Executives talk tech, port drayage and capacity on FreightWaves Today

June 23, 2026 · Nimo

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Facts and Figures

This story reports a measured change such as 30 percent and 20 percent. Figures like this show direction and scale, so it helps to keep them separate from the surrounding commentary.

Change / rate: 30 percent These systems rely heavily on standardized APIs and have demonstrated that transparent data sharing can cut container dwell times by up to 30 percent.

Change / rate: 20 percent This allows them to pre-position assets, balance capacity across lanes, and reduce empty miles, which can account for 15–20 percent of truck miles in some regions.

Digital integration has become the backbone of modern logistics, with standards-based APIs replacing batch-file exchanges in a push toward real-time visibility. This shift took center stage on a recent live broadcast of FreightWaves Today, where executives

unpacked how technology is reshaping port drayage, network optimization, and capacity management.

Port Drayage: The Critical First Mile

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Port drayage—the short-haul movement of containers between marine terminals and nearby rail yards or warehouses—remains one of the most fragmented links in global supply chains. Even minor delays in this segment can ripple outward, causing missed ship connections, demurrage charges, and strained inland networks. On the show, participants stressed that digitizing drayage operations is no longer optional.

Visibility tools topped the discussion. By equipping chassis with IoT sensors and using GPS-enabled platforms, dispatchers can now track container moves in real time. This cuts down on wasted trips and helps coordinate just-in-time pickups, easing pressure on congested port gates.

Appointment Systems and Gate Efficiency

A recurring theme was how outdated appointment systems at ports create bottlenecks. Several terminals have started adopting digital twin technology and API-connected booking platforms that allow truckers to reserve slots dynamically. When integrated with drayage dispatch software, these systems can reduce turn times and improve asset utilization—critical when chassis pools are tight.

Port community systems, which digitize the flow of information among all stakeholders in a port environment, are gradually being adopted in major logistics hubs like Rotterdam and Singapore. These systems rely heavily on standardized APIs and have

demonstrated that transparent data sharing can cut container dwell times by up to 30 percent. While North American ports have been slower to deploy such systems, pilot programs in Los Angeles and Oakland are now laying the groundwork for a more interconnected drayage ecosystem.

API-Driven Integrations Connect the Supply Chain

Freight Images (14)

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Frictionless data exchange was another focal point. Executives highlighted that the logistics sector is gradually moving from Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) to RESTful APIs, which allow faster, more flexible connections between transportation management systems (TMS), warehouse management systems (WMS), and terminal operating systems. A single API call can now trigger shipment updates, invoice generation, and customs clearance steps simultaneously, shrinking processing windows from hours to minutes.

Standards bodies such as the Digital Container Shipping Association (DCSA) are pushing for common API frameworks, and the conversation on FreightWaves Today reflected a growing consensus that interoperability will be key to scaling these solutions across thousands of independent carriers and forwarders.

Optimizing Networks for Resiliency

Network optimization emerged as a multi-layered challenge. Beyond mapping the shortest route, planners must weigh variables like fuel costs, driver hours, emissions targets, and real-time weather. Advanced analytics platforms—often powered by machine learning models—now help logistics providers simulate different scenarios. This allows them to pre-position assets, balance capacity across lanes, and reduce empty

miles, which can account for 15–20 percent of truck miles in some regions.

The discussion underscored that the most resilient networks are those that can adapt on the fly. When a port closure or labor disruption occurs, shippers with flexible routing rules and multi-modal options can pivot cargo to alternative gateways without manual intervention, often through automated exception-management tools.

Capacity Management in an Uncertain Market

Capacity planning drew equal attention. Freight markets have swung from tight capacity and soaring rates to softening demand, and carriers are increasingly relying on predictive analytics to right-size their fleets. By aggregating data from load boards, contract bids, and macroeconomic indicators, some firms can now forecast demand shifts up to six weeks out.

On the technology side, digital freight matching platforms are gaining traction. These marketplaces use algorithms to pair available trucks with loads instantly, reducing downtime and improving margins for both shippers and carriers. While not a panacea, they provide a buffer in volatile markets, especially in the spot-driven drayage sector where pricing can change by the hour.

The session concluded with a recognition that technology adoption, although accelerating, still faces hurdles in a fragmented industry. Smaller operators often lack the capital for full-scale system overhauls, and patchwork state-level regulations add complexity. Yet the consensus was clear: those who invest in digital tools and collaborative frameworks today will be better positioned to weather future disruptions.

Why This Matters

The integration of APIs and real-time data in drayage addresses a long-standing pain point in the supply chain—the disconnect between ocean carriers, truckers, and shippers. By standardizing how information is exchanged, these tools not only cut costs but also build the resilience needed for future disruptions, making the global flow of goods more predictable and efficient.

FAQ

Who participated in the discussion on FreightWaves Today?

Industry leaders and executives from the freight, logistics, and supply chain technology sectors joined the live broadcast to share insights on pressing operational challenges and innovations.

What were the main topics covered in the show?

The conversation centered on port drayage efficiency, strategies for network optimization, the growing role of API-driven integrations, and how companies are managing capacity in a fluctuating market.

Why is API integration important for modern freight operations?

API integration enables real-time data exchange across disparate systems, reducing manual processes, minimizing errors, and speeding up transactions. This interconnectivity supports faster decision-making and smoother coordination among carriers, terminals, and shippers.

How does port drayage affect overall supply chain performance?

Port drayage is the first overland leg of container movement. Delays in this segment can cause downstream congestion, demurrage fees, and missed connections. Improving drayage visibility and efficiency thus has an outsized impact on end-to-end supply chain velocity.

Sources

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