, largely attributed to escalating trade tensions with China and the Trump administration's tariffs. Daily ocean container bookings from China to the U.S. have plummeted. This decline is expected to negatively impact trucking companies that rely on freight from the port, potentially leading to increased competition and lower rates. Importers are also reportedly pausing inbound shipments.

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MASS LAYOFFS IN TRUCKING AND RETAIL COMING

Investment firm Apollo Global Management forecasts a significant U.S. recession triggered by recent tariffs, predicting widespread layoffs in both the trucking and retail sectors. The report anticipates a sharp decline in container ship voyages from China, leading to reduced freight volumes and forcing trucking companies to cut labor costs. Retailers also face potential job losses due to supply chain disruptions and declining consumer confidence.

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TRUMP MANDATES ENGLISH FOR TRUCKERS, IMPORT DELAYS EXPECTED

President Trump is set to sign an executive order requiring all U.S. truck drivers to demonstrate English proficiency, citing safety improvements. While seen as a move towards a more efficient industry by some, it's expected to reduce the pool of eligible drivers and create short-term capacity challenges. Simultaneously, U.S. ports, particularly on the West Coast, are experiencing a noticeable drop in container and cargo volumes due to ongoing trade tensions and tariffs, leading to anticipated import delays.

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BOT AUTO TARGETS AGGRESSIVE 2025 DRIVERLESS FREIGHT ROLLOUT

Demand for short-haul truckloads (under 100 miles) has increased over the past year, while long-haul volumes have decreased, partly due to intermodal transport. Short-haul freight, involving local or "city" shipments related to warehousing and fulfillment, is presented as a potentially strong economic indicator, particularly in sectors like automotive and retail. Changes in short-haul demand, especially in key markets, could signal broader economic shifts and the direct impact of tariffs on consumer and manufacturing activity.

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