

Baltimore bridge collapse fails to shift dial on container rates



The catastrophic collision of the Maersk-chartered vessel Dali with the Francis Scott Key bridge, which closed Baltimore port on 26 March and killed at least six people, has not had a discernible effect on rates according to analysts Linerlytica.

[Nick Savvides](#) | Apr 02, 2024

The Hong Kong-based company said spot rates on the Pacific are “still sliding”, and a “brief spike in both import and export spot rates from the US East Coast were quickly reversed”.

Receding transpacific rates have seen the Shanghai Container Freight Index record lower week-on-week levels in spite of what Linerlytica said were “encouraging hikes” on the Asia to Europe, Middle East and Latin America trades.

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“The diversion of the Baltimore cargo could result in minor delays, but the situation is expected to normalise within the next four weeks even with the port of Baltimore is shut beyond this time frame,” said the analyst.

It is another supply chain crisis that is key to holding up the SCFI with the disruptions to the Red Sea route which links the Suez Canal to Europe at its northern end and Asia in the south which continues to see bolster the charter market, 12 ships delivered this week, said the analyst.

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Linerlytica, however, also reports: “Capacity across all routes is set to increase in April which will continue to put pressure on carriers' recent rate gains and test their ability to hold rates ahead of the summer peak season.”

Even as the US Army Corps of Engineers has set to work on the removal of the wreckage it has become clear that the accident has had little effect on the declining container shipping market.

“The port of Baltimore handled 1.12 million teu of container cargo in 2023, accounting for only 4.5% of the total containers handled at the main ports at the US East Coast. There is sufficient container handling capacity at the neighbouring ports of Norfolk and New York where the cargo affected by the Baltimore port closure are currently being diverted.”

Alliance partners MSC and Maersk have announced plans to divert cargo to other eastern seaboard ports, with the Danish line advising customers: “While we remain unable to accept new bookings into or out of the Port of Baltimore, we continue to serve greater Baltimore via alternative ports such as Newark, Norfolk and Philadelphia via road and rail subject to available capacity.”

The carrier is also considering options to use road and rail connections from ports as far north as Canada and south to the US Gulf to meet customer demand.

MSC has also told customers that its April sailings on the US to east coast South America service will divert to New York with the final two vessel diversions in April yet to be announced.

Zim has not yet notified customers of alternative destinations for imports, while exporters are asked to contact the carrier to nominate an alternative, with the line waiving change of loading fees.

Evergreen has not yet announced changes to its Baltimore services.

On average Baltimore handles 94,000 teu per month, 50% are imports, 21% are exports and the remaining 29% are outbound empty boxes. Maersk, MSC, Zim and Evergreen, are the major pure container operators, with Grimaldi subsidiary, ACL, offering a regular con-ro service.

Linerlytica outlines the services affected by Baltimore port's closure

Baltimore currently handles three FE-US East Coast services, five Transatlantic services, one USEC-South Africa service and two USEC-Latin America services, with details as follows:

Transpacific services

1. 2M / Zim : TP-12 / Empire/Zim Big Apple (ZBA) calling at Tanjung Pelepas, Yantian, Xiamen, Ningbo, Shanghai, Busan, Panama Canal, New York, Norfolk, Baltimore, Colombo, Tanjung Pelepas
2. Zim Ecommerce Xpress Baltimore (ZXB) calling at Cai Mep, Haiphong, Yantian, Kaohsiung, Shanghai, Lazaro Cardenas, Panama Canal, Cartagena, Baltimore, Norfolk, New York, Boston (US), Suez Canal, Cai Mep

3. OCEAN Alliance : USEC5 / AWE3 / ECC1 / AUE / TWS calling at Xiamen, Kaohsiung, Hong Kong, Yantian, Panama Canal, Colon, Savannah, New York, Norfolk, Baltimore, Colon, Panama Canal, Xiamen

Transatlantic services

1. 2M : TA-2/NEUATL2 calling at Bremerhaven, Antwerp, Le Havre, New York, Norfolk, Baltimore, Savannah, New York, Bremerhaven
2. 2M : TA-5 / MEDUSEC calling at Tangier Med, Valencia, Gioia Tauro, Naples, Livorno, Genoa, Algeciras, New York, Norfolk, Baltimore, Savannah, Charleston, Tangier Med
3. MSC : TURKEY / GREECE TO USA service calling at Tekirdag, Derince, Aliaga, Piraeus, Mersin, Haifa, Gioia Tauro, Sines, Boston (US), New York, Philadelphia, Norfolk, Baltimore, Savannah, Port Everglades, Freeport (Bah), Tekirdag
4. ACL : Transatlantic conro service calling at Halifax, New York, Baltimore, Norfolk, Halifax, Liverpool, Hamburg, Antwerp, Liverpool, Halifax
5. ARRC : Baltic Russia-US East Coast Service calling at St Petersburg, Baltimore, Houston, St Petersburg

USEC-Africa services

1. Maersk / MSC : America Express (AMEX) / USA to South Africa Service calling at New York, Baltimore, Norfolk, Charleston, Freeport (Bah), Port Elizabeth, Durban, Cape Town, New York

USEC-Latin America services

1. Maersk / Hapag-Lloyd : AGAS / Americas Services (USW) calling at Cartagena, Colon, Port Everglades, New York, Baltimore, Charleston, Port Everglades, Cartagena
2. MSC : USA to SAEC String 1 calling at New York, Norfolk, Baltimore, Charleston, Savannah, Port Everglades, Caucedo, Santos, Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Rio Grande, Navegantes, Paranagua, Santos, Rio de Janeiro, Suape, Colon (Coco Solo), Caucedo, Freeport (Bah), New York

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