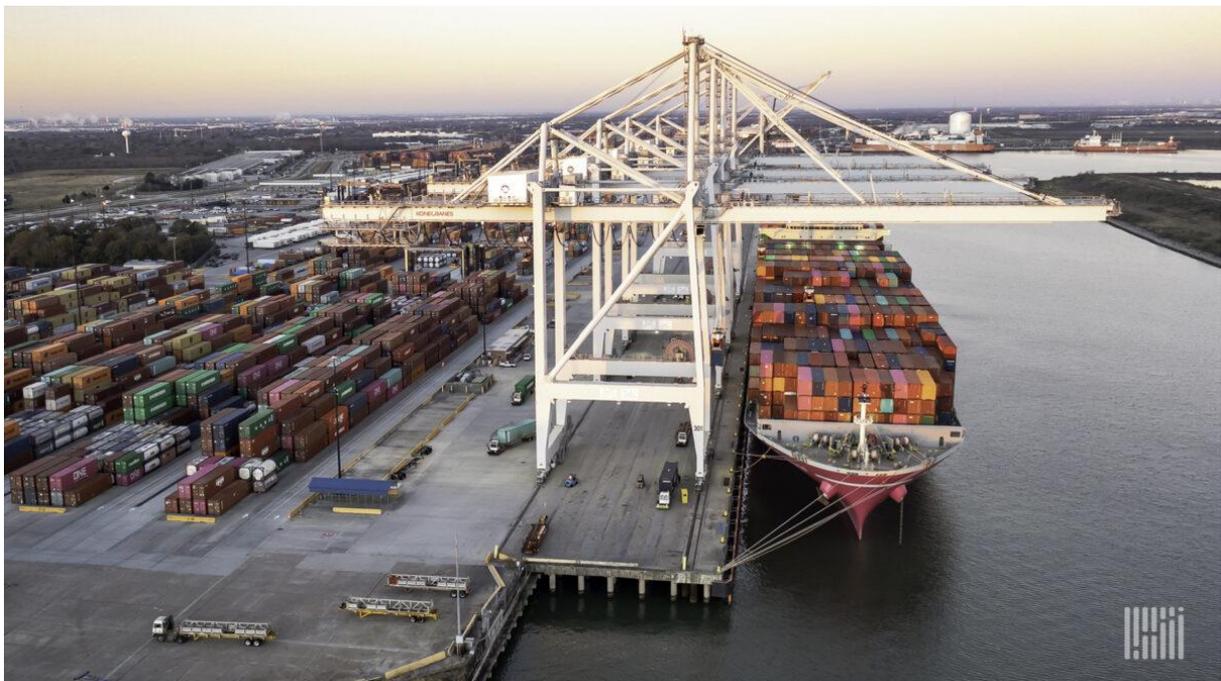


# FMC building case for new container data-sharing rules

Federal Maritime Commission zeroes in on data accuracy in new public comment request

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Monday, April 15, 2024



FMC could eventually require vessel operators to provide better and more accurate container shipment data. (Photo: Jim Allen/FreightWaves)

WASHINGTON — The Federal Maritime Commission is seeking another round of comments from container line operators and their customers as part of its quest to build the case for potential new mandates on container shipment data sharing.

The FMC wants to supplement an information request issued last year along with a [May 2023 report](#) on the agency's Maritime Transportation Data Initiative (MTDI). That project, led by Commissioner Carl Bentzel, attempts to measure the extent to which shipment data is used and shared throughout the supply chain.

The [information request](#) is scheduled to be published Tuesday.

"While some key data elements are readily shared between supply chain participants, the lack of timely and accurate access to some data elements can lead to inefficiencies, as was seen during the COVID-19 pandemic," the new information request states.

"Improved communication and data availability could ease the flow of data and potentially provide positive results including fewer and shorter duration instances of congestion, quicker movement of import and export shipments, assessment of fewer storage fees, and a reduction in non-government cargo holds thereby improving supply chain effectiveness and efficiency."

Bentzel plans to use his initiative as the basis for a Maritime Transportation Data System to improve the accuracy and timeliness of estimated arrival times at container ports, and would include all intermodal cargo shipments in the U.S.

"I'm still in the convincing mode — there are some carriers who are hesitant to see any kind of a mandate," Bentzel [told FreightWaves earlier this month](#). "That's why I'd like to continue to build a record to get this done."

The FMC points out that the MTDI revealed that information on container pickup and return was difficult to gather accurately or to predict.

“MTDI participants cited challenges such as determining who should provide the information, information changing frequently, and changes not being conveyed to shipping entities,” the agency stated in the latest information request notice. “The Commission created the prior [information request] to understand some of the data challenges that entities throughout the supply chain face.”

Focusing specifically on data accuracy, the current information request is seeking responses to 25 questions, including:

### ***For importers***

- What were the primary causes of penalty fees for missing a container pickup window?
- How many days prior to the vessel’s arrival do you need the date to be finalized?
- How often do you try to pick up a container that you believe is available, but it is not, and what are the most common reasons for this?
- How often do you try to retrieve a container, but equipment such as chassis or rail service is not available?

### ***For exporters***

- What were the main causes of penalty fees for missing a container return window?
- How many days prior to the container return window do you need the ERD [earliest return date — the date before which exporters are not allowed to give a loaded export container to the ocean carrier] to be finalized?
- How often do you attempt to export a container within what you believe to be the return window but you end up being too early or too late, and what are the most common reasons for this?

- How frequently do you try to export a container but equipment such as chassis or rail service is not available, and what are the most common reasons for this?

### ***For vessel and marine terminal operators***

- How do you communicate the vessel schedule and any changes regarding the schedule to the beneficial cargo owners (BCOs) and/or their agents?
- What share of vessels change their schedule within the last week prior to arrival at a scheduled port?
- What are the most common reasons for a vessel schedule to change?
- What indicators can BCOs use to predict changes to vessel schedules?
- What are the primary reasons for changes to ERD?
- What share of ERDs change within a week prior to the window?
- How do you access information related to the availability of intermodal rail services?