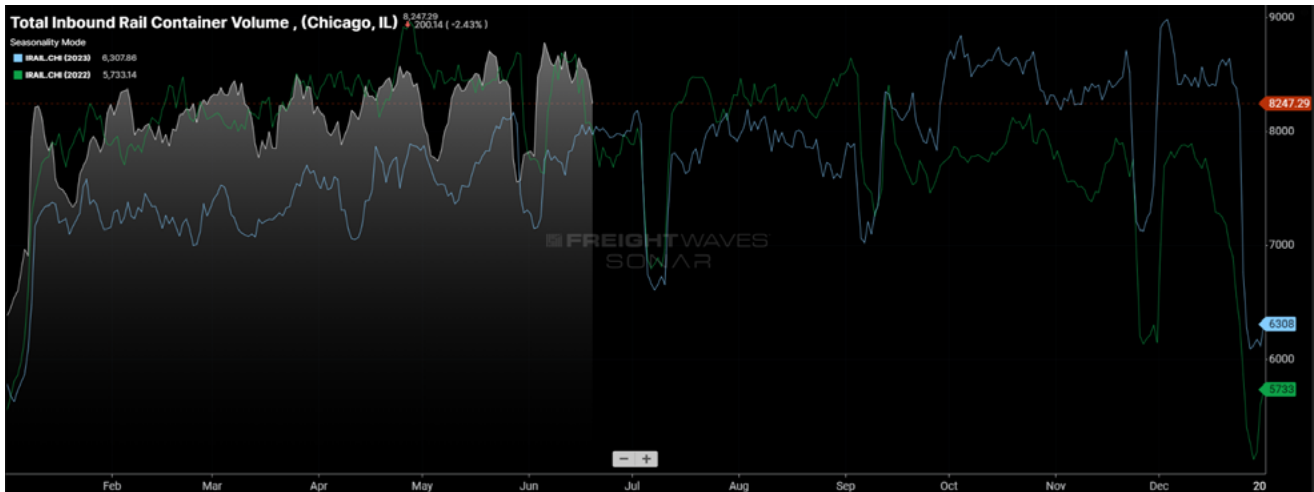


Unlock Leading Indicators for Drayage Demand With SONAR



While SONAR doesn't contain drayage rates yet, certain data sets provide a look forward at demand that can help carriers be nimble with timely adjustments to resource levels. Total drayage capacity in a particular market doesn't typically change much from day to day or week to week, but demand can fluctuate based on the volume of containers coming off the docks or into a rail yard.

The SONAR chart below shows why drayage carriers in Chicago should be busier than they were at this time last year. While still below 2022 levels, loaded inbound Chicago intermodal volume (includes containers of all sizes) is up 11.6% year over year since January 1.

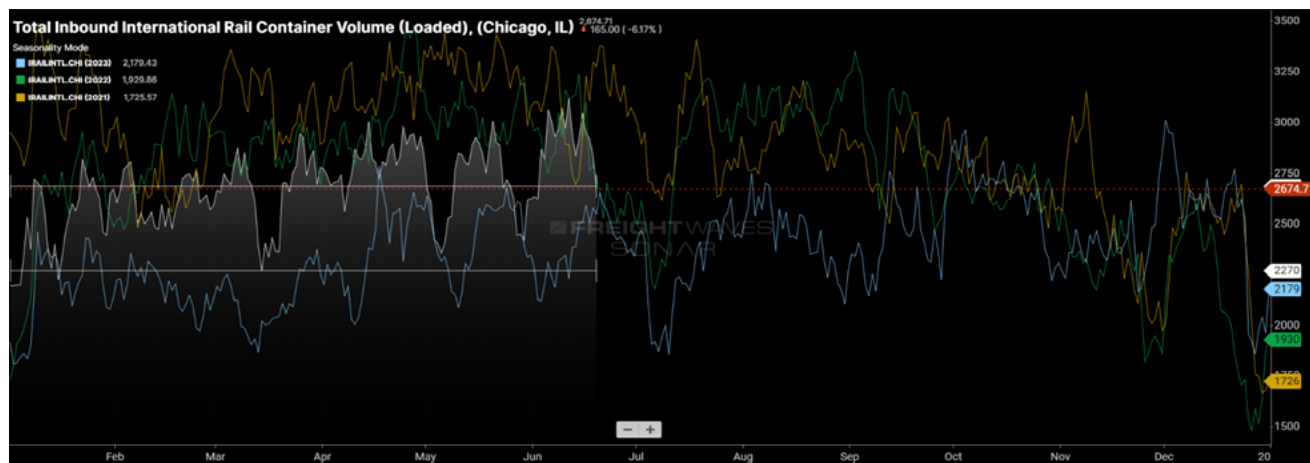


Loaded Chicago inbound containerized rail intermodal volume (includes all container sizes) for 2024, 2023 and 2022 shown in white, blue and green, respectively. [Chart: FreightWaves SONAR – IRAIL.CHI seasonality view](#)

The data contained in the SONAR ORAIL/IRAIL data set is based on the date that containers are in-gated at the origin terminal. Therefore, it provides insight into drayage demand at the destination terminal in the coming days. About one-third of inbound Chicago intermodal volumes originate in Los Angeles, and intermodal transit time is typically “truckload plus one day” — so an uptick in IRAIL.CHI should translate to an increase in drayage demand in about five days. That’s a heads-up for carriers to source sufficient numbers of chassis and seated power units (drayage companies often heavily leverage owner-operators) for those days. When it comes time to update rates, carriers can leverage the most up-to-date data.

Aside from just looking at total loaded containers inbound to Chicago, draymen can break down that data between international and domestic containers, by specific container size, and by point of origin — whichever is most reflective of a carrier’s book of business.

This year, international intermodal has been the main growth driver of drayage demand. Year-to-date, loaded international intermodal volumes inbound to Chicago increased 18% year-over-year. But carriers should monitor SONAR for a potential shift in the market. An emerging international container shortage would lead to less drayage demand to haul international containers and potentially more demand to haul domestic containers. SONAR data shows that international intermodal volume may have peaked; that volume is up a less dramatic 5% year-over-year in the third week of June. If that trend persists, it would mean less available volume from container ship lines and freight forwarders. It also means that carriers may soon find 40-foot chassis in greater supply.



Against a depressed year-ago comparison, loaded international intermodal containers inbound to Chicago are up 18% year-over-year since January 1, but units may have peaked in mid-June (white line). Chicago inbound international containerized intermodal volume for 2024, 2023, 2022 and 2021 is shown in white, blue, green and yellow, respectively. [SONAR: IRAILINTL.CHI seasonality view](#)

So while the drayage industry may be one of the last frontiers when it comes to data, market players don't have to be flying blind. Partner with SONAR to unlock leading indicators so that your team can make smarter decisions faster.

[Learn more](#) about how SONAR can improve your operations or [request a demo here](#).