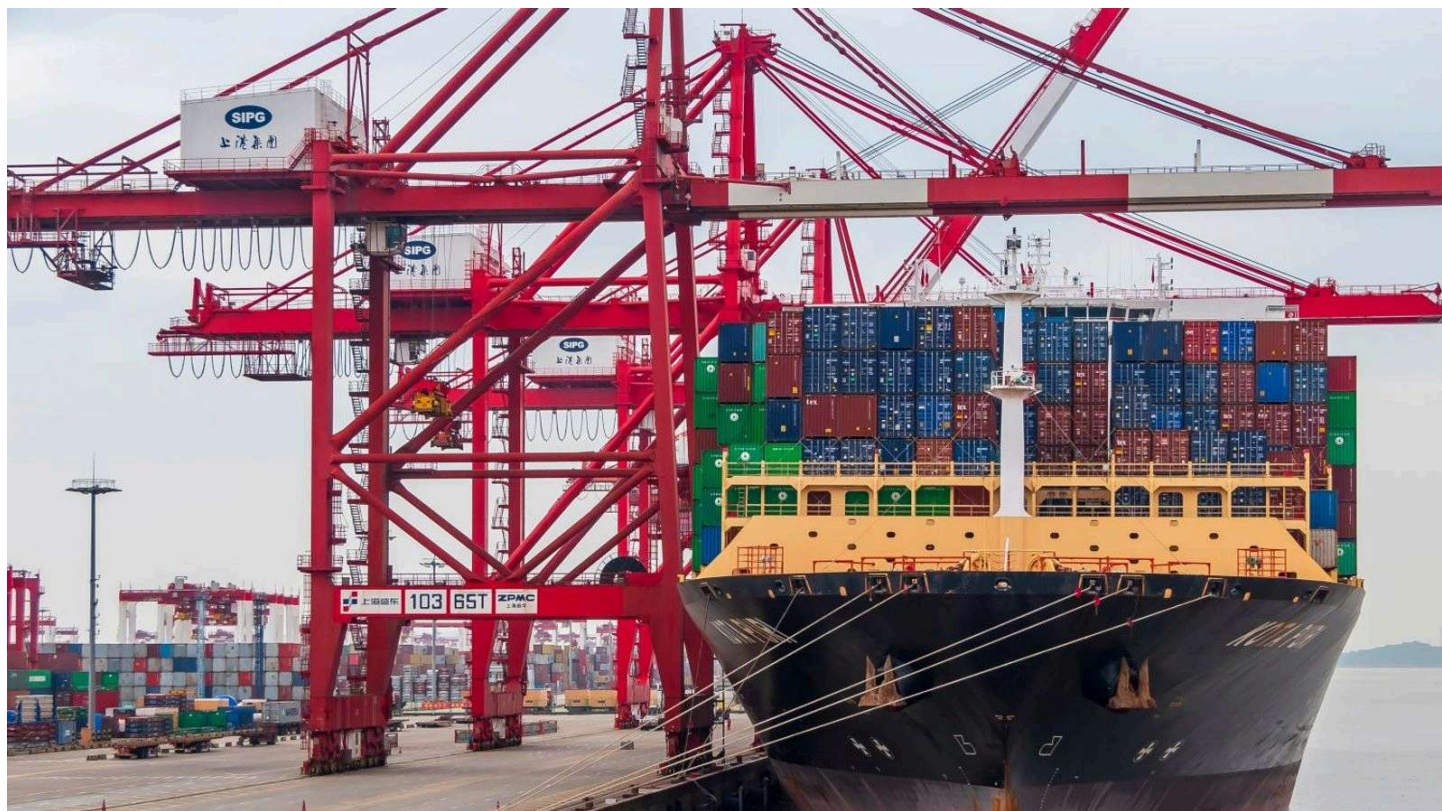


Trade deal could boost short-term China imports, but uncertainty lingers



The seemingly tenuous nature of the US-China trade deal — notably its one-year term — does not provide the long-term clarity needed for many US importers to alter their supply chain strategy. Photo credit: ambient_pix / Shutterstock.com.

[Bill Mongelluzzo, Senior Editor and Laura Robb, Associate Editor](#) | Oct 31, 2025, 4:14 PM EDT

The US-China trade deal announced this week will prompt some US retailers to move quickly on imports they need in the short term, but the seemingly tenuous nature of the agreement — notably its one-year term — will likely prevent a broad shift back to traditional ordering patterns, market participants say.

“If it’s needed now, it will be ordered. Longer term, retailers need more time. There will be hesitancy,” an industry consultant who managed the logistics departments of two national retailers told the *Journal of Commerce*.

Revelyst, an importer of outdoor gear, immediately shifted imports that it had scheduled to ship by air beginning Nov. 1 back to ocean mode after the US-China deal.

“We’ll save a good deal of money,” said John Pace, the company’s senior manager of logistics.

In the longer term, even with the deal’s elimination of the 10% so-called “fentanyl tax” on imports from China, the total tariff on most imports from China is about 47%, which is higher than tariffs on most countries in Asia. As such, Revelyst will continue to explore sourcing options from countries such as Vietnam, Pace said.

The broad agreement announced Thursday also included a one-year pause in the reciprocal port fees the US and China had implemented on Oct. 14.

The National Retail Federation (NRF), which represents a broad range of retailers, said a bump in imports in the short term is likely in the wake of the deal, but that it is too early for retailers who are tied to China to make supply chain decisions for spring and summer imports in 2026.

“The challenge for retailers is there’s still so much uncertainty about what’s going to come out and when it’s going to come out,” said Jonathan Gold, NRF’s vice president of supply chain and customs policy.

Many details relating to tariffs on important commodities such as steel, aluminum, automobiles and lumber, when Customs and Border Protection (CBP) will begin to collect duties, and what the status is of duties that have already been collected are still uncertain, Gold said.

Jason Cook, CEO of the forwarder Ardent Global Logistics, said there’s been hesitancy over the past two months among retailers and direct importers to ship seasonal merchandise and replenishment product for fear the US-China talks would break down and the huge tariffs would remain in place. But those fears have been allayed, at least for now.

“So make up for the hesitation and bring in as much inventory as possible in case things blow up again,” Cook said.

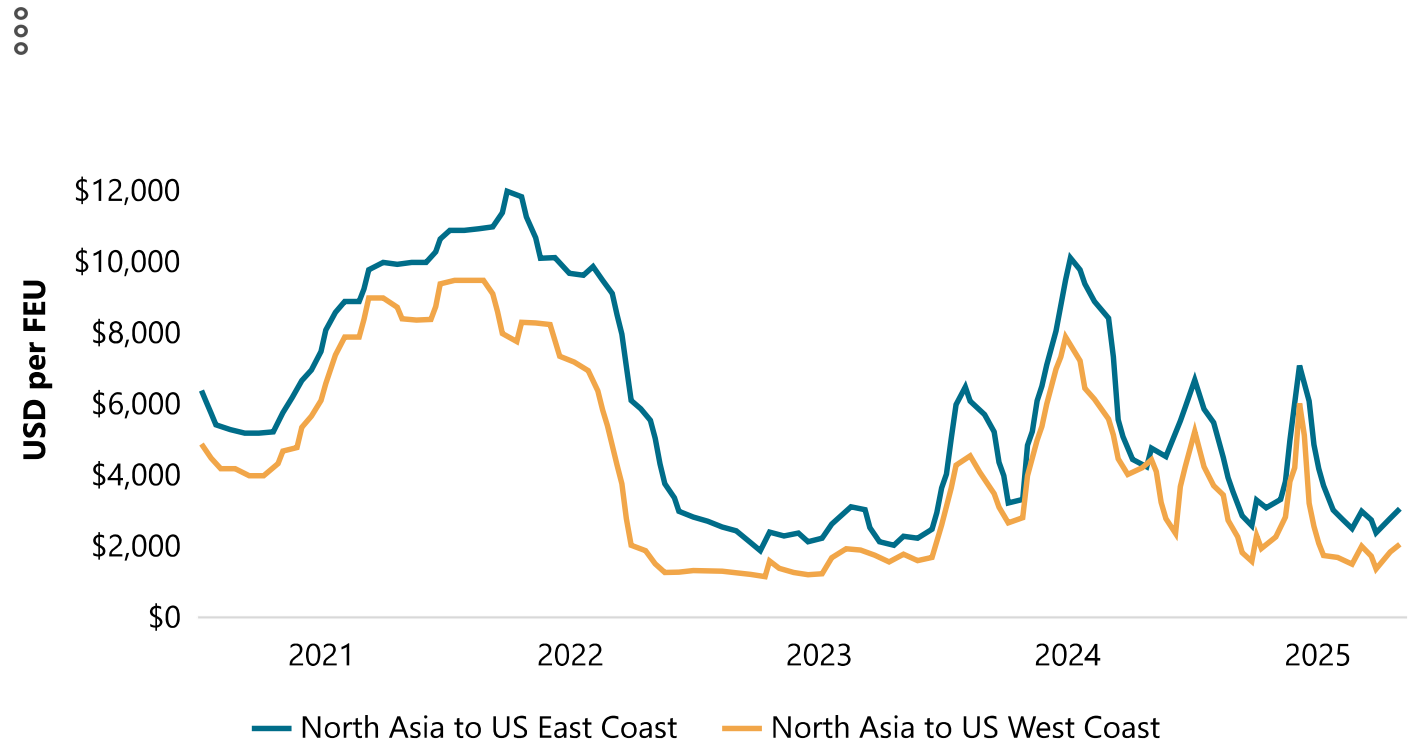
Some importers keep supply chain strategy unchanged

Still, some importers say their ordering patterns have not really been affected by the trade agreement. A national furniture retailer said the company earlier this year set its logistics plan and sourcing patterns for 2025, has stuck with those plans, and has no regrets for doing so.

“The fact that major decisions are being made in such a knee-jerk fashion has us scared,” said the furniture retailer’s logistics manager.

Asia-US spot rates rose in October after GRIs

Container spot rates from North Asia to US West and East coasts, in USD per FEU



Source: Platts, S&P Global

© 2025 S&P Global

3M	6M	2Y	YTD	MAX
----	----	----	-----	-----

Related data for this chart

[Click here](#) to explore related data on Gateway

An importer in the automotive sector said he has no intention of increasing imports from China.

“A 10% [tariff] change is not material enough to make a switch,” the source said. “The overall rates are still very high.”

Prior GRIs boosted rates in October

Imports from all of Asia have remained relatively strong this fall even though carriers have been successful in propping up freight rates through a series of general rate increases (GRIs).

Platts, a sister company of the *Journal of Commerce* within S&P Global, pegged Asia-West Coast rates at \$2,075 per FEU as of Oct. 30, up from \$1,300 earlier in the month

as an Oct. 1 GRI was taking hold. Rates to the East Coast have risen to \$3,075 per FEU from \$2,260 over the same period.

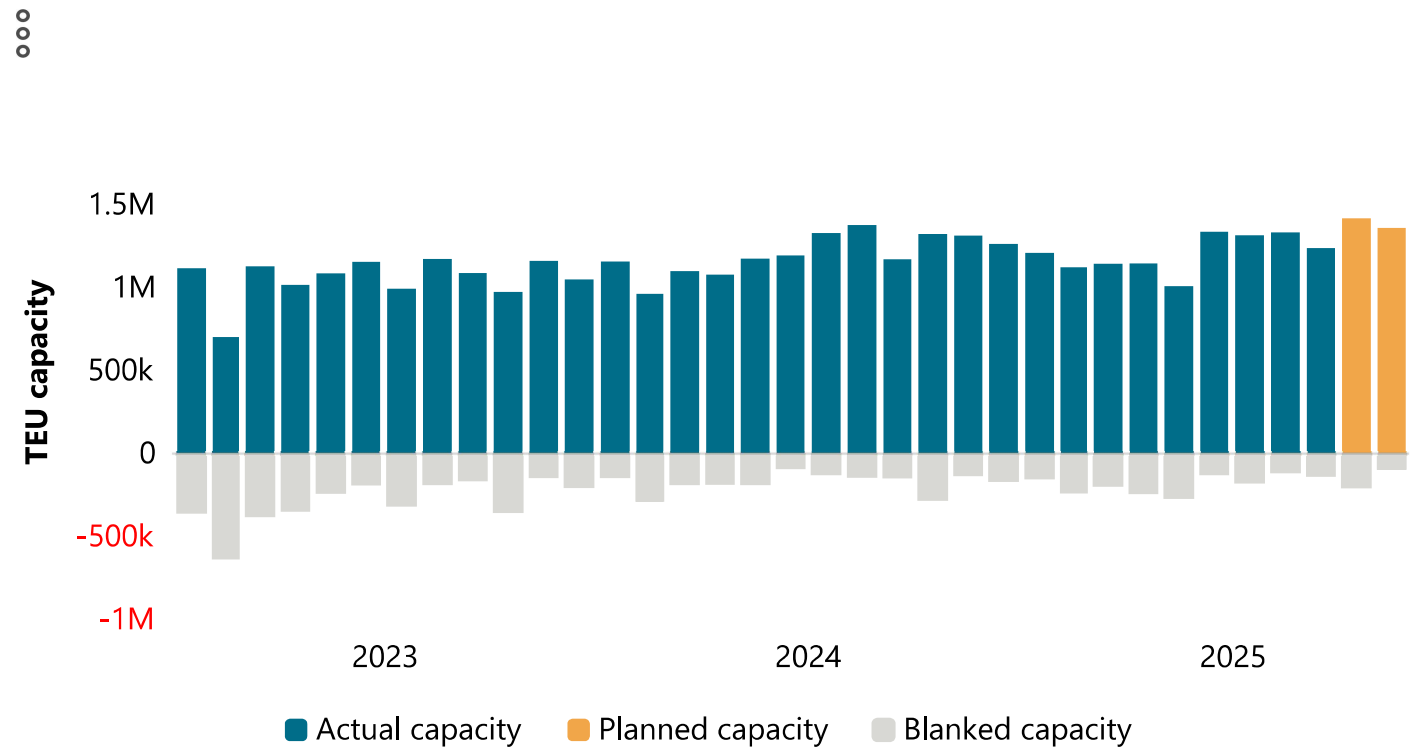
Trans-Pacific carriers pre-filed GRIs to take effect on Nov. 1, and so far the alliance carriers have been holding on to the intended rate hike, said Jon Monroe, who serves as an advisor to forwarders. Most, but not all, carriers are posting rates of \$3,800 per FEU to the East Coast and \$2,800 per FEU to the West Coast this weekend, Monroe said.

“It looks like carriers are holding it together publicly but privately they’re cutting deals,” he said.

Importers and forwarders who utilize so-called bullet rates and on-line rates from individual carriers can save about \$300 to \$400 per FEU, according to Monroe.

Trans-Pac blanks to West Coast set to decline in November

Asia-US West Coast container ship capacity, deployed and blanked, with planned



Source: eeSea

© 2025 S&P Global

6M 2Y YTD MAX

Related data for this chart

[Click here](#) to explore related data on Gateway

Carriers have succeeded in propping up rates by reducing capacity in the trans-Pacific through blank sailings, but reduced blanks scheduled so far for November could result in additional capacity being available.

The blanking rate to the West Coast so far for November is 8.2% of capacity, down from 20.8% in October, according to maritime intelligence provider eeSea. Similarly, blanked capacity from Asia to the East Coast is pegged thus far at 10.9% for November, down from 22.8% in October.

Contact Bill Mongelluzzo at bill.mongelluzzo@spglobal.com.

Contact Laura Robb at laura.robb@spglobal.com.

© 2025 S&P Global. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited.

You are permitted to print or download extracts from this material for your personal use only. None of this material may be used for any commercial or public use. For more information on reprints/eprints, please visit <https://subscribe.joc.com/mediasolutions/>.