

U.S. MARKET:	
Gross Domestic Product	<p>Real gross domestic product (GDP) increased at an annual rate of 6.4 percent in the first quarter of 2021 (table 1), according to the "second" estimate released by the Bureau of Economic Analysis. In the fourth quarter of 2020, real GDP increased 4.3 percent. (Source: US BEA) As of May 18, 2021, the GDPNow model estimate for real GDP growth (seasonally adjusted annual rate) in the second quarter of 2021 is 9.3 percent on May 28, down from 10.5 percent on May 14. (Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta) (The GDPNow forecast aggregates statistical model forecasts of 13 subcomponents that comprise GDP.)</p>
U.S. Trade Deficit	<p>The U.S. goods and services trade deficit increased 5.6% in March 2021 to \$74.4 billion. The global pandemic and the economic recovery continued to impact international trade in March 2021. The full economic effects of the pandemic cannot be quantified in the statistics because the impacts are generally embedded in source data and cannot be separately identified. (Source: US DOC & Census Bureau)</p>
Import Volumes	<p>In March 2021, the U.S. imported \$274.5 billion of cargo, increasing 6.3% from the previous month. March imports of goods (\$233.0 billion) were the highest on record. March imports of consumer goods (\$65.1 billion) were the highest on record. March imports of foods, feeds, and beverages (\$14.0 billion) were the highest on record. March imports of capital goods (\$63.0 billion) were the highest on record. March non-petroleum imports (\$217.7 billion) were the highest on record. (Source: US Census)</p>
Export Volumes	<p>In March 2021, the U.S. exported \$200.00 billion of cargo, increasing 6.6% from the previous month. March exports of goods (\$142.4 billion) were the highest since May 2018 (\$142.7 billion). March exports of industrial supplies and materials (\$51.5 billion) were the highest on record. March non-petroleum exports (\$128.9 billion) were the highest on record. (Source: US Census)</p>
Import & Export Price Index	<p>Prices for U.S. imports increased 0.7 percent in April following a 1.4-percent advance in March. Export prices rose 0.8 percent in April, after increasing 2.4 percent the previous month. Over the past year, import prices advanced 10.6 percent and export prices rose 14.4 percent. (Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics)</p>
Unemployment Rate	<p>The unemployment rate in America was 6.1% in April 2021, up from 6.0% the previous month. Total nonfarm payroll employment rose by 266,000 in April, and the unemployment rate was little changed at 6.1 percent, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Notable job gains in leisure and hospitality, other services, and local government education were partially offset by employment declines in temporary help services and in couriers and messengers. The unemployment rate in Georgia was 4.3% in April 2021, a decrease from 4.5% the previous month. (Source: AAR, US DOL, GDOL)</p>
Labor Force Participation Rate	<p>The labor force participation rate was 61.7% in April 2021, up slightly from the previous month. The labor force participation rate for those of prime working age (25-54) was 81.3% in April, no change from the previous month. (Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, AAR, FRED) <i>(The Workforce Participation Rate measures the share of Americans at least 16 years old who are either employed or actively looking for work)</i></p>
Leading Economic Index	<p>The Leading Economic Index for the U.S. increased 1.6% in April 2021, to a reading of 113.3. According to The Conference Board, "With April's large monthly gain to start the second quarter, the U.S. LEI has now recovered fully from its COVID-19 contraction—surpassing the index's previous peak, reached at the very onset of the global pandemic in January 2020. While employment and production have not recovered to their pre-pandemic levels yet, the U.S. LEI suggests the economy's upward trend should continue and growth may even accelerate in the near term. The Conference Board now forecasts real GDP could grow around 8 to 9 percent (annualized) in the second quarter, with year-over-year economic growth reaching 6.4 percent for 2021." (Source: Conference Board Note: The LEI was recently revised the seasonally adjusted index to 2016 = 100) <i>(The LEI is a composite of 10 economic indicators that together create an analytic system designed to signal peaks and troughs in the business cycle. The LEI reveals patterns in economic data in a clearer and more convincing manner than any individual component alone.)</i></p>
Pending Home Sales	<p>Pending home sales were 106.2 million in April 2021, down 4.4% from the previous month, and up 51.7% year-over-year. According to the National Association of Realtors, "Contract signings are approaching pre-pandemic levels after the big surge due to the lack of sufficient supply of affordable homes. The upper-end market is still moving sharply as inventory is more plentiful there," (Source: AAR, National Association of Realtors)</p>
Housing Starts	<p>Housing starts for April 2021 in the US decreased 9.4% from the previous month and up 67.3% from April 2020. Single-family housing starts in April were at a rate of 1,087,000; this is 13.4% percent drop (±17.4 percent)*. The March rate for units in buildings with five units or more was 482,000. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau)</p>
Light Vehicle Sales	<p>New light vehicle sales were an annualized and seasonally adjusted 18.5 million units in April 2021, up 112.0% from April 2020 Though pent-up demand from the pandemic played a role this April, sales were also likely pulled forward by consumers' uncertainty about being able to find the vehicles they want in coming months. (Source: Seeking Alpha/AAR) <i>(Light vehicle sales record the number of domestically produced units of cars, SUVs, mini-vans, and light trucks that are sold. Because motor vehicle sales are a large part of consumer spending in the United States, the motor vehicle sales data can provide important information on consumer-spending trends and on the overall direction of the economy.)</i></p>



Personal Income	In April 2021, personal income decreased \$3.21 trillion, or 13.1% from the previous month. Disposable personal income (DPI) decreased \$3.22 trillion (14.6 percent) and personal consumption expenditures (PCE) increased \$80.3 billion (0.5 percent). (Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis) <i>(Personal income is the income received by a person from all sources. It includes income from domestic sources as well as the rest of the world. It does not include realized or unrealized capital gains or losses).</i>
Retail Sales	Advanced estimates of retail and food service sales in April 2021 were \$616.697 billion, a decrease of 2.1% from the previous month, and 51.4% above April 2020. Non-store retail sales were up 14.8% from the same period in 2020. (Source: US Census) <i>(Non-store retail sales are measured on a monthly basis and include internet-only sales outlets as well as other direct-to-customer channels)</i>
E-Commerce	The estimate of U.S. retail e-commerce sales for the first quarter of 2021, adjusted for seasonal variation, was \$215.0 billion, an increase of 7.7% from the previous quarter and 7.8% higher than the fourth quarter of 2020. E-commerce sales in the first quarter of 2021 accounted for 13.6% of total sales. (Source: US Census) <i>(E-Commerce sales are measured on a quarterly basis and include the sales of goods and services where the buyer places an order, or the price and terms of the sale are negotiated over an Internet, mobile device (M-commerce), extranet, Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) network, electronic mail, or other comparable online system. Payment may or may not be made online.)</i>
Consumer Confidence	The Consumer Confidence Index increased to 121.7 in April 2021, up from 109.0 in March. The Present Situation Index—based on consumers’ assessment of current business and labor market conditions—soared from 110.1 to 139.6. The Expectations Index—based on consumers’ short-term outlook for income, business, and labor market conditions—rose moderately, from 108.3 last month to 109.8 in April. (Source: The Conference Board) <i>(The consumer confidence index is based on a monthly survey of 5,000 U.S. household. It is designed to gauge the financial health, spending power, and confidence of the average U.S. consumer. Base year 1985=100)</i>
Consumer & Producer Price Index	The seasonally adjusted Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers increased 0.8% in April 2021 to 267.05, after rising 0.6 % in March. The gasoline index decreased to 1.4 percent in April. The Producer Price Index for final demand was 123.8 in April 2021, up from 123.1 the previous month. (Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics) <i>(The CPI measures the change in prices paid by consumer for goods and services. Base year 1999=100) (The PPI measures the average price changes by producers for domestically produced goods, services, and construction. Base year 2009=100)</i>
Small Business Optimism Index	The Small Business Optimism Index rose to 99.8 in April 2021, up 1.6 points from the previous month. According to the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), “Small business owners are seeing a growth in sales but are stunted by not having enough workers. Finding qualified employees remains the biggest challenge for small businesses and is slowing economic growth. Owners are raising compensation, offering bonuses and benefits to attract the right employees” (Source: National Federation of Independent Business) <i>(This Index collects data from small businesses on economic topics ranging from current job openings to expected credit conditions. Base year 1986=100)</i>
Industrial Production and Capacity Utilization	The Industrial Production Index was 106.3 in April 2021, an increase of 0.7% from the previous month and 16.5% higher year-over-year. Capacity Utilization for the industrial sector was 74.9% in April 2021, down 0.1% year-over-year. (Source: Federal Reserve) <i>(The industrial production and capacity utilization rates cover manufacturing, mining, and electric and gas utilities. The industrial detail provided by these measures helps illuminate structural developments in the economy)</i>
Manufacturing & Trade Sales	The estimated monthly sales for manufacturers, retailers and merchant wholesalers totaled over \$1,638.2 billion in March 2021 up 5.7% from the previous month. Inventories to sales ratios were 1.38 for Manufacturing, 1.10 for Retail and 1.22 for Merchant wholesalers all down from March 2020.
Manufacturing & Trade Inventory	Total value of inventory on-hand is estimated at \$2,014.3 billion in March 2021, up 0.7% from the previous month and unchanged from March of the previous year. (Source: US Census)
Purchasing Managers Index	The Manufacturing PMI was 60.7% in April 2021, a decrease of 4% from the previous month. This figure indicates expansion in the overall economy for the eleventh consecutive month. New Orders decreased 3.7% to 64.3% , and Production decreased 5.6% to 62.5% . (Source: Institute for Supply Management) <i>(The PMI combines data on new orders, inventory, production, supplier deliveries, and employment. A reading above 50 indicates that the manufacturing economy is generally expanding.)</i>
Purchasing Managers Index in the Southeast	In April 2021, the Southeast PMI increased 3.6% month-over-month to 71.9% . New Orders in the Southeast increased to 83.3% and Production also increased 73.9% . (Source: Kennesaw State University) <i>(The Southeast region includes the states of Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Tennessee, Louisiana, and Mississippi. The PMI combines data on new orders, inventory, production, supplier deliveries, and employment. A reading above 50 indicates that the manufacturing economy is generally expanding.)</i>
Logistics Manager’s Index	The Logistics Manager’s Index was 74.5 in April 2021, an increase of 2.3% from the previous month, which is the second highest reading in the history of the index. (Source: the-lmi.com) <i>(The LMI score is a combination eight unique components that make up the logistics industry, including: inventory levels and costs, warehousing capacity, utilization, and prices, and transportation capacity, utilization, and prices. The LMI is calculated using a diffusion index, in which any reading above 50 percent indicates that logistics is expanding; a reading below 50 percent is indicative of a shrinking logistics industry.)</i>
U.S. Market News	Georgia will fully recover the jobs lost to the COVID-19 recession much faster than it recovered jobs lost to either the 2001 recession or the Great Recession. According to some economists, the COVID-19 recession began last February and ended in May when employment began to rise. Georgia’s labor market did not get hit as hard as the U.S. labor market, so there’s less economic debris to clean up. And when the pandemic began the economy was in good shape. In 2020, Georgia’s labor market healed much faster than nation’s. By December, Georgia had recovered 64% of the 609,500 jobs lost to the COVID-19 recession whereas the nation had recovered only 55% of the 22.4 million jobs lost. To



recover fully, Georgia must add back another 216,700 jobs, which should happen sometime in 2022. The nation will need to add back more than 12 million jobs, which probably will not happen until 2023. The transportation, warehousing and utilities industries got hit hard, losing one of every 20 jobs, but recovery was swift and those industries closed out 2020 with 4% more jobs than prior to the recession. Several of Georgia's major industries ended 2020 with employment that was only 4% to 6% below their pre-COVID-19 levels, a remarkable achievement given the 10% and greater job losses last spring. Since April 2020, job growth has brought Georgia's unemployment rate down from its peak of 12.5% to about 5%. If labor force participation does not rise quickly, net job creation should be fast enough to bring down the unemployment rate to 4.5% by the end of 2021. It is already difficult to hire workers that have very specialized training or educational requirements. For example, there are shortages of some types of construction workers and truck drivers (Source: Georgia Trend; [Link to article](#))

MULTIMODAL:

Dow Jones Transportation Average Index Dow Jones Transportation Average Index **increased 1.22%** in over the past month, ending at a reading of 15,492.60 as of May 25. (A price-weighted average of 20 U.S. companies in the transportation industry. The index includes railroads, airlines, trucking, marine transportation, delivery services, and logistics companies.)

NASDAQ Transportation Index NASDAQ Transportation Index **increased 1.24%** in May 2021, ending at a reading of **6,558.50**. (Averaged share weights of NASDAQ-listed companies classified as transportation companies)

DOT Freight Transportation Services Index The USDOT's freight transportation services index **fell 2.1%, in March 2021 to 130.0** due to seasonally-adjusted decreases in truck tonnage and pipeline despite growth in water, rail carloads, rail intermodal, and air freight. The large decline in truck freight volumes, possibly due to supply chain issues, outweighed gains in other modes. The March decrease took place against the background of growth in other indicators from February to March. (Source: US BTS)(TSI is based on the amount of freight carried by the for-hire transportation industry)

Cass Freight Index The Cass Freight Shipments Index was 1.178 in April 2021, a **decrease of 1.5%** from the previous month, and an **increase to 27.6%** year-over-year. The Cass Freight Expenditures Index was 3.452 in April 2021, **an increase of 1.1%** seasonally adjusted from the previous month and an **increase of 45.1%** year-over-year. (Source: Cass Information Systems | Cassinfo.com) (Based upon transportation dollars and shipments of Cass clients comprised of over 400 shipping companies)

Shippers Conditions Index The FTR Shippers Conditions Index (SCI) for March 2021 fell to a **negative reading of -17.8**, its lowest reading on record. According to FTR, "While May and June are expected to be the worst months for shippers as rate increases in truck and rail hit their peak for the year, it is possible that the tight conditions could persist for longer. Capacity is expected to remain a constraining factor for transportation through the end of 2021 as truck and rail each struggle to regain employees lost during the pandemic. Strong consumer and industrial demand means freight volumes will remain strong at the same time, setting up a challenging market for shippers over the next few months." | ftrintel.com) (Figures below zero indicate a less-than-ideal environment for shippers)

North American TransBorder Freight Total transborder freight between the U.S., Canada, and Mexico totaled **\$114.6 billion** in March 2021 **up 19.5% than the previous month and up 16.0% compared to March 2020**. Trucks carried \$73.9 billion of transborder freight **up 24.3%** compared to February 2021 and continued to be the most heavily utilized mode for moving goods between the U.S. and other North American countries (Canada and Mexico). (Source: US BTS)

Multimodal News Clips: Management from **J.B. Hunt Transport Services (NASDAQ: JBHT)** said the volume strength experienced in the first quarter has continued thus far through the second during a virtual appearance at BofA Securities' transportation conference Wednesday. While "demand is there," capacity constraints continue to present headwinds. Management said container purchasing plans in 2020 proved to be a little light as they were hoping for a material improvement in rail service last year. In hindsight, they wished they had added more equipment as customers continue to voice needs for incremental capacity. Currently, the physical delivery of new containers is being hampered by [extreme tightness in ocean vessel capacity](#). Field said there haven't been any issues finding production slots and build schedules haven't been pushed out by the manufacturers. The issue has been finding transportation to get the boxes delivered to the U.S. with the challenge getting "more and more difficult by the day." These headwinds could keep J.B. Hunt from taking delivery of all 12,000 boxes this year. New equipment not likely to impact favorable supply-demand balance. When asked about the potential disruption the equipment additions could have on pricing as the company looks to add a double-digit percentage of new containers to its current fleet of almost 100,000, management noted it could increase the pace of container retirements, thus minimizing fleet growth, if demand were to cool. Field said the rate increases are not just a supply-demand function or due to record truckload rates. Higher costs are driving the increases as well. He said intermodal rates have increased significantly since 2017 but the increases are being largely offset by cost inflation. Field said the cost environment was the reason J.B. Hunt recently lowered its long-term intermodal operating margin guidance by 100 basis points on each end of the range, which is now 10-12%. (Source: FreightWaves; [Link to article](#))

RAIL:

U.S. Freight Rail Traffic	For week 20 ending May 22, 2021, total originated carloads on U.S. railroads were 242,227 carloads and intermodal units, up 27.2% compared to the same week in 2020. Total combined U.S. traffic for the first 20 weeks of 2021 was 528,774 carloads and intermodal units, an increase of 23.4 percent compared to last year. (Source: AAR.org) <i>(Report includes rail car-loadings by 20 different major commodity categories)</i>
U.S. Intermodal Rail Traffic	For week 20, 2021 ending May 22, total US Intermodal Units were 286,547, a 20.4% increase compared to the same week in 2020. (Source: Bureau of Transportation Statistics and AAR.org) <i>(Report includes rail car-loadings by 19 different major commodity categories as well as intermodal units)</i>
Railroad Fuel Price Index	The index of average railroad fuel prices in April 2021 was 384.0, 3.7% lower from the previous month and a 94.7% increase over April 2020. (Source: AAR.org) <i>(Average monthly price for gallons purchased by freight railroads; Includes federal excise taxes, transportation, and handling expenses)</i>
Class 1 Railroad Employment	Railroad employment in April 2021 was 115,485 a slight increase from the previous month. (Source: U.S. STB, AAR)
Railroad News Clips:	<p>U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) plans to spend \$46 million to upgrade technology to improve rail cargo inspections at 12 points of entry by the Canadian and Mexican borders. CBP says it will replace aging rail scanner systems with new high-energy rail scanners that can generate high-quality images more quickly and securely. The scanners use linear accelerators to generate X-rays from electricity rather than radioactive isotopes, the agency said. Installation and testing of the new scanners should begin this fall. Twelve locations, which process approximately 60% of the rail cargo imported into the U.S., will receive the new scanning equipment: CBP says the new scanners will increase the efficiency of commercial rail inspections. The X-rays will occur only when trains are present, and CBP will install shield walls, fencing and signage at project sites in compliance with the safety and performance requirements specific to each location. CBP processed approximately 3 million rail containers in 2020. “Nonintrusive inspection technology is a force multiplier that allows CBP officers to safely and more efficiently process U.S.-bound cargo,” said William A. Ferrara, executive assistant commissioner of the CBP Office of Field Operations. “The high-quality images produced by the new rail cargo scanners will enhance CBP’s efforts to interdict stowaways, deadly narcotics and other contraband while facilitating the flow of lawful trade.” CBP estimates that during its 6.4 million nonintrusive inspections at U.S. ports of entry in 2020, it intercepted 470,000 pounds, or 235 tons, of illicit narcotics and \$11.54 million in undeclared currency. (Source: FreightWaves; Lnk to article)</p>
TRUCKING:	
Truckload Linehaul Index	The Cass Truckload Linehaul Index® value of 146.5 in April represented a second-straight all-time record and accelerated to a 13.0% y/y increase from a 10.1% y/y increase in March. On a m/m basis, the seasonally adjusted index was 2.4% higher than March, in the tenth straight increase. With strong freight demand and major supply constraints in both of the critical components of trucking capacity – drivers and tractors – the near-term trend of the Cass Truckload Linehaul Index should remain up and to the right. Driver challenges continue to mount, as discussed below, and the annual Road Check law enforcement event in early May was a factor in pressing spot truckload rates even higher. Meanwhile, parts shortages continue to limit truck production and keep the truckload market tight. (Source: Cass Information Systems, Inc. Cassinfo.com) <i>(the index is an indicator of market fluctuations in per-mile dry van truckload pricing in the U.S. and does not include other components like fuel and accessorial. Provides trends in baseline truckload prices)</i>
Truck Tonnage Index	The ATA’s seasonally adjusted For-Hire Truck Tonnage Index was 114.7 in April 2021, a decrease of 0.3% from the previous month but up 6.9% from April 2020. According to ATA Chief Economist Bob Costello, “The outlook is solid for tonnage going forward as the country approaches pre-pandemic levels of activity, with strong economic growth in key areas for trucking – including retail, home construction and even manufacturing.” (Source: American Trucking Associations Trucking.org . Note: ATA recently revised the seasonally adjusted index to 2015 = 100)
Truckload Freight	The spot market for truckload-freight available for pick-up in April 2021 decreased 4.3% compared to the previous month and was 577.3% higher year-over-year. Van Load-to-Truck Ratio dropped to 4.9 in April 2021 down from 5.78 in March, but for the same period in 2019 (pre-pandemic) capacity is 5x tighter than the ratio of 1.45. (Source: DAT Trendlines www.dat.com)
Refrigerated Trucking	In April 2021, the national load-to-truck ratio for refrigerated loads was 9.92 loads per truck , down from 12.21 the previous month. Georgia’s reefer load-to-truck ratio ranges 12+. In March, the national spot market reefer rate was \$2.93 per mile, up from \$2.94 the previous month. (Source: DAT Trendlines www.dat.com)
Trucking Conditions Index	FTR’s Trucking Conditions Index (TCI) surged in March 2021 to a 16.27 reading. The March TCI was the highest on record. Contributions from freight volume, rates, and capacity utilization all strengthened in March. The TCI should remain in positive, double-digit territory at least through the third quarter with the possibility of one or more record readings. (Source: FTR Transportation Intelligence ftrintel.com) <i>(Figures below zero indicate a less-than-ideal environment for trucking)</i>

Diesel Prices

As of May 24, 2021 the U.S. average diesel price was **\$3.25 per gallon**. The U.S. average diesel price was **\$0.863 higher** than the same week last year. The average price of diesel in the Lower Atlantic states was **\$3.137 per gallon, \$0.778 higher** than the same week last year. (Source: U.S. DOE) *(Reflects the costs and profits of the entire production and distribution chain.)*

Trucking Employment

The trucking industry workforce **decreased 0.10% to 1,480.3 million employees total** in April 2021. (Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)

Trucking Earnings and Hours

The average earnings of truck transportation employees were \$26.69/hour in March 2021, **down slightly** from the previous month. The average weekly hours totaled 41.8 in March, **up 2.45 %** from the previous month. (Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)

U.S. Truck & Trailer Orders (Class 8)

Preliminary North American Class 8 net orders for April were **34,600 units**, continuing to exhibit strength above normal trends. It was the best April order activity since 2018. Orders were down 15% m/m but 30,500 units above April 2020. Class 8 orders now total 403,000 units for the previous 12 months. (Source: FTR Transportation Intelligence | ftrintel.com)

Trucking News Clip

Truck drivers and fleets have two months to prepare for the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance's (CVSA) annual Operation Safe Driver Week, which is set for July 11-17. [CVSA](#) said inspectors throughout North America will focus on speeding and unsafe driving, including distracted driving, making improper lane changes, failing to use a seat belt and driving while impaired. "Data shows that traffic stops and interactions with law enforcement help reduce problematic driving behaviors," CVSA President Sgt. John Samis of the Delaware State Police said in the release. "By making contact with drivers during Operation Safe Driver Week, law enforcement personnel aim to make our roadways safer by targeting high-risk driving behaviors." According to the National Safety Council's (NSC) preliminary estimates, the estimated rate of death on the roads last year increased 24% over the previous 12-month period, despite miles driven, which dropped 13%. Inspectors will also be tracking reckless or aggressive driving, distracted driving, following too closely, improper lane change, failure to obey traffic control devices, failure to use a seat belt, evidence of drunk or drugged driving during Operation Safe Driver Week. (Source: FreightWaves; [Link to article](#))

AIR FREIGHT:

Air Cargo Traffic

U.S. airlines carried **9% more cargo by weight** in March 2021 (preliminary) than in March 2020. The rise was fueled by gains of nearly 4% in domestic cargo and 24% in international cargo, according to data filed with the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) by 12 of the leading U.S. cargo airlines. March 2020 was the first month in which the pandemic started affecting air cargo totals. The 12 airlines carry 95% of the total cargo by weight transported on U.S. airlines. (Source: Bureau of Transportation Statistics and/or IATA.org,) *(Global air freight covers international and domestic scheduled air traffic.)*

Jet Fuel Prices

As of May 21, 2021, the global average jet fuel price was \$71.28 per barrel **up 2.0%** from the previous month, and **104.3% higher** year-over-year. (Source: IATA.org, platts.com) *(The weekly index and price data shows the global average price paid at the refinery for aviation jet fuel)*

Air Freight News Clips:

The competition for scarce aircraft to transport international cargo is about to get even more intense, especially for exports from the U.S. West coast, as seasonal fruit growers look to squeeze their way onto already crowded aircraft. Expectations for a strong growing season combined with high fruit demand around the world point to robust exports this year. California cherry harvesting went into full swing earlier this month. After that, stone fruits like peaches and apricots head to market, followed by grapes. Pacific Northwest cherries arrive in early June. And blueberries and blackberries will be shipped in July. Many producers are increasing their reliance on air transport this season to quickly get their perishable products to customers in Asia and Europe. The extra volume they generate will lead to a further tightening of capacity and push up cargo yields for carriers, logistics managers say. (Source: FreightWaves; [Link to article](#))

OCEAN FREIGHT:

Shanghai Containerized Freight Index

The May 28, 2021 SCFI comprehensive reading was **\$ 3,495.76 per FEU**. (Source: Shanghai Shipping Exchange | www1.chineseshipping.com.cn/en) *(The Shanghai Containerized Freight Index reflects the spot rates of the Shanghai container transport market. It is a weekly reported average spot rate of 15 major container trade routes exported from Shanghai to regions around the globe.)*

Georgia Ports Authority

The Georgia Ports Authority reached **466,635** twenty-foot equivalent container units for all terminals in April 2021 **up 38%** as compared to the same month last year. (Source: GPA)

Ocean Freight Business News:

North America East Coast laden container imports in the first quarter of 2021 grew by 22.3% year-on-year, according to a Sea-Intelligence report. Growth was also seen over pre-pandemic levels, with Q1 laden imports up 17.6% compared to the first quarter of 2019. "This shows that the demand boom is far from over," said Alan Murphy, Sea-Intelligence CEO. Total transported volumes were also up, by 14.8% compare to Q1 2020 and 12.3% compare to Q1 2019. Empty container exports shot up as carriers tried to reposition empties to alleviate delays caused by equipment shortages. Empty exports grew by 51.2% year-on-year in Q1 2021, up by 25.6% compared to Q1 2019. "While the latter figure is lower, and in line with the year-on-year growth in 2019, the laden export to empty export ratio has decreased considerably in the past few months and has been stable at 1.0-1.1 since August 2020," said Murphy. For combined North America import volumes, laden imports were up 30.3% in Q1 2021 compared to the year prior, and 19.1% up on Q1 2019; empty exports rose 67.2% year-on-year, up 32.6% over Q1 2019. Laden exports fell by 6.0% year-on-year and were 5.1% lower than the first quarter 2019. (Source: Seatrade Maritime News; [Link to article](#))

WAREHOUSING & DISTRIBUTION:

Industrial Vacancy The U.S. industrial vacancy rate in the first quarter of 2021 increased 30-basis points quarter-over-quarter to 4.9%. Vacancy remained flat year-over-year and the vacancy rate is now 170 bps below the 10-year historical average of 6.6% for all product types. This decrease is largely due to more demand in the market for quality space than supply can keep up with which can be attributed to the acceleration of e-commerce. (Source: Cushman & Wakefield)

Warehouse Rent Rates The continued tight market conditions and solid demand brought on another quarter of YOY rent growth for Q1 2021, **increasing to \$6.90 from \$6.40 in Q1 2020** per square foot (psf). Warehouse/distribution rents rose during the same period to \$6.26 psf. **The average asking rent in Atlanta was \$5.14/SF in Q1 2021.** (Source: Cushman & Wakefield)

Industrial Absorption The U.S. industrial market started 2021 stronger than expected with demand outpacing supply for the first time since Q2 2019. In fact, in the first quarter alone, the market **absorbed 82.3 million square feet (msf)**, which is the most space ever absorbed in a first quarter of any year reported by Cushman & Wakefield—up 78.2% over the 46.2 msf reported in Q1 2020. The Atlanta market finished the first quarter 2021 at a strong pace, **absorbing 8,747,936 million square feet (msf)**. The net absorption in Q1 2021 in Savannah was 2,109,330 million square feet. (Source: Cushman & Wakefield) *(Absorption is the net change in occupied space between two points in time. Positive absorption means that previously unoccupied space is being occupied.)*

Warehouse Employment The nationwide warehousing industry workforce **decreased slightly to 1,405.6 million** employees preliminary total in April 2021. (Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)

Warehouse Earnings and Hours The average earnings of warehousing & storage employees across the U.S. were \$21.99/hour in March 2021, **down \$0.40** from the previous month. The average weekly hours totaled 40.5 in March, **up 0.7 from** the previous month. (Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)

W&D Business News: Amazon today announced that it is hiring 75,000 people in its fulfillment and logistics network across the U.S. and Canada as it continues to expand its footprint and serve customers. Amazon recently announced pay increases across its fulfillment and transportation networks, and these open roles offer an average starting pay of over \$17 per hour, plus sign-on bonuses in many locations of up to \$1,000. In addition, the company offers full-time employees industry-leading benefits, which include health, vision, and dental insurance, 401(k) with 50% company match, paid parental leave, and access to various company-funded upskilling opportunities, including Amazon’s innovative Career Choice program, which prepays 95% of tuition for courses in high-demand fields. Hiring for the 75,000 roles is already underway. Interested candidates can visit amazon.com/apply to learn more, see where jobs are available, and apply. The locations with the most open roles include Arizona, California, Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Washington, and Wisconsin. (Source: AJOT; [Link to article](#))

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