

FCBF Freight Forwarding Committee

AGENDA | September 15, 2026 | 11:00 AM

Chair: Nicholas Roe | Co-Chair: Stanley Rigaud

1. Port Congestion - Who Is Responsible?

SOURCE: *The Freight Buyers' Club - September 2, 2026*

- Maersk CEO Vincent Clerc has pointed to years of underinvestment in ports and landside infrastructure as a major cause of current congestion.
- Drewry counters that global terminal capacity added over the past 15 years has exceeded container-volume growth, suggesting the issue is more complicated than simple underinvestment.
- Ocean carriers now control about 45% of global marine container-terminal capacity, raising questions about how much responsibility carriers themselves share for congestion.
- Larger vessels, unreliable arrival schedules, cargo dwell time, inland bottlenecks, labor, weather and geopolitical disruption can all reduce effective terminal capacity.
- Chinese ports are operating with very little buffer in some locations, while Europe is also dealing with low water, labor shortages and strikes.

Key takeaway for forwarders: Port congestion is increasingly a supply-chain-wide problem, but growing carrier ownership of terminals makes it difficult to separate carrier responsibility from port responsibility.

Discussion Question: If ocean carriers control nearly half of global terminal capacity, is it fair for carriers to blame ports for congestion - and do carriers have enough incentive to solve congestion when tight capacity can support higher rates and profitability?

2. Panama Canal Update - Congestion, Capacity & Expansion

SOURCE: *Bloomberg / Journal of Commerce - September 7, 2026*

- Panama Canal wait times recently reached as long as 19 days, with some operators paying millions of dollars to move ahead in the transit queue.
- Congestion has pushed LPG tankers toward unusual alternatives, including ship-to-ship transfers near Balboa and longer routing around South America.
- The Canal is temporarily loosening Neopanamax booking rules, allowing more than one reservation for the same booking date and reservations on consecutive dates; the changes apply to booking dates beginning September 13.
- Container services to the US East Coast have seen one-off schedule changes as Panama draft limits combine with weather-related disruptions at major Chinese ports.
- New Administrator Ilya Espino de Marotta (first woman to lead to Panama Canal administration) takes office as the Canal manages renewed El Nino water risk; she is advancing plans for a Rio Indio reservoir, new Atlantic and Pacific container terminals, and broader logistics infrastructure.

Key takeaway for forwarders: Panama is becoming a clear example of how water availability, capacity, booking rules, carrier routing and global disruption can combine to affect transit time and cost.

Discussion Question: What should forwarders be telling customers now about Panama Canal routing, lead times and contingency planning?

3. Ocean Carrier Capacity & Rate Outlook

SOURCE: *FreightWaves - August 26, 2026*

- The global containership orderbook is approximately 13.1 million TEUs versus an operating fleet of about 33.8 million TEUs - roughly 38.7% of existing fleet capacity.
- Fleet growth is expected to outpace container-trade growth, creating longer-term concern about downward pressure on ocean rates once today's disruptions normalize.
- The orderbook is heavily concentrated in larger mainline vessels; carriers can still manage effective capacity through blank sailings, slow steaming, service changes and geopolitical diversions.
- Carrier rankings are also shifting: Linerlytica expects COSCO to overtake Maersk by 2028, while CMA CGM continues to close the gap as both carriers maintain much larger orderbooks than Maersk.
- COSCO's orderbook is reported at about 52% of its current fleet, illustrating how aggressively some carriers are positioning for future market share.

Key takeaway for forwarders: A large wave of new capacity could eventually pressure rates, but congestion, rerouting and carrier capacity management may delay or soften that effect.

Discussion Question: As new ships enter the market, will shippers see meaningful rate relief - or will carriers continue to manage capacity tightly enough to protect pricing?

4. COSCO Intelligence Allegations & Maritime Security

SOURCE: *Reuters - September 1, 2026; COSCO response - September 2026*

- Two senior US administration officials alleged that COSCO vessels carry concealed signals-intelligence equipment capable of collecting military communications near foreign coastlines.
- The officials said the alleged program could gather information on military communications technology, encryption and strategically important maritime routes.
- COSCO has rejected the allegations as unfounded, and the Chinese government has also denied the claims.
- The allegations add another national-security dimension to US-China maritime relations at a time when COSCO remains a major global carrier calling US ports.

Key takeaway for forwarders: Even without a policy change yet, security allegations involving a major carrier could eventually affect port access, regulation, contracting decisions or broader US-China shipping policy.

Discussion Question: What practical impact could increased “national-security” scrutiny of foreign carriers have on US forwarders and their customers?

5. Hapag-Lloyd / ZIM Deal - September Update

SOURCE: *Reuters / Hapag-Lloyd - September 7, 2026*

- Hapag-Lloyd is working with the Israeli government to revise its proposed \$4.2 billion acquisition of ZIM after opposition centered on national security and maritime independence for Israel.
- Hapag-Lloyd says the revised proposal is intended to strengthen Israel's maritime security and preserve access to key shipping routes, including Asia.
- The structure would retain an Israeli-controlled shipping company backed by FIMI, while the broader acquisition remains subject to Israeli and other regulatory approvals.
- The transaction remains important to Hapag-Lloyd's strategy to secure its position among the world's largest container carriers.

Key takeaway for forwarders: The deal remains alive, but national-security concerns are directly reshaping the structure of a major carrier consolidation transaction.

Discussion Question: Could national-security reviews become a larger factor in future carrier mergers, terminal ownership and access to strategic trade lanes?

6. US Trucking - Unlicensed Drivers & the "Shadow Fleet"

SOURCE: *Journal of Commerce* - August 31, 2026

- Industry attention has focused heavily on non-domiciled CDLs and English-language proficiency, but the Journal of Commerce commentary argues that drivers operating without any commercial driver's license should be an equally serious concern.
- An 3-day Road check truck inspection blitz in CA and USA involving around 50K drivers showed 9.1% of drivers failed to demonstrate English Language proficiency. 1% had no CDL at all...
- The issue raises broader questions around carrier vetting, driver qualification, safety and enforcement in the trucking market.
- For forwarders and brokers, tighter verification of motor carriers and drivers is becoming increasingly important as safety concerns influence carrier selection.
- Diesel in U.S. has reached an all time high this week of \$5.85 per gallon; previous was \$5.82 in 2022.

Key takeaway for forwarders: Forwarders should continue strengthening motor-carrier vetting and qualification procedures rather than relying only on basic authority or rate checks.

Discussion Question: Are current carrier-vetting procedures strong enough to identify unsafe or improperly qualified trucking operations?

7. DOT Crackdown on CDL Training Schools

SOURCE: *FreightWaves* - September 1, 2026

- The Department of Transportation announced an emergency shutdown of 110 commercial driver training schools as part of a broader CDL enforcement crackdown.
- Texas and Pennsylvania had the most affected physical schools with 13 each, followed by California with 11, Florida with 10 and Utah with 9.
- Those five states accounted for two-thirds of the 84 physical-location schools identified in DOT's state-by-state breakdown; another 23 affected providers operated online.
- FMCSA said every school targeted for emergency removal had trained at least 10 drivers who were later cited for English-language proficiency violations; collectively, the schools certified more than 5,000 such drivers.
- Federal officials have not yet released a complete list of all schools by name, and DOT is also reviewing additional online providers and CDL testing practices.

Key takeaway for forwarders: The crackdown shows that federal scrutiny is moving upstream from individual drivers to the schools and testing systems that qualify them. For forwarders and brokers, this could tighten the driver pipeline while making carrier and driver verification even more important - particularly in Florida, one of the states with the most affected schools.

Discussion Question: Could stricter CDL-school and testing enforcement reduce driver availability in the short term, and should forwarders change how they vet carriers and driver qualifications?

Upcoming FCBF Events

Education Committee Meeting

September 15, 2026 | 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM | Teams

CBP Ocean Compliance Bootcamp: AMS + ISF

September 16, 2026 | 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM | Miami-Dade College West Campus

Customs Committee Meeting

September 24, 2026 | 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM | Teams

FMC Compliance Bootcamp: Are Your Tariffs, Rates & HBLs Audit-Ready?

October 14, 2026 | 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM | NPTI, Miami

NCBFAA's NVOCC Day 2026

October 20, 2026 | 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM | PortMiami

GMM - Port Everglades

November 4, 2026 | 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM